



BRITISH EMBASSY

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Date

This fax consists of 176 sheets, including this header.

TO: James Clarke R10 *cc Mykalo wide*

FROM: Ted Hallett Dublin *in May N10(B)*

COMMENTS: *On Tel of Today refers*

(The underlinings are Conor Kenyon's, not mine!)

*cc Mr Looce
Mr Belton*

Speech by Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin President to Annual
Women's Conference.

Venue: North Star Hotel, Amien Street Dublin.

303136

Embargoed until 1pm Saturday 6 November, 1993

Introduction

I want to commend the Women's Department of Sinn Féin for organising today's conference. It is important that Republican women have, as of right, a place in building a party which reflects their needs and in which they have full representation at all levels. The work of the Women's Department is not limited, of course, to the organising of this annual conference. It is reflected in the daily work of our organisation and in the publication of "Women in Struggle".

The importance of the Women's Department is also obvious in its contacts with women's organisations and individual women and in forming policy that addresses the needs of Irish women.

I have attended many Sinn Féin Women's Conferences before and spoken at a few though no, I must confess with as much media attention. On those other occasions I have stressed the need for republicans to be committed to building equality and anti-sexism within Sinn Féin and for Sinn Féin to be committed to the building of a non-sexist society. This remains my position.

Women are central to the search for peace, not in any passive way, but in struggling to bring about the conditions for a lasting peace. Republican women have articulated this clearly and I am conscious of their contribution in these vital areas.

Today I want to deal with the question of peace and the peace initiative in which our party is involved.

Background

Sinn Féin seeks an end to conflict in the North. That is our most important priority as a political party. As a leader of Sinn Féin I am subjected to many vilifications. Of all these the most frustrating is my inability to represent myself, our party and our supporters because of censorship. The immediate end to Section 31 is not only a reasonable demand, it is also the least Dublin can do to help the peace process.

In recent years we have seen party policy evolve and develop. The 'Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland' document which spelt out clearly our commitment to peace and the need for dialogue and democratic change has been the basis for all of our discussions with others.

However that evolution did not occur in a vacuum. It took place against the backdrop of the ongoing struggle in the north, the resilience of the Sinn Féin vote in that area, the wider democratic struggle throughout Ireland and the failure of British policy.

In recent times evidence that British policy was in tatters was to be found in the failure of the Hillsborough Treaty, the eventual collapse of the Stormont talks initiated by Peter Brooke, and the increasing savagery of the loyalist death squads with their British sponsored South African weapons.

In all of this, as with the wider issues, the British connection and the question of peace in the north is an all-Ireland issue. Socially, culturally and economically this country and the entire nation is affected by what is happening in the north. It effects all of us and yet the partition of our country was brought about by a British Act of Parliament for which not a single Irish vote was cast. The consent of the Irish people was never sought and has never been freely given. That is the nub of our problems. By this reasonable criteria partition is an abject failure.

It has been so since the 1920s and in every decade since then. In 25 years of violence almost three and a half thousand people have died. Countless lives have been shattered, physically and emotionally and the financial cost to Britain and Ireland, north and south, now runs into billions of pounds.

The Hume - Adams Dialogue

It was in that context that John Hume and I began our discussions. In our first joint statement we accepted that "an internal settlement is not a solution because it obviously does not deal with all the relationships at the heart of the problem" and we acknowledged that "the Irish people as a whole have a right to national self-determination".

Neither of us sought to ignore the difficulties facing us in seeking to develop a peace process. We recognised that a new agreement had to earn and enjoy the allegiance of all our people and provide for national reconciliation.

On September 25th Mr Hume and I issued our second joint statement. We stated our belief that our discussions "aimed at the creation of a peace process which would involve both governments and all parties have made considerable progress."

We agreed to forward a report on the position reached to date to Dublin for consideration and we recognised that "the broad principles involved will be for wider consideration between the two governments".

We were then, and we remain convinced that from our discussions "a process can be designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, which will provide a solid basis for peace."

In effect, we, as leaders of northern nationalist opinion reached agreement on a process which, if adopted by the two governments, could lead us out of conflict and towards a real and lasting peace on this island.

After decades of conflict this is, clearly, a significant development. It has been warmly received both by nationalist opinion in Ireland (one public opinion estimated public endorsement in the South at 72%), north and south, and by international political opinion.

It has focused the minds of the London and Dublin Governments in an almost unprecedented way on the need for a real peace process. On October 2nd the leadership of the IRA welcomed the initiative and pointed out that it could provide the basis for peace. It reiterated this position again this week.

Rejection

The response of the two governments, to the Irish peace initiative contained in a joint communique issued in Brussels on Friday October 29th was to reject the process outlined by John Hume and I.

In particular the response of the British government to the Irish peace initiative was perfunctory and dismissive. Mr Major rejected the Irish peace initiative as long ago as the Tory party conference. He has had a number of opportunities since then to change his mind.

When Mr Hume asked John Major in the British House of Commons on Monday November 1st why the British Prime Minister had rejected his initiative without ever talking to him, Mr Major bluntly replied "I reached the conclusion after having been informed of them by the Taoiseach ... that it was not the way to proceed".

He was given the opportunity again by Mr Hume in Downing Street on Thursday, to review his position. I look forward to hearing Mr Hume's assessment of Major's response to his briefing but I must say at this time that I am satisfied that John Major has no real interest in developing a real peace process. I am certain that he is out of step with British public opinion on this issue. He cannot and must not be permitted to reject this opportunity for peace.

Spring's Principles

Further evidence of Britain's rejection of a real peace process was seen in the speed with which it seized upon some of the six points outlined by the Tanaiste Dick Spring - points which reinforced the unionist veto.

The Unionist veto is used today as a political justification for the perpetuation of the problem. This bogus concept is a British Government created and maintained concept. Dublin Governments cannot acquiesce in this. X

Mr Spring also appears to have committed the Dublin government, in the context of the double veto he accorded the Unionists, to change the Irish Constitution. This was interpreted and welcomed by the British government as a commitment to remove Articles 2 and 3 and thus an acknowledgement of Britain's sovereignty claim.

In all of this it is important to avoid being fooled by, or party to, perceptions being falsely created by the British about its real intentions. British support for some of Mr Springs remarks and Mayhews welcome for them is a cynical effort to divert attention from Londons refusal to be involved in a real peace process and in order to disguise its rejection of the Irish peace initiative. M
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Mr Spring, even amid all the hype about his remarks avoided describing his points as the basis for a peace process. They obviously are not. A peace process to be successful must be based upon principles which address the substantive issues and contain the dynamic required to move the situation forward.

These are contained in the initiative taken by myself and Mr Hume. X
They are absent from Mr Springs points. He knows this.

Abandoned

Unionists have understandably grasped the negative power which the veto bestows on them it locks them into a 'no change' mindset. Unionists will not change because 'consent' - a euphemism for the veto makes it plain that they don't have to change.

The rest of the Irish people on the other hand do not have any option. Our consent to partition is not even part of the equation and while this effects all of us, for those of us who live in the north the sense of abandonment is acute. This was palpable within nationalist areas in the Six Counties following the launch of Dick Spring's six points, Britain's support for them and the Brussels communique rejection of the Irish peace initiative.

I want to appeal to people in the 26 counties. Are you comfortable with a policy which appears to isolate and ignore the agreement which exists between the two leaders of northern nationalist opinion? Do you support a policy which surrenders Irish national interest to the narrow interest of a British Tory government: a position which cuts short northern nationalists while conceding every major point to the Unionists? Do you support the rejection or abandonment of an Irish peace initiative?

X The Irish people want peace. There is no doubt about that. We need alternatives to partition not excuses for it. X

If the governments have a real initiative let us hear what it is. As I have said I am convinced that Mr Major does not want a real peace process at this time. Major's desire is to hold onto power. Party political interests: the Tory party's accord with the Unionist and the re-affirmation of the unionist veto, has London dancing to a unionist tune.

Every day has fewer and fewer
Dublin's Responsibility *on the line*

Quite clearly the Unionists, including now the DUP, see their alliance with the Tory government as strengthening their negotiating position, hence the pre-conditions from them.

All of this puts onerous responsibility on Mr Reynolds. He must be aware that the seriousness of the situation demands urgent action from his government to focus the attention of the British government on its responsibility to play a leading role in removing the causes of conflict and division in Ireland.

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An endeavor by Mr Reynolds to do this would have my support. There is no point in them cobbling together an 'Anglo-Irish Agreement Mark II' just for the sake of it or because John Hume and I forced them to focus on the issue of peace in Ireland. There is a real opportunity for a peace process now. That opportunity will not last forever and it will not be satisfied by mere formulations of words, by rhetoric or by Pax Britannica.

A peace process to be successful must be based upon principles which address the substantive issues and contain the dynamic required to move the situation forward. These are contained in the initiative taken by myself and Mr Hume. No one can be allowed to play propaganda games with a situation as serious as the one we are all faced with. I have no intention of permitting this to happen.

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Finally, the Irish peace initiative is not about getting Sinn Féin a seat at the conference table. The mandate for that came from our electorate. And as Mr Spring said ".....peace is more than an end to violence". He also said that "political courage must come from the British government and from the Unionist leadership". Quite right. And from Dublin also, Mr Spring

Unionists

Unionists currently represent 20% of the Irish nation. In the context of an all-Irish democracy such a lobby would be in a powerful position to negotiate full guarantees and full civil and religious liberties. Such an involvement is necessary, indeed crucial, to the very survival of our Irishness.

Sinn Féin has consistently made clear our republican vision of an Ireland based upon the unity of all our peoples, Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, but of course it is difficult to hear such assertions above the ongoing conflict.

I would like to use this opportunity to reassure Northern Protestants. In our joint statements John Hume and I have said quite categorically that what we seek is a political solution which can secure the allegiance and agreement of all the people of this island. I wish also to reassure Protestants that there is no desire among nationalists or republicans that they should be made to suffer for the actions of British sponsored murderers of nationalists or Catholics by loyalist death squads.

A real opportunity does now exist to build a new future for the people of this island but it requires political courage, open-mindedness and flexibility ~~on all sides.~~

The unionist veto over the future of the Irish people is undemocratic. It is sustained by force but it will inevitably come to an end. Unionist consent on the shape of a new Ireland is clearly desirable but this cannot entail a veto over the future of the Irish nation.

Unionists can take reassurance from the fact that electorally in an Irish democracy they will command far greater weight than they do now in union with Britain. Because, under British rule, the political status of the Six Counties is exactly what the Unionists say it is - a province of the United Kingdom - and its people cannot hope to have any significant say in the direction of their own affairs until they choose to democratically exercise their influence within an all-Ireland system.

A genuinely free Ireland will reduce all forms of religious fundamentalism, privilege and sectarianism and new political alliances will emerge as the current divisions arising from the British connection disappear and social and class lines become the main points of unity. This cannot occur without the full involvement of the Protestant people.

Their future lies with the rest of the Irish people. I appeal to unionists to come to terms with this reality. It is a challenge facing us all. It is our future.