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INTERVIEW WITH GERRY ADAMS, "GOOD MORNING ULSTER", RADIO ULSTER22 APRIL 1988

Interviewer: Last night the Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams, called on unionists to join nationalists in a political settlement based on them uniting to end sectarianism. We need them, he said, because a peaceful, just and united society must include them and because despite differences fostered by foreign interference the Protestant working class are our brothers and sisters. In the speech, Gerry Adams also called for a pan-nationalist campaign for British withdrawal. Some commentators may interpret that as his response to the SDLP, with whom Sinn Fein has been engaged in dialogue. But when I spoke to Gerry Adams last night he denied that this was the case. The interview begins with his call for Britain to work actively towards the reunification of Ireland. Should that happen, what would his advice be to the IRA?

Adams: Well it would be a major advance in the situation if the British Government actually adopted a policy of disengagement, of anti-partition and of reunifying Ireland, but I think that if the British Government did that and if the timescale and the terms of all of that were acceptable, and this is a hypothetical question and I dislike answering hypothetical questions....

Interviewer: But it's what you want.

Adams: Of course it is, but the present policy is the exact opposite and I certainly think that a change in policy towards a democratic policy objective, which I have outlined, would change the whole situation dramatically.

Interviewer: Yes, but it's what you want, it's the policy that you are aiming for. Should it happen, you must know what your advice to the IRA would be under those circumstances.

Adams: Well, my advice to the IRA would be to examine all of that with great care and if its detail met the IRA conditions of a British withdrawal, then of course my advice would be for the IRA to take the British up on that, but let's wait until we get the major force, the British, moving before we start putting pressure on the smaller force.

Interviewer: A man was shot today at the law courts in Belfast and the IRA has issued another warning to people not to work on court buildings or with military installations and yet at the same time you describe Protestants as your brothers and sister. Do those two things equate?

Adams: Yes. I'm the M.P. for West Belfast, for example, I represent people from loyalist areas. I don't pretend, or I am not silly enough to suggest that I represent their political allegiance but certainly I represent their class interest and I represent the class interests of working class Protestants in West Belfast as much and as well as those of working class Catholics. The IRA position has been clearly spelled out. It is no different from the position taken up by resistance forces throughout the world. Could you imagine if the Nazis had occupied a part of Britain in the last war, if British subjects would be permitted to collaborate with the Nazi occupation forces and its administration? Of course not.

Interviewer: You have said that Protestants are your brothers and Protestants are your sisters. How can you expect them to have respect and have trust in any nationalist when they perceive one section of the nationalist community, those who support Sinn Fein, supporting the IRA who turn round and kill Protestants?

Adams: Well, first of all, I would argue very strongly that for every reason that any loyalist could give of abhorrence for and a refusal to be reconciled with non-loyalists, that nationalists could give just as many reasons. I don't think that's the point. The fact is that republicans are willing to stretch out the hand of friendship. The only safe (?) thing that we say to loyalists is that they have no right to a veto over the British connection. We want them to meet with us on equal terms and to bring about a settlement of the conflict and to end all of the killings that you have referred to and we are offering unionists a settlement which is based on equality, which is based on ending the divisions and the sectarianism.

Interviewer: But any settlement you want would deny a unionist the chance to be a unionist because they would have to live in a united Ireland.

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Adams: Well, that's quite right. I mean, that is the position and we don't try to fudge that or to hide that, no.

Interviewer: So how can a unionist be a nationalist?

Adams: Well, I mean you would have to ask that of a unionist.

Interviewer: I am asking it of you

Adams: I'm sorry, I am not asking them to be a nationalist....

Interviewer: You are.

Adams: I am asking them to accept their responsibilities as Irish citizens in a new Irish society which would be worked out by all of the citizens of the new Irish society including them.

Interviewer: But by definition they would cease to be unionists.

Adams: Yes, they would, yes. I mean, no national minority has the right - are you suggesting that if by some historical fluke the people of Devon had some affinity, or thought they had some affinity with an imperial power in France, that they could secede from British society? Of course not.

Interviewer: But you are saying that everybody can be equal but in your solution nationalists will continue to be nationalists in a united national Ireland; unionists cannot be so because they will be in a united Ireland therefore they will have to become nationalists like yourself.

Adams: Well, I would hope in the type of Ireland free of foreign interference, that the terms nationalist and unionist wouldn't be of any importance and that the class interests of the Irish people, working class people would come together, regardless of whether they were ever unionist or ever nationalist. Nationalism is only an important factor and unionism is only an important factor when the union is an important factor. Remove the

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union, then the important factors are the class interests of all the people of this island and the Protestant working class people have much more in common with their working class Catholic neighbours than they would have with the big businesses and the conservative parties.

Interviewer: So unionists will have to concede what they might perceive to be a fundamental point. What would nationalists concede?

Adams: What we are saying to the unionists is, let's start off afresh, that we don't want to inflict upon you what we have had inflicted upon us for the last sixty years, that we want to bring about an end to division, that we want to reach out the hand of friendship, that we are prepared to forgive you and that you should be prepared to forgive us and that the source of division having being removed, that we unite in building a better society.