

# **Dermot Nally Papers**

**UCDA P254/67**

Comments

The purpose of the Joint Declaration presented by the Irish Government last June and worked on by Irish and British officials in the intervening period was to bring about peace, and to facilitate a permanent cessation of violence. The method was to show that political objectives common to Irish Nationalists could be pursued by democratic means, consistent with the fundamental obligations of the two Governments to both communities. In recent months considerable efforts were made to ensure that the democratic rights of the Unionist community were fully and explicitly safeguarded, and that the Irish Government would address in a conciliatory way their genuine fears and suspicions. The Irish Government believe that the text in its final version went as far as possible in this direction, without jeopardising the central objective of achieving peace.

The alternative draft text, which is substantially a new document presented at short notice a few days before the Summit was due, is, in the judgement of the Irish Government, incapable of eliciting a positive response and of bringing about peace. The changed format is not per se objectionable. It is the changed content of the document that presents insuperable problems. The whole thrust and language of the revised document is firmly in the direction of further strengthening and reinforcing the Union, and it is difficult to see how this is supposed to help elicit a cessation of violence by the Provisional IRA. Some of the language of the document would not be acceptable to the Irish Government. The whole object of the other draft text is not to prejudice the constitutional position in either direction, and to leave it to be settled over time by political negotiations. (The suggestion in Monday's Daily Telegraph from British sources that the Taoiseach wants a commitment that Britain will work towards the goal of a united Ireland is not supported by the text).

Some specific points:

- The right of self-determination is expressed in terms of entirely separate rights North and South. The emphasis is on separation. (2)
- The emphasis on ending past divisions and working to build an agreed future (whatever that may be) is gone. (3)
- The emphasis in paragraph d. is shifted away from the circumstances in which unity could be realized to constitutional change in the South. The British text, moreover, attempts to preempt the nature and scope of that constitutional change. (4)
- The Convention is eliminated from the text, even though it would be an entirely Irish initiative. There is no guarantee in these circumstances that there would necessarily be any admission by Sinn Féin to a democratic forum or a talks process for a long time to come. (5)
- Although it is not necessarily an important point from the point of view of Sinn Féin, all reference to common membership of the European Community is eliminated. This would not be acceptable to the Irish Government or the SDLP. (6)
- More generally, the Irish Government see no point in reopening discussions, and substituting at the last minute, for a text which had been practically agreed at official level and which in their judgement would have been capable of producing peace, a substantially new text, the whole tone and thrust of which has been completely altered and which would have no hope of achieving peace. (M)