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SPEECH BY MR. CHRISTOPHER TUGENDHAT, VICE-PRESIDENT  
OF THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, AT A  
DINNER IN THE GREAT HALL OF QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY,  
BELFAST, TO MARK THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST  
ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, ON THURSDAY,  
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NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

It gives me great pleasure as a host of this occasion to mark the Tenth Anniversary of the 1973 enlargement of the European Community to welcome such a distinguished audience. At the same time as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland acceded to the Community the Irish Republic and the Kingdom of Denmark also joined.

It is therefore a particular pleasure to have with us Dr. Garret Fitzgerald, the Taoiseach, a distinguished European who has held office as President of the Council of Ministers. He has another distinction which you may be less aware of, which is that he was, like myself, at one time a journalist with the Financial Times!

I have much pleasure in welcoming Edward Heath, who was as you know Prime Minister at the time of enlargement and therefore a signatory of the Treaty of Accession. He is an international statesman of the first rank with a reputation that is justifiably worldwide.

/ I am sorry that

I am sorry that the Secretary of State is unable to be with us this evening but I am grateful to Nick Scott for coming to represent Her Majesty's Government. We are old friends and when I was an MP, our constituencies were next door to each other. Ten years ago we worked together for Willie Whitelaw, he as a Minister and I as Parliamentary Private Secretary.

From Denmark, we are also fortunate to have with us Mr. Niels Haagerup, MEP, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Danish Liberal Party, which is a member of the present Danish coalition government. He also runs the Danish Foreign Affairs Institute and is the Danish representative on the executive of the Institute of Strategic Studies in London. We see each other often in Strasbourg and I know he takes a personal interest in Northern Ireland affairs. It is a pleasure to welcome him here tonight.

Dr. Peter Froggatt, the Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, is my co-host, and I thank him for allowing the Great Hall and the facilities of the University to be placed at our disposal for this European event. As he knows, I have a Queensman on my personal staff in Brussels, so he can be sure that the concerns of the University are drawn to my attention!

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is I think a unique occasion. A gathering in Belfast of so many leading Northern Irish people from all sides of the Provinces' economic and political life with such distinguished guests to mark this international event is something which is very encouraging to those of us in Brussels who try to take an interest in Northern Ireland's affairs and to seek ways in which we can - without interfering or meddling in constitutional matters - be of help.

/ It is appropriate

It is appropriate that we should reflect on the meaning and purposes of the European Community in Northern Ireland, because I believe they have a particular relevance here. The Community was established in a period when Europe was seeking to rebuild itself after the devastation of total war, the second European civil war this century which wasted our youth, our resources and our energies. European leaders were determined that never again should their continent spawn such tragedy. They therefore sought, by linking their countries economically, and to some extent politically, to make it practically impossible that they could go to war with each other again. That objective has been achieved. In a generation it has become inconceivable that such a war could recur.

Differences of course arise - it would be odd if they did not - but the mechanisms for resolving them peacefully exist and, however imperfectly, they work. Our continuing objectives are, as it says in the EEC Treaty (I think it is less controversial if I call it that in Belfast!) "an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe", "the constant improvement of living and working conditions", and the pooling of our resources "to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty".

/ None of this

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None of this means abandoning our individual identities, loyalties or cultures. On the contrary, it means recognizing the richness and diversity of European history and culture, and building on it a co-operative rather than a mutually destructive effort. This "Community" of independent and proud nations is building on a basis of economic integration an increasing awareness of the common interests and common destiny of European peoples. Northern Ireland is part of that construction and its people have both a right to influence its development and an obligation to contribute to the work of the institutions.

Strasbourg, a meeting place of the European Parliament, offers us a good example of what the Community is about. We know it as a French city. But during its long history it has been part of both France and Germany and for long periods a bone of contention between them. Now such disputes seem irrelevant. Through the Community, the economies of Germany and France are closely linked, trade flows more freely and people move across the border more easily to live and work. The city has become a symbol of Franco-German reconciliation. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that one of the attractions of Strasbourg is that it combines the best of German and French cultures - though not everyone who has eaten "choucroute" agrees with me!

/ Such experiences

Such experiences are relevant to Northern Ireland, where since the beginning of the 1970's more than 2,000 people have been killed and 25 000 injured by violence arising in part from the kind of disputes which the founders of the Community hoped to eliminate between European member states - territorial disagreements, the remembrance of old feuds, and -let us be blunt- from various forms of old-fashioned nationalism. The continuation of this violence and these disputes is a problem not only for the two Member States most closely concerned, it is a blot on the Community itself and the Community is inevitably involved in its consequences.

The means by which the Community pursues its aims are primarily economic. It was the belief of the founders of the Community that the more people co-operated in a day-to-day manner on bread and butter issues, and the more they came to realize that their standard of living could be improved by pooling their efforts, the less bitter would be political divisions between them. In Northern Ireland, with an unemployment rate of 22 %, surely this point is relevant.

The Community has no panacea for the problems of Northern Ireland - after ten years that is obvious to anyone who ever thought otherwise. But Community accession by Ireland and Britain, as well as Denmark, represented an historic change of direction in Anglo-Irish affairs. It was the first time this century that a major political decision had been taken by both governments which, instead of representing a move apart, brought them into a closer association.

/ Today we are

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Today we are launching a survey of the effects of ten years of Community membership on Northern Ireland. It analyses in an objective fashion the factual record. It shows what the Community has tried to do and how much remains to be done. Clearly, what we have been able to do to improve the economic situation is limited, and does not compare with the scale of the financial effort by Her Majesty's Government, but it is nonetheless significant and useful.

Let me refer to a few specific points.

Northern Ireland industry has traditionally been dominated by shipbuilding and textiles. These industries have throughout Europe been in decline over the last decade, and this has been felt particularly sharply in Northern Ireland. In the European Community two parallel responses to this have been adopted: first, measures to ease the process of change in declining industries and second, measures to encourage and facilitate the establishment of the new industries which can create new jobs.

On the former the Community has had to take into account both the inevitability that a degree of subsidy to ailing key industries would be necessary and the need to avoid a Europe-wide competitive scramble for higher and higher subsidies.

This would benefit no-one in the end but would waste precious resources and fossilize industrial structures which can offer no long-term prospect of employment expansion. However, the Commission has

/ recognized the

recognized the exceptionally severe problems of shipbuilding in Northern Ireland and the highest rate of assistance in the Community can be provided here. As far as textiles and man-made fibres are concerned, the UK industry like that elsewhere in Europe would have been likely to suffer an even more rapid and dramatic decline had it not had the degree of protection against cheap imports offered by the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, which is negotiated at Community level.

On the second aspect, the Community has sought to contribute to new industrial development in many ways. Community funds such as the Regional and Social Funds have grant-aided improvement of the infrastructure, the establishment and expansion of industries (particularly small and medium-sized industries), and training programmes. The European Investment Bank has provided loans at favourable rates also for infrastructure and industrial projects. In toto, Community aid to Northern Ireland over the last ten years has amounted to £342M in grants, £129M in loans, plus £212M under the supplementary measures related to the UK budget rebate.

Northern Ireland is a priority area for the application of these and other Community funds and we have (as is well known in the Province) been attempting to apply them in Belfast in a co-ordinated way through a new and as yet experimental approach known as an "integrated operation". It is the

/ Commission's hope

Commission's hope that new funds can be provided in the future for such integrated operations, though at present what is involved is simply the co-ordination of existing funds. The more rapidly the necessary arrangements for a co-ordinated approach by local, national and Community authorities can be established the better the prospects of obtaining new funds. Any reluctance to implement such arrangements until new funds were available would therefore be self-defeating.

In connection with the Belfast Integrated Operation, I was glad to be able to propose in 1982 the provision, as a first step in a three-year programme, of £16M for a special housing measure in Belfast which could be clearly seen as additional finance. I regret that it has not yet proved possible to reach agreement among all Member States on the means by which the agreed objective - that this money should come to Belfast - should be implemented. Progress is however being made in discussions and we are likely to achieve the objective soon.

Access for Northern Ireland firms to a Community-wide market of 260 million consumers is also an important advantage.

/ One of the main

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One of the main prerequisites which companies based outside the Community (such as American or Japanese companies) look for in drawing up a short-list of potential locations for a European plant is access for its products to the Community-wide market. Without this access, Northern Ireland's prospects of attracting such investment would have been jeopardized which, given its importance to the province, is something it can ill afford. In 1982, over 20% of all jobs in manufacturing in Northern Ireland were in U.S. companies, and between 1973 and 1982, over 12,000 jobs were promoted by U.S. firms in Northern Ireland, plus over 3,000 in European firms.

Indigenous industry also has expanded opportunities because of this larger market, and I know real efforts are being made to identify and exploit these opportunities. I welcome these efforts, and hope they meet increasing success. People from the province of Ulster have traditionally a reputation for sturdy self-reliance and I am sure that, however much national or Community authorities can do to help, they must in economics as in politics ultimately be the authors of their own salvation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there are many other important aspects of the Community's involvement in Northern Ireland which there is not time to comment on - agriculture, the question of additionality, the various special actions designed to suit the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. I recommend our dossier to your attention on these points.

/ The past ten years

The past ten years have seen two other Community developments of importance to Northern Ireland. Direct elections to the European Parliament have resulted in three well-known Northern Ireland politicians, John Taylor, John Hume and Ian Paisley, being elected. They have not only proved powerful advocates for the interests of the Province, but have demonstrated that when they can mount a joint effort on economic and social matters, in spite of their political differences, they can often carry the majority of their colleagues with them.

The second development has been the opening of a Commission office in Belfast, a clear demonstration of our commitment to Northern Ireland since no such office exists in any comparable region of the Community. We have been fortunate in having Geoff Martin as Head of the Office so that it can get off to a good start.

We are not complacent about what the Community has achieved here - how could we be when we look at the problems? But we are learning how best we can help and increasing our efforts to do so. Over the next decade I hope we will increasingly achieve a common effort from the local, national and Community authorities to improve the economic situation here. In Europe the will to help exists, but people outside Northern Ireland are very conscious of the constant risk of causing offence, of being thought to take sides or to meddle. What is clear is that if you, the people of Northern Ireland, agree on what the European Community should be doing here then new possibilities would be opened up for us all.

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