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News Extracts

7 Ely Place, Dublin 2  
Telephone: 01 645506  
Facsimile: 01 645502

David Hanly:

The President of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela, has been on Channel 4's Breakfast Television programme this morning. Interviewed by Bob Geldof, Mr Mandella, who enjoys the freedom of Dublin, expressed tacit support for the Provisional IRA and for communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In a moment we'll be talking to Dublin's Lord Mayor, Gay Mitchell, who watched the programme and was disturbed by Mr Mandella's comments, but first, the interview.

Nelson Mandella: (Recorded Interview)

The IRA is combatting a struggle for self assertion. They do not want Britain, a foreign country to run a colony in Northern Ireland.

Bob Geldof: (Recorded Interview)

The majority of those people do...

Nelson Mandella:

Yes.

Bob Geldof:

They get to vote every four years and they consistently vote..

Nelson Mandella:

Well, the majority of the people in this country, there are large numbers of people who don't, did not believe in what we're saying, nevertheless we're convinced that what we're saying is correct and that...

Bob Geldof:

But you didn't bomb them into that.

Nelson Mandella:

And we don't want any form of colonialism.

Bob Geldof:

I would agree.

Nelson Mandella:

And wherever colonialism is formed, we support those who fight it because people should have self-expression.

Bob Geldof:

I'm from the South of Ireland, they can't accept your analysis of what's going on there...

Nelson Mandella:

You know better, you know better, I differ to you.

Bob Geldof:

I certainly do. An example I'd like to give you, more pertinent maybe, is you would defend some Eastern Block countries under the Communist regime because they helped you and yet here is a man, your exact moral equivalent, your exact literal equivalent almost, Vaclav Havel, who is in jail fighting for the exact same thing you are fighting for here, the liberation of his people, and yet the oppressors of those people were helping you and when you came out of jail, you defend them.

Nelson Mandella:

Why not? I mean we had not got the support of the socialist countries...

Bob Geldof:

But they were oppressing their own people.

Nelson Mandella:

No, just a moment. It is not our aim to be examining what they do with their own countries, we go there to say, we're conducting a struggle in South Africa, can you assist us. They have assisted us. After today the West is not prepared to give us arms but the socialist countries gave us arms.

David Hanly:

And that was Nelson Mandella talking to Bob Geldof on Channel Four's Breakfast TV programme earlier this morning. As I said the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Gay Mitchell, was watching and he's here with me now. What is your reaction Lord Mayor?

Gay Mitchell:

The interview was glib at one level and very arrogant at another. At one level he referred to the, what he calls the struggle for self assertion against colonialism and then when he was tackled by Mr Geldof, he said, I

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differ to you, you know better. I really think it's making global (inaud) reviews of situations outside of Africa and this kind, of this kind, is both misinformed and arrogant and I don't think it should be let go. Mr Mandella, as you correctly point out, is a Free Man of the City of Dublin, he's also a very powerful international figure and I think that we should communicate to him the view of the vast majority of people here, that what is going on here is not a freedom fight, it's terrorism and it's a terrorism against innocent people and it's a murder campaign and it's no more than that.

David Hanly:

What do you make though, of his equation between the IRA and the ANC, obviously he sees them both as being part of the fight against colonialism, which he sees as the bugbear?

Gay Mitchell:

Well I think that's a very strong reflection on the ANC, and I think the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement here should put Mr Mandella right on that and should reassure the people here that the ANC is not an IRA type campaign. In this country, a free and open elections, and people are elected to speak for the people, it's not a situation where people are suffering apartheid or denied the right to vote, it's an open society and I just don't see that there's an equation whatsoever. Now I understand that David Andrews is visiting South Africa within the next month and I think he should take the opportunity to seek a meeting with Mr Mandella and in the intervening period our Ambassador there should ask to meet him and certainly since he's a Free Man of the City of Dublin I intend to write to him and to point out to him that he is wrong. When he was challenged by Mr Geldof he backed off a bit, I think the rest of us should challenge him and put him right. Now I don't want to put Mr Mandella further off side, it looks like he's going to be a global leader for some time to come and certainly his influence in South Africa and that region is enormous. What we need to do is persuade him as to the error of his ways and to put to him the case that the vast majority of elected representatives of the people here see.

David Hanly:

But obviously he's had plenty of time to find this out for himself. He has been here, he now has Kadar Asmal at his side, he knows all about it why does he not see the point of view that you're putting forward?

Gay Mitchell:

Well, it's not just in relation to the IRA. He said some peculiar things which are not helpful to his cause, like 'the enemies of Europe

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are not my enemies' and went on about the former communist regimes and that sort of thing. I think generally, the man is a man who has a lot of pressure and a lot of time constraints and he's obviously got difficulties in his own country to pursue, so I don't imagine that gives him a lot of time to become informed about all the situations in each country, and I think it is wrong of him to take a global view and to make relationships between situations in one part of the world and another, but it will gain currency if we don't correct it and I think we've therefore got to correct it and we've got to take steps ....

David Hanly:

And would part of that correction be a threat to remove the Freedom of the City of Dublin from him as a supporter of the Provisional IRA?

Gay Mitchell:

Well there's no precedence for doing that and I don't think that it would benefit anybody to do that and it would just further put the man off side. I think really what we've got to do is not to let the point go and to tackle him and to inform him as to the situation here and to bring him back on side and I would say this, I'm relying on your recollection, you I do think at the time, when they conferred the freedom that this particular point was brought up and we were assured that there was no such support for the IRA and we've got to pursue that point and make sure that there isn't.

David Hanly:

Lord Mayor, Gay Mitchell, thank you very much for coming in to talk to us and thank you for also taking the trouble to watch that programme.

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