



Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland

A Summary Guide to the Sinn Féin Peace Proposal

published by Sinn Féin October 1994

The purpose of the following article is to provide an introduction to the main points contained within the discussion document launched at Sinn Féin's 1992 Ard Fheis (national convention) and re-confirmed in 1994. There are 14 sections in the document, each is an important consideration in devising any peace strategy.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

This section outlines Sinn Féin's criteria for a lasting peace in Ireland. Each section following takes up and develops the issues lying behind these criteria.

- An end to conflict does not necessarily lead to lasting peace and in the context of Ireland has led only to new outbreaks of hostilities after a number of years. A peace process, leading to a lasting peace, must address the root causes of the conflict.
- A genuine and sustainable peace process must be grounded on democracy and self-determination.

SECTION TWO: NATIONAL DEMOCRACY AND PEACE

This section looks at the role of national self-determination, democracy and democratic structures which are fundamental to a lasting peace and how Britain's denial of these rights in Ireland and the measures it takes to enforce this

policy remain the root cause of the conflict.

- The Irish people have a right to peace: A right to the political structures which are capable of making peace permanent; a right to decide for themselves what these structures might be; and an obligation to ensure that they serve the best interests of all the Irish people.
- Peace is not just the absence of war but is also establishing conditions which will ensure a lasting peace. This means eradicating the root cause of the conflict by gaining national self-determination, which in turn lays the foundation for justice, democracy and equality - the safeguards of lasting peace.
- Britain's policy in Ireland is the root cause of the conflict between Irish people themselves and between Britain and Ireland; its purpose is to maintain and protect Britain's interests in Ireland. British policy denies the fundamental right of national self-determination and therefore contravenes the internationally accepted right of nations to self-determination.
- Britain's policy in Ireland is maintained through military and political coercion, through partition of Ireland into Six and 26 Counties, through gerrymandering to create an artificial unionist majority in the Six Counties (Unionists make up 20% of the people of Ireland and therefore are a minority not a majority, in Ireland), through Protestant privilege, through the unionist veto, i.e., Britain's support for the political wishes of the Unionists.

- Britain claims that the main reason for staying in Ireland is not to maintain its own interests but primarily to safeguard democracy; however, to protect its own interests in Ireland, Britain has given power of veto over national independence to a pro-British unionist minority which is in direct contravention of the principle of national self-determination and is therefore a denial of democracy itself.

- In reality this means defending and maintaining the inequality, injustice and the instability which are the result of a statelet founded on a political system of political, social and economic privilege.

SECTION THREE: IRISH SOVEREIGNTY: INTERNATIONAL LAW & IRISH DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

This section outlines examples of the main historical documents where the Irish people's nationhood, independence and sovereignty have been reaffirmed, both in Ireland and internationally.

- In Ireland on many occasions the national independence that is a unitary state governed by one government has been declared. Some of those occasions are as follows:

- The Proclamation of Easter of 1916;
- The Declaration of Independence of the first Dail, 21 January, 1919;
- The 1937 Constitution, Articles 1, 2, and 3;
- The Unanimous Declaration, Leinster House, 10 May, 1949;
- The New Ireland Forum, May 1984;
- The Dublin government's Minister for External Affairs, Dr. Patrick Hillary's address to the United Nations' Security Council, 1969;
- The Hillsborough Agreement, November 1985;
- Dublin Supreme Court in *McGimpsey vs. Ireland*, etc.

- In international law the universal principle of self-determination is enshrined in the following:

- The United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966;

- The United Nations' International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

- The Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Amongst States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations;

- The United Nations' Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries & Peoples, Article 6;

- The Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe, Paragraph VIII.

SECTION FOUR: DIVISION & COERCION

This section is in two parts: the British strategy of division and coercion in Ireland as the root cause of the conflict. It also examines the role of the propaganda which removes blame for the conflict from Britain, and states instead that the problem is divisions among the Irish people - divisions deliberately fostered by Britain's colonial self-interest. This section challenges that Britain is a neutral force in Ireland. In the second part of this section the economic effects of partition are examined.

PART ONE

- Britain has operated the classic colonial divide and rule strategy in Ireland using partition. However, British propaganda has masked this cause of the conflict by distracting attention away from Britain's role in creating it. The threat and use of force has supported this British strategy, creating a state of permanent emergency with the associated military and judicial repression. For two decades a 30,000 strong army of occupation has been deployed, 3,000 people have been killed, and 30,000 injured, the equivalent in Britain of 100,000 dead and over one million injured.

- Britain's arguments for remaining in Ireland are: responding to "the democratic wishes of the Unionist majority"; to avoid a "bloodbath" in the event of British withdrawal; and more recently, that Britain has no selfish strategic or economic interest for remaining in Ireland and does so only to keep the peace (Peter Brooke, 100th Day Speech, 1987).

- However this declared 'neutrality' is contradicted by Brooke's further statement that the Conservative party is committed to keeping the Six Counties as part of the UK. John Hume drew the conclusion that Britain was neutral and by doing so placed the responsibility on the shoulders of nationalists to get Britain to join the persuaders of unionists to look to national reunification. Brooke rejected Hume's conclusion.

- The formal British government position, Conservative, Labour or Coalition, is found in Clause 1 (a) of the Hillsborough Agreement, 1985 where London and Dublin "affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland" — thus copper-fastening partition.

- Since 1973 the British have tried to enlist the active support of Irish nationalists, the SDLP and the Dublin government for partition through: The Sunningdale Agreement, 1973; The Powersharing Executive, 1974; The Hillsborough Treaty, 1985, and The Brooke Talks, 1991.

What is being advocated is not peace but simply a program for political stability and to perpetuate partition.

PART TWO

The social and economic effects of partition have been disastrous for working people, North and South.

- Partition has led to: discrimination in employment; waste of millions on maintaining the border; the external dependency of the two states; industrial under-development; unemployment; emigration; and poverty.

- Partition has further led to: conservative administrations in both states; low status of women; clerical control; stagnation in education

and health provision.

A genuine peace process requires the recognition of the effects of partition.

SECTION FIVE: CONDITIONS FOR DEMOCRACY & PEACE

This section deals with responsibility in relation to the peace process and the criteria by which any peace process might be judged. It also explores the process of national reconciliation.

- The search for peace is everyone's responsibility but particularly those organisations which represent the people and specifically the London and Dublin governments. It is also an international responsibility. The criteria by which any peace initiative is judged is the degree to which it promotes national self-determination.

- The elements needed to bring about the conditions for peace are: a British government that makes the ending of partition its policy in Ireland; a Dublin government that has the same policy; cooperation between the London and Dublin governments to bring this about in the shortest possible time with the greatest possible consent and minimizing costs of every kind; that this be done in cooperation with unionists and northern nationalists, i.e. to begin the process of national reconciliation.

SECTION SIX: ARMED CONFLICT

This section traces the history of the last 20 years and places armed struggle in the context of national liberation and colonial struggles worldwide.

- During the Home Rule crisis of 1912 it was the British and loyalist forces which threatened and used violence against the reunification of Ireland. This was followed by 50 years of state oppression of the nationalist community including attacks and pogroms by state forces. In this present phase of armed struggle, state violence and armed conflict predated the IRA campaign.

- The Civil Rights campaign of the 1960s was

brutally attacked by the forces of the state, official and unofficial.

- The British army was sent in not to protect the nationalists but to shore up unionism in the rest of Britain.
- From 1969 - 1971, the nationalist community was subjected to repeated RUC/loyalists/British army attacks.
- 90% of deaths caused by loyalists have been civilians. 55% of those killed by the British army have been civilians.
- Armed struggle throughout history has been seen as a legitimate part of a people's resistance to foreign oppression.
- Armed struggle for republicans is an option of last resort.
- There is no constitutional strategy to pursue national independence.
- In the circumstances the onus is on those who condemn the option of armed struggle to advance a credible alternative.

SECTION SEVEN: BRITISH GOVERNMENT

This section deals with the reasons why partition must go and the responsibility of the British government in persuading the unionists to look toward a united Ireland.

- There are many reasons why partition must go: it is anti-democratic; it produces abnormal states; it has failed and will continue to fail to bring lasting peace; it produces conflict and the conditions of conflict.
- Cardinal O Fiach declared that change by the consent of only those people in the artificial Six Counties to be "no policy at all...it means you do nothing...it's an encouragement to sit tight."

SECTION EIGHT: DUBLIN GOVERNMENT

This section outlines the responsibility of the Dublin government in the genuine search for lasting peace.

- The Dublin government has a clear responsibility in establishing national democracy. It possesses the resources and access to the world centres of power. Since the founding of the 26-County state it has adopted a negative role towards national democracy, taking up the issue only for electoral gain.
- Since the Hillsborough Accord it has been actively involved in supporting partition. A Dublin strategy for peace must involve persuading: the British that partition is a failure; the unionists that reunification would benefit them; the international community to support Irish national rights.
- Furthermore Dublin be defending the democratic rights of northern nationalists and resisting any further erosion of Irish national rights through diluting of the 1937 Constitution.

SECTION NINE: A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

This section outlines Sinn Fein's views on what needs to be done by both the Dublin and London governments if they are serious about pursuing a genuine lasting peace.

- Britain has a responsibility to: recognize the right of the Irish people to self-determination; change its current policy to one of ending partition and giving sovereignty to an all-Ireland government; influence unionist attitudes to this end; consult with Dublin to agreement on ending partition.
- If Britain refuses to do this then Dublin should; win international support for Irish national rights; mobilise support for this among Irish people and their descendants living abroad; use every international forum at its disposal; mobilise in Britain on Irish national self-determination; initiate debate with Northern unionists regarding national reunification; mobilise support in every aspect of

Irish life to secure national independence; review every treaty with Britain re. such issues as extradition; organise nationally and internationally in defense of democratic social and economic rights; and establish democratic structures through which the above can be implemented.

SECTION 10: THE ROLE OF NATIONALIST PARTIES

This section highlights the contradiction faced by the SDLP and Fianna Fail in their refusal to challenge the existence of partition and Britain's responsibility for the current conflict.

- Fianna Fail and the SDLP have considerable influence in the world power centres'. They could and should reject the British propaganda view of "Britain as a honest broker."
- If they believe that partition is not a viable solution to the conflict, they must firmly reject any proposed solution which involves partition.
- They should demand that Britain follow to its logical end the claim that they are neutral and formally accept the Irish people's right to self-determination.
- They should highlight all abuse of human rights in Ireland and demand that the CSCE should monitor human rights abuses currently happening in the Six Counties.

SECTION ELEVEN: THE UNIONISTS

This section looks at the impact unionists have on the demand for self-determination and outlines Sinn Fein's approach to discussion with them in relation to this.

- Unionists are 20% of the Irish people and have a considerable impact on the peace process. Peace requires a settlement between Irish nationalists and Irish unionists.
- This debate cannot begin as long as Britain guarantees the continuation of the unionist artificial majority in the Six Counties. The 'unionist veto'

must be ended. To achieve national reconciliation the deep rooted fears of people must be addressed. All gain from a democratic settlement.

SECTION TWELVE: THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

This section looks at the various changes that have been taking place in Western and Eastern Europe and places Irish reunification in that context.

- The process of political and economic restructuring which is taking place in Europe has raised the issue of national self-determination. The partition of Ireland, anomalous in international law, should be considered in this context. Many European governments have already accepted Irish reunification is a necessity for durable peace to be established. Already various EC reports have recognized the 'anomalous' status of Britain's remaining jurisdiction in Ireland.
- The Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe is empowered to carry out checks on human rights abuses. It should be invited to do so in the Six Counties.

SECTION THIRTEEN: THE UNITED NATIONS

This section deals with the role of the United Nations in resolving conflicts with suggestions as to how these might be applied in the context of Ireland. The situation in the North is a failure of the normal political process and there is little reason to have confidence in either government's willingness or ability to resolve the conflict. In such a case it is possible for the United Nations to be requested to help with the resolution.

- The United Nations Secretary General and the UN's Decolonization Committee share a duty with member states to create the conditions in which the "freely expressed will of the people concerned" can be reliably ascertained.

This means, firstly, removing all forms of repression. In Ireland this would mean the removal of every barrier created to enforce partition.

- Those concerned with peace in Ireland should ask the United Nations to: request annual reports from Britain on its role in Ireland in line with Article 73 of the UN Charter; ask the Decolonisation Committee to hold an annual review of the toll of partition.

- Sinn Féin does not support placing UN troops in Ireland.

- Any deadlocks encountered during the process of British withdrawal could be assisted towards a resolution by the United Nations.

- The United Nations could be requested to convene a conference of all parties involved.

propose that the United Nations monitors partition and Britain's role within it.

SECTION FOURTEEN: SUMMARY

1. Peace requires the conditions of democracy, freedom and justice to eradicate the causes of war.

2. The Irish people have the same historical right to sovereignty and nationhood which is recognized by international law. Partition contravenes these laws and frustrates national democracy and national reconciliation.

3. British rule in Ireland has no democratic legitimacy and has rested on division and coercion. They should recognize the failure of partition.

4. The Dublin government should assume its responsibility in relation to reunification either in cooperation with Britain or if necessary, independently.

5. The unionist minority have nothing to fear from a united Ireland. Removing the veto will open up the possibility for constructive dialogue.

6. Irish republicans are committed to playing a constructive role in building national democracy when the British government finally adopts a policy of withdrawal from Ireland.

7. The partition of Ireland and the British claim to jurisdiction over the Six Counties is a European issue.

8. The United Nations has the authority and mandate to monitor a decolonisation process in Ireland. As an interim measure Sinn Féin would