



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/99/2

**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.

**THIS MIRROR HATE**  
**Some Thoughts on Northern Ireland**  
— **D. Nally**

Between September, 1973, and December, 1993, there were more than 40 meetings between British Prime Ministers and Irish Taoiseachs, concerned largely but, by no means, exclusively with Northern Ireland - not to mention numerous letters, phone calls and other communications. The Prime Ministers were Edward Heath, Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher and John Major. The Taoiseachs were Liam Cosgrave, Jack Lynch, Charles Haughey, Garret FitzGerald and Albert Reynolds. I attended all of the — meetings with one or two exceptions. My purpose is not to detail their content. It is, rather, to see if any broad conclusions can be drawn from so intensive and extensive an effort, at the very highest level, by the two Governments, to draw the dragon's teeth sown in the 1920's.

The meeting between Liam Cosgrave and Edward Heath in Baldonnell on 17 September, 1973, followed on other meetings between the British Prime Minister and Jack Lynch in Chequers, Munich, Paris and London in the early 1970's - from one of which emerged, apparently, the extraordinary conclusion that Northern Ireland was really no business of the Irish Government!. At the Baldonnell meeting, Mr. Heath did everything in his power to disabuse Liam Cosgrave of the idea that this was his belief. The meeting began at approximately 11.00 o'clock in the morning and continued, with a break for lunch, until 6.30 or 7.00 o'clock in the evening when the Prime Minister asked

if he could speak to the officers and men who had been guarding the meeting place all day, with a 'ring of steel', as one newspaper put it - after all it was the first time a British prime Minister had come to Dublin since the foundation of the Irish State. After a glass of beer he spent half an hour or more talking freely to his military audience and then left Baldonnel. The meeting was extraordinary in that for most of the day the Prime Minister spoke continuously of his concerns for Northern Ireland and for the relationship between the British and Irish Governments. He was as deeply involved in his subject as any man I have ever seen; his concern was, naturally, matched on the Irish side. The Prime Minister was accompanied at the meeting by his Private Secretary Robert - now Lord - Armstrong.

What followed from Baldonnel, was, of course, the Sunningdale Conference, which took place over the four days 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th December, 1973, involving the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Irish political parties involved in the Northern Ireland Executive (designate). The largest of these parties was the official Unionist Party led by Brian Faulkner. The Alliance Party was led by Oliver Napier and the SDLP by John Hume. There is a nostalgic relevance today about the words used in the Agreed Communiqué to describe the Northern Ireland delegates. They came, the Communiqué said "as representatives of apparently incompatible sets of political aspirations who had found it possible to reach agreement to join together in government because each accepted that in doing so they were not sacrificing principles or aspirations".

Conscious of the arguments and civil war in the South in the 1920s following on differences about the mandate for the Irish delegates in the negotiations on the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Irish delegation consisted of the Taoiseach and six Ministers with elaborate arrangements for communicating to the remaining Ministers in Dublin the progress of the Conference.

Sunningdale established a framework according to which all subsequent attempts at resolving the problems of Northern Ireland were undertaken.

There was, first the statement of the Constitutional positions of the British and Irish Governments incorporating the principle of consent and the willingness of the British Government to facilitate change if that was the wish of a majority in Northern Ireland, second, there was an attempt to formalise the relationship between Ireland North and South - through the establishment of a Council of Ireland: then, there was a reference to human rights and identity questions; and, finally, to policing and security issues. In its conclusions, the Conference agreed that a formal Conference should be held early in 1974 at which the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive would meet together to consider reports on the studies which had been commissioned and to sign the agreement reached.

No such meeting was ever held. The Sunningdale Agreement was destroyed in two ways. First, in the Irish Courts the Constitutional arrangements set out in the Agreement were attacked on the grounds that they contravened Articles

2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. In its defence the Irish Government argued that the provisions of Sunningdale did not alter what Articles 2 and 3 said.

This destroyed one of Brian Faulkner's principal arguments for Sunningdale - that he had an unconditional agreement from the Irish Government that the "territorial claim" in the Irish Constitution had been withdrawn or, if it existed, applied only with the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland.

In the North itself the agreement was attacked because of the provisions for a Council of Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act, 1920, had contained a Section - and I quote

"2-(i) With a view to the eventual establishment of a Parliament for the whole of Ireland, and to bringing about harmonious action between the parliaments and governments of Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland, to the promotion of mutual intercourse and uniformity in relation to matters affecting the whole of Ireland, and to providing for the administration of services which the two Parliaments mutually agree should be administered uniformly throughout the whole of Ireland ..... there shall be constituted, as soon as may be after the appointed day, a Council to be called the Council of Ireland."

According to the White Paper issued with the 1920 Bill, three matters were to be placed within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Council of Ireland viz railways, fisheries and contagious diseases of animals.

Sunningdale, however, went further than this and referred to natural resources and the environment, agriculture, co-operative ventures in the fields of trade

and industry, electricity, tourism, roads and transport, public health, sport, culture and the arts. Studies done in connection with the Agreement showed that if the provisions of Sunningdale were to be fully implemented, they would have required the assignment of about 22,000 civil servants from the then Irish civil service, to the Council.

The proposal for a Council brought vociferous objection from Loyalists. Early in 1974, Brian Faulkner visited Taoiseach Cosgrave in Dublin twice to tell him that if arrangements for the Council were to go ahead Faulkner could not guarantee the future of the Executive, which, he said, was working together better and more co-operatively than any administration in his experience; and Mr. Faulkner had, indeed, considerable experience of the workings of executives in Northern Ireland. He pleaded with the Taoiseach to postpone the arrangements for a Council of Ireland. Before any formal decision on the question could be taken the Ulster Workers strike had happened - in May, 1974 - and Sunningdale collapsed.

The effect of this collapse on the relationship between the two Governments was disastrous. It destroyed trust and without that trust progress was impossible. At a meeting in London with Prime Minister Wilson on 5th April, 1974, Taoiseach Cosgrave made a strong plea for support of Sunningdale. The meeting pointed to the need for the elimination of violence as a primary aim in the efforts to establish stable, acceptable institutions with which the community in Northern Ireland could identify and a normal political life in which

those who wanted changes were at liberty to argue for them and to persuade. The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister agreed that to secure the early formal signing of the Sunningdale Agreement the necessary preparatory work agreed at the Conference should be completed as soon as possible - but, as indicated, that just did not happen. The collapse of Sunningdale and with it the Northern Ireland Executive when representatives of the two opposing traditions in Northern Ireland were working together for the common good, with the possibility ahead of change, by consent, is indeed one of the great tragedies in Irish history. If the collapse had not occurred, I doubt if that extra 2000 people would have died, or 20,000 been injured or if we would now, still, be seeking a solution.

In the absence of trust the years after the collapse of Sunningdale were barren. Liam Cosgrave met Harold Wilson on the 1st November, 1974, and again on 5th March, 1976, but neither meeting produced anything. Jack Lynch met the new Prime Minister, James Callaghan, on 28th September, 1977, and again on 7th April, 1978. He met the new Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, on 10th May, 1979, and, again, on 5th September, 1979, both in London. The meetings were concerned largely with security matters, particularly in the aftermath of the murder of Lord Mountbatten,

The first moves out of these sterile interchanges occurred at a meeting in Dublin, on 8th December, 1980, between Margaret Thatcher and Charles Haughey. The meeting brought to Dublin the most powerful gathering of

British Ministers ever to have visited the city. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Geoffrey Howe, and Humphrey Atkins, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Taoiseach was accompanied by his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan, and Michael O'Kennedy, Minister for Finance. The meeting was important, not so much for the concrete proposals which emerged from it, as for the relationship it established between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, and the way in which she involved herself in Northern Ireland issues. The meeting agreed "to devote their next meeting in London during the coming year to a special consideration of the totality of relationships within these islands, and for that purpose commissioned joint studies covering a range of issues including possible institutional structures, citizenship rights, security matters, economic cooperation and measures to encourage mutual understanding". This was against the background of the hunger strikes. Before that next meeting could take place, the Government led by Mr. Haughey collapsed, and that led by Dr. FitzGerald took its place. Dr. FitzGerald met Mrs. Thatcher on 6th November, 1981, on 22nd June, 1983, on 7th November, 1983, (the "out, out, out" meeting in Chequers) on 3rd September, 1984, on 19th November, 1984, and on 30th March, 1985. On 15th November, 1985, they signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement in Hillsborough, Co. Down.

After the 1980 meeting between Mrs. Thatcher and Charles Haughey the joint studies, including cross-border studies, which that meeting had commissioned

went ahead at civil service level. The studies were important not so much for their substance as for the contacts they developed between people in the central administrations in both countries. The really crucial meeting leading to the Anglo-Irish Agreement took place on 1st March, 1984, when the British Cabinet Secretary, Robert Armstrong, and David Goodall, Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Office met myself, Sean Donlon, Michael Lillis and Brian McCarthy in the Taoiseach's Department. Armstrong stressed that he was coming on the instructions of the Prime Minister and the British Cabinet to put suggestions which had emerged on their side following the Taoiseach's meeting with the Prime Minister in Chequers. The proposals which he wished to discuss were under the general headings:-

- (1) Security
- (2) Governmental arrangements and citizenship rights etc., and
- (3) Constitutional matters.

The Government's reaction at the time to these proposals is well described in Dr. FitzGerald's autobiography - All in a Life. The headings were, on one analysis, more or less the same as the headings of all serious attempts to settle the Northern Ireland question. The substance was pursued, analysed, criticised, developed, supplemented and refined over a period of nearly two years from March, 1984 to 15th November, 1985, by, on the Irish side, a Cabinet Committee including the Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald, the Tanaiste Dick Spring and Minister for Foreign Affairs Peter Barry. The official groundwork for the agreement was done by a group of five/six officials on each side led by Robert Armstrong for the British and by me on the Irish side,

in a series of at least 36 meetings, involving discussions often over entire days and much of the night in different venues in Dublin and London.

An important concern was to devise an agreement which would, at the least, not be constitutionally destructible in the way that Sunningdale had been destroyed. It was also essential to ensure that the agreement did not fall foul of an all out onslaught by the opposition in either Parliament. For both of these reasons, the wording of the Constitutional sections in the Agreement was considered with particular care and, in the end, the section was based on the words used in the Communiqué issued following the meeting between the Prime Minister Thatcher and Mr. Haughey in London on 21st May, 1980 viz:-

"While agreeing with the Prime Minister that any change in the Constitutional status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the Taoiseach reaffirms that it is the wish of the Irish Government to secure the unity of Ireland by agreement and in peace."

As expected, the Constitutional section in the Agreement was challenged in the Irish High Court, in the McGimpsey case in 1988. The Court upheld the Irish argument that the use of the word "would" (instead of, for example, the word "could") meant that the Agreement recognised the practicality that any change in the Constitutional status of Northern Ireland would come about only with consent - not that change could not come about only with consent. It may seem like counting the angels on the head of a pin - but the distinction

between "would" and "could" was of crucial importance to the integrity of the Agreement and its constitutional survival.

The McGimpsey judgement did, of course, create problems in its emphasis on the "constitutional imperative" on an Irish Government to seek unity.

Emphasis on Article 29 under which Ireland "affirms its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations" did little to allay the suspicions aroused by the judgement. And the old arguments continued in all their sterility.

The next line of anticipated attack was that which had destroyed Sunningdale.

That was provided against, by ensuring that the Anglo-Irish InterGovernmental Conference should be an intergovernmental body rather than an Executive vulnerable, as the 1974 Executive had been, to destruction on the streets. The Conference was to be concerned with views and proposals put forward by the Irish Government concerning stated aspects of Northern Ireland affairs and the promotion of cross-Border co-operation. A much underestimated provision of the Agreement was that if there should be an Executive or administration formed in Northern Ireland, involving the Northern Ireland Parties, then, to the extent that that body dealt with a particular function, the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference would cease to deal with that function. In other words, if the Northern Ireland Parties could agree among themselves and administer a certain set of

functions (as defined), then, the Conference would withdraw from the consideration of those matters.

The negotiation of the Agreement was, in my experience, unique in the way in which, over time, understandings developed between officials on both sides: one side would argue for the other's case so that the entire effort became concentrated on making the Agreement not simply a record of hardly won compromises between two opposing sides but a composite accord aimed at achieving an end to which both sides could fundamentally subscribe.

The Agreement worked, to the extent that it could not be destroyed as Sunningdale was destroyed. An important purpose of the Agreement was to seek to draw support away from violence in Northern Ireland as a means to political ends. In this the Agreement had a limited success. It had an even greater success in the evidence it provided of the degree to which the two Governments were determined to work together: and evidence was tremendously enhanced when the incoming Government under Mr. Haughey in 1987 said they would support and implement the Agreement. That really is one of the cornerstones of progress in relation to Northern Ireland. When British and Irish Governments lack trust or are in dispute there is retrogression and confusion: when they are united in a common aim their strength of purpose supports the forces of reason and peace.

Peace became virtually obsessional with the new Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, on his taking office. He emphasised repeatedly to the British Prime Minister that peace would be an achievement worth striving for: after 24 years of violence it would be on a par with the achievement of any of their predecessors in this century - in fact, a truly historic breakthrough. He told the Prime Minister that there were risks, but peace was within reach if they played their cards right. The principle of consent, on which the Prime Minister laid so much emphasis in earlier meetings, was not an issue. The Nationalist proponents now fully accepted the idea, subject to the sort of framework the Irish side set out in the draft of what finally became the Downing Street Declaration. This draft was sent to the Prime Minister in June, 1993. Those who are interested in the comparison between the Downing Street Declaration and the Hume/Adams document can see a detailed exegesis on the question in the book published by Eamon Maillie and David McKitterick - The Search for Peace. Essentially the Joint Declaration is more broadly based, specifically taking into account certain Loyalist concerns, conveyed during the negotiation, and being more precise on the principles of self-determination, on the one hand, and agreement and consent on the other. Here, I am concerned only with the negotiation on the Declaration which took place between June, 1993 and 15th December, 1993, when it was signed by the Taoiseach and Prime Minister in Downing Street.

That negotiation took place largely at official level with the British side being led by Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robin Butler, Permanent Secretary of the

Northern Ireland Office, John Chilcott and Assistant Secretary, Quinton Thomas. On the Irish side were Assistant Secretary Sean O hUiginn of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Martin Mansergh of the Taoiseach's Office and myself. Again the negotiations, apart from one or two near disasters, coming towards the end of the negotiation, were characterised by the whole hearted contribution of the teams on both sides towards reaching an agreement acceptable to the widest proportion of their populations. We were not interested in winners or losers but in an accord to bring an end to suffering. In this Sir Robin Butler's contribution was as sustained, as dedicated and as impressive as that of his distinguished predecessor when the 1985 Agreement was being negotiated.

The Downing Street Declaration is concerned with the fundamental North South relationships, relationships between the two Governments, human rights and security, as had been the Government of Ireland Act, the Sunningdale Agreement and the 1985 Agreement, only, this time, the Declaration recognised for the first time that "it is the right of the Irish people alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish". The background to the Declaration is well-described by Dr. Mansergh in his paper on "The Background to the Peace Process" published in Irish Studies in International Affairs, Volume 6, 1995. The Declaration involved, again, the most detailed and painstaking negotiation at Cabinet Office level between the

two Governments. It led to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation established in Dublin in October, 1994, to discuss proposals for settlement, and the Joint Framework Document signed by the two Governments on 21 February, 1995.

Neither the Declaration nor the Document is a blueprint to be imposed. The Document, in particular, is a shared understanding of the two Governments on the parameters of a settlement that would be capable of securing the support of the two main traditions in Ireland in four key areas:

- (1) Constitutional Issues
- (2) North South relationships
- (3) East West Structures, and
- (4) Structures within Northern Ireland.

In the Document the Irish Government undertakes to support change in the Constitution which will "fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland and demonstrably be such that no territorial claim of right to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland contrary to the will of a majority of its people is asserted"; and the British Government undertakes that should the people of Northern Ireland freely determine to become part of a United Ireland, they will give legislative effect to that wish. The North-South body, comprising elected representatives from and accountable to a Northern Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas, could deal with matters designated in the first instance by the two Governments in agreement with the Northern Ireland parties. On East West

structures the two Governments envisage a Parliamentary Forum, with representatives from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas to consider matters of mutual interest. Detailed proposals on structures within Northern Ireland are contained in the British Government paper called "Accountable Government in Northern Ireland".

There are those who argue that the 1985 Agreement and/or the Downing Street Declaration led to the ceasefire on 31st August, 1994 - and others who say that they did not; the important point is not what produced the ceasefire but that neither the Agreement, the Declaration nor the Framework Document, nor the Forum, nor anything that has been done by the two Governments over the period covered in this paper was sufficient to prevent the collapse of the ceasefire on 9th February, 1996, with the Canary Wharf bombing and its aftermath.

Both Governments have invested massively in understandings and proposals over the last 25 years. There is now in place the understanding that the British Government has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland - that their role is to help, enable and encourage (Secretary of State Brooke in his speech at the Whitbread Restaurant on 9th November, 1990 formally confirmed in the Downing Street Declaration); that they recognise the right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination, subject only to Northern consent; and that they will legislate for such arrangements as can be agreed.

The Irish Government fully accepts that the aspiration to a united Ireland is subject also to the principle of consent and has signified its willingness to propose constitutional change in Articles 2 and 3 and elsewhere in an effort to reach a peaceful settlement.

On the part of both Governments there is a commitment to equality of opportunity, treatment and esteem. Equally, they will both, so far as is within their power, facilitate arrangements to enable the two communities to live together, in peace, in Northern Ireland without threat to each other - in fact, virtually everything is on offer.

Obviously, there are three main participants. The first is the British Government. It could be argued that if the Downing Street Declaration (and the Framework Document) had been more actively followed-up, instead of being the subject of arguments about clarification and then decommissioning, the ceasefire would not have collapsed. Subsequent events have thrown doubt on this interpretation. To revive an old phrase: Is productive negotiation under the threat, this time coming from the IRA, of "immediate and terrible war" ever a possibility nowadays?

Irish Governments with an aspiration to unity could do a great deal more within their jurisdiction, to make that prospect attractive. Roads south of the border are only one manifestation of differences in quality of infrastructure as

between North and South. Income, capital and other taxes in the South are penal in comparison with their Northern counterparts - though many welfare payments are more generous. And the authoritarian or majoritarian ethos, where it is displayed, is about as unattractive to many in the South as it must be to Northerners.

A great deal of this changed and is changing in the South: and change is fuelled, particularly in the economic sphere, by the phenomenal growth there since the early 1990's - when growth rates of 5%, 6% - 7% per annum - and higher - have been achieved at a time when the economies of most countries in Western European have been stagnating or in recession. When the United Kingdom joined the European Community its GNP per head was about 115% of the Community average. The Irish figure was just over 60%. Now the UK figures is under 100% of the Community average while the Irish figure is about 90%. One forecast is that by the end of the century Irish GDP per head, which is already higher than the Northern Ireland and Welsh figures, will equal that for England. Membership of the EU also can help to bring about significant changes, North and South, both economically and culturally.

The US administration has at all times worked assiduously to foster peace - and has, with the generosity one associates with that great nation, backed its words with its money, along with the Governments of Canada, New Zealand and Australia, through the International Fund for Ireland, in particular.

However, I have the suspicion that even if the South was the richest country in the world the argument for unity would not win the day in Northern Ireland. It is not by bread alone ... Governments can give an impetus and set frameworks, but except in the most extreme circumstances, cannot impose a solution. The problem now is not with Governments, either bilaterally or multilaterally, though their continued support and guidance are obviously essential. The problem is with the people of Northern Ireland, on both sides of the divide. Without widespread consensus, there can be no peace - and certainly no progress. Intransigence and majoritarianism have not worked in the North (or in the South) - or anywhere else in the world.

Most Irish people would support the conclusion of the New Ireland Forum of 1984 in favour of a unitary state, embracing the whole island of Ireland, achieved with consent and in peace. They would also support the idea of a federal or confederal state or joint authority. These options were the subject of the famous "out, out out" of the Chequers summit which, of course, did not end the matter. What is important now is that none of the options - or indeed any other option - is, I think, in the view of the vast majority of Irish people, to be achieved by violence.

Violence has seen the deaths of over 3,000 men, women and children and the injury and maiming of tens of thousands of others<sup>1</sup>. The main result of this

---

<sup>1</sup>See Appendices 1 and 2

can be achieved by violence has come to be held by fewer and fewer. Indeed, violence has been to drive the British and Unionist people further away from the idea of an accommodation. And for the Irish people the belief that unity to my mind, the important effect of the violence has been to isolate Northern nationalists and weaken support in the South for the whole idea of unity.

A similar aversion is beginning to grow, I think in the United States where support for unity is coming increasingly to be for unity by agreement. In this sense, the proponents of violence are their own worst enemies - just as those who support the old majoritarianism in the North do so much to injure their  
— cause.

No country in the world can enjoy stability if its peoples persistently engage in factionalism - if one side or both continually try to exert their will on the other. In such conditions the social cohesion which is the basis for economic progress, is absent.

I listened a short time ago to the then Prime Minister De Klerk speak of how he and Nelson Mandela had reached the accord which brought an end to the civil strife in South Africa. They did not speak of the things that divided them. They spoke of things in which they had a common interest, like sport and people and the future of their country. And because by speaking in this way they came to see how much they had in common they came in the end to the settlement with which their names will always be associated.

I have heard people from Northern Ireland say that to them the South is a foreign country. They do not feel at home there. Sometimes I, from Dublin, feel that Cork and Connemara are foreign countries and I certainly do not know what they mean when they speak of certain customs or foods or ways of doing things but that does not mean that I do not share many interests and beliefs with them. There can be unity in diversity: And indeed unity can be strengthened by diversity.

The people of Northern Ireland on both sides of the divide have a great deal more in common with each other and with people of the South - even those of Cork or Connemara - than DeKlerk had with Mandela; and they have at least as much to gain by agreement in matters which affect their daily lives - like how they are governed; the rule of law, European policy, agriculture, the attraction of investment, health, education and so on. The British and Irish governments have gone to great lengths over the last 30 years to provide a framework for an accommodation, within the North, within the Island and between Ireland and Britain. So far their efforts have not succeeded. In fact, I am reminded of Beckett's lines: "Ever tried; ever failed; never mind; try again. Fail again: fail better".

What the proponents of violence everywhere have in common is a burning conviction - this can be religious, economic or nationalist in origin.

Torquemada regarded himself as a great Christian: Stalin probably

considered himself a benefactor of mankind. Those on the extremes in the present impasse on Northern Ireland have a similar strength of conviction. Irish Unity is an ideal: being part of Britain is an ideal. These convictions must be matched by an equally strong and equally pervasive idea: that the wishes of the majority in each part of this island should be respected by the other part - and certainly should not be the subject of argument by bomb and gun. Perhaps in the end, democracy, tolerance and common humanity in the interest of all the communities living in Ireland will provide the basis for a settlement. In all this, a heavy responsibility now rests on the people of Northern Ireland through their elected representatives, to push the current of process forward. They cannot fail if there is to be peace.

We are told that the outcome of the present talks in Belfast will be the subject of referenda, North and South. Can the process throw up the questions for those referenda? And if it cannot, can the two Governments working on their behalf devise those questions so that the people in the North - and in the South - in their various communities, who so passionately and in such large majorities want peace, can at last give voice to their views.

In the words of a Northern poet

This land we stand on holds a history  
so complicated, gashed with violence,  
split by belief, by blatant pageantry  
that none can safely stir and still fee free  
to voice his hope with any confidence.

Slave to and victim of this mirror hate  
surely there must be somewhere we could reach.

a solid track across our quagmire state  
and on a neutral sod renew the old debate  
which all may join without intemperate speech.

The Anglo-Irish Accord John Hewitt Irish Times 21 April, 1986.