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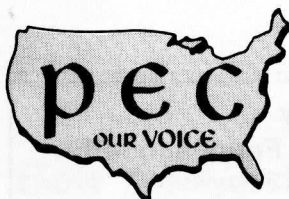


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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 21, Number 8

August 1996

PEC Questions Official Irish Famine Commemoration "Party"

The Irish government has decided to close out its Great Hunger commemorations on June 1, 1997, with a giant musical party having commercial aspects unsuited to the subject of famine commemoration.

We have registered our concern as have other American Irish groups. The government has turned the event over to private promoters, who hope to tap the pockets of 100,000 American Irish enjoying the numerous "pubs and restaurants" at a famine village theme park in Millstreet, Cork when they are not enjoying U-2 and others at the musical events. We are told that the purpose of this "wake cum celebration" is to "bury the ghost of the famine", something we don't think that the Irish can ever do. There are no serious famine related themes to the event other than a few symbolic ceremonies, obviously a side act.

The close is set for June 1997, we are told, so as to give the government time to work on the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the 1798 United Irishmen's Revolt. On the basis of the Great Hunger closing and previous failures to adequately commemorate the Easter Rebellion, we must wonder if 1998 will turn out to be another damage control exercise by the people who told us that the Great Hunger was a "shared experience" of the British and Irish. More on this in the future we expect.

Recruit a New PEC Member

Unfortunately as we have told you before, after the IRA cease-fire of August 1994, many people have had the mistaken idea that there is no longer a need for organizations such as the PEC. Subsequently PEC has seen a decline in membership.

During the eighteen-month ceasefire, as the preconditions piled up, as the British government raised further obstacles to progress, it became clear to our members that our work was not only still necessary, but more important than ever.

We need to increase our membership in order to continue our work. The support of our membership, both actively and financially is crucial to the success of PEC activities. This is why the PEC is conducting a massive membership recruiting drive. It is our goal to double our current membership and thus double our clout and influence.

This sounds like a mighty task. In order to accomplish this we are asking each of our members to make the effort and recruit at least one new member. If each of our members could find a family member, a friend, maybe a business associate or just someone you know who cares about the cause of peace with justice in a united Ireland, this campaign will be a success. If each member could do this, the clout of the PEC will skyrocket. So please recruit that one new member.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

West Belfast priest and Andersonstown News columnist, Fr. Des Wilson can now luxuriate in the title of Doctor of Philosophy, *Honoris Causa*, after the medieval University of Ferrara conferred the honorary degree on him at a high-powered ceremony at the Italian university. Fr. Wilson said he accepted the honor on behalf of the people of West Belfast, whom he had been privileged to work with for the past 30 years. "I see this not only as a recognition of my life's work, but of the indomitable spirit and courage which the people of West Belfast have shown over the years." (*Andersonstown News* 7/6/96)

The forced marches into nationalist communities along routes which are not acceptable to the local people, and which could lead to trouble and violence, are outrageous and provocative acts. These unwelcome, offensive marches have consequences for which you and other unionists who insist on these practices, must be held accountable. Insisting as you did at Drumcree on an Orange Order march through a nationalist area, along an unacceptable route, with beating drums signalling intended domination, absent the local communities consent, and in the face of clear resentment and

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OUR VIEW

The British government's disgraceful handling of the controversy created by its Loyalist allies provocative sectarian parade in Portadown is by now well known to all. So is the inflammatory conduct by Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble. Both Mr. Major and Mr. Trimble bare heavy responsibility for the violent disturbances that rocked Northern Ireland last month.

It's not as if the British didn't know it was coming. After all the Loyalists have been marching for 300 years on the 'Glorious Twelfth of July' and there were readily seen signs that they were seeking a special confrontation to establish their power over the peace process. What government worthy of the name would not have plans to diffuse such as potential conflagration before it reached the confrontation point? What kind of government would give in to the rule of Orange/Loyalist mobs?

The final result of the decision of the RUC to first ban the march through the nationalist Garvaghy Road, then allow it to proceed because of Loyalist violence against the police and nationalists throughout the North, was the quite predictable and understandable outrage from the nationalist community.

Could it be that this was exactly what the government wanted? Conventional wisdom is that this is a "severe roadblock" to the continuation of the peace process. This provides the British government with the opportunity to blame the "impossible" Irish for the failure of the process. This of course will divert attention from its own failure to promote real change in Northern Ireland, blocking Sinn Fein participation and allowing Loyalist obstruction of the process. They must not be allowed to get away with these tactics.

As we have said before, in the final analysis, it is the governments, British and Irish, who are responsible for implementing the necessary changes in Northern Ireland. The ball is in their hands, and thus the responsibility.

The Pope and King Billy

by Frank Morris, Jr., Pennsylvania

Did you hear the one about the airline pilot flying into Northern Ireland who advised his passengers: "We are now arriving in Belfast, please adjust your watches to the local time, 1690."

How true! The Orangemen march through Catholic enclaves every July taunting them about their defeat 300 years ago at the Battle of the Boyne, when King William of Orange defeated Catholic King James. The taunts include hanging the Pope in effigy.

History tells us however that Pope Innocent XI had blessed King William on his way to the Boyne and prayed for his success. It seems that the Pope saw James as a tool of power-lusting Louis XIV of France, who was attempting to interfere in Church affairs... And so the Pope backed Billy

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GREAT HUNGER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR: Frank Morris, Jr., 821 Briarwood Ln, Camp Hill, PA 17011-(717) 737-7013

NATIONAL ORGANIZER:Pete Foley, 3177 Villa Ave. #3H, Bronx, NY 10468-(718)933-7196

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(contrary to what Ian Paisley and the Orangemen believe). But no matter! Orange trumpets blast and bass drums pound out the message... a sort of Gaelic in your face disgrace.

So every year when the Orange Order has its parades, bonfires etc.. When they burn the Pope in effigy or sing songs about kicking him or worse, they would do well to remember that their victory at the Boyne in 1690 was celebrated by their ally the Pope and prayers of thanksgiving were given in Catholic cathedrals all over Europe. However this would probably dampen their spirits thus is unlikely to be remembered. In Belfast, it is 1690. Let the good times roll.

**Send Offensive Situations to: Paul Newman,
9 Deltic Road, New City, NY 10956**

A Future of Peace or Conflict: That is the Question

by John Waters, *Irish Times* (6/25/96)

Caught between the stupid inhumanity of the IRA and the seemingly congenial folly of its opponents, it is difficult to say what needs to be said and be heard. The easy option is to reach for the lexicon of repudiation and join the chorus of condemnation.

But someone has to say the obvious. After Adare, after Manchester, I repeat: condemnation makes us sound better and feel better but does nothing to create conditions in which further deaths or injuries might be avoided. What *might* save us from future Adares and Manchesters is a little verbal restraint and common sense.

There have been few of these commodities on display in the past week. The government's challenge to Sinn Fein, trumpeted and celebrated as an important stand, was the height of stupidity. We are it appears, supposed to keel over in wonder at the government's audacity in asking Sinn Fein if (a) it has yet gone to the IRA to ask for a ceasefire, and (b) whether the party continues to support the armed struggle of the IRA.

In the first place, does it matter whether Sinn Fein has gone to the IRA to ask for a ceasefire? One presumes that members of the IRA army council read the newspapers and so will already be aware that almost everybody would like them to stop killing people.

As to whether Sinn Fein supports the armed struggle - does this matter more than the fact that Sinn Fein represents our best chance of ending the conflict? Surely any child in the street could inform the Government that Sinn Fein has, under the enlightened and courageous leadership of Gerry Adams, long sought a peaceful resolution of the conflict and arguing within the republican movement for the pursuit of a purely political strategy.

Of course, the Government's purpose in asking such questions is not to obtain information. Still less have such plays to do with restoring the peace. The Government is engaged in "perception manipulation" in an effort to wrongfoot Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein in the eyes of a willing media and a supposedly gullible public.

One concludes inexorably that, their vision impaired by the moral fog of ritual condemnation, many of our political leaders cannot see that the consequences of their words and actions are likely to be the

direct opposite of their stated intentions. We are confronted with two possibilities: one, that they are fools, the other that they willfully adopt positions because they lack the courage to proceed with the peace process.

Suppose that at lunchtime today, Gerry Adams were to go on RTE's *News at One* and announce that he and his leading Sinn Fein colleagues were renouncing the IRA. What would be the consequences?

Undoubtedly, Mr. Bruton would immediately issue a statement welcoming Mr. Adams aboard the democratic process. Other party leaders might, with varying degrees of churlishness, do likewise. Commentators would engage in an orgy of triumphalist sanctimony. No doubt many of us would feel proud to have participated in this historic moment.

What then?

It seems obvious to me that then the IRA, in turn, would renounce Gerry Adams. The republican movement would be split yet again. But the genie of physical force republicanism would be at least as elusively at large as at any time in the past. The IRA campaign, the brake of moderate republicanism removed from it, would proceed with a new ferocity.

The best it would become would be like the worst it was before. The net result would be a repetition of 1970 and the creation of new generations of Stickies and irredentist physical force republicans.

Sometimes it seems that this is all most political leaders in the Republic are prepared to imagine. They say that they want peace but their words and actions suggest otherwise.

They ask Gerry Adams to repudiate the Manchester bombing and when he does they demand that he go what they insist is a step further and "condemn" it. It is reminiscent of the contributions of many of the same people in the immediate aftermath of the 1994 cessation, when they harped endlessly on the difference between "permanent" and "complete".

What is this nonsense about? Does it matter if Gerry Adams condemns or does not condemn? What is the difference between "repudiate" and "condemn"? Will the untellable numbers of potential future victims of this conflict gain a single crumb of comfort from such semantics?

Or could it be that, like the British government, the Irish government and most of our political establishment simply want from republicans a gesture of surrender. Could it be that they have so come to believe the untruths they have told themselves about their own political and military lineage that they want from Sinn Fein a similar declaration of dishonesty?

Could it be that they are so deeply wedded to the notion of vindicating and validating the nature of the southern State, and the spurious version of history on which it is based, that they are more interested in empty declarations from Gerry Adams than they are in the fact that this leader of Sinn Fein represents the one chance of ending this conflict that any of us alive on this island today will see in our lifetimes?

Could it possibly be as simple as this: that the establishment in this republic is more interested in defeating republicanism than in peace? Perhaps this, for them, is the real end of the line: Gerry Adams on *Questions and Answers* saying "I was wrong".

That I believe may well be the limit of their ambition. For why else would they spend more energy in attempting to browbeat Mr. Adams into seeing things from their viewpoint than in seeking - by working with others to remove the obstacles to full engagement between all of the participants in this conflict - to demonstrate to republicans that Gerry Adams is right when he tells them - *as he does* - that armed struggle is counter-productive?

Gerry Adams stands head, shoulders, chest and torso above the political midgits who denounce and berate him. While they have been content to pay lip-service to peace, he has been placing his reputation, even his very life on the line in his search for a permanent settlement of this savage conflict.

It is time for the games and semantics to stop. We are at one of the most critical moments in our history. If this conflict is allowed to enter a new phase, it may take another generation to untangle. The Taoiseach, speaking in the Dail on Wednesday vaingloriously repeated his famous public interrogation of Sinn Fein. "No question could be more simpler or more fundamental", he said, than whether Sinn Fein supports the armed struggle of the IRA.

There is in fact, a simpler or more fundamental question, which I asked in this column two weeks ago: do we want peace or do we want war?

Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

and hostility, was a provocative act. We cannot accept double standards and calls by one side against violence and the means and methods that cause such violence, intended to apply solely to the other side. Before we meet again on your next trip to the US, I would strongly urge that you as a key unionist leader, identified with the current unrest, pledge an end to forced marches and the violence clearly associated with them.

(Letter to David Trimble from Rep. Ben Gilman R-NY 7/16/96)

Imagine that President Robinson receives a letter from a group of Anglicans requesting that they be allowed to celebrate the Eucharist privately in the chapel of Dublin Castle once a year to commemorate some event or person that is dear to them. The President responds with a curt "no" and gives no reason. Can you imagine the furor and the propaganda? And yet-that scenario in reverse is almost exactly what has happened in England. A group of pious Roman Catholics who have a devotion to a saint martyred in the Tower of London asked permission to have Mass celebrated privately in his cell. But, under no circumstances were the masses to take place. What a pity to find the Monarch, who holds a very special position in that church, stirring old embers and giving new standing to religious bigots such as Ian Paisley.

(Evening Herald 6/18/96)

David Trimble has demonstrated graphically in the past couple of weeks that his party is once more prepared to engage with nationalists in making a deal that preserves the constitutional position of Northern Ireland but seeks to make it a place in which nationalists can live at ease. *(Ruth Dudley Edwards, Irish Independent 6/23/96)*

(Editors note: Hopefully Mr. Trimble's conduct at the siege of Drumcree and throughout the marching season will make Ms. Edwards and the Independent realize how ridiculous their positions on David Trimble and the unionists, past and present are in the real world. However, we doubt they will.)

American Irish Contributions to the Shaping of Modern America

by Kevin Murphy, *Massachusetts*

The American Irish have played a major role in the physical transformation of the United States from a vast wilderness to the great power it is today. This American Irish role dates back to the infancy of our great democracy.

In 1785, Kilkenny born James Hoban left his native Ireland for the USA. The young Irish architect soon found himself as the chief architect for the "President's House". Hoban used as a model for what is now known as the White House the Duke of Leinster's house in Dublin, which today is the seat of the Dail Eireann (Irish Parliament). Hoban also played a huge role in the design of the US Capitol Building. After British troops burned down the White House and US Capitol in 1814, Hoban was supervisor of the reconstruction effort.

As America became an urbanized land, another American Irish architect came forth. Louis O'Sullivan was born in Boston in 1856. His father was a refugee from Ireland's Great Hunger. O'Sullivan is considered by many architectural scholars to be the father of American Urban Modernism. He is credited with inventing the American skyscraper. His style also dealt with the use of steel in building erection. The Flat Iron Building in Manhattan was O'Sullivan's first skyscraper. O'Sullivan's efforts in inventing the skyscraper changed the face of urban America forever. Crowded cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston etc...built to the sky as a result of O'Sullivan's ideas. Quite a legacy from this American Irish architect who was born into poverty to parents who fled starvation in Ireland.

Now into the late 20th century came Dublin born Kevin Roche. America's largest metropolis, New York City, is full of architectural monuments to the famed Dubliner. The CBS Tower and Ford Foundation skyscrapers were designed by the Irish immigrant Roche. He also designed the vast TWA terminal at Kennedy Airport. In 1979, Roche received the Pritziger Prize. That award is considered the ultimate recognition in the architectural field. Universities that teach architecture commonly refer to Roche as the premier futuristic architect of late 20th century America. Hoban, O'Sullivan and Roche, just three of the American Irish who helped shape America.

US Media Fails to Report Loyalist Violence

Once again the US media has failed to accurately report the news coming out of Northern Ireland. During last month's marching season by the Orange Order there were numerous attacks against nationalists and nationalist property throughout Northern Ireland.

Nationalists were forced out of their homes, churches, schools and businesses were burned to the ground throughout Northern Ireland. These attacks occurred in Belfast, Ballymena, Newtonards, Portadown and other parts of the North. However little of this reached any of the American public through the news media.

The media down played Loyalist attacks. They also reported attacks on nationalists as sectarian battles between Catholic and Protestant mobs, giving the impression that nationalists were fully embroiled in the battle and thus equally responsible for the disturbances. Other news agencies decided to focus on the neutral British Army/RUC line and even tried to pin the blame on the IRA by speculating that the IRA was going to retaliate against Protestants.

It is time for the news media in this country to give accurate and in-depth coverage of all the news coming out of Northern Ireland. **They must stop distorting the news about Northern Ireland.**

The Unionist Threat

by Captain James Kelly (ret.), Dublin, Chairman, *United Ireland Forum*, former editor of the *Irish Defense Journal*, has written extensively on politico-military affairs

"I believe that Senator Mitchell will seat Sinn Fein immediately if the IRA announces a ceasefire. The only flaw in that scenario is that the seating of Sinn Fein at the peace talks will precipitate a resumption of loyalist violence. The loyalist cease-fire, announced in October 1994, was based on the assumption that 'the union is safe.' The seating of Sinn Fein automatically invalidates that assumption in the eyes, not merely of loyalist paramilitaries, but of the whole unionist community. So from the day on which Sinn Fein get seated, all of us here in the Republic will have to brace ourselves for the blows which the peace process, with its mindless meddling in the internal affairs of a province which we have never fully understood, will have brought down on us."

The above and latest unionist threat of violence against the Irish Republic emanates from none other than Dublinman, Conor Cruise O'Brien, erstwhile Irish government minister, now a fully fledged unionist, sitting as an accredited unionist delegate at the peace talks in Belfast. As such he sees fit to issue the threat, not on the issue of Sinn Fein arms on or under the table, but merely because Sinn Fein is likely to take a positive political stance in opposition to the union. Logically, this means that any nationalist party, inclusive of the Irish government, which espouses the Irish constitutional case for unity, will spark unionist violence against the Irish state.

The O'Brien threat makes a farce of the entire peace process. It means that the 1993 Joint Declaration of both governments, the seminal peace document, is set at naught. In that document, Britain asserted that "it is for the people of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right on the basis of consent freely and currently given." Britain also asserted that it was for the people of Ireland as a whole, without "external impediment,"

to consent and agree to the new political structures necessary to remove the cause of conflict.

How can there be any agreement and consent if, under threat of violence, one side is debarred from putting its case forward? How undemocratic can one get?

The O'Brien dictate makes it clear that, as far as he is concerned, there must be no question of putting the Irish case for unity on the peace agenda in opposition to and as an alternative to the British maintenance of the Union; that Mr. Major's acceptance of the validity of the Irish case for unity in the Joint Declaration means nothing; that the opposing constitutional positions, which have led to all the political violence in Ireland for over seventy years, are not to be debated at talks allegedly called to address the causes of the conflict. To date, the O'Brien threat has not been abrogated by mainstream

unionists such as Dr. Paisley and Mr. Trimble. Perhaps even more sinister was the Major statement, subsequent to the O'Brien peroration, that in the event of an IRA ceasefire, all political parties could not be expected to talk to Sinn Fein. He said that, even with a ceasefire in place, the question would not only be whether the British government would talk to Sinn Fein, but if the other parties would be willing to do so.

By handing over the driving of the peace bus to unionism in this way, with such as Dr. O'Brien as the conductor, it must be assumed that the British Prime Minister is handing over the peace process to hardline unionism.

Conflict resolution, which demands placing the issues causing violence on the table and working towards a compromise based on the principle of mutual consent, is apparently thrown overboard. This is something that the Irish government must address as a matter of urgency. As for Sinn Fein, it should be at the peace talks to effectively fight its corner.

Unionists Try to Stop Funding for West Belfast Group

Unionist councilors on the Belfast City Council are attempting to block the application for funding for the West Belfast Economic Forum (WBEF). The WBEF has been instrumental in the economic development plans for West Belfast and has been a key player in some of the most significant developments in recent years.

Even though the application for funding was unanimously approved by the Council's Economic Development Sub-Committee, Unionist councilors obstructed the passage of the WBEF's application at a recent meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources Sub-Committee. With this action, the application is at best delayed until September.

The group has already negotiated funding from outside sources and has received a commitment from the International Fund for Ireland to support development projects in West Belfast. However these commitments are contingent on WBEF's application being approved by the Belfast City Council. If the application fails the ramifications for West Belfast will be grave. WBEF Director Ruth Taillon states, "It is deeply worrying that Unionist politicians are obstructing our funding and it raises questions about whether these politicians are prepared to treat this community fairly."

The people of West Belfast need your support to see that Unionist councilors are not allowed to block the creation of jobs and stymie the work of the WBEF.

Please turn to Action Request #2

How the Goal of the Irish "Peace Process" has Shifted Over the Years

by Albert Doyle, *Vice-President*

We are presently witnessing a veritable media blitz to place the entire blame for the impasse in the so-called peace process on the IRA because of their recent return to violence in Britain and on Sinn Fein for failing to deliver an IRA surrender of arms. Are these the real reasons for the impasse? We don't think so.

Let's look at the history of the process to see how we got to where we are today.

December 1993 - The Downing Street Declaration

Prodded by talks between John Hume and Gerry Adams, the British and Irish governments produce a vague document calling for dialogue about Northern Ireland. Although containing no specific ideas it did establish several principles: a unionist veto on any changes in Northern Ireland and that Sinn Fein participation depended on a cease-fire, then defined by John Major as a three month trial period.

July 1994 - British clarifications

After months of being prodded for details the British issue a document containing some "clarifications." It restated the principle of a Loyalist veto and again demanded an IRA cease-fire. Furthermore, nowhere in these clarifications did the British government say that IRA decommissioning would be a precondition to Sinn Fein participation in talks.

August 1994 - IRA ceasefire

Ceasefires by the IRA and Loyalist paramilitaries set off a wave of optimism about the possibility of real progress. John Major immediately raises first obstacle over the fact that the IRA didn't use the word permanent in its declaration of a ceasefire. After being chided internationally Major is quoted as saying that he accepted that the ceasefire as genuine and would

begin talks with the Sinn Fein before year-end seeking an IRA weapons turnover. This was controversial and became the subject of much comment. The Irish government "Forum", without Loyalist participation, begins and quietly fizzles away, now forgotten.

Albert Reynolds, who negotiated the Downing Street Declaration while in office says that an IRA surrender (turn in of weapons) was never part of the agreement. Reynolds had by then been replaced by a Fine-Gael-Dick Spring coalition. The two governments frown at Reynolds and the British go so far as to say that was what they meant even if they didn't quite say it exactly. The unionist claim that Reynolds is mentally unbalanced.

February 1995 - the "Framework Document"

The long awaited document which was to spell out the ideas of the governments about the changes they had in mind. It provides a basis for hope for many but is still short on real substance, calling for some form of devolved government in still British Northern Ireland, some North - South cross-border bodies in matters of common interest, e.g. tourism, some European Community matters, etc. and some loose British-Irish contacts much like those already in place after the Hillsborough Agreement. The Loyalists explode. Major retreats. His margin in the British Parliament depends on Northern Ireland Loyalist support. The Loyalists say they will not accept the Framework Document as a basis for negotiation.

March 1995 - British move the goal posts; now demand IRA "decommissioning" (surrender) as a condition for Sinn Fein participation

The IRA ceasefire is now six months old. They object to the change of rules. So do many others but Major sticks it out with the now tacit support

of the Irish government of John Bruton which first endorsed the decommissioning idea, then tried to back away, ultimately endorsing it.

November 1995 - "Twin Tracks" agreement

Under pressure of President Clinton's highly successful visit to Ireland, including the North, the British and Irish governments propose to allow former Senator George Mitchell and other distinguished outsiders to come up with some suggestions to break the decommissioning deadlock. The Mitchell Report was supposed to pave the way for all-party talks at the end of February. However, the framework has now shifted firmly into a question of how to handle decommissioning, not whether it should be done. The Irish government agrees, thus fracturing the previous united front of nationalists. No changes in Northern Ireland are even mentioned.

January 1996 - Mitchell Report

Senator Mitchell's team shocks the British by rejecting advanced decommissioning as a precondition for all-party talks. Mitchell suggests that talks begin with parallel decommissioning as they progress. Within hours Major rejects the idea. He does, however, like Mitchell's passing reference to elections for a Northern Ireland "forum" and makes that a further precondition to the elusive all-party talks now pushed back to June. Later the governments agree that Mitchell will be the overall chairman of the negotiations.

February 1996 -IRA ends cease-fire

A London bomb apparently signals end of IRA belief in progress through "negotiations" which exclude Sinn Fein, who, as everyone knows, cannot deliver an IRA surrender.

Continued on next page

How the Goal of the Irish "Peace Process" has Shifted Over the Years

Continued From Previous Page

But the governments still hope for another cease-fire before the scheduled date for "talks" on June 10th. Ultimately elections for the new "forum" are held and Sinn Fein does better than anyone expected, increasing its electoral support. Sinn Fein demands admission to talks on the basis of its electoral support, without conditions and continue to do so.

June 1996 - Talks begin in circus atmosphere

Aggressive and disruptive Loyalists take the talks over by attacking Senator Mitchell personally and in his position as chairman, revealing for those who didn't know it before their fundamental anti-Catholic prejudices. Sinn Fein remains outside the gates having been barred because of IRA acts. Senator Mitchell's status is in doubt. The Loyalists don't look very good.

Manchester

Then, it all changes. The IRA, which marches to a different drummer, explodes a bomb in Manchester. No one is killed, but this is hardly noticed. The government's public relations mills swing into action. All blame is now placed on Sinn Fein and the IRA for the trouble in the peace talks. Editorial denunciations abound. A prominent Irish American newspaper claims that the peacemakers have been deceived by the nationalists and loyalists, suggesting that President Clinton may now throw up his hand in Churchillian disgust at the Irish. A columnist for the same paper hints that the British SAS will now hit the IRA hard because of their obstinance. Loyalist obstinance is now almost forgotten.

Conclusions

We agree that this entire process has been tainted by deception. But it is the British and Irish governments who have been guilty of

deception. It is now clear that they had no substantial political changes in mind for Northern Ireland. Their agreement on a Loyalist veto over any serious changes in Northern Ireland assured that there would be none. This was readily apparent to anyone with eyes in there head, a category which did not include the Irish and Irish American mainstream press, judging from their head-in-the-sand optimism. The only real aim of the two governments was an IRA surrender. As time has gone by that has become their definition of "peace." This has been supported by outsiders, including the US government, which really only wants the problem to go away and stop bothering us, a la Bosnia.

Not having gotten what they wanted, the British and Irish governments now must stop the process or be exposed as not having any other serious ideas for political change. A problem for them is that the Loyalist tiger, now out of its cage and armed with the veto weapon, may be hard to get back in its cage. Their aim remains the killing off of any changes in Northern Ireland, and

they are now well positioned to get their wish. The Irish side has certainly made its concessions: the Loyalist veto, the promise to drop constitutional claims to the North, to an all-Ireland solution and ultimately Sinn Fein's concession that a united Ireland was not on the table for these talks. These huge concessions were never reciprocated in even the slightest way by the British and particularly not by the Loyalist leaders. The sincere hopes of the Irish government that there might have been a change of hearts in the Loyalist camp have been dashed repeatedly.

Since the Major government is unwilling to confront its Loyalist allies it is very unlikely that any changes of significance to resolve the Northern Ireland problem can be agreed, even on a government to government basis. Perhaps the Manchester bomb has rescued the British from exposure but it was not the real cause of the breakdown. That blame can be laid squarely at the doorstep of the governments, particularly the British government. Blaming the IRA because they refuse to surrender is a smoke screen.

Another Reason for a British Apology

"England is now reading what she has lost by her positive enmity or careless neglect of Ireland: we are paying dearly for the errors of our fathers, which meet us on the many pages of the journals of our legislature. When Ireland had trade and industry, the merchants and manufacturers of England petitioned William the Third to 'discourage' them; and the Dutchman did it. With the consent and applause of Parliament, the rising manufacturers of Ireland were destroyed; it was made a felony to weave and spin, and enterprise was punished as a crime. So capital went elsewhere; Ireland sunk; no middle class grew up; and slowly, but surely, the bulk of the nation was flung upon the land alone, millions depending for existence on the lowest vegetable produce, while they exported cattle and provisions of all kind to England... no poor rate (tax) attached a portion of the rents of the soil, and appropriated it to the poor; the landlord swept all, according to law, returning what he chose - according to conscience."

(From the "Illustrated London News," January 30, 1847)

Action Requests

Write the letters below (or call), preferably in your own words, or as is. Be courteous. Have friends, organizations, business associates, etc., do the same.

1. Mr. John Bruton
An Taoiseach
Upper Merrion Square
Dublin 2, Ireland

Message: Recent events confirm that the British government is the root cause of the violence in Northern Ireland. It is time for you to realize this and use your good offices to unite nationalist opinion both in Ireland and abroad, and do everything in your diplomatic arsenal to get a declaration from the British government to withdraw from Ireland.

2. Mr. Joe McVey
Economic Development Man.
Belfast City Council
City Hall, Belfast BT4
Northern Ireland

Message: The Belfast City Council should approve the application for funding from the West Belfast Economic Forum. They do great work and should receive funding to continue plans for economic development in W. Belfast.

New York Times Downgrades Irish News

It is no surprise to readers of this newsletter that the *New York Times* coverage of Irish matters has been abysmal over many years. Since the beginning of the conflict in Northern Ireland 27 years ago, the *Times* has been notorious for its coverage. For decades the *Times* has portrayed the conflict as an irrational sectarian war conducted by Catholics and Protestants with the innocent British trying to act as peacemaker. For a newspaper which is supposed to set the standards by which all others go by, it is little wonder that the coverage of the conflict in Ireland has been biased and downright inadequate.

After massive complaints and protests about the *Times'* coverage of Irish matters and after former *Times* reporter Jo Thomas' scathing expose of the *Times'* pro-British bias, they assigned a reporter to Dublin (previously it had been covered out of London). One had hoped with a man on the scene that the *Times'* coverage would now improve, become more frequent and in greater depth. However, even with the *Times* reporter stationed in Dublin, the coverage continued to be poor with no continuity, usually emphasizing "color" stories, and light-weight in general.

This style continued through the current "peace process." As the British government placed preconditions in the path to Sinn Fein participation, little was reported in the way of criticism. When John Major rejected the report of the Mitchell commission and raised elections as a precondition, nowhere in the *Times'* piece did it say that Major rejected the report. Following the June 10th opening of talks, the *Times* failed to report a single line of news about the talks - which had by then become a nit-picking exercise by unionists aimed at limiting the powers of Senator George Mitchell, and seeking to enhance their control over the procedures. Forced to report on the Loyalist riots over their sectarian marches on their July 12th holiday, the *Times* down-played Loyalist violence and emphasized the "neutral British Army" line.

This is contrast with the excellent coverage in the *New York Times* on the Mid-East peace process. PEC Vice-President, Albert Doyle, has done a careful analysis comparing the *Times'* Irish coverage with their coverage of Israel. Based on the number of news stories, op-ed pieces, letters, editorials and weighing them based on lineage and seriousness of subject matter, we concluded that the *Times* coverage of Irish matters was 1% (that's right one percent) as compared to Israeli news.

This is an outrage. The American Irish have to let the *Times* know that we will not tolerate being degraded in this manner.

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