

Thank you for the document entitled: "A Strategy For Peace And Justice In Ireland" which we received and studied carefully. We welcome all sincere attempts to find a path to self-determination and true democracy which we believe is a prerequisite to lasting peace for all the people of Ireland.

The idea of a joint declaration by the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister if based on an actual programme aimed at the exercise of self-determination and democracy would, of course, be a very significant and radical development. If its objective is the establishment of an Irish National Democracy and the phasing out of British rule then it would be of historical importance.

In studying this document we have found a degree of ambiguity which is confusing and open to a multitude of interpretations. For Republican Activists and Nationalists to give this document realistic consideration there must be clarity on the most fundamental issue of national self-determination.

In attempting to find agreement on the issues the present method of communication is, we think you will agree, unsatisfactory. Meetings between nominees would be a much better and more fruitful way to proceed.

Such meetings would, as one of the primary tasks, consider redrafting the declaration.

Reference to  
the Joint Declaration  
of 16/12/83



POL 35 / 336(3)

A STRATEGY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN IRELAND  
A Joint Declaration by the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.

The British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach acknowledge that the most urgent and important challenge facing the people of Ireland, North and South, and the British and Irish Governments together, is finally to overcome the legacy of history and to heal past conflicts and differences, recognizing that past failures to settle relationships between the people of both islands satisfactorily has led to continuing tragedy and suffering.

They believe the development of closer European unity, which will result in the effective removal of borders, fundamentally changes the nature of British-Irish relationships and removes the basis of the historic conflict still taking place within the confines of Northern Ireland. These developments, and the fact that both parts of Ireland will in the future be the only considerable territory in the Community without land links to the other countries and regions, will intensify the need for both parts of Ireland to be united in their approach to all major issues, which affect the future of all the people of Ireland, North and South, in the context of the new Europe.

Both the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach are convinced that the ending of conflict and healing of division can make a huge positive contribution to the future welfare and prosperity of both parts of Ireland, as well as bring to an end the last remaining divisions in a European Community that has already ended more deep and bitter quarrels. Both of them recognise that the ending of division can only come about with the agreement and co-operation of the people North and South. They therefore make a solemn commitment to use all their influence and resources to create an atmosphere which will foster agreement and reconciliation, and to promote intensive co-operation at all levels to strengthen the process of agreement and achieve closer unity of purpose.

The British Prime Minister reiterates on behalf of the British Government that they have no selfish, strategic, political or economic interest in Northern Ireland, and that their sole interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among the people who inhabit the island. The British Government acknowledge it is the wish of the people of Britain to see the people of Ireland live together in unity and harmony, born of agreement with respect for their diverse traditions, and with full recognition of the special links and the unique relationship which exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

The Taoiseach, on behalf of the Irish Government, accepts that the exercise of the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole cannot in practice be achieved except with the agreement and the consent of the people of Northern Ireland and that it must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights of both communities, whether majority or minority. The Irish Government would, accordingly, commit themselves to working, in the spirit and on the basis of the Report of the New Ireland Forum, to create institutions and structures, which while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland would enable them to work together in all the areas where there is substantial common ground. This would help to build the trust necessary for an agreed future leading to a closer form of unity by agreement. Such unity would of course, require institutional recognition of the special links that exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland as part of the totality of relationships, while taking account of the newly forged links with the rest of Europe.

In order to promote these aims the Taoiseach has indicated to the British Prime Minister his intention of establishing a permanent Irish Convention in order to consult and advise on the steps required to remove the barriers of distrust which divide the people of Ireland and which stand in the way of the exercise in common of self-determination on an equal basis. The Convention would be open to all democratic parties in Ireland, who share the objective of a united Ireland achieved peacefully through democratic self-determination, or who wish to share in dialogue about Ireland's political future and the welfare of all its people.

Note:

If the British Government are unable to accept a Joint Declaration, the Irish Government will proceed to set up the Convention with the further objective of planning and implementing the policies required to persuade the British Government to accept these objectives.



- 1 The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister acknowledge that the most urgent and important issue facing the people of Ireland, north and south, and the British and Irish governments together, is to remove the causes of conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions which have resulted, recognising that past failures to settle relationships between the people of both islands satisfactorily has led to continuing tragedy and suffering.
- 2 They consider that the development of European Union fundamentally changes the nature and the context of British Irish relationships and will progressively remove the basis of the historic conflict still taking place in Northern Ireland. The challenges and opportunities of European Union will, of themselves, require new approaches to serve interests common to both parts of Ireland.
- 3 The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister are convinced of the inestimable value to both their peoples of healing divisions in Ireland and of ending a conflict which has been so manifestly to the detriment of all. Both recognise that the ending of divisions can come about only through the agreement and co-operation of the people, North and South, representing both traditions in Ireland. They therefore make a solemn commitment to promote co-operation at all levels. It is their aim to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing the whole island.
- 4 The British Prime Minister reiterates, on behalf of the British Government, that they have no selfish, strategic, political or economic interest in Northern Ireland, and that their sole interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among the people who inhabit the island. The British Government recognise and accept that the people of Ireland have the right collectively to self-determination. We regret that the people of Ireland have been divided on how to exercise that right and we regret in particular the heavy price that the people of Ireland, particularly the people of the North have paid for that division. We also regret any mistakes or failures by past British Governments that may have contributed to that division.

However, the past is over. Let us look to the future.

We would naturally, as we believe would the whole world, like to see the people of Ireland reach agreement on the exercise of self-determination. We have already made clear that if such agreement took the form of Irish unity that we would legislate for it. Whatever form such agreement takes we would therefore naturally endorse and we underline that it must be a



matter for the collective agreement of the people who inhabit the island. Indeed we will do all in our power to encourage such agreement and in particular to persuade the people of Northern Ireland that such agreement is in their best interest as well as everyone elses. We are more than willing to take immediate and appropriate steps to create the conditions and climate for such agreement providing for consensus and reconciliation. We have no doubt that any such agreement should reflect and give clear expression to the common interests in today's world of the people of Ireland North and South, respecting their diverse traditions and recognising the special links and unique relationships which exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

The British Government deeply regrets the failure of successive British Governments to achieve agreement on all relationships to the satisfaction of the people of Ireland. We will do all in our power to succeed this time.

- 5 The Taoiseach, on behalf of the Irish Government, considers that the lessons of Irish history, and especially of Northern Ireland, shows that stability and well-being will not be found under any political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on grounds of identity by a significant minority of those governed by it. He accepts, on behalf of the Irish Government, that the democratic right of self determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with the agreement and consent of the people of Northern Ireland and must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights of both communities.
- 6 The Irish Government accordingly commits itself to working in the spirit and on the basis of the Report of the New Ireland Forum, to create institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest. This will help to build the trust necessary to end past divisions, leading to an agreed and peaceful future. Such structures would of course, include institutional recognition of the special links that exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland as part of the totality of relationships, while taking account of newly forged links with the rest of Europe.
- 7 In light of their joint commitment to promote the forgoing objectives, the Taoiseach has indicated to the Prime Minister, his intention of establishing a permanent Irish Minister, his intention of establishing a permanent Irish Convention to consult and advise on the steps required to remove the barriers of distrust which at present divide the people of Ireland and which stand in the way of the exercise in common



by them of self-determination on a basis of equality. It will be open to the Convention to make recommendations on ways in which agreement, as defined in the Forum Report, and respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland, can be promoted and established. The convention will be governed by the authority of Bunreacht na hEireann, and the institutions established under it. It will be a fundamental guiding principle of the Convention that all differences between the Irish people relating to the exercise in common of the right to self determination will be resolved exclusively by peaceful, political means.

- 8 The convention will be open to all democratically mandated political parties in Ireland which abide exclusively by the democratic process and wish to share in dialogue about Ireland's political future and the welfare of all its people.