

**Dermot Nally  
Papers**

**UCDA P254/92**

Historical Context

Revised plan  
Obligation  
Dinston

11/7/94 P254/92

Notes

We need to show that setting objectives has an effect	
Late 80's talks with the SDLP	
1990 SF decision to externalise and make politics	
Development of the Broad front strategy	
* 11 Intervene in the Peace debate - reclaim the word peace for Republicans • Scenario for Peace Put peace on the political agenda	
* Towards a Lasting Peace - pushing out the peace debate promoting the document getting an overview of the terrain talking to various groups gaining political strength	
• Continued to talk to John Hume 1st joint statement	
Language of the debate changed	

development of the internal and  
external debate  
Joint statement 25th Sept.

## Strategic objectives 1989

A number of broad objectives have guided us for many years. These are:

1. To ensure that Irish National democracy becomes a priority in the overall political agenda	These are new terms and we need to be sure that people understand them	<i>Discussion</i> <i>1/2</i> <i>what is the</i>
2. To bridge the gap between Sinn Féin and the sympathetic attitude of the anti-imperialist population by regularly reviewing tactics and activity by setting realistic short term objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad front</li> <li>• Fianna Fáil base</li> </ul>	<i>2/4/89</i> <i>5/3/89</i>
3. To bolster the validity and credibility of Sinn Féin's objectives and to develop the ability to achieve them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review what we do</li> <li>• Censorship</li> <li>• How people see us</li> </ul>	
4. To define and project Sinn Féin's strategy and aims in a manner that will be clearly understood by the broad base of Irish national and international opinion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in USA, Europe, EU, Britain</li> <li>• Using 'Towards a Lasting Peace'</li> <li>• Gerry Adams visit to USA</li> <li>• Tom Hartley, Mitchell, councillors etc in Britain</li> <li>• Our initiative</li> </ul>	
5. To ensure that all elements of Sinn Féin activity are mutually complementary		
6. To influence British public opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warweary, raising awareness, positive image</li> <li>• Effect on John Major</li> <li>• British will move</li> <li>• Downing Street declaration</li> </ul>	

7. To develop an on-going strategy to address Unionism

- Never leave the unionists out \*
- Section in Towards a Lasting Peace
- Most underdeveloped part of SF strategy
- national reconciliation - our term
- need for longer view of Unionism

8. To establish a permanent and persistent international strategy

- Change of image in the international arena \*
- last year unending war but this year Peace Debate
- Delegations - are they successful?
- Link SA, Palestine, Ireland

## Main points

The main points to be noted are

1. The political value of the ~~Southern~~<sup>1962/</sup> Nationalist consensus or agreement and John Hume's central position of political importance.
2. Our need to develop the political strength and skill to sustain this once achieved
3. That latent Irish nationalism will take a lead. That lead must be given and given regularly to meet changing situations.
4. That the British government is unwilling to change its policy at this time
5. That Dublin 4/the revisionists/ the ideological "Free Staters" can be confronted and isolated.
6. That Inter-unionist rivalry is intense but the UUP is on board with the British government
7. That reassurance of Unionists has been carried to exaggerated lengths. Six County nationalist sensitivities and aspirations have suffered as a result
8. That there is an astute political control over loyalist murder squads
9. That public debate about real issues in Ireland, Britain and internationally can be created.
10. That we must strive to get our internal political communication resolved and to improve our structures in order to enhance external activities
11. That the political situation remains fluid
12. That judicious political risks can pay dividends

### Considering the Future - Exploring the Options

The situation is fluid. The opportunities to lay out our stall are multiple if not infinite in terms of time available to us.

#### The context

1. The British government is perceived in many areas as intransigent
2. There is a reasonable balance to media reporting. Again this is not infinite but we can influence it.
3. Sinn Féin position / arguments are getting a reasonable and probably unprecedented airing. This can only be of benefit in a general way to our peace strategy.
4. Its difficult to assess how all of this impacts on our main target audience - all Ireland nationalist opinion.
5. Effective political communication with the membership and the base of support remains a problem as does our ability to improve our external structures so that we are able to constantly put our case in a developing situation and to dictate how this develops.

#### Where we are now

1. We have a moral and political obligation to explore the Downing Street declaration to see what contribution if any it can make to the development of a peace process aimed at delivering a lasting peace.
2. We have publicly committed ourselves to a process of internal and external consultation and have conducted Peace Commissions.
3. We have a clear Peace Strategy.

- 4 Downing Street may be a first step towards lasting peace or a way of avoiding confronting Dublin and a means to put pressure on Sinn Féin
- 5 If it is not the first step we should not let this unduly influence us when we are considering the political risks.
- 6 Whatever the duration of this fluid situation - it is not important to speculate on this - it is important to reach a conclusion about our objectives and strategies for the incoming period.

Defensive/Offensive Strategy in the Current Situation

A defensive strategy for the future is of the utmost importance and has a broad focus taking in our external as well as our internal politics. Relatively speaking this is not so difficult to work out.

An offensive strategy on the other hand is difficult and risky but necessary because we need to come to a conclusion.

It must involve high political risk because it brings directly into play what we have to offer

- as a political incentive
- a bargaining counter
- as a means of rallying domestic and international support to our position so as to put pressure on the British government and the unionists.
- as a combination of the above.

In relation to this there are three alternatives

1. to retrench behind a defensive strategy
2. to give precedence to a defensive strategy and attempting to edge forward - which has a low risk offensive element
3. to attempt to develop a defensive / offensive political strategy where the risk involved - b



virtue of its political weight- gives precedence to the offensive strategy.

These alternatives seen in the context of Downing Street became five options for Sinn Féin.

1. Sinn Féin could accept the Downing Street Declaration with or without clarification
2. Sinn Féin could publish the detail of the Irish Peace Initiative and let popular and political opinion make their decision
3. Sinn Féin can in the short term continue to edge forward in the politically cautious manner it has adopted since the declaration was made on Dec 15th
4. Sinn Féin could attempt to build on the conditions created by the Irish Peace Initiative and the Downing Street Declaration
5. Sinn Féin could reject the Downing Street Declaration - with or without the clarification requested.

#### Recommendations

There are two related recommendations

#### Recommendation(a)

To attempt to establish specific objectives and strategies for the incoming period in the general context of

- (i) the established broad objectives and analysis laid out in part 1 of the paper and option 3/4 ie
- (ii) (3) Sinn Féin can attempt to build on the considerations created by the Irish Peace Initiative and the Downing Street Declaration
- (4) Sinn Féin can choose the middle course in all of this by attempting to edge forward in the politically cautious manner it has adopted since the declaration was made on Dec 15th