



Northern Ireland Office Press Notice

Whitehall, London SW1A 2AZ.
Stormont Castle, Belfast, BT4 3ST.

Telephone Enquiries 071-210 6454
Telephone Enquiries Belfast 763011

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NIO LONDON

The following is the text of a speech by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP, at a meeting of the Foreign Policy Association, in New York, on Tuesday, 12 April 1994.

*W. Rowe la gran Michael
American a l'ur & l'ur
(W. Rowe & l'ur with)
PR*

I am conscious that this audience in this city will understand better than most the importance of the politics of identity. Not just because as people interested in foreign affairs you know how important questions of identity and nation are throughout the world today, but also because as Americans - and especially as New Yorkers - you live in a place where cherishing your different identities while working together under common principles and values is a fact of everyday life.

For many immigrants from the Old World New York was the melting pot into which they came, whether as Poles, Germans, Russians, Jews, Italians, and, of course, Irishmen and women, and became Americans. The basis for their welcome, and for the new opportunities which enabled so many of them to prosper here, was in their equality under the law and under the Constitution. They were able to become full citizens of the United States and to remain Irish, Italian, Polish, Jewish and not to feel disadvantaged by holding on to that identity. The vigour of your

recent St Patrick's Day celebrations shows how much that choice still means to many Americans.

But this was not simply the fortuitous result of mass migration into a new country. The principles which built a nation from so many different peoples were set out when your Republic was born. I hope that you will not be put off at the thought that I, as an Englishman, a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, should come here and speak to you about the Constitution and, as I shall come to shortly, the Declaration of Independence. Because - although our ancestors may not have seen it quite like this - they are part of our common heritage.

I want to speak today about another Declaration, the one signed by the Irish and British Prime Ministers in Downing Street on 15 December last.

Although that Declaration may lack the passion and intensity of Mr Jefferson's language, the measured tone of the Downing Street Declara-

tion is a mark of the no less steely determination of both British and Irish governments to hold fast to our principles and to break the bonds of a history which simultaneously holds our two nations together yet keeps us separate. As the Founding Fathers knew, there are times when the making of a Declaration can itself have an energising influence on events. This, I believe, has been the case with the Downing Street Declaration.

But there is something else, something more significant, which draws those two declarations together across the centuries, and there is no better way of putting it than this:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights Governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

In a nutshell, those are the concerns of the Downing Street Declaration. Consent and democratic politics are at the heart of its approach. The consent to any constitutional change in the status of Northern Ireland expressed by a numerical majority in Northern Ireland. Consent, as the Declaration says "freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland if that is the wish of the people of the island of Ireland alone".

Consent, and an unshakeable commitment to democratic politics, where the rights of people of both main traditions in Ireland to argue their case and seek to persuade one another peacefully without coercion or violence, are guaranteed. And within that framework the people of the island of Ireland would exercise their right of self-determination.

Now some have argued that the Declaration does not allow for democratic self-determination because that right should be exercised singly by the island as a whole. Such arguments ignore

the reality that there are two traditions in Ireland who sensed their identity to be different long before partition established the present boundaries. Both of those traditions have contributed to making the present Republic of Ireland and United Kingdom the places they are today. Indeed both traditions are strongly represented here in the United States.

However much some people would wish it, the differences between Catholic and Protestant, Nationalist and Unionist, Irish and British identities cannot simply be wished away or smothered in an empty rhetoric of unity that reality does not match. The overwhelming majority on the island understand that respect for their different identities must be a condition for progress in the future. They accept that a united Ireland can only come about with the freely given consent of a majority in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein still seem to object to that necessary consent, but, as the Taoiseach said when he was in the United States last month; "If it is one of the problems, then I say that that dispute is not with the British Government but with the Irish people, because over 90% have endorsed the Peace Declaration and have said clearly to everybody that is the way forward."

So the Taoiseach is saying that the wishes of the overwhelming number of people in Ireland, north and south, are clear. But still you will have heard demands that the British Government should provide clarification. Both the British and the Irish Government's have made determined efforts to ensure the Joint Declaration is fully understood. They remain as one in their commitment to the Declaration and in their public exposition both of what it contains and what it does not contain. There is no difference between the two Governments on this.

What the British Government has said about the Declaration is freely available as a matter of public record: no private explanations have been given to any party that have not been repeated in public.

So, as the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr Spring,

said on 31 March: 'everything is now on the table and very clear'.

For our part, we shall continue to refer to the text of the Declaration, and to what has already been said by Ministers in public. It is remarkable that nearly 4 months after the Declaration was signed no specific feature of it has ever been identified as being in need of clarification. Only five days ago Sinn Fein's spokesperson repeatedly refused to tell journalists of any specific portion of the Declaration that Sinn Fein wanted clarified.

Of course, people have a right to disagree with the Declaration. What they do not have is a right to subvert democracy by violence. Nor should they be allowed to characterise as undemocratic any agreement - to paraphrase the Declaration - between the parts of Ireland respectively to exercise their rights on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given. After all, that would be a fair description of how your Constitution was adopted - with New York being one of the last to give its consent.

The aim of the British and the Irish Governments is to work with the grain, respecting the different traditions, and to help to fashion an agreement between ourselves and the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland in the spirit of the principles contained in the Declaration. Naturally, therefore we believe that any such agreement must address all the important relationships - that is those between the communities within Northern Ireland, those between the North and South of Ireland, and those between the British and Irish Governments - in a single process.

All the participants in the last set of round table talks on Northern Ireland's future accepted the importance of this three-stranded approach if there was to be a prospect of an overall settlement giving adequate expression to the totality of these relationships. More recently some parties have had second thoughts and have suggested that solutions to part of the problem are an essential first step. I can understand their

frustration with the difficulties in making comprehensive progress. Nevertheless, I still believe that it is the only context within which an enduring settlement can be reached.

But, having accepted the analysis, the process which follows is an open one. Open in the sense that there is no predetermined outcome - nothing is ruled out, nothing is ruled in. It is open too in the sense that (as the Declaration spells out) all parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and show that they abide by the democratic process are free to participate fully in democratic politics and to join in dialogue on the way ahead.

That is the key. The pursuit of happiness through a settlement in Northern Ireland cannot be at the expense of life or liberty. There can be no coercion, nor impediment, nor violence, preventing the voice of the people being heard. The history of this century in Ireland has seen too many people choosing to stay with their guns outside the conference chamber instead of leaving them behind and coming in. The Declaration seeks to put an end to that.

So we do not simply ignore the fact that some 80,000 people in Northern Ireland voted for Sinn Fein in the last General Election. In the Declaration we have set out a clear path by which Sinn Fein can come to represent their views at the conference table. They could be there: it is not the British Government which is preventing their participation. It is, ironically, the leadership of their own party, who, by their continuing adamant refusal to condemn, and renounce their support for, violence to achieve political purposes, effectively disenfranchise their own people.

The solution is a simple one: renounce support for violence, deliver a permanent cessation of violence, and Sinn Fein will, within three months, be engaged in exploratory Talks with the Government which will lead them into a full role in the democratic process.

That is the way in which full recognition can be accorded to the mandate which Sinn Fein candidates are accorded at the polls.

That is the way in which Sinn Fein can play a role, like all of the other constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, in fashioning a future political accommodation based on a parity of esteem for all.

And it is very plain, as I have already said, that public opinion throughout the island wants Sinn Fein to seize that opportunity. In a recent poll taken in the Republic and in Northern Ireland more than 90% of the people believe that Sinn Fein and the IRA should permanently renounce violence and join negotiations. Nearly 80% accepted the principle set out in the Declaration that it would be wrong to impose a united Ireland without the freely given consent of a majority in Northern Ireland, and more than 75% approved of the British and Irish governments decision to press forward with the political talks process.

By any standards this is a ringing endorsement of the approach taken by the two Governments to the problem. I also think it shows that people throughout Ireland understand very clearly the principles contained within the Declaration and their part in the process which can lead to a lasting agreement.

There is intense disappointment that Sinn Fein have not yet decided to take the opportunity presented to them by the Declaration to join in democratic politics.

They should have done so. There can be no shred of justification for the killing and the bombing to go on. As John Hume said in January "past reasons given by the republican movement for armed struggle no longer exist". And speaking in this city a month ago he said, "the first step and a major step must be a total cessation of violence".

During his visit here earlier this year, Mr Adams went around telling everyone who would listen

to him that he was a man of peace. Yet a week or so later he was predicting more IRA "spectaculars" at the same time as the IRA launched their reckless attacks on London's Heathrow airport.

And just who does Mr Adams represent? Certainly not the Irish people as he claims. I have already mentioned the overwhelming support in opinion polls for an end to violence and for the Declaration. The Taoiseach leads a government which was supported by more than half of the people at the Republic - at the last General Election - an election in which Mr Adams' Sinn Fein received around 2% of the vote. In Northern Ireland at the last General Election Adams himself was defeated at the polls and Sinn Fein took 10% of the vote, less than half the support given to John Hume's SDLP.

Let there be no illusion, Mr Adams is no Nelson Mandela. The Irish Republican Army are not the legitimate representatives of Irish people, North or South of the border. They cannot say whose authority sanctions their killing, nor in whose name they act. They react with violence against people who speak out against them. A week or so ago the IRA attacked the police station in Crossmaglen, a village in County Armagh. Crossmaglen is often described as a Republican stronghold - certainly its people are overwhelmingly nationalist. Yet the IRA chose to fire mortars over the roofs of houses, and they hit a helicopter as it was coming in to land. Only the skill of the pilot, who managed to guide his aircraft inside the base where it exploded in flames, avoided an appalling tragedy. The IRA were prepared to take that risk with the people they call their own. The helicopter could have landed in the village centre. Their mortars could have fallen short on people's houses. That was another acceptable risk for them. And when a local SDLP councillor, Mr Fee, nephew of the late Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh, spoke out to condemn their action the IRA's contempt for democracy was made abundantly clear. Councillor Fee was brutally beaten for speaking out. In whose name did they beat him? Themselves alone. That is the

answer, and it is not one that will serve in a democracy.

But, whatever Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army may do, the two Governments will hold firmly to the principles of their Joint Declaration. We shall carry on with a whole range of policies to improve the quality of life for people in Northern Ireland and enhance their prosperity. In these areas our policies are having a great deal of success already. Any of you who have visited Northern Ireland recently will have seen the new businesses, the good housing and the investment in infrastructure, which are benefiting the whole community.

We shall also carry on with policies for fair employment; policies to ensure that the police enjoy the full confidence and support of the whole community for their difficult and dangerous task; policies to improve healthcare and education in Northern Ireland. And we do put our money where our mouth is. In the last financial year the Government spent £7.5 billion in Northern Ireland - about a third higher per head than the United Kingdom average. Law and order does take a substantial 12% chunk of that spending, but we spend even more on education (17%), health and social services (18%), and social security (33%).

Carrying on means above all persevering with the search for an agreement. There are no shortcuts to that. Persuasion and debate take time. But we have an obligation to encourage, facilitate and enable agreement to be reached through dialogue. That is what the talks process has been about. That is what the Downing Street Declaration is about.

I began by pointing to the positive lessons in living together that this city can hold up. But, as you know, it is not always quite that easy. There is a downside too. Here in New York - as much as in Northern Ireland, elsewhere in Europe and across the world - there are also painful examples of how we can get relationships wrong in our modern world. In our homes, our towns, just as much as between governments and people, and between nations, we are trying to come to terms with new realities, to which we can adapt our identities and institutions.

So we shall hold to the principles and realities I have outlined.

We shall not surrender to terrorism, or the threat of violence. I doubt if anyone would expect us to do so. The ending of the armed conflict which has so afflicted the lives of so many in Northern Ireland over the last 25 years - the toll to which you Madam Chairman referred in your introduction - that's not going to require any surrender, the ending of that armed conflict. It's not going to require any surrender. It will be resolved only through a renunciation of violence, an engagement in the democratic process, a search for a just peace, underpinned by a political accommodation based on the principles of democracy, consent and parity of esteem for all. That is the prize for which we democrats are striving.

I am very confident that, sticking to our principles, and keeping our eyes firmly fixed on those self-evident truths, we shall in the end succeed.

*Plus
on first reading, this could refer to surrender by HMG; by PIRA; or either. Ken Lindsay is trying to get in touch with Jonathan to find out what Soft means.*

D.M. 12/6