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Interviewer with Gerry Adams on Radio Ulster, 1.p.m.,  
1 May 1987

Interviewer: First, to clarify this for listeners, why yourself and Mr. Hendron are both with us here but are not in discussion. Why will you not debate this document with Joe Hendron?

Mr. Adams: Oh, I want a serious debate. I mean, the protocol that's involved very simply, is that we don't ask one of our councillors to debate issues with the party leader of the SDLP. I have no problem discussing and debating anything with Joe Hendron or anyone else.

Interviewer: Well, I put to you what Mr. Hendron said of your document this morning, that it showed contempt for people's intelligence and is an insult to the protestant community.

Mr. Adams: Well he obviously hasn't read the document. The fact of the situation is the document outlines a scenario whereby peace, demilitarisation of the situation, justice and freedom can be established. It is based upon the right of the Irish people to national self-determination and upon the illegitimacy and the failure of partition, and that view isn't as narrow as Sinn Fein. That is the democratic right of our people.

Interviewer: Can any such document from your organisation be taken seriously while the campaign of violence continues? Many people I suggest to you will find offensive the use of the phrase strategy for peace by an organisation which to use Sinn Fein's own term, 'unambiguously supports the IRA'.

Mr. Adams: Well I mean the situation is quite simply that we have a conflict here. Like, Sinn Fein as well as anyone else, and in fact much more than most other people want to see an end of that conflict. We want to see a real, honest, and frank debate about the issue. We want to have an examination of what has gone wrong.

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Interviewer: But can I put to you again the problem? Can you be taken seriously, by, for instance, the families of Sir Maurice and Lady Gibson, the families of police and UDR men who have been shot or blown up, the family of Leslie Jarvis, the family of the businessman shot dead by the IRA because they said he was working for the security forces.

Mr. Adams: But I mean I could give you a whole long litany of republicans and nationalists who have been killed. The fact is that no one section of the community has any monopoly on suffering. We have been accused in the past of only being involved in war war. Now what we are trying to do is to develop a situation of jaw jaw. We want people to look at this document. We want them to be critical. We want them if they wish to be hostile. I said in the introductory remarks this morning we weren't expecting an immediate favourable response.

Interviewer: You say Sinn Fein wants an end to what you call the long war and you repeat it can only be achieved by British withdrawal but this document is very short on how that can be achieved.

Mr. Adams: Well it actually states quite clearly and obviously it's dependent upon the political will of the British to actually withdraw but it's just quite clearly the steps, the reasonable step by step method by which the British can withdraw. One, that they repeal the Government of Ireland Act, it's immoral, it's illegitimate.

Interviewer: How are they to be persuaded to take these steps, that the important thing. You've clearly outlined the steps you want to see taken, but how do you persuade?

Mr. Adams: Well the the situation is that the British have been here for some considerable time. They have tried all types of political experiments. They have tried all sorts of options. They have all failed. As those options continue to

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fail because partition is a basic wrong, it's about the basic issue of contention. Once the British get to a situation where they realise that they don't have any other option but to withdraw, what we have outlined for them, and they probably don't need us to tell them, what we have outlined for them is the way they can withdraw.

Interviewer: Do you agree with Martin McGuinness who said this morning at your press conference Britain will only give way under threat of force. He said that the IRA campaign was centuries old, it would continue for centuries if necessary. Is that a scenario for peace.

Mr. Adams: Well I mean the history of the situation is, and the history of any colonial situation is that conflict arises from the colonial presence. What we have in Ireland is a colonial presence. We have had an occupation here for the last 17 years. We have had this state, which isn't by either socially or economically, kept alive on a life support unit of British soldiers. Now what we are saying is and everyone else must concede this as well because the British say that while the British are here the IRA will continue, British militarists say that, British strategists say that. Everyone accepts that, what we're saying is that the British are going to have to leave some day, why not now.

Interviewer: The continuing IRA violence, can I suggest to you finally, is likely to rebound on the people you represent in the wake of possible increased security measures and wouldn't it be cynical of Sinn Fein to see that as being to its advantage in terms of any extra votes.....

Mr. Adams: Well I don't see that as being to our advantage. I mean this whole ridiculous situation of Sinn Fein seeking repression is a nonsense. The fact is repression hasn't worked. If the British want to get into more repression, that's a matter for them. It won't work. It won't isolate Sinn

Interview with Joe Hendron, SDLP, on  
Radio Ulster, 1.p.m., 1 May 1987

Interviewer: May I ask you first of all for a response to the justification Gerry Adams gave for not debating this document with you on this programme?

Mr. Hendron: I think he just doesn't want to face up the points that I'm going to make, the very obvious points which he knows that I'm bound to make, as some of them have already been made earlier today. When I look at this document, Seamus, and I have studied it. I studied it because it was left in our Party office last night. Scenario for Peace, they talk about, or strategy for peace. I am aware that in the republic that Sinn Fein got something like 1.8% of the vote in the Republic, that's one point. The second one is that in the North here their savagery continues on a daily basis.

Interviewer: Not Sinn Fein's savagery, the savagery ..... do you really mean that?

Mr. Hendron: My point is the savagery of the Provisional IRA. I look on the leadership of Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA as all one. That's what I believe and I don't know who the leader of the IRA is. But I do believe that Gerry Adams is a senior member of the leadership of the Provisional Republican Movement. I mean that's the only way I can put that Seamus. What I like to say coming to this document, I think it is an insult to the intelligence of the people in the streets, both Catholic and Protestants and the central deficiency of their document is the fact that they completely ignore the protestant community. They don't talk in any way of finding some way to reconcile the two communities that are in this island. I mean Irish unity is to do with cherishing all traditions. They completely ignore that. Frankly I think what they're doing is trying to dupe the man on the street coming up before this Westminster election.

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Interviewer: What do you say to the point that Gerry Adams makes that they're continually being accused of being apologists for terrorism and that here they are saying we are now offering what we see as a political solution and we want that to be considered and we think it should be considered.

Mr. Hendron: Well what I would say to Gerry Adams, he wasn't prepared to speak with me on this programme, what I would say to him, and I would beg that not only him but that all of the other people who are leaders of the Provisional Republican Movement, is that I would ask them to get their people to lay down their arms. There are too many people have been killed. He talks about a constitutional conference. There is a conference that takes place every month, every couple of months. In terms of all the problems in this land you have the two sovereign Governments are there. There is no reason why the unionists couldn't come there, there is no reason why SDLP, why the Republican Movement, provided they lay down their arms. You cannot kill people and at the same time say this is a strategy for peace. I do not look on this as a serious document. Believe me if I thought it was a serious document then I would take it very very seriously indeed. I think it's entirely related to an election. All of us will produce documents coming up to an election. I don't object to it on that score but to talk of a scenario for peace when Belfast and Northern Ireland is straddled with graveyards containing bodies resulting from the violence of the Provisional IRA. I look on this document as absolute hypocrisy.