



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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# Sinn Féin

...news release/nuacht ráiteas...

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## British Obstruct Process

The following is the text of a speech which Ard Chomhairle member Martin McGuinness will be giving tonight in Tralee, County Kerry.

Mr. McGuinness will point out that SDLP leader John Hume and Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams have been working to reconstruct the peace process since it collapsed in February. It is clear that progress is dependent on the construction of a credible process of talks. "In short it must be made clear that the British government will not treat any new IRA cessation in the same way that it treated the last one.

Up to now the British government have not made this clear. In fact, the British government and the unionists have obstructed this process from the beginning."

## Full text of Mr. McGuinness's remarks

Regrettably there are those in the British establishment and in the leadership of unionism who still foolishly hold to victory as their objective; who reject any suggestion of an accommodation between the people of Ireland, and the people of these islands, and who see dialogue as nothing other than an exchange of threats, abuse and name calling. When Sinn Féin embarked on its peace strategy we knew that it would be both difficult and risky, and that we would witness both advances and set-backs.

1

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Success in peace-making will always be dependant on former enemies entering into a full partnership in which all positively engage and seek to build trust and confidence. A credible process of negotiations has to tackle in a fundamental and constructive way the causes of conflict in Ireland, and to bring about substantial and significant change on constitutional and political matters as well as democratic rights.

For this to work there can be no question of domination by one side or the other. As the Taoiseach said earlier this year in Finglas, new arrangements and structures must afford to all, "on the basis of equal treatment secure and satisfactory expression and protection in all spheres of public life."

As Mr. Bruton also acknowledged on that occasion a "settlement can only be brought about through inclusive all party negotiations" and "without clear and firm guidance and commitment at government level there is no real prospect of resolving the problem."

That means the two governments taking the lead. It is especially important that Mr. Bruton and his colleagues recognise that their responsibilities towards the Irish nation extends beyond the 26 county state. It must also embrace nationalists trapped without their consent in the north and who would seek to secure their identity within an Irish state. Most immediately it also requires the two governments agreeing a mechanism which can ensure that irrevocable momentum will be built up and sustained in negotiations. As Mr. Bruton said agreement on an indicative timeframe is necessary.

A credible process of negotiations must also see the removal of all preconditions. The demand for an IRA surrender - for the decommissioning of their weapons - as a precondition for Sinn Féin's entry in talks, is an obstacle to negotiations. John Major in his Irish Times article, just before the May elections, said it would not be allowed to become a block on progress. But that is exactly what it has been since Patrick Mayhew first raised it as a precondition in March 1995.

Of course, the issue of arms will have to be satisfactorily addressed and dealt with to the satisfaction of all the participants in the process of negotiations. It must not be permitted to prevent progress towards the overriding goal of a widely accepted political agreement that brings an end to conflict. The removal of the gun from Irish politics is an obvious objective of the peace process, not a precondition to involvement or progress in the process.



In addition, a convincing negotiating process must reflect the widely held view and reality that there can be no internal settlement. It must tackle the critical issues raised by the lack of equality of treatment in the six counties and the need for parity of esteem. Discrimination, which still depresses nationalist areas, the lack of an acceptable police service, the absence of a proper legal and judicial system, the protection of human rights, and the release of all political prisoners are all issues which must be satisfactorily addressed.

At this time there are very few nationalists in the six counties who believe that the talks at Stormont can seriously deal with the whole agenda of direct concern to people at the grassroots. The Stormont talks are not inclusive; they are surrounded by a barbed-wire fence of preconditions; they lack any momentum or dynamic, and the British government has failed to implement the confidence building measures proposed by Senator Mitchell and his colleagues almost one year ago.

In fact the review of emergency legislation conducted by the British government has recommended that the 'temporary' legislation be made permanent and that some aspects become more draconian.

John Hume and Garry Adams have been working to reconstruct the peace process since it collapsed in February. There has been much speculation in recent weeks. It is important, therefore to understand the context in which we are all working.

Sinn Féin cannot deliver anything unless the British government makes clear that there is to be a credible process of talks, without preconditions, on a broadly acceptable time-frame and with which everyone engage in initiatives to build confidence. In short it must be made clear that the British government will not treat any new IRA cessation in the same way that it treated the last one.

Up to now the British government have not made this clear. In fact, the British government and the unionists have obstructed this process from the beginning.

Despite this I remain convinced that an historic opportunity still exists if only John Major is prepared to take risks for peace.

It is my firm view, in light of all the events of the past three years, since John Hume and Gerry Adams first identified the means by which this conflict could be permanently ended, that we all need to embrace a peace process in a spirit of good faith. We must be willing to meet the challenges facing us with imagination, honesty and flexibility.

The reality is that we must all adapt to changing circumstances, we must all be willing to suffer the discomfort of change in order to achieve a better future. We must seek to close the gap between the promise and the current reality of what we can all achieve.

For all its uncertainty we cannot run away from the future. Our task therefore is hard - in the long history of the Anglo-Irish conflict - our task is unprecedented and it cannot wait.

Real negotiations are the only way forward.

Without political will the road is fraught with danger. With political will our goal of a new and democratic political dispensation for the new millennium, which is fair to all, that threatens nobody and that fairly accommodates the identities and rights of all, is achievable.