



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Meeting between the Government and the SDLP:-
Background Note on recent political developments.

Position of the SDLP

1. The SDLP have been strongly supportive of the Declaration. In a speech in the House of Commons on 15 December, John Hume stated that "... it is one of the most comprehensive declarations that has been made about British-Irish relations in the past 70 years". In a statement on 4 February, Mr. Hume said, inter alia, that "what the Declaration essentially does among other things is address the stated reasons for armed struggle given by the IRA". Mr. Hume rejected unhelpful language used by the British Prime Minister and urged the two Governments to offer any clarification required.

2. In recent weeks, there have been some indications of disagreement between John Hume and Seamus Mallon in relation to publication of Hume/Adams and the visit to the US by Gerry Adams. In a number of interviews, Mr. Mallon has argued that the Hume/Adams document involved acceptance by Sinn Fein of the principle of self-determination based on consent and that elements of the speech made by Gerry Adams in New York were in "absolute contradiction" to Hume/Adams. In an RTE interview on 8 February, Mr. Mallon said that seeing Mr. Adams interviewed in the US together with Mr. Hume made him "very uncomfortable". In a Radio Ulster interview on 6 February, he denied that there is criticism of John Hume within the SDLP but added that "there is some unease at the way in which Mr. Adams was able to handle the American visit ... there is some unease at the length of time that this process has taken".

3. In a BBC interview on 6 February, John Hume declined to place a deadline in relation to a Sinn Fein response to the Declaration but added that the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis

would clearly be "the point of decision".

4. After a further RTE interview in which he said that he was "not his brother's keeper", Mr. Mallon conspicuously closed ranks with his party leader in a radio interview last Saturday (attached on brief).

Recent developments relating to the Joint Declaration

5. In two major speeches during January and in interviews and other public statements, the Taoiseach has developed the key themes of the Declaration. In an address to the Irish Association on 10 January, he emphasized the Declaration's historic nature and importance. He noted, in particular, that it spelled an end to the coercion or attempted coercion of either tradition in Ireland, nationalist or Unionist, and he underlined the link between self-determination and consent.
6. In a speech to the UCD Law Society on 20 January, the Taoiseach dwelled in some detail on the concept of national self-determination and its treatment within the Declaration. Reviewing international expressions of this concept, he again highlighted the link between self-determination and the principle of consent, remarking that self-determination was about "government with the consent of the governed". He also observed that there was no way round the need for agreement and consent and that, in the Declaration, "we have travelled the full distance" on the central principles of self-determination and consent.
7. In an interview in the Sunday Press on 6 February, the Tánaiste said he would like to see political talks taking the Declaration as their natural point of departure and aiming at a deep and comprehensive settlement of the problem. In relation to a Sinn Féin role, the Tánaiste said the Government do not wish to set any absolute

deadlines but that the Government do not believe the effort to negotiate a comprehensive settlement on the basis of the principles agreed between the two Governments in the Declaration can be deferred indefinitely.

8. Recent British Government speeches have taken a softer line on the question of "clarification" and on other matters arising from the Declaration. In a speech on 20 January, the Secretary of State accepted that, in the aftermath of a cessation of violence, clarification could be appropriate on the steps required to get Sinn Fein into talks. After the Anglo-Irish Conference on 28 January, he said he was prepared to "expound" on the Joint Declaration and that he was prepared to make a distinction between pointing out what the document says and reinterpreting it.

In a speech to US correspondents in London on 10 February, the Secretary of State re-iterated that the British Government would enter exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein within 3 months of the ending of violence. In an interview in the Irish Times on 14 February, he stated that self determination can lead to a range of possible outcomes subject to the consent requirement on the status of Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State said that, following an end to violence, exploratory talks with Sinn Fein could discuss the party's admission to the political talks process, its role in Northern Ireland along side the other constitutional parties and the practical consequence of the ending of violence.

Prospects for political talks

9. Recent British Government statements have also highlighted the importance of an early resumption of political talks involving the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. In his Trinity Association speech,

the Secretary of State said (with reference to the Ancram round of contacts with the parties) that "the current talks will now be intensified and we shall seek to give them more focus and direction in order to move forward the process of achieving widespread agreement".

10. Statements by the Irish Government over recent weeks have preferred to keep the focus firmly on the importance of peace as a catalyst for wider political agreement and the need for patience in relation to the timing of a Republican response to the Declaration.
11. However, this has been balanced by a recognition that the waiting period cannot be open-ended and that a point may come when, with no sign of a positive response, the two Governments would have to consider alternative strategies and possibly decide to proceed without Sinn Fein.
12. At the Inter-Governmental Conference on 28 January, the Irish side stressed that resumed Talks should be based on a framework agreed between the two Governments and commensurate with the depth achieved in the Declaration.
13. In a letter to the Tánaiste on 4 February (following a Financial Times interview), the Secretary of State said it was his firm belief that Sinn Fein cannot be allowed to put all political debate on hold while they make up their minds. In relation to an agreed framework between the two Governments to carry the talks process forward, the Secretary of State urged that officials from both sides address that matter intensively. He attached a paper summarising in "check-list" form the main themes to have emerged from the Ancram bilaterals and indicating that this paper would be given to the political parties. It was subsequently passed to the UUP leader (prior to receipt of the Tánaiste's reply). In his reply of 10 February, the Tánaiste commented that the British paper

seemed to go beyond the remit of the Ancram discussions and that its treatment of Strand II issues appeared essentially minimalist.

14. Remarks by Jim Molyneux have deepened suspicions about British Government intentions in relation to resumed talks. Molyneux has e.g. praised the Prime Minister for emphasizing the need "to restore democratic accountability to the people of Northern Ireland at whatever level can be managed and in whatever way it can be phased". He has also claimed that, with agreement among the four constitutional parties, "we could have a workable Assembly up and running by late spring or early autumn". In media comments on 10 February, Mr. Molyneux stated that the Downing St. Declaration had failed and that the British Government and the local constitutional parties should now work at restoring local democracy.

Anglo-Irish Section
15 February, 1994

A1714

TRANS:

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FOR: Gerry Nolan
DATE: 12 February 1994

FROM: Christy O'Shea
PAGES: 8

Interview with Mr. Seamus Mallon, Deputy Leader of the
SDLP on "Inside Politics", Radio Ulster,
Saturday, 12 February, 1994

Interviewer: Jim Dougal

Introduction: Good afternoon. As the SDLP leader John Hume and the Irish Government encourage Sinn Fein to provide a definitive answer to the Downing Street Declaration at or before their Ard Fheis at the end of this month there is no indication that they will do so. Yesterday the Ulster Unionist leader James Molyneaux said that the Declaration had been a failure and that the Government should recognise that and now get on with restoring democracy to Northern Ireland. DUP leader Ian Paisley said that Mr. Major must reject the Declaration. But during the week the SDLP Deputy leader Seamus Mallon called on Sinn Fein for a speedy response but he said that speed should not be put before results. Mr. Mallon also said that he was uncomfortable seeing his party leader John Hume being interviewed on television alongside Gerry Adams in New York last week. But he denies that there is any criticism within the SDLP of the party leader who he says has done more for the cause of peace than anyone else. Mr. Mallon's main bone of contention with the Republican movement is over their interpretation of self-determination. When I spoke to him yesterday in London I first asked him for the SDLP's definition of self-determination.

Mr. Mallon: Well it's that which was adopted by the Irish people, by the Irish Government, by all of the constitutional

parties, by the nationalist parties in the island of Ireland in terms of Article 1A of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is there within that Anglo-Irish Agreement, it is there within the Joint Declaration and put simply it is that the right to self-determination as it says in the Joint Declaration by the Irish people alone and I quote that word "as of right" and I quote that term "without outside impediment" and I quote that phrase "they have that right to exercise self-determination based on consent and agreement" and that is the essence, that is the essence of it because surely to Heavens the spirit of self-determination is essentially about governing with the consent of the governed and nationalists in the North of Ireland more than anybody else should know what it is to be governed without their consent and I would never like to see the nationalist community in the North of Ireland either practically or psychologically getting into a situation where they were going to deny that right to other people.

Interviewer: But within that you accept the principle of consent which is in other words the Unionist veto in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Mallon: There is a substantial and fundamental difference between the term consent and the term veto.

Interviewer: Define them.

Mr. Mallon: I will indeed. Consent is in relation to any constitutional change which might be imposed on a large section of the community above their wishes and above their heads and that runs counter to the United Nations Charter. It runs counter to Article 29 of the Irish Constitution, it runs counter to the Helsinki Final Act Agreement, it runs counter to the type of convention and agreement that exists in international law and Ireland is part of the international community and I cannot and would never suggest that Ireland for its own internal reasons

should contravene either those conventions or those international laws because they say very very clearly that where you have a divided community, where you have partition it should not be resolved by force or threat of violence by one side against another and that is something we must hold to.

Interviewer: You see paragraph 5 of the Hume/Adams document reads "the Taoiseach accepts on behalf of the Irish Government that the democratic right to self-determination by the people of the island as a whole must be achieved and exercised with the agreement and consent of the people of Northern Ireland", and Gerry Adams is joint author of that, the IRA put out a statement accepting the Hume/Adams document. Do you believe, therefore, that Gerry Adams and the IRA have already accepted the principle of consent as you see it?

Mr. Mallon: Well I have been saying this since New Year's eve to be precise. I questioned it then because it was on that day that both Sinn Fein and the IRA issued their New Year's message, hours before they shot dead a soldier in Crossmaglen. Now, they said that the core of the problem and the core fundamental issue was self-determination. I said then and I say it now if and I agree by the way that self-determination is the core issue, that if that is what they believe then they should go to paragraph 5 of the Hume/Adams document because within that as you have read it is the doctrine, the principle of self-determination based on consent to which they say they have agreed. The IRA have said they have agreed it, the IRA have said they will stop violence on the basis of that document. Now, where has this gone wrong because they seem to have left that position now, because Mr. Adams when he was in the United States made a totally different type statement because, and I don't want to quote too much, but I think this is worth quoting, in his press statement in New York on February 2nd when he said and I quote "it is a nonsense to argue that the consent of a national minority within a non-

democratic and artificially created State is necessary before any constitutional change could occur". Now, what you have read from the Hume/Adams document and what I have read from Mr. Adams' speech, one contradicts the other, they are totally incompatible.

Interviewer: Are you saying that Mr. Adams is moving away from the Hume/Adams document?

Mr. Mallon: I'm saying those are incompatible, I'm saying they are contradictory. I will leave Mr. Adams to say whether he is or is not moving away from any other document. I'm dealing in fact and I'm saying that the factual situation is those are contradictory.

Interviewer: But what you're saying really is that he is repudiating paragraph 5 of the document which he jointly authored with John Hume?

Mr. Mallon: I'm saying one contradicts the other, that they are incompatible. Now, whatever interpretation wants to be put on that by others, let them put it on it. I will reiterate that those are contradictory and incompatible.

Interviewer: Well, if Mr. Adams is contradicting the Hume/Adams document isn't it therefore very unlikely that he would accept the Downing Street Declaration?

Mr. Mallon: I would put it in a different way, I would put it in this way. If as he said he would, that he would accept the Hume/Adams document and the IRA would also accept it, then I want to know why they will not accept the Joint Declaration because the core element is exactly the same within both and that core element is self-determination. The reality is in terms of what they have defined as a core element, that there isn't, as I have said so often, a whisker of difference.

Interviewer: Isn't it really time Mr. Mallon that you went to your leader John Hume and said to him, publish this document, publish the Hume/Adams document side by side with the Downing Street Declaration and let people decide what Mr. Adams has signed up to?

Mr. Mallon: I think everyone knows my view on that. I think it should be published, I've said that publicly, I've said it consistently. It is a matter for John Hume and Mr. Adams as to when, if or when they are going to publish that document and you know in politics you get very strong-willed people and we wouldn't be worth a hoot if we weren't string-willed people and John Hume is very much a man of his own views, he holds his views very strongly and he is not going to publish that document until he makes a judgement to do so whether Seamus Mallon asks him or not. Now, that's the reality about political life, we're dealing with strong people and it's not simply a matter of the Deputy leader of the SDLP going to the leader of the SDLP and telling him or asking him to publish that document, life politically doesn't work like that thanks be to Heaven.

Interviewer: So isn't Mr. Adams perhaps leading Mr. Hume up the garden path?

Mr. Mallon: Well if he is he is the first man who has ever done it and I think anybody who has dealt politically with John Hume over the years knows he is a very very difficult man to lead up a garden path or to lead in any direction that he doesn't want to go. And that's why he is leader of the SDLP because of that strength and because of his perception and because of his integrity and because of all of those qualities that we have all recognised and admired for so many years. That's why he's leader of the SDLP, that's why he has been able to do what he has done in this peace initiative with Mr. Adams because I suggest no other politician on the island of Ireland from the nationalist

community would have had the credibility and the standing within his own party and within Irish nationalist life to be able to do what he did and he should be admired for doing that. Now, I don't always agree with the way in which he has done it, again that's politics.

Interviewer: I was going to make that point...

Mr. Mallon: I thought you might.

Interviewer: you yourself have said that you have been uncomfortable with some of the things which he has done for example sitting side by side with Gerry Adams in America doing an interview?

Mr. Mallon: Yes and the interview was done with you, your goodself if I should remind you. But the reality is you see within political life we do agree about the fundamentals, we do agree as to what our objectives are, we do agree about the basic philosophies that we are pursuing, we don't always have to agree about every little iota and every little thing that happens. It would be a strange type of political world if that happened and it doesn't happen in the SDLP, it doesn't happen in any other political party and look, let me suggest it doesn't happen in any home or family either.

Interviewer: Is there a lot of criticism within the SDLP of John Hume?

Mr. Mallon: There is not. There is some unease at the way in which Mr. Adams was able to handle the American visit. There is some unease at the length of time that this process has taken. There is some unease in relation to, certainly in Belfast, the position of West Belfast, vis-a-vis Mr. Adams and Dr. Hendron but there is not that type of criticism that some people are trying

to invent, it is not there, it is not going to be there because we know what the stakes are, the prize is peace and that will override any other consideration.

Interviewer: But where do we go from here. I mean how long did John Hume and Gerry Adams expect people to wait?

Mr. Mallon: It's not a matter for John Hume and Gerry Adams. John Hume has asked Gerry Adams very very forcefully, no later than Monday of this week, in a programme where he asked him to move and move quickly. Mr. Adams has a difficult task within his organisation, I think people realise that and even there are signs now that even the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is recognising that in some of his statements. But it cannot go on indefinitely because there is one factor that we shouldn't forget, nor should we allow anyone else to forget that the Joint Declaration was not written for Sinn Fein and the IRA, it was written for all of the Irish people, it was a set of principles for the future on which all of the Irish people will base their political thinking and whatever structures are arrived at. Now, there's a mistaken view afoot that somehow or another if Sinn Fein don't accept this that the Joint Declaration is gone, it is nothing, you can't dispense with principles in that way, it is upon those principles that the future will be built irrespective of who accepts or who doesn't.

Interviewer: You are a politician of vast experience of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland, what do you expect the Republican movement to do at the end of the day?

Mr. Mallon: I think they will have a cessation of violence. I think they are on the road to peace, I think they are having difficulties in doing that and I didn't expect they would have anything but difficulties. I think it will be longer than people think, it will be more tortuous than people believe but it will

happen and I am convinced of that.

Interviewer: You are convinced the IRA will stop?

Mr. Mallon: I am convinced there will be a cessation of violence from within the Republican movement, I am convinced they will move into the political process, I am convinced of that more now than I have been at any stage of this whole process.

Interviewer: Could you just tell me why?

Mr. Mallon: Instinct, what I hear around me, what I see around me, when I look at the attitudes of people on the ground not just in my own constituency but throughout Northern Ireland, I believe there is that burning desire within the entire community for a complete cessation of violence and for peace I believe it is there within a very large section of the Republican movement and I believe that those who would want to continue with violence will not be able to sustain their position in the face of that desire.

Interviewer: I know you don't want to put a time limit on this, but is this going to happen soon?

Mr. Mallon: There is no such thing as a time limit in politics, especially the type of politics in the North of Ireland but it is going to happen and I believe we should all get ourselves mentally adjusted to the fact that it is going to be slow, it is going to be torturous but it is going to be worthwhile.

Interviewer: That was the SDLP Deputy leader Seamus Mallon and that's all from Inside Politics for today.