

**TOWARDS
A
PEACEFUL
IRELAND**

Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach

The proposals contained in this document "Towards a Peaceful Ireland" were drafted by Dáithí Ó Conaill and completed on December 29, 1990, three days before his death. They were subsequently adopted by Republican Sinn Féin of which he was Vice President.

TOWARDS A PEACEFUL IRELAND

For 21 years, the people of Ireland have suffered war, strife and political turmoil. The cost has been high; 2,800 lives have been lost to date, liberties have been denied and two generations have grown up in an abnormal situation. With so many changes taking place in the world, many people ask why it is difficult to bring about peace, stability and economic development in our own country.

It should be evident to most people by now that the unresolved national question is the root cause of our problems. Resources which would normally be used for economic development, both North and South are diverted to sustain a regime of repression. Constant efforts are made to resolve the Northern situation by military means; yet it is widely recognised that a military solution is not feasible in the long term. All parties involved in armed activity are on public record as admitting that a political solution will have to be found eventually.

Various political solutions have been tried to date and have failed.. The Dublin administration has never made a serious effort to produce worthwhile proposals while the British have blundered from one failure to another. The 26-county state operates under the 1937 Constitution which many people are now calling into question. Demands have been made recently for the deletion or amendment of Articles 2 and 3 of that document. While the Supreme Court may uphold the same articles as a "constitutional imperative", they are in effect an empty formula in true Leinster House fashion, which serves the politicians' purpose of giving the 26-county state the appearance of being a nation-state.

For their part the British continue to nurse the so-called Brooke initiative. Talks which were to be held have been postponed and the stop-go nature of the proceedings leads many to believe that there is no substance whatsoever in the whole Brooke affair. While people die, politicians temporise, the political vacuum grows emptier by the day and many people are beginning to despair of an eventual solution. To overcome that feeling of hopelessness, Republican Sinn Féin makes the following proposals.

1. The lack of democracy is at the root of the National issue. The restoration of democracy would secure a way forward. The Irish people, acting as a unit, must be free to exercise their national right to self determination. Towards that end Republican Sinn Féin calls for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrage of the adult population. The Assembly would have the sole function of drafting a new Constitution and would have six months to complete its work. The agreed Constitution would be submitted to the people in referendum for acceptance or rejection.

Republican Sinn Féin believes that drafting a new 32-county Constitution would be more democratic, just and lasting than amending an existing flawed 26-county document. Furthermore, an open democratic forum would be more meaningful to the Irish people today than meetings behind closed doors between politicians who have failed the people so often. All elements of Irish society would be free to contest the election for the Assembly. The internal relations of the Irish people with one another and their external relations with Europe and the world at large would be determined through free and open debate. As a contribution to that debate, Sinn Féin Poblachtach has prepared a set of proposals - ÉIRE NUA - which outlines the basis for a new Constitution in a federally structured Ireland.

2. Prior to the setting up of the Assembly, the British Government must declare that it will withdraw its forces and establishment from Ireland within twelve months of the adoption of a new Constitution by the people of Ireland. Can Mr. Brooke's statement of November 9, 1990 that Britain has "no selfish strategic or economic interest" in staying in Ireland be interpreted as a political declaration of intent to withdraw? If it can, then the British must prove their sincerity by publicly committing themselves to withdraw from Ireland after the Irish people have adopted a new Constitution.

3. Coupled with the two above-mentioned proposals there must be an amnesty for all political prisoners and people on the wanted list. Thousands have endured great hardship in prisons since 1970 ranging from torture in 1971 to the deaths of ten hunger strikers in 1981 and the gross injustice inflicted on the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four, Judith Ward and many others. Some people have been kept in jail for eighteen years, a situation unprecedented since Fenian times. All political prisoners must be released one month prior to the election for the Constituent Assembly.

Given the acceptance of the above three proposals, there would be no necessity for the continuance of armed struggle. All elements, including the British, engaged in such activities should cease action immediately on acceptance of these proposals. By so doing, a new spirit of freedom would pervade the country and the Irish people could, at long last enter into a dialogue of genuine discussion to fashion the Ireland of the future.

Failure to adopt these proposals will prolong the current situation of further loss of life, police harassment of the people, hundreds languishing in jail and thousands fleeing our shores because of the lack of employment. Such conditions cannot be allowed to continue.

Seo é Bóthar na Síochána.

YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE

These proposals were drafted to indicate a way forward to peace with justice in Ireland. If you agree that they are worthy of consideration, please do what you can to assist in creating a public debate on them.

You can do this in many ways, like

- mentioning them to your friends, especially any who are in positions of influence.
- writing to the press to show your approval.
- mentioning them on a radio or T.V. programme.
- proposing support for them in any organisation to which you belong, e.g. trade union or professional association, tenants' or residents' organisations, political party, local council, community association etc.

If you would like to have a copy of our programme, ÉIRE NUA - A New Democracy, write to us and enclose £1.30 for cost and postage.

Published by Sinn Féin Poblachtach, 13 Aston Place, Dublin 2.
Telephone : 01-6799120.

January 21, 1991.

Title: Towards a Peaceful Ireland

Organisation: Republican Sinn Féin

Date: 1991

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