



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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EMBARO UNTIL 12NOON 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1988

THE TALKS BETWEEN SDLP AND SINN FEIN HAVE ENDED WITHOUT AT THIS TIME REACHING AGREEMENT ON THE OBJECTIVES OF THE TALKS.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THESE TALKS, THE SDLP HAS PUT FORWARD THE VIEW, CONSISTENT SINCE ITS FOUNDATION, THAT VIOLENCE OR WHAT SINN FEIN CALLS 'ARMED STRUGGLE' IS WRONG AND HAS NO CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE TO A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN IRELAND. WE HAVE ARGUED THAT EVEN IN SINN FEIN AND THE IRA'S TERMS, JUSTIFICATION NO LONGER EXISTS FOR THE USE OF SUCH METHODS AND THAT THERE ARE NO OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD TO ACHIEVING THEIR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES WHICH JUSTIFY THE USE OF ARMED FORCE. WE HAVE ASKED THE QUESTION, THEREFORE, IS THE METHOD NOW MORE SACRED THAN THE CAUSE?

IS THE IRA DOING ANYTHING TO ADVANCE THE INTERESTS OF THE POPULATION IN WHOSE NAME IT CLAIMS TO ACT? GIVEN THAT THE TRADITIONAL REPUBLICAN OBJECTIVE IS TO SEEK TO UNITE CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT AND DISSENTER AND TO ABOLISH THE MEMORY OF PAST DISSENSIONS, HOW CAN IT BE SAID TO ADVANCE THOSE INTERESTS WHEN THE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE IS MAKING AGREEMENT WITH THE UNIONIST POPULATION CONSTANTLY MORE DIFFICULT, WHEN IT IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE FATALITIES IN THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN THE LAST TEN YEARS THAN EITHER THE SECURITY FORCES OR THE LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES, AND WHEN IT BEARS A LARGE PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT AND DEPRIVATION IN THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY? TO THOSE WHO CLAIM THE HERITAGE OF PEARSE AND CONNOLLY, WE SAY: WHAT WOULD THEY DO IN YOUR PLACE? THEY LAID DOWN THEIR ARMS TO PREVENT THE FURTHER NEEDLESS SUFFERING OF THEIR PEOPLE. WILL YOU NOT DO THE SAME?

THE SDLP'S BASIC POLITICAL VIEW IS THAT THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO NATIONAL SELF DETERMINATION AND THAT THE IRISH PEOPLE SHOULD BE DEFINED AS THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE DOMICILED IN THE ISLAND OF IRELAND. THIS IS A VIEW SHARED BY SINN FEIN. IT IS ALSO SHARED BY A MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND. HOWEVER, THE SDLP HAS POINTED OUT THAT SINCE THERE IS A VERY DEEP DIVISION AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND AS TO HOW THAT RIGHT IS TO BE EXERCISED, IT IS THE SEARCH FOR AGREEMENT ON THE EXERCISE OF THAT RIGHT THAT IS THE REAL SEARCH FOR PEACE IN THIS ISLAND. SINCE THIS IS A SEARCH WHICH INVOLVES OURSELVES - ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND - IT IS SELF EVIDENT THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE PURSUED BY ARMED FORCE AND CANNOT BE WON BY ARMED FORCE. THE AGREEMENT OF THE UNIONIST PEOPLE IS ESSENTIAL. SUCH AGREEMENT IS OBVIOUSLY A TASK OF PERSUASION NOT A TASK OF COERCION.

ANOTHER AREA OF FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SDLP AND SINN FEIN IS RELATED TO THE ROLE, RESPONSIBILITY, MOTIVES AND INTENTIONS OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. THE SDLP HAS ASSERTED THAT IN ARTICLE I OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT, AN INTERNATIONAL BINDING AGREEMENT, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE REMOVED THE TRADITIONAL REPUBLICAN JUSTIFICATION FOR THE USE OF VIOLENCE. IN THAT ARTICLE, IN THE SDLP'S VIEW, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT IF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNIONIST AND NATIONALIST TRADITIONS IN IRELAND REACH AGREEMENT ON THE UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF IRELAND, THEN THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL LEGISLATE FOR IT, FACILITATE IT, AND LEAVE THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND, NORTH AND SOUTH, TO GOVERN THEMSELVES. IN SHORT, THEY ARE STATING THAT IRISH UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE ARE ENTIRELY A MATTER FOR THOSE IRISH PEOPLE WHO WANT IT, PERSUADING THOSE IRISH PEOPLE WHO DON'T. IT IS CLEAR FROM ARTICLE I AND THE PREAMBLE TO THE AGREEMENT THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE NO OTHER INTEREST AT STAKE IN THE EXERCISE OF IRISH SELF-DETERMINATION EXCEPT THAT VIOLENCE OR THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE SHALL NOT SUCCEED. IN THIS CONTEXT THE 'ARMED STRUGGLE' CAN ONLY BE A NEGATIVE FACTOR.

THE SDLP HAS NOT CONVINCED SINN FEIN THAT THIS IS THE BRITISH POSITION, BUT WE WOULD POSE A QUESTION TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE PROVISIONAL REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT, BOTH IN SINN FEIN AND THE IRA, AND TO THEIR SUPPORTERS. IF THE SDLP IS CORRECT, THAT THIS IS THE BRITISH POSITION, DO YOU AGREE THAT IT REMOVES THE STATED JUSTIFICATION FOR THE 'ARMED STRUGGLE' OF THE PROVISIONAL IRA?

THE SDLP DOES NOT ACCEPT THAT THE BRITISH POSITION AS STATED IN ARTICLE I OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT GIVES A VETO TO THE UNIONISTS ON IRISH UNITY. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE NO RIGHT TO DO SO AND IT IS NOT THE BRITISH POSITION THAT GIVES A VETO TO ANY SECTION OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND. IT IS THE PRESENCE OF THE UNIONIST PEOPLE, DOMICILED ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND, THEIR NUMBERS AND THEIR GEOGRAPHY THAT REQUIRE OF NECESSITY THEIR AGREEMENT WITH THE REST OF US AS TO HOW WE SHARE THIS ISLAND. JUST AS THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS CANNOT BE UNITED UNLESS THERE IS AGREEMENT OF BOTH THE GREEK AND TURKISH TRADITIONS, NEITHER CAN THERE BE UNITY OF IRELAND UNLESS THERE IS AGREEMENT OF BOTH THE NATIONALIST AND UNIONIST TRADITIONS. IN ADDITION, IT SEEMS TO US TO REFLECT A DEEP MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE ULSTER PROTESTANT TRADITION TO SUGGEST THAT IT IS THE BRITISH INFLUENCE ALONE AND NOT THEIR OWN CHOICE AND THEIR OWN REASONS THAT HAVE MADE THEM WISH UP TO NOW, TO LIVE APART FROM THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND. DO WE NOT ACCEPT, EVEN THOUGH WE MAY NOT LIKE IT, THAT THEY HAVE DEEP-SEATED AND DEEPLY FELT REASONS OF THEIR OWN, BASED ON MANY HISTORICAL FACTORS, FOR THEIR DIFFERENCES, DIFFERENCES WHICH GO BACK BEYOND PARTITION? DID NOT WOLFE TONE ACCEPT THOSE DIFFERENCES TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO WHEN HE TALKED OF UNITING CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT AND DISSENTER AS HIS MEANS OF BREAKING THE CONNECTION WITH ENGLAND. IF HE WANTED TO UNITE THEM THEY MUST HAVE BEEN DIVIDED. WE ALSO MUST FACE THE FACT THAT THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND REMAIN DIVIDED FOR REASONS WHICH GO BEYOND THE BRITISH PRESENCE.

THE SDLP DOES NOT DENY THAT THE TASK OF PERSUADING THE UNIONIST PEOPLE THAT THEIR BEST INTERESTS LIE IN COMING TOGETHER WITH THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND TO BUILD A NEW IRELAND, WHICH ACCEPTS AND ACCOMMODATES ALL OUR DIFFERENCES, WILL BE A VERY DIFFICULT ONE BUT WE BELIEVE THAT WITH THE ENDING OF THE IRA CAMPAIGN, AND THE CONSEQUENT DEMILITARISATION OF THE NORTH, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HARNESS WITH ENTHUSIASM AND ENERGY ALL THE RESOURCES OF DEMOCRATIC IRELAND, INVOLVING EVERY POLITICAL PARTY WITH AN ELECTORAL MANDATE IN THE TASK OF PERSUADING OUR FELLOW CITIZENS IN THE NORTH. INDEED, THE LEADER OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS MADE CLEAR HIS WILLINGNESS TO INITIATE SUCH A PROCESS BY CALLING A CONFERENCE OF ALL MANDATED PARTIES ON THE ISLAND TO PREPARE SUCH A STRATEGY. IT WOULD ALSO BE POSSIBLE TO HARNESS THE MASSIVE INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL TOWARDS THIS COUNTRY AND TOWARDS OUR OBJECTIVE - GOODWILL WHICH IS AT PRESENT CONFUSED AND THWARTED BY THE CONTINUOUS VIOLENCE ON OUR STREETS.

THIS PROCESS OF SEARCH FOR AGREEMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND IS THE POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE THAT SINN FEIN HAS CONSISTENTLY CHALLENGED POLITICIANS TO PRODUCE.

WE REGRET THAT TO DATE WE HAVE NOT PERSUADED SINN FEIN ON THESE MATTERS. THAT IS PARTICULARLY EVIDENT FROM THE VIOLENCE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED IN RECENT WEEKS. WE CONDEMN THAT VIOLENCE UNRESERVEDLY. BUT WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE DEEPEST RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE OF US IN THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY WHO BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEMS TO DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO PERSUADE SINN FEIN AND THE IRA THAT 'THE ARMED STRUGGLE' IS WRONG, THAT IT IS WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION, THAT IT IS INFLECTING THE GREATEST DAMAGE ON THE PROSPECTS OF UNIFYING ALL THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND, AND THAT IT MUST BE ENDED SO THAT POLITICAL PROGRESS CAN BE MADE. WE WELCOME, THEREFORE, THE OPPORTUNITY WHICH THE POLITICAL MEETINGS WITH SINN FEIN HAVE GIVEN US TO STATE OUR VIEWS FACE-TO-FACE AND TO ARGUE THEM FULLY AND THOROUGHLY. WE SAY AGAIN THAT CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICIANS, WHETHER NATIONALIST OR UNIONIST, HAVE A SOLEMN DUTY TO CHANGE THE POLITICAL CLIMATE AWAY FROM VIOLENCE AND TOWARDS A PEACEFUL ACCOMMODATION OF OUR DIFFERENCE. THE SDLP HOPES AND EXPECTS THAT THE DEBATE ON THESE CRUCIAL ISSUES WHICH HAS BEGUN WILL CONTINUE IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ARENA, PARTICULARLY AMONG ALL THOSE WHO REGARD THEMSELVES AS REPUBLICANS, AND THAT IT WILL LEAD SOONER RATHER THAN LATER TO AN END TO THE AGONY OF ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH.

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