

MAYHEW CALLS ON ADAMS TO CLARIFY SUPPORT FOR IRA VIOLENCE

Three months after the Downing Street Declaration the world is condemning the IRA and Sinn Fein for the continuance of Republican violence.

Nowhere is the criticism louder and more harsh than in America. Only 7 weeks since the publicity coup of Mr Adams' visit, resentment is now widespread and vocal, from the President downwards. And no wonder. The generosity of the visa gesture, and the willingness to hear Mr Adams, have been spurned. For all the carefully crafted talk of peace, only death and threats of death have been delivered by the IRA - with not a word of dismay, let alone denunciation, from Mr Adams.

Heathrow was for many the decider. These projectiles were not mere dummies, intended not to do harm but to make a gesture. They were everything they seemed to be. Only their failure to explode was unintended.

Thus Speaker Tom Foley told the BBC on Thursday

"The attacks on Heathrow are the worst kind of terrorist threat, - the threat to innocent civilians was contemptible."

But Mr Adams bids us look forward to more 'spectaculars'.

Here in the United Kingdom, however, we have had even more reason than the Americans to perceive the gap between words and deeds. For example, the IRA have murdered two policemen in Belfast since Mr Adams' visit. One was a community policeman in the Markets district; the other was an off-duty constable sitting in a bar with his pregnant wife.

Beware of referring to innocent civilians. Of what offence were these non-civilians guilty, to warrant their brutal and summary execution? By what right were they killed by the IRA? In whose name were these murders done? Not the name of the people of Ireland, North, South or together: that is for sure. These have made clear that they loathe and reject such violence.

Yet Mr Adams gives no answers to these questions. The reason is that these murderers kill for no-one but themselves - themselves alone. On the contrary, Mr Adams does not withdraw his justifications of what he calls the armed struggle. His claim that there is a need for clarification of the Joint Declaration constituting a barrier to peace, a need incidentally which after 3 months he has yet to specify, should now deceive no-one. It has rightly been dismissed by the Taoiseach.

In America this week Mr Reynolds said that the IRA's

"dispute is not with the British Government but with the Irish people, because over 90% have endorsed the peace Declaration and have said clearly to everybody that it is the way forward".

Of Mr Hume's latest suggestion, that the British Government should now sit down with Sinn Fein - one or two hours only would be enough - Mr Reynolds has said "I have never heard Sinn Fein saying that".

What does need clarifying is the disparity between the words of Mr Adams and the deeds of the IRA, and his failure to comment upon it.

I wholeheartedly endorse something else Mr Reynolds said in America this week:

"If they are trying to get new or additional terms for people who use violence to try and achieve a political end, then they will not succeed".

That is indeed true.

The reason is this. The Joint Declaration is a Declaration of principles. The principles are those of democracy and consent, and of the rejection of violence. The isolation which it has brought upon Sinn Fein and the IRA has induced increasingly desperate attempts to shift the Governments away from the Declaration's terms. But these will continue to fail.

Being a Declaration of principles, it was not put forward as a bargaining proposal. The two Governments will stand by these principles, whether or not violence ends. They provide a sound platform for the Talks process.

The Talks process will never be open to those who use or support violence: such people exclude themselves. The Talks process is open, and only open, to those who establish a commitment exclusively to democratic methods.

There has been no "waiting" for an end of violence to be declared. No security measure has been held in abeyance, while Sinn Fein debate a decision. None will be, there could be no justification for any such thing. The fact that in the past 4 weeks alone 40 people have been charged with serious terrorist offences demonstrates vividly that there has been no reduction of effort.

The reality is that security policy has continued to be one of full commitment to the deterrence and defeat of terrorism. The police and army have not ceased to 'crack down' on the terrorists. In addition to the charges I have mentioned, discoveries of arms and munitions have continued on a prodigious scale.

Here I should like to pay a well deserved tribute to the efforts of the Garda on the Southern sound of the Border. Sir Hugh Annesley this week described the co-operation between the two forces as first rate, and at an all time high. Lives have undoubtedly been saved in Northern Ireland by the diligence and determination that the Garda have been displaying.

These are the qualities that are needed, rather than soundbite rhetoric from any quarter. They will continue to be remorselessly deployed against those who in this democracy try to get their way by force of arms.

Mistaking its true character, some people have called for the Declaration to be taken off the table, in the light of continuing Republican violence.

But principles that are of fundamental importance on the 15 December do not lose their importance 3 months later.

It is worth remembering some of the things that would be taken off the table together with the Declaration. They include the reaffirmation of the constitutional guarantee for Northern Ireland. They include the acceptance by the Taoiseach that it would be wrong to seek to impose a United Ireland against the wishes of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. They include the Taoiseach's commitment to bring forward and support amendments to the Irish constitution which he acknowledges are offensive to many unionists, in the event of an overall political settlement.

Nor should we take off the table the reassurance contained in the Declaration that the Government would not try to impede the creation of a united Ireland, if by peaceful and democratic processes that became the wish of the people of Northern Ireland. I have consistently pointed out the reassurance this affords to constitutional nationalists. It enables them to reject the IRA's false assertion that nationalist aspirations can only be achieved through violence.

No-one in the Conservative party who supports the Union should wish to see any of these withdrawn.

All of these are important statements of constitutional and political reality. They are principles that will endure. They are not dependent on acceptance or rejection by Sinn Fein and the IRA. For the two Governments to have declared their common acceptance of them is an event of historic significance.

Now they are recommitting themselves to the political talks process, which the Joint Declaration complements and underpins.