

11<sup>th</sup> April 2001

Hello Martin Hello Gerry

Happy Easter to you and all yours, and to all of the MLA's who have worked so hard for all of us over the last couple of years.

The progress has been remarkable and will historically be judged as such.

I am writing this at Easter time, which seems appropriate, but it has been on my mind for the last year.

The purpose of this writing is, not blame, but a deep concern, which has been with me for the last year, and, I believe reflects feeling throughout the whole country North and South.

David Trimble's delaying tactics in the first two years of the Good Friday Agreement and Peter Mandelson's inept handling of the Patten report on policing, and the endless amendments to the P.S.N.I.'s Act, have in many ways added to the fog and the confusion which exists all around us at this present time.

I think the assessment is correct that Sinn Féin will do well at both the local elections and the elections when they come in the South, however the subsequent debate on these results whilst important may again help to cloud the judgments on the bigger picture.

The core thinking of this paper is that the leadership of the Republican Movement having risked everything within the family to achieve the Good Friday agreement have stopped leading, or even worse are over influenced by grass roots thinking which while perfectly honourable and legitimate, may in itself be over influenced by their immediate concerns and experiences of the last 30 years.

Looking at the Irish problem historically from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, this period is probably the only time in our history where real progress has been and can be made. Again this will be the subject of a protracted debate but two major factors will emerge, one the tenacity of the Republican movement, and two the global change in England's need to dominate Ireland for its own strategic safety.



The Republican movement has often claimed, correctly in my opinion, that history is at last on its side, and bottom line it does not really matter what happens, the peace process is unstoppable towards an intergrated united Ireland living in harmony and in peace with its more powerful neighbour.

That thinking is fine up to a point and it is very easy to see that if you are born and brought up in a deprived Catholic area of the North, i.e. West Belfast, Derry and some of the border counties, and you learned discrimination, dominance and control, how you would want to sweep away all other political considerations and look for reassurance in your own community, that the thinking is unquestionably correct.

It is my opinion that the nature of the Republican armed struggle reinforced the phenomenon of the "group thought". During the war I believe that this was an essential ingredient of the struggle and with out it the movement would have been crushed, but it takes a different thinking to take full advantage of this moment in our history, this I believe is at the centre of the dilemma and dynamic facing the leadership at this present time.

The confusion over the statement the 'war is over' clearly illustrates this dilemma, as does the endless debate on the minutiae of the Policing Act, important as the details are.

These two areas and the confusion over the retention of arms, whilst essential ingredients of the past Republican psyche have created despair in the Unionist -Protestant- community.

*quote* [ This group of people, the Unionists, have nowhere to go, they have been used, abused, and been given privileges they did not earn over the centuries, they are indeed a lost tribe.

Consider this - If the present leadership of the Republican Movement found itself in leadership roles within the Unionist Community how would they lead their people? Remembering at every point and turn, that they are abandoned, they have lost and they have nowhere to go. Would it be comfortable to think that real leadership would prevail? And you would say 'lets realise that our future is in a United Ireland, lets make the best deal in the interests of our people' or would you say as they are saying 'we have nothing to lose lets stand and fight'

I think what I have just described is embryonic within Unionist consciousness, but the terror of what this would actually mean for the majority of their people is unthinkable; a fifty year war which they could



never win. What I believe is happening is that the periphery of Loyalism is acting out on behalf of the centre, i.e. the spread of the Loyalist pipe bombing and the sectarian attacks on isolated Catholics; is a manifestation of the parallel confusion and lack of leadership within the Unionist community.

How similar this must look to a neutral outside observer; the splitting of the 'Real' IRA from the Republican family on one side and the accusations of betrayal and sellout of the Republican tradition by the present leadership, and the similar parallel position adopted by the UDA and the DUP and their accusations of sellout and betrayal by the Ulster Unionist Party.

The inherent dangers are like a cancer, which are continuing to grow, and may endanger the entire process which the Republican Movement has so courageously initiated and developed since the early eighties. If the political position is accepted; that the Republican position is unstoppable, then nothing in the current impasse can justify threatening the entire position.

It is totally in the interests of the Republican Movement to take what ever steps are necessary to remove the individual logs from this log jam so that a renewed spirit can be regenerated in Ireland.

It is also in the interests of the Unionist family that the Republican leadership make the running, and I believe that if you have the courage to do this the support throughout the entire country will be immediate and massive.

It is you, the Republican leadership which has made the peace, it is you who have taken enormous personal and collective risks, and whilst I understand perfectly well politically when you appeal to the British and Irish Governments to move things forward, the buck started with you and the buck stops with you! It is your leadership which will achieve success, or otherwise.

Again back to what you would do if by some flick of fate you were placed in the leadership role of the Unionist people. Just imagine if you accepted that you were abandoned and that you had lost, would it not be a safe reasonable policy to clear the outside peripheral territory with a pipe bomb strategy, gradually drawing your people into that section of North Eastern Ulster, and when you had achieved that, with one million people collected in that area it would be possible to sit back and simply state; "We the Unionists are agreeing to nothing, are going nowhere". What could the British and Irish Governments do? Little or nothing, other than initiate a Bosnian style war.



This doomsday scenario would empower the 'Real' IRA or whoever, to clearly illustrate that the present leadership had got it wrong and that the failure of the political process was self evident; re-igniting a war more destructive than the one we are emerging from.

Please consider this position.

Yours sincerely

Brendan