

~~James Molyneux~~



F'6

for
26/6.

With Compliments

The Rt. Hon. James Molyneux, MP.
(Lagan Valley)

Gale

You might like to
glance at the marked
extract from my speech
to the Irish Association
21.6.96

Don't acknowledge.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON, SW1A 0AA

Jim

James Molyneux - Text of speech to the Irish Association, Belfast, 21/6/96

Although this is my first appearance at one of your meetings I would assume that others have referred to the stated aim of your founder "to make reason and goodwill take the place of passion and prejudice in Ireland, North and South."

I have chosen to repeat that charter because it is in line with my own objectives. The first Molyneux came to Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth I as Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer. Regrettably he failed to make the most of his opportunity for the family have seldom been out of the red ever since.

A later ancestor, William, author of "The Case for Ireland Stated" was so level headed that today he would have been accounted a dull dog, too constructive to be a success on a talkback programme, and too dismissive of sound bites for his own good.

I suppose my own modest credentials do not fit preconceived notions. I have never claimed that I am a typical Ulsterman. For a start I was educated at a Roman Catholic Church School. During that time I acquired a liking for the old Latin Mass - now they have gone and changed it!

Secondly I am the probably the only Unionist to have spent six months in a monastery. In the last winter of the War, following the withdrawal from Arnhem, we were instructed to create an airfield at Helmond on the road from Endhoven to Venlo.

The Wing Commander and I decided the weather was becoming too chilly for canvas so we took a closer look at a large monastery overlooking the airfield hoping we might squat in the basement. We were warmly received by the Abbot who insisted that we should have his suite on the first floor while he and the senior brothers moved to the basement. We moved in that evening. Next morning over coffee I expressed gratitude to the Abbot's No. 2 who, with a twinkle in his eye, replied ah yes but it is not such a sacrifice because when German aeroplanes come bomb bomb it will be much safer in the basement.

I regarded him as a soul mate who blended his faith with prudence!

Thirdly, those five war years in my 20's away from home, serving with various nationalities, including many from the South of Ireland, forced me to view my native Province through the other end of the telescope. Another influence was the gradual growth of a resolve to make something of one's life - if one got that life back. That is how it feels on the eve of battle. It may sound high minded but it is not. It is simply a dawning realisation that when friends become casualties one has to do their job in the present and in the distant future.

The minus is that one doesn't have patience with people who simply fritter away their lives and talents - nor does one suffer fools gladly.

My apologies for tendering my CV but it is only fair that you should be aware of some of the unconventional thinking of the speaker to whom you have accorded house room this afternoon.

Your founder's aim of promoting reason and goodwill was echoed by a former Taoiseach Mr Haughey in his 1980 phrase about the totality of relations between the people of these islands.

Mr Haughey courageously projected the vision of all of these islands putting past quarrels behind them and forging enduring relationships which would take account of their underlying sense of values.

For a whole year Mr Haughey and I made published speeches to each other and discovered a good deal of common ground particularly on the need for a replacement for the Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985. The news industry were slow to notice what had been going on, openly for all to see, and when they did see what had been before their noses they did their best to wreck it. They failed in their endeavours and I am convinced that if Mr Haughey had been Prime Minister when I led my team to the Mayhew talks in Dublin in 1992 there would have been progress and not continued stalemate.

On her recent official visit to England, President Robinson in non political terms revived the good neighbour attitude. She pointed out that she did not feel she was in a foreign land because she had been meeting many of the one million of Irish born citizens living and working happily with their English neighbours. When questioned about those in Northern Ireland who regard themselves as Irish, Her Excellency replied that they were nervous and unsure of their future. It is not difficult to discover the reasons. The Irish in Birmingham live under settled patterns of Parliamentary Government which have evolved over 700 years but the Irish in Belfast have no such assurance of settled structures because the Northern Ireland Office launches initiatives with monotonous regularity. The proposed structures would be anything but stable. They would be from the experimental mould which designs electoral systems resembling no known device on the face of this earth. How can any segment of the Northern Ireland community have confidence in structures fundamentally unstable by insistence on weighted majorities; blocking mechanisms which place honest representatives at the mercies of walk out populist politicians who are always with us; not forgetting the instability inherent in the proportional representation system which makes impossible the degree of collective responsibility inseparable from workable democracy?

And overshadowing the sorry machine would be the threat built into the 1982 Act which inspired Lord Prior, then Secretary of State to explain that if any one party withdrew from the Cabinet or Executive he would then have to dismiss the remaining native ministers and claw all power back to his own office.

Small wonder that President Robinson is aware of uncertainty and unease in Northern Ireland. How could it be otherwise?

The latest experimental initiative relied heavily on a crude blackmail labelled "Peace Process". Northern Ireland parties were continually harangued about their duty to give peace a chance. It was difficult to resist such orchestrated pressure particularly as few people could be aware of the forces at work.

On 24 September 1993 I alerted my Party Executive to a plan to announce a total cease fire on 16 October. My anxiety was that none of us, including HM Government had made any preparations for such an event.

Someone leaked my warning to newsmen in London. Republican tacticians were thrown into confusion and their planned surprise Press Conference was cancelled. But I knew they would come again within months. Still it was impossible to persuade anyone to prepare for next time.

When Parliament returned in October 1993 it was possible to engage in discreet discussions on contingency plans to cope with a tactical cease fire. The then Irish Government was also making representations for a very different reason - namely increasing pressure on HM Government.

Over the following two months drafting proceeded on what became the Joint Declaration. I took the view that it would have been improper for me, as Leader of an Opposition Party in Parliament to sponsor what was properly a presentation by two sovereign Governments.

At a late stage in drafting I was concerned by the determination of Mr Reynolds to go ahead with "a Forum within his jurisdiction" because of the danger that all those contributing would subscribe to the principle of consent while the SF/IRA would refuse. That is exactly what happened and the IRA reaction was the London Docklands bomb.

Nevertheless, Mr Major adhered to the Declaration time frame which would follow any tactical ceasefire. The 3 month period without terrorist action; the acceptance of the Declaration; the eventual meetings with Her Majesty's Ministers; and finally all-party talks conditional on a cease fire holding. At least we had the protection of an orderly plan in the form of the Declaration.

Exploration
rather.

In April 1994, armed with certain information, I led my team to Washington. At a Press Conference on 19 April I was asked if I could see an end to terrorism. My affirmative answer prompted the inevitable "when?" I replied - in that year 1994.

And so it came about on 31 August of that year, although Parliament was in Recess, I was on duty in my Westminster office when the expected news broke of the "cessation of military operations". In two business-like meetings with Mr Blair and then Mr Major we calmly initiated the Joint Declaration plan. When invited to talk to the Press in Downing Street I welcomed this initial cessation of military operations and expressed the hope that all who had influence with the IRA would persuade them to progress to a total end to terrorism.

But in Belfast the mood was very different amounting to bewilderment, suspicion and fear. Some said they were suffering from withdrawal symptoms like the children of Israel released from captivity. They were in the grip of fear of the unknown.

I do not apportion blame to our good citizens. The blame attaches to those people who had the opportunity to design and explain the Declaration. Instead we had the bloodcurdling bluster and threats.

I must exempt from that criticism the leaders of the loyalist paramilitary bodies who kept their heads; probed for certain answers and assurances; and then announced their own cease fire in rather more convincing form.

For propaganda purposes the IRA have accused John Major of squandering the opportunities for peace. They do not admit that which has been explained to their tacticians, that it was not in their interests to rush them prematurely into all party talks in which they would quickly have been required to accept the principle of consent - as they were earlier in the Reynolds forum - only this time they would have hit the buffers with a more resounding crash.

It astonishes me that so many intelligent people have swallowed the allegation that John Major dithered and wasted a golden opportunity.

Prime Minister,
you might think it would be
helpful if other members
of the Government were to make these points, Sir M.

fact he was doing the opposite, in giving the IRA time to make the painful transition from terrorism to democracy. That is if any wanted to take that course.

The younger generation also owe John Major a debt of gratitude for enabling them to experience a peace they had never known. Those younger age groups will not readily forgive any who try to snatch it away.

Your good Hon. Secretary first invited me early last year. At that time I was giving thought to my own future and it would have been unfair to your Association to have accepted under false pretences in the shape of self reduced status!

When I readily accepted Mrs. Miskimmons renewed invitation in January of this year neither of us could have predicted the sea change of the last weeks. Even had we met last week our thinking would have been rendered obsolete by now.

The debate is not now about how people can be weaned away from terrorism or others persuaded to withdraw support from terrorism.

Nor is the debate about the form of structures which could make for reconciliation.

Still less is the debate about concessions; devolution; decommissioning or another tactical temporary cessation of military operations (which is all that any cease fire will be).

No - we must face up to one fundamental issue - the principle of consent, a principle taken for granted in democratic societies but anathema to terrorists anywhere. For them consent is only there as a marker for the purpose of calculating how a democratic people can be terrorised into consenting. The word Democracy is a convenient smokescreen just as it was in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

It is a fatal mistake to assume that the gun and the bomb are appendages capable of removal by small talk. They are not! They constitute the driving forces to extract concessions leading on to total surrender to terrorist demands, and over ride the necessity for consent of the greater number, now shown to be 85% of the population.

If terrorists anywhere in the world respected the principle of consent they would not be terrorists, dedicated to subverting the will of the greater number. That truth ought to be self evident.

For all our sakes I hope that those engaged in the Forum or the talks will face that uncomfortable fact for it touches at the heart of the original purpose of the recent election, the Forum, and what were termed - the peace talks, a term which had some validity a week ago - now it has none.

With the job specifications of those elected on 30 May completely transformed, HM Government have to adjust to the new scene. They need to take account of the obliteration of former ideas of how peace could be achieved through concessions and negotiations. Now it has been established that the essential ingredient of consent will never be accepted by terrorists.

It follows that the entire direction of the talks must be adjusted if they are not to become irrelevant.

A new starting point might be the Mayhew talks of 1992 in which there was broad agreement on what was called Strand One - the internal governance of Northern Ireland. Although some modifications might be required by reason of the creation of agencies which have further reduced the

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authority and powers of the Departments. At the other end of the scale the gradual seepage of powers from the UK Parliament to Brussels has reduced the scope for an additional layer of Government in Scotland and Northern Ireland. We have also to recognise that polarisation has increased since 1992 and the inevitable friction generated by the preposterous system of election has continued and probably will continue to be a malignant influence.

Attendant on an early establishment of devolution would be a premature and baleful insistence by a Dublin Government to have protecting power status and a measure of joint central control over a new assembly. In such circumstances there would be a tendency for even enthusiasts for devolution to say "forget it".

INFO IMMEDIATE OTTAWA, BOSTON, ACTON, SNUFFBOX, WHIRL

Last year great resentment was caused in Parliament by the overt action of the Irish Government in interfering in the work of the Boundary Commission of which the Speaker is Chairman.

It was a priceless experience to see the reaction of British MPs whose seats were abolished by the Boundary Commission watching helplessly, unable to save themselves while an Irish Foreign Minister rewrote the Boundary Commission Report on Northern Ireland. That was one example of how not to do it.

SUMMARY

But if it becomes impossible to reinstate even administrative devolution in Northern Ireland there are roles for Northern Ireland representatives which already bring benefits to all the people of Northern Ireland. They are particularly effective when, for example, the two main parties - Ulster Unionist and SDLP make common cause as we did last summer when after a joint team study of vitally important economic problems we met the Prime Minister for an extremely useful meeting. It would have been even more beneficial had the Northern Ireland Office not sabotaged our efforts by announcing as we left the Cabinet Room that the Secretary of State had decided to shake hands with Mr Adams in Washington. The news industry, true to form completed the demolition job.

I hope that it will bring you some consolation to know that level of co-operation goes on continually - in Parliament and at various levels in Northern Ireland.

What is more, we would be even more successful were we not distracted by what I call "High Wire Acts" produced by the Northern Ireland Office at intervals of 18 months since 1972. The nauseating hype given to the present circus has the effect of setting Party against Party and destroys all prospect of success until the fever is over.

My plea to all in positions of influence is to throw away the rusty needles and the wounds of Ulster will quickly heal.

COMMENT

There has been some criticism by commentators in Dublin of the Government's decision to downgrade contacts with Sinn Féin. It is widely believed that Sinn Féin could not declare it did not support the IRA's armed struggle without provoking a split in the Republican movement and that, in asking the

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