



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Mr. Brooke's Speech to East Belfast Rotary Club, ^r

Lunchtime, 16 October 1990.

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The shooting in cold blood of two policemen in the Province's main shopping centre last weekend is a sad and bitter reflection of the destructive divisions that still bedevil life in Northern Ireland. Our overriding policy in Northern Ireland is to bring violence to an end. That policy has and will continue to have the first call on our resources and our energies. It represents a commitment by the whole British people to the suppression of terrorism and the preservation of democratic freedoms and values. Law and order policies are not our only weapons in our war against evil terrorism, and in particular the Provisional IRA. By all the various means at our disposal we will resist them and we will defeat them. No other outcome is possible or acceptable to the Government.

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2. But, as we look around Northern Ireland today, we can see many positive signs. There is much new investment, from firms such as Daewoo and Montupet, many new jobs are in prospect and there are exciting new schemes under way in Belfast, Londonderry and other parts of the Province. It is the intention of the Government that these will benefit all sections of society. Those signs are all visible on the ground. But, just as important, I detect a new spirit on the part of many people in the Province. There is, I believe, a developing mood of self-help and a desire to put away past animosities and build new, positive relationships for the future. Time and again I hear of initiatives and enterprises on the part of individuals and small groups of people in all parts of Northern Ireland and particularly in the areas of greatest deprivation. This must represent the way forward for all of us in Northern Ireland.

H. Walsby

3. Yet there are still organisations, on both sides of the community, whose purpose is wholly negative in attempting to block the path to progress. By intimidation and extortion, by looking back and not forward, they have sought to frustrate enterprise, stifle progress and perpetuate the bad old ways of fear and deprivation. We for our part pursue each of these groups with equal vigour and determination.

4. All these organisations are evil, though the one I shall focus on today is the Provisional IRA, who claim to represent the interests of the ordinary nationalist man and woman, but who still, after all these years, need to maintain their position in society by violence or the threat of it and not through popular consent.

5. What is the truth about this organisation? I wish to say two things. First, and most obviously, it kills people. In the words of the "Economist", "it kills to exist, and it exists to kill". It claims that there is nothing wrong in killing people it says are "legitimate targets" and apologises for those it kills by mistake. I reject both. Let it never be forgotten that the IRA has killed more Catholics in Northern Ireland in the past 20 years than has anyone else.

6. And secondly, those whom the IRA do not kill they have left in fear. Families, particularly in Catholic areas, have been held hostage in their own homes to serve the killing and maiming of soldiers and policemen. Weapons have been hidden in the homes of the elderly and infirm. Still worse, young people have been lured into running errands for the IRA; leaving themselves open to a

frightened existence on the run or to ending up spending the best and most productive years of their lives in prison. There are no doubt those who say they support all this; but none of this can be justified. Any cause is defiled by such means. No end is worth pursuing or achieving by such methods.

7. And we all know that people living in areas which the IRA has sought to dominate suffer inconvenience because the security forces have to mount house searches and other operations to protect ordinary people against the actions and intentions of this tiny minority. But let me make it clear; unlike the IRA, the purpose of the police and Army is simple and unambiguous; to protect the community, to eradicate terrorism and to get the paramilitaries off the backs of the people. They are certainly not there to dominate one section of the community or the other.

8. How have the Provisionals sought to maintain a hold and exert an influence? Through the blackmail and intimidation of ordinary working men and women. I need not elaborate on what has passed for justice from the Provisional movement; in recent weeks and months many people have spoken tellingly about what happens to those who offend members of the organisation. There is no trial, no legal process. Instead there is the knock on the door at night; the cold fear of the victim; and the weeks and months in hospital. Or the final and enforced departure from home and family ties, into exile away from Northern Ireland. Or the hood, the bullet in the back of the head and the sad funeral. Yet the people who have been responsible for all this profess a belief in freedom and a better life for everyone. What is their definition of freedom? Who

appoints these judges, juries and executioners? They are representative of neither the men nor the women of any part of Northern Ireland.

9. The IRA is a parasitic organisation. It could never hope to survive through voluntary donations and subscriptions. So what has it done? Put simply, it has lived off the backs of the people, as have members of paramilitary organisations on both sides of the community. Its members have stolen and extorted money to sustain themselves and their activities. People in small businesses have been forced to pay protection money in order to save themselves from the threat of injury or their premises from destruction. Local enterprises have become subject to the mafia-like empire of the Provisional boss in the area. In this way the IRA's aim has been to stifle initiative and perpetuate the cycle of deprivation which all of us would wish to break. The process goes still further. Firms and enterprises in competition with those supported by the IRA face threats and intimidation. That is the reality of the Provisionals' concept of a free society with opportunity for all. It can have no relevance to their professed aim of a "peaceful, stable Ireland". Activities such as these can form no part of any scenario for peace. Instead they are the recipe for conflict and corruption.

10. The bitter truth is that the IRA is bent on taking money out of the local economy, rather than putting it in. And the wrong is compounded by the fact that that money has gone towards the means and methods of killing and intimidating people. Thus the vicious circle has continued.

11. The rest of us - like responsible people anywhere - attach the highest importance to creating jobs in Northern Ireland, both through inward investment and by encouraging local enterprise. But the IRA actually seeks to destroy jobs. For twenty years it has bombed factories, shops and public transport. And it has intimidated and killed employers and employees often just because the companies concerned were engaged in activities to which the Provisionals were opposed. Or take Belfast. In recent years massive investment has been undertaken by both the public and private sectors aimed at regenerating the city centre and providing jobs for the unemployed from both sides of the community. The response from the Provisionals has been to plant fire bombs in shops. It is the people of Belfast who give them a clear answer by straightforwardly continuing to shop in the city centre. I firmly believe that the people of Northern Ireland simply want to be left alone to go to work, to do their shopping, to enjoy their entertainment, and to bring up their children in a peaceful environment.

12. So much for the Provisional IRA's methods, methods which have increasingly seemed to be ends in themselves. Who do the Provisional IRA represent? If they were confident that they had the full support, freely given, of a majority of the ordinary men and women of the nationalist community they would not have needed to operate by means of the extortion and fear I have described. No genuinely popular representatives would have been so destructive of the aspirations of ordinary people. Above all, they would not have needed to continue to kill people in order to enable their voices to be heard. The Provisionals seem afraid to let their arguments stand

on their own merits. They are just not confident enough to join the constitutional political parties North and South who attract 95% of the votes and work through argument and consent. This speaks for itself. Their use of violence has demonstrated that the Provisionals have nothing positive to offer. They have sought power only through the bullet; not through popular support for their methods.

13. What do the Provisionals stand for? They want to put the political clock back to 1918 by wishing away much of what has happened since. They ignore realities, such as the fact that the overwhelming majority of nationalists on the island of Ireland vote for parties which acknowledge the Border as a fact of life, and would certainly condemn those who are prepared to kill to remove it. They do not represent the majority of Irish nationalist opinion; they are an unrepresentative minority rooted in the past. As a distinguished Irishman, Peter Sutherland, said at the weekend: "those who are carrying out vicious and sordid acts of murder and pointless violence in Northern Ireland must never be allowed to invoke the name and authority of those who took part in the War of Independence". The IRA ignore that history has moved on and is finding new ways of resolving former differences. The rigidity and backwardness of Provisional thought stands exposed in complete contrast with the openness, fluidity and change evident in Eastern Europe. Their ideas are bankrupt.

14. I said at the beginning that there is a new atmosphere of hope in Northern Ireland, a hope exemplified by exciting new developments and opportunities in both town and country. I profoundly believe

that people want to come together, in order to develop their prosperity and in so doing to bury past animosities and look together to a brighter future. The Government is encouraging this. We are committed to addressing community relations issues at all levels. We are working hard to create the conditions for self-sustaining growth in the local community, to tackle the worst areas of social and environmental deprivation and to promote constructive political development. In all these areas we are seeking to involve local people to the maximum extent and to build constructively on what is already there. I believe we are making progress. That is the positive path, the path of constitutional politics, and of peace and prosperity.

15. By contrast, the negative path is the one represented by the Provisionals. The impact of the IRA - and other, similar, bodies - in every single area of activity has been destructive. To the Catholic community, to the Protestant community, to relationships between the two communities, to the elderly who live in fear, to jobs, to young people, and to political development. The Provisionals continue to pursue an agenda which has been rejected through the ballot box by the vast majority of people in this island. Their methods are abhorred in civilised societies throughout the world. The days when such methods might have prevailed are long past. They will never be allowed to return.

16. Even by their own lights the Provisional IRA are without achievement. Their primary declared aim is to "get the British out of Ireland". I shall let pass the fact that that scorns the wishes of a million people and seeks to drive apart the two sides of the

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community in Northern Ireland. The British Government's writ runs in Northern Ireland and will continue to do so for so long as a majority wish it. And, however long it takes, the Government will go on taking whatever measures are necessary, within the law, to ensure that the IRA can never win.