

Copy to Dr. John Alderdice

TO THE FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

MADAM CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE FORUM, I AM GRATEFUL FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS WHICH I BELIEVE NEED TO BE CONSIDERED IF WE ARE TO SUCCEED IN ACHIEVING THE NOBLE GOALS OF THIS FORUM. I SPEAK FIRSTLY AS A CHRISTIAN, IN THE HISTORIC EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED SENSE OF THAT TERM. ACCORDINGLY, MY FIRST LOYALTY IS NOT TO ANY STATE OR NATION BUT TO GOD. THAT MEANS THAT I AM CLOSER TO A CHRISTIAN OF IRISH NATIONALITY THAN TO UNBELIEVERS OF MY OWN NATION. SECONDLY, I SPEAK AS A BAPTIST MISSIONARY PASTOR, WHOSE MISSION-FIELD IS THE PRISONS OF NORTHERN IRELAND. IT IS THE CONCERN I HAVE NOT TO SEE ANOTHER GENERATION KILL AND BE KILLED THAT CAUSES ME TO SPEAK TO OUR POLITICIANS AND PEOPLE THROUGH THIS FORUM. LASTLY, I SPEAK AS AN ULSTERMAN. NATIONALITY DERIVES FROM A COMPLEX OF RELATIONSHIPS AND BELIEFS: IN MY CASE THAT MEANS I AM AN ULSTERMAN FIRST, BRITISH SECOND AND IRISH THIRD.

WAYS IN WHICH LASTING PEACE, STABILITY AND RECONCILIATION CAN BE ESTABLISHED BY AGREEMENT AMONG ALL THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND, AND ON THE STEPS REQUIRED TO REMOVE BARRIERS OF DISTRUST, ON THE BASIS OF PROMOTING RESPECT FOR THE EQUAL RIGHTS AND VALIDITY OF BOTH TRADITIONS AND IDENTITIES.

FUNDAMENTAL TO AN AGREED SOLUTION TO THE NATIONAL CONFLICT IN IRELAND IS THIS ONE (WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN OBVIOUS) PRINCIPLE: THAT THERE ARE TWO NATIONS IN IRELAND, BOTH OF WHOM ARE SEEKING TO EXERT THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. THESE NATIONS ARE THE HISTORIC IRISH CATHOLIC PEOPLE (MAINLY IN THE SOUTH OF THE ISLAND) AND THEIR ULSTER/SCOTS PROTESTANT COUNTERPARTS (MAINLY IN THE NORTH).

UNTIL THE DOWNING STREET DECLARATION OF 15 DECEMBER 1993 THE VALIDITY OF THE NORTHERN NATION'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION WAS DENIED BY THE IDEAOLOGY OF IRISH NATIONALISM. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSENT HAS BEEN THE KEY WHICH HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION AND THE END OF OUR CENTURIES OF CONFLICT. I REALISE THAT MANY IRISH NATIONALISTS WISH TO REGARD US AS ESSENTIALLY IRISHMEN, SO THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF CONSENT MAY NOT EQUATE ABSOLUTELY WITH AN ACCEPTANCE OF MY ULSTER NATIONAL STATUS, BUT IS NEVERTHELESS TO BE WELCOMED FOR ITS WILLINGNESS TO CONCEDE OUR RIGHT TO EXPRESS OUR OWN NATIONALITY.

SINN FEIN'S FAILURE TO ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSENT MAY MEAN IT IS COMMITTED TO TRADITIONAL ONE NATION DOGMA. IF THAT IS THE CASE THEN THE ONLY HOPE FOR A CONSENSUS AGREEMENT AMONGST ALL PARTIES TO THIS CONFLICT IS FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND TO VALIDATE CONSENT AT THE BALLOT BOX, AS SINN FEIN IS COMMITTED TO ACCEPTANCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND AS A WHOLE.

HOWEVER, SINN FEIN'S PROBLEM WITH CONSENT MAY LIE IN A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE VETO THIS IMPLIES FOR THE ULSTER NATION. A UNILATERAL VETO WOULD ENABLE REACTIONARY FORCES TO FOLD THEIR ARMS AND ESTABLISH THE STATUS QUO. THAT, I BELIEVE, IS NOT WHAT ANY SINCERE ULSTERMAN IS AFTER: WE RECOGNISE THAT WE HAVE A CONFLICT AND WE WISH TO HAVE IT ENDED FOR GOOD, IN A MANNER ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL. THE STATUS QUO IS NOT - OBVIOUSLY NOT - A SOLUTION. CONSENT THEREFORE MEANS NOT A SIMPLE VETO, BUT A MUTUAL

VETO: ANY SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEMS MUST HAVE THE CONSENT OF BOTH OUR PEOPLES. THE STATUS QUO IS THEREFORE SUBJECT TO VETO ALSO.

TURNING NOW TO THE END RESULTS WHICH AN EXERCISE OF CONSENT MAY LEAD TO, NO VALID OBJECTION CAN BE RAISED TO ANY PROPOSED SOLUTION, AS ALL ARE PREDICATED ON FREELY-GIVEN CONSENT. EVERYTHING FROM AN IRISH UNITARY STATE TO THE READMITTANCE OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM SHOULD BE HONESTLY DISCUSSED, IF PROPOSED.

IT IS MY OPINION THAT SEVERAL OPTIONS ARE POSSIBLE AS ACCEPTABLE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS; IT IS THE FORM OF THESE OPTIONS THAT WILL DETERMINE THEIR ACCEPTABILITY TO ALL PARTIES. FOR EXAMPLE, AS AN ULSTERMAN I CAN FORSEE CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A UNITED IRELAND WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO MY PEOPLE: BUT THE SHIFT IN SOUTHERN CULTURE AND THINKING WOULD NEED TO BE SO RADICAL THAT I DOUBT THE IRISH PEOPLE ARE UP TO IT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. LIKEWISE, A BRITISH INTERGRATIONIST SOLUTION, WHERE THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND OR IRELAND AS A WHOLE UNDERTOOK TO LIVE AS MILLIONS OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN ALREADY LIVE IN THE BRITISH MAINLAND, SEEMS UNLIKELY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

THE SOLUTION THAT I FEEL CLOSEST TO IS THAT OF AN INDEPENDENT ULSTER. THIS IS NOT THE ORANGE STATE SCENARIO OFTEN ENVISAGED WHEN THAT TERM IS USED, BUT RATHER A CONSENSUS-GOVERNED SOCIETY FOUNDED ON THE MERGER OF THE IRISH AND ULSTER/SCOT PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND INTO ONE NEW ULSTER NATION. WE WOULD LOOK TO NEITHER 1690 NOR 1916 FOR OUR INSPIRATION BUT TO THE DAY ON WHICH WE SIGNED THE HISTORIC DOCUMENT ESTABLISHING OUR NEW NATION. RELATIONSHIPS WITH BRITAIN AND IRELAND WOULD BE AS CLOSE AS WOULD BE AGREED BY CONSENSUS.

IN ANY SEPARATE-STATE SOLUTIONS A PROCEDURE WHICH COULD BE TAKEN TO ACCOMMODATE THE MINORITIES IS THAT OF RECIPROCALITY. BY RECIPROCALITY I MEAN THE SETTING-UP OF SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS WHEREBY THE ETHNIC LOYALTIES OF THE MINORITY IN BOTH STATES IS DEALT WITH IN EXACT PARITY BY THOSE STATES. FOR EXAMPLE, VOTING RIGHTS AND REPRESENTATION IN THE SOUTHERN PARLIAMENT FOR THOSE IN THE NORTH WHO REGISTER AS IRISH NATIONALS SHOULD BE MIRRORED BY SIMILAR RIGHTS ACCORDED TO THOSE IN THE SOUTH WHO REGISTER AS ULSTER NATIONALS. OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS FLAGS AND EMBLEMS COULD LIKEWISE BE RESOLVED. THE HEROS OF ONE STATE ARE THE VILLAINS OF THE OTHER, AND TO WHAT EXTENT WE LET GO OF THE PAST WILL ONLY BE DETERMINED BY THE WILLINGNESS OF BOTH PARTIES TO DO SO.

MORE DIFFICULT AND SENSITIVE IS THE ISSUE OF THE ETHOS AND PUBLIC MORALITY OF THE STATE. IT IS TOTALLY IMPRACTICAL FOR ANY MINORITY TO OPERATE UNDER THE LEGISLATION OF ANOTHER STATE, SO EVERY EFFORT MUST BE MADE TO ACCOMMODATE THEM IN THEIR STATE OF RESIDENCE. THE RIGHT TO A FULL EDUCATION FREE FROM UNWANTED RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION SHOULD BE GUARANTEED AND FACILITATED BY ANY PROGRESSIVE STATE. SCHOOLING IN THE NORTH IS WELL CATERED FOR DUE TO THE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, BUT THE SOUTHERN MINORITY IS UNDER SEVERE PRESSURE BECAUSE THEY ARE SO SMALL AND ISOLATED. PERHAPS A GREATER STATE SUPPORT FOR MINORITY/PRIVATE SCHOOLING COULD RESOLVE THAT.

IN THE NORTH THE SUNDAY CLOSURE ISSUE NEEDS SENSITIVE EXAMINATION, SO AS NOT TO INFRINGE THE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OF SOME OR THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF OTHERS.

LIKEWISE IN THE SOUTH, THE OVERT CATHOLICISM OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS MUST BE DEALT WITH. FOR EXAMPLE, THE BROADCASTING OF THE ANGELUS IS OFFENSIVE TO PROTESTANTS WHO ARE BEING ASKED TO IDENTIFY WITH THE STATE WHO SPONSOR R. T. E. HOSPITAL CARE IS ANOTHER FIELD WHERE SECULARIZATION IS REQUIRED.

DIVORCE AND ABORTION LEGISLATION REPRESENT AREAS OF COMPETING RIGHTS IN EACH STATE, AND OF DIVERGENT CONCLUSIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO SOCIETIES. MAXIMUM EFFORT NEEDS TO BE MADE TO ENSURE WE DO NOT ENFORCE A MERELY CONFSSIONAL POSITION, BUT RATHER THAT EACH STATE SEEK TO OBTAIN A CONSENSUS POSITION THAT ESTABLISHES A LEVEL OF MORALITY THEY CAN LEGISLATE FOR (I SPEAK FROM A PRO-LIFE POSITION).

WAYS IN WHICH NEW APPROACHES CAN BE DEVELOPED TO SERVE ECONOMIC INTERESTS COMMON TO BOTH PARTS OF IRELAND

ANY CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION SHORT OF A UNITED IRELAND OR A RE-UNITING WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY ENTAIL THE SETTING UP OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES TO FURTHER THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF BOTH OUR NATIONS. THE RELUCTANCE OF ULSTER POLITICIANS TO COUNTENANCE SUCH CROSS-BORDER/ALL-IRELAND BODIES LIES IN THE FEAR THAT THEY WOULD PREPARE THE WAY FOR A SLIDE INTO A UNITED IRELAND: A PIECE-MEAL TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY TO THE IRISH REPUBLIC. I BELIEVE THESE OBJECTIONS CAN BE COMPLETELY OVERCOME BY MAKING ANY SUCH BODY REPRESENTATIVE OF BOTH OUR NATIONS. THIS COULD BE DONE BY COMPOSING IT OF APPOINTEES FROM THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN PARLIAMENTS, CHOSEN BY CONSENSUS OR 85% MAJORITIES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE HOUSES. THE BODY WOULD OPERATE BY ABSOLUTE CONSENSUS AND WOULD ENJOY FULL INDEPENDENCE, SUBJECT ONLY TO THE APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF EACH MEMBER BY THEIR RESPECTIVE PARLIAMENT.

THE MOST LIKELY STARTING POINT FOR IMPLEMENTING STEPS TOWARD THE GOALS OF THIS FORUM IS A CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY AT STORMONT. IT WOULD BE ABLE TO THRASH OUT WHAT PRECISE FORM OF GOVERNMENT WOULD OBTAIN CONSENSUS AGREEMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IT WOULD CALL IN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENTS TO OBSERVE AND CONSULT AT ALL STAGES SO THAT AN AGREEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH COMMUNITIES IN ULSTER, AND TO THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC AND GREAT BRITAIN COULD BE OBTAINED. WHEN THE FINAL PACKAGE HAS BEEN AGREED BY THE ASSEMBLY AND THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE OF ULSTER, IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN A REFERENDUM, THE CONSENT OF ALL THREE BEING REQUIRED FOR IT TO BE IMPLEMENTED. I DO BELIEVE, OF COURSE, THAT ANY REASONABLE ARRANGEMENT REACHED AMONG THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND BY CONSENSUS SHOULD STAND, WITHOUT REQUIRING THE APPROVAL OF THE OTHER TWO STATES, BUT AM CONFIDENT OF THE GOOD-WILL OF THE BRITISH AND IRISH PEOPLE.

IN CONCLUDING, I WISH TO DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO TWO ISSUES THAT CAN DESTROY ALL OUR EFFORTS FOR A LASTING PEACE, BOTH IN THE SHORT AND LONG TERMS.

FIRSTLY, THE FAILURE TO SEE THE RELEASE OF PARAMILITARY PRISONERS NORTH AND SOUTH WITHIN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME WILL LEAD, IN MY OPINION, TO SUCH A LOSS OF CREDIBILITY BY THE PARAMILITARY LEADERSHIPS THAT THE CEASE-FIRES WILL BREAK DOWN. I BELIEVE THE DETAILS CAN BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE

BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS AND THE PARAMILITARIES, BUT OUR POPULATIONS NEED TO BE SHOWN THE NECESSITY FOR THIS COURSE OF ACTION AND FOR THE MORAL PROPRIETY OF IT ALSO. I HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN SUCH AN EFFORT SINCE THE DOWNING STREET DECLARATION, AND KNOW THE INITIAL OPPOSITION ANY TALK OF AMNESTY PRODUCES. HOWEVER, I HAVE FOUND THAT WHEN THE HISTORICAL FACTORS ARE DISCUSSED (ESPECIALLY THE ORDINARY CITIZEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE TENSIONS THAT LED UP TO THE ARMED CONFLICT), AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF A FAILURE OF THE PEACE-PROCESS EXAMINED, THEN A READINESS TO FINISH WITH RECRIMINATION OCCURS.

SECONDLY, IF THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE NATIONAL STATUS OF THE ULSTER PROTESTANT PEOPLE IS NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD, IN THE LONG-TERM A NEW CONFLICT COULD BREAK OUT. BY THIS I MEAN THAT TALK OF 'THE MAJORITY' OR 'THE GREATER NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND' IS A DANGEROUS USE OF LOOSE TERMINOLOGY. ULSTER'S RIGHT TO REMAIN SEPARATE FROM THE FREE-STATE IN 1920 WAS NOT BASED ON MAJORITARIANISM, BUT ON THEIR RIGHT AS A NATION TO SELF-DETERMINATION. AS A MINORITY WITHIN THE U.K., THE IRISH PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO THEIR OWN STATE WAS NOT BASED ON MAJORITARIANISM, BUT ON THEIR NATION'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. THIS MEANS THAT EVEN IF THE DEMOGRAPHY IN NORTHERN IRELAND LEADS TO AN IRISH MAJORITY, THERE SHOULD BE NO RIGHT TO SUBSUME AN UNWILLING ULSTER PEOPLE INTO A UNITED IRELAND. TO IGNORE THIS WOULD BE TO COURT A FURTHER WAR OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION. HOPEFULLY WE WILL SOON BE FAR BEYOND SUCH TENSIONS, LIVING IN AN ISLAND WHERE MUTUAL GOOD-WILL AND RESPECT PREVAIL.

WITH EVERY BEST WISH IN YOUR SEARCH FOR SUCH CONDITIONS,

YOURS SINCERELY

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