



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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NO 3

Tearach.
I think that this is in
order. It is a good draft.
52
18/9.

Mr. Gallagher,

A draft section on Northern Ireland for the UNGA speech, as requested, is attached.

A.A.

Anne Anderson,

13 September, 1989.

M. L. McCarthy
mk
19/9
19.9.89

Mr. Sullivan

ple copy sent, ref. 11/10/89, 11/10/89, 11/10/89, 11/10/89,
Carrington 11/10/89 14/ix.

Yours
Coke & R012/ale
18/ix.

Mr. Chairman,

For twenty years - since August 1969 when the Irish Government made its urgent plea for the involvement of the United Nations to stem the tide of violence which threatened to engulf Northern Ireland - successive Irish Foreign Ministers have reported annually to the General Assembly on developments in that troubled part of our island. Twenty years on, I make no apology for continuing to claim your attention for this central issue of concern to my Government.

The conflict in Northern Ireland is first and foremost a human tragedy; in the rarified atmosphere of international diplomacy, we must never lose a sense of the personal tragedy behind statistics of death and injury. But our human sympathy for the victims, instinctive and deep as it is, and our unqualified condemnation of the perpetrators of violence, are not in themselves sufficient. As public representatives, joining here in discussion and debate, we have a responsibility to probe, to explain, to illuminate what there may be in common between conflicts in different parts of the world and what may be learned from the various attempts to work towards solutions.

Central to the Northern Ireland conflict are the same elements which are at the heart of the most intractable conflicts elsewhere, including a community divided by radically different interpretations of history, different senses of identity, and different aspirations for the future. The very complexity of these conflicts defies any simple solution; there is no easy formula for reconciling memories and reconciling aspirations. A minimum first step, however, is to seek to identify those elements which will be essential if an enduring solution is to be found.

In Northern Ireland, as in other situations involving conflicts of rights, I would define three prerequisites for progress - fairness, sensitivity, and open mindedness on the part of all involved. The presence of these elements may not guarantee a

resolution of the problems, but the absence of any of them will surely mean that a settlement will continue to evade us.

Confidence in the essential fairness of the system is fundamental to any healthy society; it was the total - and well-founded - absence of that confidence on the part of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland which formed the background to the fateful events of Autumn 1969. Many of the basic civil rights demands articulated at that time have received a response in the twenty intervening years; and indeed the Irish Government saw the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement as having as one of its basic objectives the achievement of a fair deal for nationalists.

Much has been achieved since signature of the Agreement. In the past year, for example, new fair employment legislation for Northern Ireland has gone on the statute books, and we now look to the effective implementation of that legislation. Action on the economic front has to be sustained; one does not have to be a nationalist to accept that there is something inherently wrong in a situation where all the economic indices uniformly point to nationalist disadvantage. A legacy of economic discrimination is not easily shaken off, but with determination on the part of all involved, it must and will be.

In looking for the hallmarks of a fair society we do not of course look to the economic dimension only. There must be a confidence on the part of the community generally in the essential even-handedness of all the instruments of government, including the administration of justice and the operation of the security forces. If that confidence is absent, there will be an erosion of moral and political authority; and that unreserved cooperation of the population which is so necessary to the fight against terrorism will not be forthcoming.

My Government have consistently pointed to the need for the security forces in Northern Ireland to win the trust of the

nationalist community. In particular, we have focussed over the past year on the urgent need to address the problem of harassment of the nationalist community by elements within the security forces. We were hopeful that we had at least begun to win acceptance of the need to address that problem. Against this background, I cannot over-emphasise our dismay at evidence in recent weeks of collusion between members of the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries. Only the most trenchant and effective of responses by the British Government can repair the damage done by these recent developments.

I have underlined the need to exercise sensitivity in dealing with the affairs of a divided society. Both the British and the Irish Governments have responsibilities in this regard, as well as both sectors of the community in Northern Ireland. For our part, we must - as we do - strive to understand that mix of emotions, interests and loyalties from which Unionism draws its character and strength. We have to continually remind ourselves of the fears which may be engendered in a community which feels itself adrift in the uncharted territory of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We have to ensure that our friendship is not mistaken for threat, nor our concerns easily dismissed as one-sided.

But there are obligations on others also. If we, for example seek to understand what it means to the Loyalist community to mark their great anniversaries, then surely we are entitled to their understanding - and that of the British Governments - of the different resonance their drums may have in a predominantly nationalist area. And there are other, more worrying, instances. Decisions within the past year, for example, to allow soldiers to resume service in the British army after they had been found guilty of the most serious crimes in Northern Ireland are scarcely compatible with a minimum exercise of sensitivity.

Despite such setbacks, we must continue to work towards developing that enhanced sensitivity which is so vital to

progress. I believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement - particularly as fortified by the Review of its workings which occupied so much of our attention in the past year - can play a crucial role in this regard. One encouraging development, which deserves note as important in itself and as demonstrating the potential of the Intergovernmental Conference, is the more enlightened British policy towards long-term prisoners in Northern Ireland of which we saw evidence in the past year.

The third quality I mentioned is that of open-mindedness. Never has there been such an urgent need for innovative and creative thinking within and about Northern Ireland; never has the opportunity been greater to translate such thinking into practical steps forward. The time has passed for all of us, North and South, when we could afford to define our positions by negatives. Among reflective people, a new and exciting debate is being engendered about identities, definitions of nationhood, varieties of Irishness. All of us are challenged to an open, generous and inclusionary approach - to rid ourselves of the old cliches and the old suspicions.

The Irish Prime Minister, the Taoiseach Charles Haughey, has repeatedly made clear that the Irish Government wants to enter a new dialogue with Unionists. Our door is open, and we stand ready to advance to meet our Unionists colleagues in mutual respect and friendship. We say directly to Unionist leaders: there is nothing to be lost - neither self-respect nor political advantage nor integrity of position - by meeting with us; the gain will be for all the people of Northern Ireland who long for leadership out of the present political impasse.

We approach the period ahead with the same unswerving commitment to advance towards a resolution of the problems of Northern Ireland which informed the address of the then Irish Foreign Minister, Dr. Patrick Hillery, when he addressed the General Assembly twenty years ago. Dr. Hillery said on that occasion,

that "Differences in political outlook or religious belief need not set people apart the real barriers are those created by fear, suspicion and intolerance". I would conclude today be evoking again that sentiment, applicable not just in Northern Ireland but in so many situations worldwide. If our discourses at this annual debate of the General Assembly do anything to enlarge understanding or to help lower those barriers, then they will indeed have proved worthwhile.

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