

DUBLIN, 16 DECEMBER 1994

MR. LEO TINDEMANS MEP

SPEAKING AT THE FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

DECEMBER 1994



Madame Chairperson,

Taoiseach,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I read in the proceedings of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation of the 18 November last that the Chairperson of the meeting declared : " We were informed that the European Parliament had nominated Mr.Piet Dankert and Mr.Leo Tindemans as its observers (at this Forum). We all saw the nomination of two such distinguished statesmen as a true testimony to the constructive interest which the European Parliament has taken in the efforts to bring about peace and reconciliation in Ireland".

I feel of course, much flattered, not only by such an introduction, and its fine wording, but also by the fact that I will have the opportunity to attend your meetings as an observer, being of course, always at your disposal where I can contribute



to the fulfilment of your task. I realize that this task is far from easy. That is the reason that the European Union, attaches such importance to your initiative.

I have always cultivated a fundamental respect for the human person. You know as well as I do, that men can differ, that they can have different ideas, views or opinions, that their behaviour is not always the same. In my youth I often heard the judgement formulated by the French author J.P. Sartre "Hell is the others". But if we really want to create a human world, we must be ready to understand our fellow citizen, even if we don't accept his or her ideas. The basis of peaceful co-existence, or real brotherhood, is the conversation, the exchange of views, of thoughts, the dialogue. When people talk to each other they will not fight, even if they do not agree. Out of such a dialogue can grow more insight, better understanding, eventually an agreement or a good compromise. It can even lead to a common initiative to improve an existing bad situation. You can easily imagine how careful I try to be in formulating my thoughts at this Forum.



You know how the wrong choice of a word can hurt your interlocutor and create an incident instead of eliminating an obstacle.

But let me confess that I have always tried to practice that philosophy in my own country. Belgium has long been divided by a linguistic problem ; you will probably understand that language is nowadays often a greater source of division than religious difference was 50 years ago.

In 1975, I had the honour to sign the Final Act of Helsinki, which was a turning point in the East-West relations. This Act, or this accord, constituted a very serious problem for the Western world, because it was based on the principle that the borders in Europe, such as they existed militarily at the end of World War two, would not be changed by violence. Finally this was accepted as part of a package deal in which economic, cultural and political elements (human rights) were included. It contributed substantially to diminish the risks of military



conflict. Today European policy in this area is based on an appeal to all political forces to prevent violent actions and to adopt a series of measures necessary to create a more humane world. The European Union itself, approved, as you certainly know, a credit line of 300 million ECUS for Northern Ireland. By doing so the Union shows its willingness to help all those who want to solve the problems in Northern Ireland. It is the duty of Europe to be an example and to show the way leading to peaceful solutions. Where violence reigns, Europe suffers, we cannot develop our social model of peace and prosperity.

When I saw that your topic this time was the Economic Consequences of Peace I could not prevent my memory to go back to the book published under the same title by the famous economist John Maynard Keynes. The author was not followed by the political leaders of his time and his book provoked a controversy. Having read the history of the period between the two World Wars, we may say now ; "if the political leaders after the First World War had listened to Keynes, the second World War



would probably never have taken place".

From that lesson, I draw the following conclusion : if you discover the nature of your problem and of a fair solution, try to implement it as soon as possible. By neglecting such a decision, you are worsening your position.

The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is based on the exchange of views, which means that you already know that the best instrument for success is dialogue. The establishment of this Forum is already an important achievement.

That two members of the European Parliament are invited to attend such a Forum is more than a political gesture. It shows that you are aware of your European responsibility and your European vocation. We all know that there are many problems and tensions all over the world, even in Europe. But you understand the necessity to seek more civilised forms of discussion, deliberation or consultation. This answers exactly what Europe



is expecting from Ireland.

Mr. Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission mentioned the European effort in his farewell speech in the European Parliament on Wednesday. He said that Europe will make a special effort in order to realise a rapprochement between the two communities (he used this word) in Ireland. They must learn to know each other better, he said, and to find peace. This is quite a programme.

I thank you once again for your invitation. I hope that your exceptional work will be rewarded with historic success.

LEO TINDEMANS MEP