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FROM UKREP BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT : HAAGERUP REPORT ON NORTHERN IRELAND

SUMMARY

1. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 29 MARCH ADOPTED THE HAAGERUP REPORT ON NORTHERN IRELAND BY 124 VOTES TO 3 WITH 63 ABSTENTIONS. A LIVELY DEBATE WITH PAISLEY, BLANEY AND OTHERS MAKING PREDICTABLE INTERVENTIONS. THE COMMISSION SAID THAT A SPECIAL GROUP OF COMMISSIONERS WOULD CONSIDER MEASURES FOR IRELAND, IN PARTICULAR TRANS-FRONTIER PROJECTS.

2. THE ADOPTED RESOLUTION INCLUDED FEW AMENDMENTS. HAAGERUP'S OWN AMENDMENT "RECOGNISING THAT THE INFRINGEMENTS OF CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS.....HAVE HAD A DEPLORABLE EFFECT ON THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND" BUT "RECOGNISING THE EFFORTS OF SUCCESSIVE BRITISH GOVERNMENTS IN RECENT YEARS TO END THEM" WAS ADOPTED. AN AMENDMENT BY BLANEY CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH TROOPS WAS DEFEATED BY 126 VOTES TO 23. A FURTHER BLANEY AMENDMENT CALLING FOR "A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS IRELAND ON THE BASIS OF SELF-DETERMINATION" WAS ALSO REJECTED BY 138 VOTES TO 21.

3. TEXT OF REPORT AS ADOPTED BY BAG TO ECD(1).

DETAIL

4. HAAGERUP SAID THE COMMUNITY'S AIM SHOULD BE TO CONTRIBUTE TO ALLEVIATING THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND, PARTICULARLY SOCIAL CONDITIONS WHICH WERE CHARACTERISED BY A HIGHER DEGREE OF UNEMPLOYMENT THAN IN ANY OTHER PART OF THE COMMUNITY. THERE WAS GOOD WILL BETWEEN THE UK AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS, INSTANCED RECENTLY IN THE SECURITY FIELD BY THE HANDING OVER OF MCGLINCHY. THE PARLIAMENT COULD NOT BE NEUTRAL ON VIOLENCE - "WE FIND NO JUSTIFICATION FOR TERRORISM IN WHATEVER FORM, AND I CAN REPORT TO THIS HOUSE THAT IN THIS CONDEMNATION OF VIOLENCE WE ARE ON THE SIDE OF NOT ONLY THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS, BUT ALSO ON THE SIDE OF THE VERY LARGE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND WHO WANT NOTHING BETTER THAN TO GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES IN PEACE".

5. VJOHN HUME (SOCIALIST GROUP) PRAISED THE HAAGERUP RESOLUTION. A MAJOR REAPPRAISAL WAS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE THREE PARTIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND: PROTESTANTS, NATIONALISTS AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. THE BRITISH SEE THEMSELVES AS REFEREES BUT THEY ARE IN FACT A PART OF THE PROBLEM. THE LAND OF IRELAND WAS UNITED

3
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BUT THE PEOPLE WERE DIVIDED : "YOU CANNOT UNITE PEOPLE AT THE POINT OF A GUN". FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, PENDERS (NETHERLANDS) CONFIRMED THAT THE PARLIAMENT HAD NO COMPETENCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS BUT COULD NOT IGNORE VIOLENCE IN ONE OF ITS MEMBER STATES. "THE COMMUNITY WAS BORN OUT OF THE RAVAGES OF HISTORICAL CONFLICT". HE APPEALED TO THE EDG TO SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION.

6. LADY ELLES (EDG) SAID THAT IT WAS NOT FOR THE PARLIAMENT TO STUDY THE POLITICAL, LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF A MEMBER STATE. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND SOUGHT PEACE AND WANTED TO REMAIN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. SHE DREW ATTENTION TO HAAGERUP'S CONCLUSION THAT AN IRISH UNITARY STATE COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED IN THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE AND A BRITISH WITHDRAWAL WOULD NOT LEAD TO PEACE. SHE PRAISED HAAGERUP FOR HIS REMARKABLE UNDERSTANDING OF A COMPLEX PROBLEM. DENIS (FRENCH COMMUNIST) CALLED FOR A REFERENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIEW OF THE VIOLENCE WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE. BANGEMANN (LIBERAL GROUPLÉADER) SAID THE PARLIAMENT'S ROLE WAS NOT TO PASS JUDGEMENTS BUT TO SHOW CONCERN. HE APPEALED STRONGLY TO THE EDG TO SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY WERE A EUROPEAN PARTY. LALOR (FIANNA FAIL) DISAGREED WITH HAAGERUP'S PESSIMISM ABOUT A SOLUTION. IT WAS TRUE THAT AS LONG AS IRELAND WAS DIVIDED IT WOULD NEVER BE AT REST. HE APPEALED TO THE BRITISH TO STOP GIVING GUARANTEES FOR SOMETHING THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IN AND TO SET A DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL.

7. PAISLEY SAID THE BORDER WAS RATIFIED BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, THE STORMONT PARLIAMENT AND THE IRISH PARLIAMENT. THE FEW THOUSAND BRITISH TROOPS COULD NOT HOLD DOWN THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IF THEY DID NOT WISH TO REMAIN PART OF THE UK. HAAGERUP'S ANALYSIS WAS BIASED, RIDDLED WITH FALSEHOODS AND TOTALLY MISLEADING. IT WAS INSULTING TO DESCRIBE THE PROVINCE AS A CONSTITUTIONAL ODDITY. "THERE WOULD NEVER BE A DAY WHEN ULSTER WOULD BEND IT'S NECK UNDER THE HEEL OF A DUBLIN ADMINISTRATION". MCCARTIN (IRISH, CD) SAID THAT SUCCESSIVE BRITISH GOVERNMENTS, APART FROM MR HEATH HAD BEEN TOO RELUCTANT TO LOOK FOR NEW SOLUTIONS. THE COMMUNITY SHOULD USE ITS MORAL INFLUENCE AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT IN FAVOUR OF ALLEVIATING THE PROBLEMS. JOHN TAYLOR (NI, EDG) OPPOSED THE DEBATE. IT WAS NOT THE CONCERN OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. 40% OF THE PEOPLE OF ULSTER ARE CATHOLICS BUT ONLY 25% WANTED A UNITED IRELAND. THE REPORT HOWEVER HAD SOME WELCOME FEATURES: CONDEMNATION OF THOSE WHO FINANCE TERRORISM, PARTICULARLY NORAIID, AND THE APPEAL FOR GREATER EC SUPPORT ON ECONOMIC MATTERS. T J MAHER (LIBERAL) PRAISED HAAGERUP'S REPORT VERY WARMLY. HE APPEALED TO THE EDG AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSALS. NEIL BLANEY WELCOMED THAT THE PROBLEM OF NORTHERN IRELAND WAS BEING BROUGHT TO A WIDER AUDIENCE BUT THIS REPORT AMOUNTED TO PUSSY-FOOTING. THERE WOULD BE NO PEACE IN IRELAND AS LONG AS HIS COUNTRY WAS OCCUPIED BY BRITISH TROOPS. SIR FRED CATHERWOOD CONSIDERED HAAGERUP'S REPORT EXCELLENT BUT THE EDG FELT UNABLE TO VOTE FOR IT BECAUSE THEY REPRESENTED THE PARTY IN GOVERNMENT IN THE UK WHICH BORE A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY IN MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER AND WHICH FELT THAT SUPPORT FOR THE REPORT COULD PREJUDICE THIS.

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8. REPLYING FOR THE COMMISSION, NATALI SAID THAT THE COMMISSION WAS NOT COMPETENT TO PASS POLITICAL JUDGEMENTS ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND, BUT ENDORSED THE DESCRIBED COMMUNITY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE. THE COMMUNITY WAS ALREADY PROVIDING AID FOR BELFAST AND WAS WILLING TO LOOK AT INTEGRATED PROPOSALS COVERING BORDER AREAS IN PARTICULAR, THOUGH SUCH A PLAN WOULD NEED THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE IRISH AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS. THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION WOULD CALL A MEETING OF A SELECT GROUP OF COMMISSIONERS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICIES HAVING A DIRECT IMPACT ON NORTHERN IRELAND.

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