

**Dermot Nally
Papers**

UCDA P254/97

cc PST
PSS; Friday
F Murray
Anto Lon.
Com. 11/11/93

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BÉALFEIRSTE

BELFAST

FOR: GERRY CORR, ANGLO-IRISH

FROM: DEREK FEELY

DATE: 6TH DECEMBER, 1993

PAGES: 3

Interview with Rev Martin Smyth, on Radio Ulster,
Monday, 6 December, 1993

Transcript of Item from Radio Ulster, this morning, 6
December, 1993

Introduction:

Downing Street dismissed as ill informed nonsense newspaper reports yesterday suggesting that Mr Major was ready to compromise on Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said that: "There has been no softening on any point of principle. The principle here and this is the key of the whole thing is, consent. And what is crucial and I think is there is that both Governments accept that what counts are the views of the people of Northern Ireland."

SDLP leader John Hume said the peace negotiations should include the loyalist people of Northern Ireland and he urged them to participate.

John Hume: The loyalist people through their spokesmen keep asking the British Government to reiterate their guarantee. That emphasises there is always a distrust there that some day, some British Government will sell them out. They said last week they don't trust the present British Government because it is talking privately to the IRA. They said they don't trust the opposition. What I am actually asking them to do is to trust themselves and nobody else and to stand on their own feet and negotiate a relationship for the first time ever with the rest of Ireland, because we cannot, I mean, can I say it any clearer, we can't solve the problem without them and their real strength is their numbers and their geography and now is the time for them to sit down and negotiate their own relationship whatever form that takes with the rest of the island.

Presenter: That was John Hume. Well Martin Smyth of the Ulster Unionist Party is on the line now. A very good morning to you

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Reverend Smyth.

Rev Smyth: Good morning.

Presenter: How do you respond to John Hume's invitation. Do you believe, do you accept that you are condemning Unionists to a lifetime of distrust?

Rev Smyth: No, I don't think so. I think I could... perhaps John hasn't been around when I and others have said we don't want the conditional guarantee, because that is the thing that pushes us apart. There may be some people within the Unionist community who want that sort of guarantee. We believe that the strength lies within our own people. On the other hand, I have got to say quite clearly we have been there in the most recent round of talks. Our forebears were there when they were betrayed, at Sunningdale, and betrayed by the Hillsborough agreement without our consent because they have never delivered what they set out to deliver and the promises that have been made have never been fulfilled and may I point out that we in Northern Ireland are not terribly happy by shotgun marriages and when people talk about consent it must be free consent and Albert Reynolds has already given the game away.

Presenter: How is that? Because he seems to be saying, everyone seems to be saying in every corner that the freely given consent is precisely what must dominate.

Rev Smyth: But Albert has gone back again to the two fold position, one, that there has got to be the double referendum which has been John Hume's position all along, in other words to get on the record that the majority of people in Ireland will not consent to Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom.

Presenter: Well it is interesting because Mr Reynolds seems to be saying over the weekend that what has happened is the British and presumably you as well don't understand the significance of this double referendum. He seems to think that the fact that there will be separate referenda and that the people of the North will have the right to veto is a complete guarantee of their position.

Rev Smyth: I can't understand how he can make that claim except that he uses English in a way different from myself. Perhaps that is because he is better in the Gaelic. On the other hand, he said not so very long ago that he could not deliver a change of Articles 2 and 3. People in Northern Ireland are now saying forget about Articles 2 and 3 because that shows that the Republic is a backward looking state signing Agreements, The Rome Treaty, The Helsinki Agreement, without meaning it. They have said they recognise our frontier and yet their constitutional court says Articles 2 and 3 are a constitutional imperative.

Presenter: Well who is saying forget Articles 2 and 3 because that seems to remain the ground rock of Unionist opposition.

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Rev Smyth: People in Northern Ireland are saying that. I know that Dr Paisley and others are saying that they are not going to talk until Articles 2 and 3 are gone, but there are other people throughout and they are not Unionist leaders, they are the people on the ground who are saying we have lived with Articles 2 and 3 for years, do not sell our birthright by negotiating with people who have not been prepared to deliver the goods they promised in the past as was involved in the Hillsborough Agreement and beyond that, Sunningdale.

Presenter: When Douglas Hurd says that there has been no softening in any area of these meetings on any point of principle and that the principle of consent remains paramount, you just think he is not telling the truth.

Rev Smyth: I didn't say that. With respect to you, I didn't say that.

Presenter: I am not saying you did say that, I am asking you if you accept what he says at face value.

Rev Smyth: At face value I believe what he is saying is correct if I read between the lines but I am concerned about this concept of a communique. Albert Reynolds gave the game away again, because the Communique is not what the leaders, Prime Ministers or whoever agree on at the end of a Conference it is that which has been worked out by officials before the summit has begun, which is why we are against summitry.

Presenter: I am sorry Martin Smyth but the time has beaten us. Thank you very much for joining us.