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Sinn Fein Discussion Paper

"A SCENARIO FOR PEACE"

The above document, released by Sinn Fein on 1 May, is divided into three sections. The first section, entitled 'National self-determination', touches on the historical and legal reasons for Ireland's right to national independence and unity on a 32 county basis. The next section deals with loyalists and their position within a "new constitution for Ireland". The final section, "A Scenario for Peace", deals with the document's proposals and some of the consequences.

The main proposals contained in the third section are:

A. The British Government must

- (i) Repeal the Government of Ireland Act and publicly declare that Northern Ireland is no longer part of the United Kingdom.
- (ii) Declare that military forces and their existing system of political administration will remain only for as long as it takes to arrange their permanent withdrawal.

A "definite date" within the lifetime of a British Government to be set for completion of withdrawal.

B. Constitutional Conference:

Free elections to an all-Ireland Constitutional Conference to be arranged.

The Conference having taken submissions from all significant organisations, would

- (a) draw up "a new Constitution" and
- (b) organise "a national system of government".

C. As a consequence of A. (ii) the "RUC and UDR would be disarmed and disbanded". Part of the settlement would include financial support from the British Government to provide "economic subvention for an agreed period" - i.e., reparations liable because of Britain's "disasterous involvement".

Anyone not accepting the new scenario and who would wish to leave should be offered resettlement grants to move to Britain or elsewhere.

The paper contains nothing very new in Sinn Fein thinking and only superficially mentions the new structures they propose should be set up. It has some value in that it gives an insight into current Sinn Fein thinking. The document throws some light on its thinking in regard to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It sees British policy in regard to the Agreement as designed "to rock the morale of loyalists, split the unionists and force the emergence of a pragmatic leadership which will do an internal deal with the SDLP". The fact that this manifesto was issued at a time of intense PIRA activity confirms the belief that the Army Convention of September 1986 not only agreed to drop abstention from Dail Eireann but re-affirmed that the military campaign should operate in tandem with Sinn Fein's political activities.

One explanation for the timing of the document's release is that it was in preparation for some time, probably before the the current PIRA campaign, and it is now being released by Sinn Fein to aid Gerry Adams in his attempt to retain his seat in the forthcoming Westminster election which is generally expected to be set for June next, perhaps on 11 June.

Dr. Joe Hendron of the SDLP immediately attacked the document as being insulting and hypocritical and challenged Gerry Adams to debate its contents. Adams refused, saying he would only discuss the paper with leaders of political parties.



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