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23 Sep 1979

Thus throughout the 17th and 18th centuries the Irish people looked to the continental powers as political allies.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries they looked to the Irish-American community. When both parts of the Island acceded to membership of the European Community in 1973 this was not an unprecedented involvement with the Continent: people had a sense of renewing a connection from which they had been distracted by a century of turbulent and sometimes horrific events.

The situation today is intriguing: the earlier links with the continent have been renewed but now rest on the solid foundation of the Treaties of the European Community. The links with America were founded on the connections of blood, friendship and heritage between four and a half million people on this island and upwards of 16 million people in the United States; the relationship has deepened and matured as the Republic has developed politically and economically and as the Irish in America have prospered and built on their extraordinary political achievements of the past hundred years.

These two global relationships have played major roles in the fortunes of Ireland in recent years. From America came

tourists and much of the industrial investment which created the impressive economic development of the Republic in recent years. From Europe have come the economic benefits of membership of the Community which have transformed life, particularly in the Republic, and also a sense of political dignity and statehood, again in the Republic, which, prior to membership, had been stifled by a claustrophobic bilateral relationship with the neighbouring island.

to the leadership of the great cities and some of the States; it was still excluded from Washington. That situation changed dramatically in 1960 with the Kennedy Presidency.

In recent years the influence of powerful and responsible American leaders of Irish extraction in Washington, notably Senator Edward Kennedy and House Speaker, Thomas P. O'Neill, has brought this issue to a point where the Administration has taken a responsible, careful and very generous position on Northern Ireland and for the first time an American President has spoken on the Irish problem. As a result, the support for violence from the United States has been contained and has in fact dropped. That this should have been maintained during the past years of political vacuum in Northern Ireland is an extraordinary achievement. There are many men, women and children in Northern Ireland, who are alive today, I am convinced, because of the political courage and concern of such men as Kennedy and O'Neill. The present US Administration has committed itself to provide economic aid in the event that a solution acceptable to both sides in Northern Ireland and to the British and Irish Governments can be found. That is generous commitment. It is humane, responsible and unprovocative. It is a major incentive to reconciliation. It was welcomed by the Irish and British Governments and they were both consulted about it. Ireland has become a legitimate and serious issue in the Atlantic relationship between London and Washington.

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And what of Europe? The European Community, because of its name, because of its primary historic commitments to reconcile the enmities of generations and avert the recurrence of armed conflict cannot stand aside from the conflict between two of its own peoples.

The interest of the United States and of the European Community in Northern Ireland is inevitable, necessary and perfectly legitimate. This need not necessarily involve direct intervention or support for particular partisan policies. It should involve encouragement, the creation of the conditions in which the parties can resolve their differences. It is clear by now that the people of Northern Ireland cannot solve their problems without outside help. Northern Ireland is and <sup>be</sup> must/an issue in the Atlantic Community.

Meanwhile the situation festers. The contradictions deepen. London exercises a frayed and somewhat reluctant sovereignty in Northern Ireland while Dublin maintains a frayed and somewhat reluctant claim to sovereignty. Events - the horrors of the past month - cry out for joint decisive action and underline the Republic's essential role in helping to solve the Northern Ireland problem. There will be no progress until that need is publicly acknowledged in both capitals.

There is a natural tendency on the part of the public, which extends to political leadership, to regard Northern Ireland as a tragic insoluble morass on which it is vain to waste the energy and concern of politicians, the media and ordinary people. "Will it never end?" is the jaded reaction to the latest atrocity. "What is it all about?" is the rhetorical question to which people would prefer not to hear a reply. This has been the disastrous attitude which generated the political vacuum of the past five years. Not alone is this attitude irresponsible and immoral: it is also dangerous to us all because it has encouraged the killers. The recent horrors showed, and I hope will, force all the protagonists to this crisis to rigorously re-examine their own roles, responsibilities, hopes and room for manoeuvre.

The British should acknowledge that the basis of their policy is unworkable, a tragic mistake which must be set right. The basis of that policy is, in fact, an unconditional guarantee of support to one section of the community, the Unionists, at the expense of the other. This has ensured both the alienation of the minority and the unwillingness, indeed inability, of Unionist political leaders to have any meaningful dialogue with anyone about the problem. Such an unconditional guarantee to Ian Smith that the Whites of Zimbabwe could remain linked to Britain as long as they wished would have made the present negotiations on Zimbabwe inconceivable. With such guarantees he would never talk to the blacks. What has this policy produced for Northern Ireland? Has it produced peace? Has it produced stability? Is it unreasonable to suggest that the time has come for it to be re-examined?



It is the governing concern of Unionists to protect the rights and distinctiveness of their own tradition. That is a legitimate and admirable concern in itself. Alas, given the political structures of Northern Ireland, it has manifested itself steadily down the years in the monopolisation of power in Unionist hands and the exclusion of the minority from the Government of their affairs. Their security rests in fact on no more than an act of the British Parliament, a measure which itself constitutes the chief obstacle to dialogue and the ultimate source of the wasteful drain on limited British resources which is Northern Ireland today.

I feel they should seriously ask themselves whether this is a real and abiding security? Does it offer any prospect for what we all want in this island: a prosperous future free of the conflict, instability and violence of generations? It clearly does not. It is in the interest of the Unionists themselves to jettison this straight jacket. They are, it has often been truly said, a gifted and hardheaded people. There is no reason why they should not place their confidence in themselves and in the strength of their own members rather than in the ephemeral commitment of Westminster.

The traditional posture of Dublin has been to claim that unity is the only solution. But what does that mean? For too long it has been left undefined and interpreted by Unionists as conquest of the North by the South. Unity to many has become, incredibly a dirty word. Ireland must be one of the few places on earth where people seriously suggest that it is wrong to unite people! Are the Government, parties and people of the Republic prepared to accept the sacrifices involved in real unity? Do they accept that the goal is a pluralist Ireland, one that is dominated by no section or tradition?

I believe that they do but it is long past the time where the meaning of unity should be spelt out. Agreement yes, coercion no.

The time has come for a positive and decisive initiative. It must be taken by both Governments acting together. They should firstly make it clear that there are no longer any unconditional guarantees for any section of the Northern community. There is only a commitment to achieve a situation in which there are guarantees for all.

Secondly, they should make it clear that there is in fact no solution as such but only a process which will lead to a solution. They should declare themselves committed to such a process, a process of integration of the differing traditions on this island, a process designed to lead to an agreed Ireland with positive roles for all. They should invite all parties to participate in this process, the process of building a new Ireland. Some will undoubtedly react with an initial refusal but the process should continue without them, leaving the door always open for their participation at any stage.

Indeed in embarking on this process we ought to be encouraged by the example of both the United States and the European Community. In the United States in spite of deep differences of origin and background they have forged a constitution which is able to harness the great differences in the common good. Yet the Italians remain Italian, the blacks are still black and the Irish still parade on St. Patrick's day. They have created a unity in diversity.

Europe itself has suffered centuries of bloody conflict. In this century alone the peoples of Europe have been locked in the savagery of two World Wars with bitterness and slaughter that goes far beyond anything that we have experienced on this island. Yet thirty-four years after the Second World War, as a result of an agreed process, they have been able to create one Parliament to represent them, one Community and the Germans are still German and the French are still French. They have a unity in diversity.

Is it too much to ask that we on this small island do precisely the same thing? Is it too much to ask that the two responsible Government declare themselves now in favour of such a process. Can we too build a unity in diversity?

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