



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/97/35

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

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

27

Journal (O/R)  
To note re.

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST

25/8

FST  
FSS  
by [unclear]  
S/Sec [unclear]  
Dalt  
G. Sherry  
Amb Wash.  
Conall A  
9 Hayes.

(J)

FOR: LAVINA COLLINS/EMBASSY LONDON

FROM: C. O'Shea

DATE: 10 August 1995

PAGES: 3

W. Rose  
K. [unclear]  
A

Extract from Good Morning Ulster, 10 August 1995

Interview with Albert Reynolds

**A Reynolds:** The decommissioning of arms wasn't a precondition during the Downing Street Declaration and wasn't a precondition before the ceasefires, and while we all accept that, you know, the guns have to be destroyed on all sides and that we want to get back to an unarmed society, it is an issue that has to be dealt with during the process. You can't have an arms settlement at the end of the day without the destruction of arms and I think everyone recognises that. But to put it in as a precondition is - preconditions don't work - it's really moving the goal posts after the game has started.

**Interviewer:** Now would you have signed the Downing Street Declaration if decommissioning had been a precondition for all-party talks?

**A Reynolds:** No I wouldn't because I've said many times and made it clear that from my discussions with both sides, from people that have been coming to me, I knew it wouldn't work. There was no point in putting a precondition that was going to destroy the whole Declaration, so there was no question of it arising anyway. But had it arisen, I was sufficiently well-informed of the whole situation that it wouldn't have worked.

**Interviewer:** What about the fears of the Unionist community? Do you not accept as Ken Newell said that there's a need to build trust and removing the guns and the bombs is one way of doing that.

**A Reynolds:** You must start from a position of building trust by indeed carrying out your solemn declarations and commitments given, and both Governments gave commitments in paragraph 10 in the Downing Street Declaration about the entry into full-scale negotiations with both Governments. And the ceasefire is there for almost 12 months. It's quite clear that violence has been rejected as the way forward, that the democratic process has been embraced and, you know, people expect both Governments to live up to the Declarations. And after all, the Ulster Unionists supported the Downing Street Declaration, so I mean it wasn't a precondition there and it wasn't a precondition for the ceasefires. So what I'm saying is, the talks should go ahead; it is an issue, another issue that has to be dealt with, certainly a very important one and one which we all recognise and both sides recognise. This is not a question of the IRA, I mean the loyalist paramilitaries have been equally strong in their views to me and it seems to me that they're not going to decommission their arms at this point in time either. So here's an issue on which both sides are very clear on what their views are, and let's go ahead with the agenda. That matter has to be dealt with but not as a precondition.

**Interviewer:** You just touched upon it, during the debate you said that you'd held behind-the-scenes discussions with loyalists, with David Ervine, with Gusty Spence. How important were they?

**A Reynolds:** Of course these discussions, which were through intermediaries, were very important because we had to find exactly what their fears were, the fears of the Unionist community, why they were involved in arms conflict, the reasons for it. And I mean it's very clear when you hear the leaders of both sides tell you what their fears are. I can understand them, I always did understand them. And that's why the Downing Street Declaration was a very balanced document and in fact it's difficult for me to understand why the Framework Document is being rejected because it is no more than an elaboration of the Downing Street Declaration. As I say, decommissioning was not a precondition in the Downing Street Declaration or in the ceasefire.

**Interviewer:** The prisoners issue took up a large part of the debate. Are you saying on that

issue that the British Government has promised more than at the moment they are delivering?

**A Reynolds:** What I'm saying is that I made it clear that both Governments - there was never any question of an agreement of a full amnesty, that both Governments were expected to look at the prisoners issue, that first of all both Governments committed ourselves to a full repatriation of political prisoners, both loyalist and IRA prisoners. What I'm saying is very little has happened by the British Government in that respect and I hope they accelerate that situation because that will again bring confidence back into the process which it badly needs at the moment. And as I said to plenty of people, I know it's a sensitive issue, and I know that it's not an easy issue for politicians to make decisions on, but I mean if we're talking ultimately about consolidating a peace process and saving people's lives, then as I say whatever we have to do should be done. And at least one expects Governments to carry out what they said they would do.

**Interviewer:** Are you concerned about the pace of the peace process at the moment?

**A Reynolds:** Yes I am, because while it's not in crisis at the moment I think it could easily find its way into crisis. I am concerned about it at the moment. I would like to see the people who led their own people to ceasefires, I'd like to see them supported at this stage by an acceleration of the things that are required to be done and the initiatives that need to be taken in this regard. And you know, if we had, I mean, nobody will blame the British Government if they set out and called all-party talks unless somebody didn't turn up to them and at least they kept their bona fides with the process and I think that's what people would like to see happening.

END