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**Reference Code:** 2021/50/348

**Creator(s):** Department of Foreign Affairs

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11/04 '96 11:24



# Sinn Féin

...news release/nuacht ráiteas...

Washington, London, 0003  
J. Sec.

For immediate release  
7th April 1996

## Easter Speech by Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams speaking today at the Easter Commemoration in Derry accused John Major of pursuing a policy "which subverted and frustrated the widespread desire in Ireland and Britain for the peace process to be consolidated. Some people may be puzzled by Mr. Major's stance. Why did he squander historic opportunity for peace?"

Why even yet does he refuse to create the conditions for real peace talks? Others may be puzzled at the refusal of Mr. Trimble and Mr. Paisley to embrace the opportunity to build a peace settlement. Irish Republicans know the real reasons behind the stance of the British government and the unionists. We know that the real negotiations, real dialogue will mean change and we know that they are against change. They are afraid to talk. And this is the greatest failure of the last few years; the refusal of the unionist leadership and of John Major to engage in honest dialogue."

Mr. Adams continued:

"Regrettably, John Bruton has not so far provided the leadership which the Irish nation requires of a Taoiseach. Mr. Bruton has not so far risen to the challenge presented by British duplicity and bad faith. British policy is clearly rooted in a unionist agenda. The election proposal is unionist. The structure for the election is essentially unionist. That the Irish government permitted the British government to promote a Unionist agenda and proposals is not encouraging. Let me spell out clearly our position on all these matters.

"It took over 50 years for Stormont to be overthrown. There is no way that Sinn Féin will be party to any restoration of that kind of institution. Our preference would be to boycott both the election and the elected body. However, we live in the real world. we will be guided therefore by whether it is necessary to defend our vote or to uphold the rights of our electorate.

There is no going back to the bad old days. There is no going back to Stormont. There is no going back to Unionist domination."

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The full text of Mr. Adams speech:

1916 lit a torch for freedom around the world which inspired oppressed peoples to strike out for freedom and justice. In the decades which followed that momentous time, and in scores of conflicts, the British have been forced from former colonies. Ireland did not achieve what others had - national self-determination. Our island was partitioned, our people divided and the causes of conflict were built into the political settlement imposed by Britain 75 years ago. Since then generations of Irish men and Irish women have sought to succeed where so many others before them failed. Here in Derry, at this graveside, we remember those from this area and the hundreds of others across this island and beyond, who have given their lives in pursuit of Irish freedom and independence. They laid down their lives so that we might know freedom. No greater sacrifice is possible.

We pledge to them that the day of freedom for which they lived and died will dawn. We all owe a debt to those who have fallen that can only be repaid through the achievement of the liberation of our people.

#### No going back

Today, on the 80th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, we rededicate ourselves to complete that unfinished business. Irish republicans remain firmly committed to our Republican goals and their legitimacy and to the achievability of those goals. Our goal remains an Irish socialist republic. Our primary objective at this time is an Irish national democracy. The partition of our island and our people, the status quo which has heaped indignities on nationalists in the 6 Counties, has to go. A solution can only be found in a functioning, inclusive democracy agreed and established by all the people of this island.

This requires a democratic and a negotiated settlement of the conflict in our country. Our strategy is to create political conditions which tilt the range of possibilities in that direction or which makes movement in that direction irreversible. Let me assure you that we can - with energy, commitment, determination and a real sense of our own empowerment - we can succeed - we can secure our republican goals - those which were mapped out for us so clearly in 1916 in the Proclamation.

The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally.---

#### Republicans seek agreement

Sinn Fein is committed to our peace strategy. We have sought, with honesty and integrity to construct a peace process which reaches out to, and embraces on the basis of equality. That is our conviction; that is our commitment to others.

Our record of engagement in the peace process, its birth and evolution, will stand scrutiny for even the most sceptical. We have demonstrated in a real and tangible way, on many occasions, a real and determined commitment to democratic negotiations and debate. The objective must be an agreement among all our people that will earn their allegiance and their respect.

### The failure to talk

Closing doors on dialogue - returning to the bad old days of vilification and abuse and to the tired, failed agenda of exclusion, will not work !! On the contrary, it undermines the search for peace. It is clear from the international experience that while peace processes are inevitably risky and dangerous, and are often confronted by set-backs, it is only through honest inclusive dialogue, based on equality, and with a sense of urgency and speed, that success can be achieved.

Unfortunately, rather than become a partner in the work of peace John Major has chosen to pursue a policy which has subverted and frustrated the widespread desire in Ireland and Britain for the peace process to be consolidated.

Some people may be puzzled by Mr. Major's stance. Why did he squander a historic opportunity for peace?

Why even yet does he refuse to create the conditions for real peace talks?

Others may be puzzled at the refusal of Mr. Trimble and Mr. Paisley to embrace the opportunity to build a peace settlement. Irish Republicans know the real reasons behind the stance of the British government and the unionists. We know that the real negotiations, real dialogue will mean change and we know that they are against change. They are afraid to talk. And this is the greatest failure of the last few years; the refusal of the unionist leadership and of John Major to engage in honest dialogue.

### Paddy Kelly

I want to turn now to the issue of prisoners. There are few better or more tragic examples of British bad faith and inhumanity than the treatment of republican prisoners and in particular Paddy Kelly who, as we stand here today is dying in a prison cell, far from his family, condemned to a slow death by a callous British government which refused him the medical treatment which would have saved his life.

Paddy Kelly deserves to be treated as a human being. His condition is non-negotiable - he should be transferred now to the 26 Counties to be near his family.

To the hundreds of republicans still imprisoned - we have not forgotten you and we stand with you.

To their families - we remain steadfast in our determination that there can be no

peace - no political settlement unless all of your loved ones are home!

### A Unionist Agenda

"Regrettably, John Bruton has not so far provided the leadership which the Irish nation requires of a Taoiseach. Mr. Bruton has not so far risen to the challenge presented by British duplicity and bad faith. British policy is clearly rooted in a unionist agenda. The election proposal is unionist. The structure for the election is essentially unionist. That the Irish government permitted the British government to promote a Unionist agenda and proposals is not encouraging. Let me spell out clearly our position on all these matters.

"It took over 50 years for Stormont to be overthrown. There is no way that Sinn Féin will be party to any restoration of that kind of institution. Our preference would be to boycott both the election and the elected body. However, we live in the real world. We will be guided therefore by whether it is necessary to defend our vote or to uphold the rights of our electorate.

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### Rebuilding the Peace Process

As republicans we have defined our goals, we have mapped out the route by which they can be achieved and we now need to create the political conditions which can move the whole situation forward.

What is required to rebuild the peace process?

The commencement of inclusive negotiations, real negotiations, is essential and the route to those negotiations must be direct and unencumbered. All pre-conditions must be removed.

Both the Irish and British governments committed themselves in their Joint Communique to reassure parties that what is on offer is a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiations which will address their legitimate concerns about new political arrangements. Let them give us these reassurances. In particular let the British government provide Sinn Féin and our electorate with clear, specific and unambiguous assurances that these negotiations will be inclusive, with no item on the agenda allowed to become an insurmountable obstacle to progress and all negotiations to be conducted with an agreed timeframe.

None of those engaged in the negotiating process can have a veto. And, there can be no attempt to predetermine the outcome, nor to preclude any outcome, to the negotiations. In short we require a new approach by the British government which is positive and in good faith, an approach which enables, facilitates and encourages agreement among all the Irish people.

### A New Era of Freedom

The people of our island have the right to peace. We are four years from the end of this century and the commencement of the new millenium. For most of the old millenium, over 800 years, the people of this island and our nearest neighbours have been in a state of conflict. Millions have died, many have perished in the great hunger and countless millions more are scattered in the Irish diaspora throughout the world. It doesn't have to be like that. We have a responsibility to raise our nation above the tragedy of our past and into a new era of freedom, equality and democracy.

We Irish republicans have a historic role to play in reshaping a new future for all our people. Together with the rest of the people of this island we have the right to develop an Ireland which cherishes all the children of the nation equally. We can and we will do it and no British government has the right to condemn us to more way - more division - more hatred.

### A New Ireland

The men and women of 1916 had a vision of a new Ireland - at peace with itself and its neighbours. A new Ireland in which poverty was abolished -where all sections of our people are equal and where freedom and justice and democracy form the bed-rock of a new society. We require a new society in which Irish people can live together in mutual respect, and work together in mutual regard - a society in which peace is not a mere interlude between wars, but an incentive to the creative and collective energies of all the people who live on this island.

An impossible dream? No! I believe we have the integrity, the courage, the vision and the ability to do it. I believe we can make our vision of a new future a reality. Don't let anyone tell you that we Irish are inferior, that we should be ashamed to be Irish, that we don't have the intelligence, or the imagination or the ability to achieve what we have set out to achieve.

Let us extend our arms in friendship to all our brothers and sisters on this island and call on them to join with us in tackling the challenges ahead - to embrace the cause of real democracy as the only guarantor of all our futures.

The bright promise of a democratic Ireland demands that we shed our fears and step forward boldly prepared to build a country we can all be proud to call home. Republicans are up to the challenges which face us. We go forward confident in our own strength, prepared to be flexible and to take risks. We are all at a defining point in our history but for all the uncertainties, one thing is certain - we are going forward. We are going forward to a new beginning for all our people - and no matter about all the twists and turns, no matter about all the obstacles we are going forward to freedom, to justice and peace.