

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON, 5th SEPTEMBER 1988

Sinn Fein statement on end of present round of Sinn Fein/SDLP talks.

At the beginning of this year Sinn Féin and the SDLP received a written invitation from a third party to engage in a political dialogue aimed at investigating the possibility of developing "an overall political strategy to establish justice and peace in Ireland". Any suggestion that the talks had any other purpose is untrue.

During this dialogue several position papers and analyses were exchanged.

From the outset, our proposals were based on our overall view *that justice and peace can best be established when the Irish nation can exercise its right to National Self-determination and the conflict over British interference in Irish sovereignty is resolved.*

Sinn Fein believes that any strategy which seeks to establish National Self-determination must have as its objectives:

To persuade the British Government to change its current policy of Partition to one of ending the Union and handing Sovereignty to an all-Ireland Government whose selection would be a democratic matter for the Irish nation.

To persuade the Unionists that their future lies in this context and to persuade the British Government that it has a responsibility to so influence Unionist attitudes.

The method of achieving these objectives should include:

The securing of maximum political unity in Ireland based on these objectives.

The launching of a concerted political campaign Internationally, using Dublin Government diplomatic resources to win international support for Irish demands.

The mobilising of support in Britain itself which would create conditions in which the right to Irish National Self-Determination can be exercised.

During this campaign a debate, aimed at leading to dialogue must be initiated with Northern protestants and Northern protestant opinion on the democratic principle of National Self-determination.

They must be assured of our full commitment to their civil and religious rights and be persuaded of the need for their participation in building an Irish society based on equality and national reconciliation.

There is also a need to establish a democratic structure by which the above can be agreed upon, implemented and overseen, or, failing this, to encourage informal agreement to implement the above.

Finally, Sinn Fein believes that there must be concerted political action, Nationally and Internationally, to defend democratic rights and to defend and improve the social and economic rights and conditions of the population of the Six Counties and that transgressions of these rights must be exposed.

The round of talks has now concluded.

In summing up the talks Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams M.P. said:

"It is to be regretted that Sinn Féin and the SDLP are unable to agree, at this time, on *'an overall strategy to establish justice and peace in Ireland'*.

"Sinn Féin welcomed the opportunity for face-to-face talks between the two parties which represent the nationalist population of the six-counties despite

intense external pressure aimed at prohibiting the talks. We note that that opposition is not shared by the combined constituencies of the two parties and has been welcomed by many nationalists in the twenty-six counties.

"From the outset of the dialogue Sinn Fein has put the consistent republican and democratic view that the root cause of the conflict in Ireland is to be found in the British Government's denial to the Irish nation of its right to national self-determination.

"Successive British Governments are directly responsible for the maintenance of the conditions created by that denial in which perennial conflict has ever been present. Our discussions with the SDLP elicited the shared political view 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 domiciled on the island of Ireland (and its off-shore islands). In that context it was accepted that an internal six-county settlement is no solution.

"However, the Sinn Fein delegation was somewhat perplexed that the SDLP continues to maintain that the British Government is now a neutral party to the conflict in Ireland.

"This claim ignores all the historic evidence of British domination in Ireland and is wholly contradicted by the events of the past 20 years, all of which point to the continuing commitment of the British Government to impose its will by force on the Irish people through the maintenance of partition and continuing loyalist dominance of the six-county state.

"In the face of British Government injustice and oppression the SDLP, to substantiate claims that the British are neutral, can only point to Article 1 of the Hillsborough Treaty despite the fact that the loyalist veto is explicitly contained within this article, despite the fact that the British Government asserts that the Treaty is a *"bulwark against a United Ireland"* and despite the fact that even Charles Haughey recognised the Treaty to be a *"copper-fastening of partition"*.

"To confer neutrality on the British Government would be to confer neutrality on the Turkish Government whose military invasion has partitioned the island of Cyprus.

"The Sinn Fein delegation, in attempting to explore the SDLP policy of 'unity by consent' was dismayed to discover that contained within this policy was a recognition and acceptance by the SDLP of the loyalist veto.

"The SDLP now appear to accept as absolute the power of veto of a National minority to obstruct and thwart the democratic right of the Irish people as a whole to exercise National Self-Determination. This position is of course untenable for a party which claims to act in the interests of Irish nationalists.

"Self-determination is universally accepted to mean a nation's right to exercise the political freedom to determine its own social, economic and cultural development without external influence and without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity.

"The democratic position, and here the SDLP share our view, is that the search for agreement on a lasting, democratic and peaceful solution must involve Northern Protestants and every effort must be made to get their agreement and involvement in the constitutional, financial and political arrangements needed to replace partition; and, that the civil and religious liberties of Northern Protestants must be guaranteed and protected.

"We concur with the SDLP in stating that the real question is how do we end the British presence in Ireland in a manner which leaves behind a stable and peaceful Ireland.

"The Sinn Féin view is that all experience to date shows that any alliance between sections of Irish nationalism and the British Government in the governance of Ireland can only culminate in an unequal partnership which serves the broad British Government interest. British Government interests have thus been maintained to the detriment of the interests of the Irish Nation.

"What is required is an alliance of Irish political parties and opinion, informal or otherwise, pursuing objectives which look to the interests and well-being of the Irish Nation with the aim of normalising relationships within the Irish Nation and between the Irish Nation and the people of Britain.

"To that end and in response to an SDLP proposal, Sinn Fein agreed that a conference of all political parties in Ireland, convened by the Dublin Government, aimed at reaching agreement on the exercise of national self-determination could make a positive contribution to an eventual, lasting, democratic and peaceful solution.

"Likewise, as a step towards such a strategy and as an exploration of the SDLP's assertion regarding the current British Government position of putative neutrality, we proposed that Sinn Fein and the SDLP jointly issue a call to the Dublin and London

Governments for them to consult together to seek agreement on the policy objective of Irish reunification. The SDLP rejected this proposal.

"If Irish Nationalist Parties and the Dublin Government are genuine about ending the British presence then they must be involved in concerted political action nationally and internationally to bring about conditions in which the right to national self-determination can be exercised.

"There is also a need for concerted political action, nationally and internationally, to defend the democratic rights and social and economic rights of the population of the six-counties and to expose transgressions of those rights. The SDLP rejected our proposal on these issues.

"While the SDLP feel unable, at this time, to join with Sinn Fein in the concerted manner described above, despite the potential within such an initiative to advance towards an overall strategy for justice and peace, it is to be hoped that they will do so independently and that they will exhort the Dublin government to do likewise.

"While we have not presently succeeded in agreeing on *"an overall political strategy to establish justice*

and peace in Ireland" Sinn Fein believes that the quest for such a strategy must continue.

"We firmly believe that the broadest possible alliance, informal or otherwise of Nationalists, Republicans, Socialists and Democrats in active and constant pursuit of a political solution which finds its basis in the democratic principle of national self-determination, is the best means of expediting the achievement of peace and justice in Ireland.

"We remain committed to the pursuit of these objectives and to dialogue aimed at achieving a strategy by which they can be secured.

"We consider our discussions with the SDLP to be an important part of this process and we look forward to further debate and discussion with all those genuinely interested in developing a strategy to establish justice and peace in Ireland."

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