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PRESS RELEASE

The Full text of Mr Adams Speech

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams has described the recent speech of British Secretary of State Sir Patrick Mayhew as "evidence of the continued centrality of the Republican struggle".

Mr Adams said: "Quite clearly his speech reflects a political reality and a political contradiction that while the British government seek to demonise and marginalise Republicans, yet at the same time in making this speech Mayhew, like his predecessor Brooke, is acknowledging our ability to effect the political agenda."

"Sinn Féin has a keen interest in examining closely any comments which are presented as a shift in British policy or thinking. All Republicans wish for a peaceful solution. The central and most urgent issue facing everyone, including Mr Mayhew, must be how to resolve this conflict and bring the violence to an end. How to create the conditions for justice, equality and democracy through which a lasting peace can be achieved.

"Mr Mayhew has set out his views of the situation at length. It is significant that he is one of a line of British ministers who has been moved to respond in this way.

"If this is a genuine effort to address the above matters then despite the flaws in his analysis, nationalists and republicans will be concerned that this should be built upon and so I approach Mr Mayhew's remarks, as Sinn Féin always seeks to approach such developments, in a positive way.



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"In doing so I note that every British initiative to date has been within the context of partition, a British political agenda and with the Unionist veto underwritten.

"Unfortunately the Mayhew speech falls into this category and reflects a refusal on the part of the British government to recognise that its presence and its insistence on partitionist structures remain the greatest barriers to peace.

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"Some of those who will have read the full text of Mayhew's speech will have been struck by its sometimes patronising tone.

"Nowhere does he mention partition and its effect. Nowhere in his opening four point analysis is the presence of Britain and its role as instigator of the divisions in Ireland even a mention!

"Instead we are again presented with the proposition that the British are 'neutral' or in Mayhew's terms 'facilitators' with no 'blue print or master plan'.

"No one believes this and many observers correctly see this assertion as aimed primarily at the international community as an excuse by the British for maintaining the status quo. Contrary to Mayhew's claim, Britain does have a 'blue print' and one which was clearly discerned during the Stormont talks when British Ministers again tried to secure agreement on a Partitionist arrangement.



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"If Mr Mayhew is hinting at a change in this position and if he wants to be taken seriously on this issue then he should accept that the Irish people have the right to national self-determination and facilitate the introduction of measures to give legislative effect to the exercise of that right. Instead of the current position the British government should move to a positive policy and use its influence and energy to win the unionist consent for an agreement between all the people of Ireland on their political future.

The British government is in a position to dramatically transform the situation by adopting a policy of ending partition. Such a policy shift, at this time would meet with a positive response from Republicans and usher in a new era".



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"Historically the British presence in Ireland and its denial of an Irish national democracy to the Irish people has been a continuous source of conflict. For centuries every generation in Ireland has suffered the consequences of that conflict. Despite periods of an absence of violence the conditions fostered and imposed on the Irish people by British occupation have meant that Ireland has never known real peace.

"The refusal by successive British governments to allow the Irish nation to exercise its right to self-determination and democracy has been and is British government policy.

"In 1980, during the Republican hunger strikes in Armagh and Long Kesh, the Anglican Bishop of Salisbury, Dr John Austin Baker commented on Britain's denial of democracy in Ireland and its effect. He said: 'No British government ought ever to forget that this perilous moment, like many before it, is the outworking of a history for which our country is primarily responsible. England seized Ireland for its own military benefit. It planted Protestant settlers there to make it strategically secure. It humiliated and penalised the native Irish and their Catholic religion; and then, when it could no longer hold on to the whole island, it kept back part to be home for the settlers' descendants, a non-viable solution from which Protestants have suffered as much as anyone.'



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'Our injustice created the situation; and by constantly repeating that we will maintain it so long as the majority (in the North) wish it, we actively inhibit Protestant and Catholic from working out a new future together. This is the root of the violence.....'

"Sir Patrick Mayhew, like his many predecessors, ignores this central issue. That he chooses to do so is an indication of how far removed his analysis is from reality. He is remiss also in praising the work of successive British governments, since 1972, in promoting equality of opportunity in employment. This is not a policy in itself of.

"On the contrary any examination of the practice of discrimination in that period demonstrates the lack of concern and commitment by the British to tackling the problem of structured discrimination.

"Another example of Mayhew's patronising attitude is to be found in his comments on the Irish language and literature and in his empty gesture on the Gaelicisation of street names. This move is in keeping with pending legislation from the Council of Europe and its Convention on minority languages.



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"It is wrong to claim inferior motivation especially when Mayhew continues to discriminate against the Irish language and refuses to end the inequalities in funding faced by Irish language schools.

"His remarks about Yugoslavia are in a similar vein and it was with particular disappointment that I read his outlandish claim that 'properly understood, 'Brits out' means the ethnic cleansing of a million human beings'.

"He knows that a British withdrawal means nothing of the sort and his remark is particularly inappropriate coming at a time when Loyalist murder gangs are murdering Catholics almost on a daily basis, in their homes and on the streets; have killed more people than any other group this year; have killed more civilians than any other group in two decades of conflict; have a history of pogrom against the nationalist community and have expressed a determination to increase their bloody activities.

"Having criticised some of his remarks, it is only fair to examine what Patrick Mayhew's speech is about? Is he, as some observers suggest, trying to start a peace process? Has he even bothered to study Sinn Féin policy, including Towards a Lasting Peace? Or are his comments really aimed at Republicans or at the wider nationalist community?



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"Is he concerned only to put a gloss on British strategy for the benefit of international, including British and USA, opinion? Given the failure, to date, of this strategy including 'the talks process', is he attempting to shepherd Unionists into another phase by arousing their fears of the alternative? Perhaps it has all these concerns in mind?"

"Mr Maynew makes much in his speech of the need to identify the nature of any conflict and of dialogue as a means to resolve it. He is right, but he must know that ~~conflict resolution is not possible if any section of a community is excluded from the negotiating process.~~ Perhaps Mr Maynew harbours the hope that Republican resistance will be worn down. It will not. Peace will have to be negotiated and peacemaking is about bringing hostile parties together to seek agreement through negotiation."

"Two years ago Archbishop Tutu of South Africa, a determined opponent of injustice and supporter of freedom advised the British government: 'Let your negotiations be as inclusive as possible. Don't let any feel they've been excluded. Let them be represented by those they regard as their authentic spokespersons, otherwise talks, as we have discovered at home, become an exercise in futility'."

Peace talks = chm



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"The exclusion of Sinn Féin by Patrick Mayhew is undemocratic and is itself an obstacle to peace."

"Our party represents approximately 35% of the nationalist vote in the 6 counties, a greater proportion of the nationalist vote than the DUP represents of the Unionist vote; we command greater electoral support than the Alliance Party; and are the second largest Party in Belfast.

"Sinn Féin has a democratic mandate and it is that mandate which gives us our right to be involved in any discussions."

"To put any pre-condition on Sinn Féin participation serves only to delay our inevitable involvement. That Sinn Féin will be involved in talks is absolutely certain. Patrick Mayhew and his advisers know this as well as I do. So does Ian Paisley. Hence his outburst."

"Sinn Féin does not put any preconditions on talking and we are committed to the development of a real peace process. It is a matter of regret that this commitment is not shared by the British government at this time.

"Patrick Mayhew would do well to look to the international community where significant political changes are taking place. That community will not always be so patient with British policy makers."



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"The UN and the EC are useful avenues which should be explored in any genuine peace process in Ireland. The imminent succession of President-elect Bill Clinton provides a further interesting area of change where assistance to help end this conflict might be found.

"The people of Ireland and Britain want peace, a lasting peace which can bring an end to the cycle of violence which has been a part of our history for generations.

"A peace process, if it is to be meaningful and genuine must address the political problems which has been a part of our history for generations.

"What is needed is a strategy for change and peace. This means London adopting a policy aimed at ending partition and which seeks, with Dublin, to achieve this in the shortest possible time consistent with obtaining maximum consent to the process and minimising costs of every kind and recognising the centrality of inclusive dialogue in this process.

"The international community can help the peace process in Ireland. The European Community which is involved in a process of economic and political restructuring can provide valuable assistance while the UN, which has the authority

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to monitor a declassification process in Ireland could during any transitional period convene an international conference on the democratic resolution of the conflict in Ireland.

"Every British effort to rule Ireland has failed. The Irish people have been the main victims of this failure. The Government of Ireland Act was not a solution. The various British government 'initiatives' since then have failed also. Since its creation 70 years the six county state has been in a permanent state of crisis and for the last two decades there has been open conflict. Partition has failed. Britain's presence in Ireland and peace are incompatible.

"A new approach is needed. One which would involve comprehensive negotiations between all of the parties. Sinn Féin remains willing and able to play its part in this process.

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