



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/48/95

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

Speeches by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in Andersonstown

Sky News - 2.45 pm

Wednesday, 31 August, 1994

Introduction: The next voice you will hear will be that of an actor, relaying what Gerry Adams has to say.

Gerry Adams: Can I say first of all that not all of the Sinn Fein leadership is here today. There in Dublin though reprobates like Tom Hartley and others send their best greeting, ... Joe Cahill sends a big 'hi' from New York. It is also a day I think of mixed emotions. We remember all of the people, all of our friends and neighbours and our comrades who have died throughout this last 25 years. Today is the 21st anniversary of a close friend of mine and other people have family who have died. At this time I want to include them also in this sentiment. 21 years ago one and volunteer Jim were shot and died in the Ballymurphy area and so our feelings of buoyancy and of confidence are tempered by the knowledge of the sacrifices of the Republican people especially of the six counties, but throughout all of Ireland and throughout the world people have laboured and fought for this struggle.

I want to say a word or two about the volunteer soldiers of the Irish Republican Army. This is a generation of men and women who have fought the British for the last 25 years.....

I want to salute the courage of the IRA leadership and the historic..... and decisive initiative that today they've taken and which they announced this morning. They have created, if you like, a crucial moment a decisive moment in the history of this island and of Anglo Irish relationships, and I applaud and commend the leadership of the army and I also applaud and commend you people here today, and others who could not be here, because you also are undefeated by 25 years.

The onus is on the British government, the onus is on Mr. Major to seize this moment. I also want to appeal to the Unionists to join with us, to join with others, to join with all of the people of this island in creating a new future for all of the people of this island, for all of the Irish people. We have waited for too long for our freedom. We are demanding of Mr. Major's Government that he take decisive steps now to move the situation forward in a fundamental way, and that means fundamental, political and constitutional change. It means a demilitarisation of the situation, it means our prisoners home from England and home with their families from prisons in Ireland.

I want to end by repeating what Barbara has said. This struggle is not over, this struggle is into a new phase. All of us have a role

(4)

to play in moving it forward. Every woman here, every man here has a role to play in moving the whole situation forward. Nationalist Ireland, Irish America, the international community, all have a role to play in moving it forward. Let you remember one thing, if we had not decided 25 years ago that we were never again going to be treated like second class citizens, if we had not taken that decision, if we had not decided to struggle for freedom, we would still have been treated like second class, sub-human, undignified human beings. We are not that. We are Irish people, we are no better and no worse than anyone else. But we are going to have our freedom and that freedom is going to embrace Unionists and Nationalists, Catholics and Protestants in a free and united Irish Republic.

Martin McGuinness: A few weeks ago I spoke at a march.. the Battle of the Bogside. There was about 7,000 people and for a few short minutes we reflected on the events of the last 25 years, making the point quite forcefully that we who have been so close to the events of the last 25 years, sometimes I think we could appreciate that we have been so close to history, to probably the most important historical period in the course of Irish history - the events of the last 25 years. The reason why it has been so momentous has been because we have had a situation where a community particularly in Belfast City, in Derry and the Bogside and other parts of the six counties: Tyrone, Armagh, Fermanagh and Down - we have had a community which has been besieged for the last 25 years. We have had a community which has been forced to resist the worst effects of everything the British Government and the British Military and all the powers they possess could throw against them. As Gerry Adams has said, and I said on the night of the Battle of the Bogside commemoration, all that Britain had has never defeated the people who have followed this road, who stand here today.

I also said that we were the history makers and I believe we are, and it is quite clear from the decision which has been taken by the leadership of the IRA which I am very pleased at. That the IRA today on 31 August 1994 are the history makers. They are the people who have made this for everyone, what is required in the months ahead.

END