

Irish National Congress

P.O. Box No. 2814, Dublin 7



Comhdháil Náisiúnta na hÉireann

P.O. Box No. 2814, Dublin 7

NOVEMBER 1994

BRITAIN MUST MOVE

The Irish National Congress believes that the historic opportunity for peace which has developed since the IRA cease-fire on August 31st demands a much more urgent and meaningful response from the British government.

The commitment to open border roads and the reduction in the level of British troops on the streets in Derry city are of course welcome but they are hardly enough. Even these moves have been "balanced" by the deployment of paratroopers in West Belfast and marines in South Armagh and repeated British government support for the unionist veto.

The British government must immediately move to remove British troops from the streets, dismantle military installations and start releasing prisoners. The process of establishing a new and acceptable police service and of guaranteeing equality must also begin.

Talks need to begin quickly which are aimed at resolving the causes of the conflict. As the Downing Street Declaration makes clear, this is the most important issue. If the causes are not removed then the possibility of renewed conflict is much greater.

The INC has launched a national peace pledge focusing on those issues which must be immediately addressed. Help us increase the public pressure for peace. Sign the pledge. Distribute copies. Ask your elected representatives to sign the pledge.

The process may have begun but it needs all our active support if it is to progress.

Since it was launched in October, over 50,000 people have signed the Peace Pledge, including:

Declan Bree, Labour TD

Joe Costello, Labour TD

Ivor Callely, Fianna Fáil TD

Seán Haughey, Fianna Fáil TD

Ned O'Keefe, Fianna Fáil TD

Neil Blaney TD

Pascal Mooney, Fianna Fáil Senator

& Chair, Leitrim County Council

May Kelly, Senator

Christy Moore

Des Fennell

Tim Pat Coogan

Judy Friel, Director

Tomás MacAnna, Director

James Connolly Heron

Padraig O Snodaigh

Harry McGee, Journalist

Charles Harper, Artist

James Gorry, Art restorer

Robert Ballagh, Artist

Pam Brighton, Director

Clodna Cussan, Sculptor

Roger Moylett, actor

Niall Andrews, Fianna Fail MEP

Frank Fahey, Fianna Fail TD

Tony Killeen, Fianna Fail TD

Liam Kavanagh, Labour TD

Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin president

Pat Doherty, Sinn Féin vice president

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin

Bernadette McAliskey

Fr Des Wilson

Oliver Kearney

Professor Tomas O'Neill

Margaret Early, Artist

Michael Farrell, Artist

Nell McCafferty, Journalist

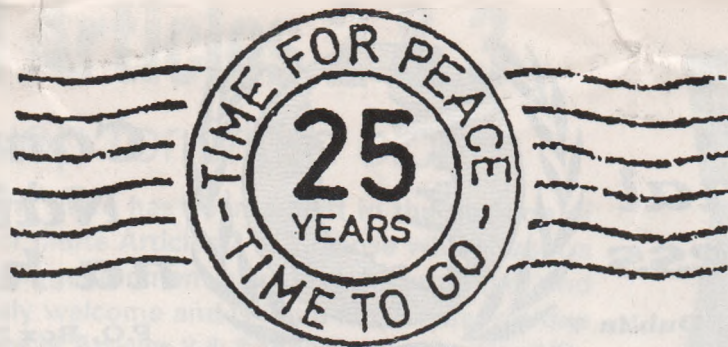
Jer O'Leary, Actor

Aodogan O'Rahilly, son of the O'Rahilly

Councillor Michael Lawlor



● 'Angel of Death' leading the parade for Peace and British withdrawal on August 20, 1994, followed by children representing the many young people who lost their lives during the last 25 years of conflict.
(PHOTO DEREK SPEIRS)



The parade and pageant for British withdrawal held in Dublin on August 20th may have gone almost unreported in the national media but 20,000 marchers along with the concert, floats and street theatre had a major impact nonetheless.

The parade and indeed the series of activities organised under the campaign banner of Time for Peace — Time to Go sent a very loud message internationally that there is widespread public support for Irish unity and the belief that a British withdrawal

must be part of an ultimate and lasting settlement.

It is worth recording the milestones of the campaign which saw a broad panel of politicians and other prominent public figures voice their support for peace and British withdrawal.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

● 23rd March — Public launch of the campaign at a press conference in Dublin at which Labour TD Declan Bree and independent TD Tony Gregory spoke in support of the campaign's aims and objectives. Also present were relatives of victims of British state violence.

● 6th April — A public meeting in Buswell's Hotel, Dublin, at which Jackie Wade of the Dublin/Monaghan Bombings Relatives' Committee, Bernadette McAliskey and Maria Caraher spoke on the subject of collusion between British security forces and loyalist paramilitaries.

● A series of public meetings were held during April at universities and colleges throughout Ireland.

● 10th May — An INC-sponsored meeting in Clare — the first in a series of regional meetings and activities to promote the campaign. Speakers were Robert Ballagh, Paddy Prendiville and Councillor Flan Garvey of Fianna Fáil.

● 1st June — A public meeting in Dublin's Mansion House at which Jeremy Corbyn MP, Mary Beck, Judith Ward, Nicky Kelly and Angelo Fusco spoke about miscarriages of justice over the past 25 years.

● 15ú Meitheamh — 'An Tuaisceart — 25 Bliain Gan Feabhas' — b'shin teideal chruinniú poiblí i dTeach an Ard Mhéara i mBaile Atha Cliath. Labhair Maria Nic Fhearchair, Gearóid O Cairealláin, an tAth. Seosamh Mac an Bheatha agus Eamon O Cuiv TD. Bhí Ite Ní Chionnaith ina cathaoirleach ag an gcruinniú.

● 6th July — Ken Livingstone MP, Robert Ballagh, Caitriona Ruane and Tony Moriarty spoke on 'British Withdrawal and the Search for Peace' at a public meeting filled to capacity in Dublin's Mansion House.

● 14th July — A gala concert at the Irish Museum of Modern Art featured many prominent artists including Jimmy MacCarthy, Eleanor McEvoy, Eilish Moore, Theo Dorgan, Deiseal, Keith Donald, Mary Stokes, Francie Conway & The Works, Tony Curtis, Paula Meehan, Máire Breatnach, Andy Irvine, Donal Lunny, String Quartet & Conor Mullen, Tony MacMahon and Brian Dunning & Mícheál O Domhnaill. Stage design was by Jim Lawn and Brid Og Ní Bhuachalla compered.

● 25th July — Almost 1,500 people filled the Round Room in Dublin's Mansion House to capacity while hundreds of others waited outside to hear a public debate on the motion that 'British Withdrawal is Essential to Peace'. Speaking for the motion were Gerry Adams and Bernadette McAliskey. Speaking against were Michael McDowell TD and Paddy Harte TD. Emily O'Reilly chaired the debate. The motion was passed by a large majority.

● A public meeting in Galway on 25th July was addressed by Jeremy Corbyn MP and Paddy Prendiville. A public meeting in Cork on 26th July was addressed by Jeremy Corbyn MP, Paddy Prendiville and Paddy Mulcahy, chairperson of the Cork Council of Trade Unions.

● 10th August — 'Women: Conflict — Progress — Peace' was the title of a Women's Symposium held in Dublin's Mansion House. Speakers were Margaret Caraher, Mary Cullen, Patricia McKenna MEP, Bernadette McAliskey and Caitriona Ruane. Ursula Barry chaired the meeting.

● 13th August — An International Day of Action with vigils and protests at British political, military and economic locations world-wide. In Dublin, Robert McBride of the ANC, British Labour MP Bernie Grant and Rosie Douglas, leader of the Labour Party in Dominica, spoke at a meeting titled 'Irish National Self-Determination — the International Context'.



● Robert Ballagh addressing the many thousands who attended the parade for Peace and British withdrawal on August 20.

PEACE PLEDGE

We, the undersigned, being convinced that the peace process can only be advanced, at this crucial stage, if the British Government is prepared to respond with courage, generosity and imagination, do hereby pledge ourselves to use all peaceable, moral and constitutional means to persuade Britain to address urgently the following issues:

1. Immediate Demilitarisation
 - the withdrawal of British troops from the streets
 - the creation of an unarmed and acceptable community police service
 - the opening of cross-border roads
 - the dismantling of military installations
2. Opening of all-inclusive talks with no preconditions
3. Accepting that no group has the right to veto political progress.
4. Ensuring an end to discrimination and a guarantee of equality of esteem.

DEARBHU NA SIOCHANA

Táimid, atá tar éis seo a shíniú, cinnte de nach féidir leis an bpróiseas síochána ag an am rí-thábhachtach seo dul chun cinn a dhéanamh mura bhfuil Rialtas na Breitainne sásta freagairt le misneach, flaitiúlacht agus le samhalaíocht. Dá bhrí seo dearbhaíonn muid muid fhéin chun gach bealach síochánta, mórálta agus bunreachtúla a úsáid chun chur ina luí ar an mBreitain tabhairt faoi na gnéithe seo a leanas gan mhoill:

1. Dí-mhíleatú láithreach
 - Aistharraingt saighdiúirí Briotaineacha ó na sráideanna.
 - Fórsa póilíneacht neamharmaithe a chruthú atá inghlactha don phobal.
 - Na bóithre tras-teorainn a oscailt.
2. Tús a chur le cainteanna cuimsitheach gan reamh-choinníollacha.
3. Ag glacadh leis nach bhfuil veto ar an próiseas polaitiúil ag aon dream.
4. Ag cinntiú go bhfuil deireadh le h-idirdhealú seciteach agus go bhfuil comhionannas i réim.

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation.

The INC has written to Albert Reynolds asking that every effort be made to include the views of community groups and organisations who have campaigned for justice within the Forum for Peace & Reconciliation.

The INC will be making a submission and encouraging others to do so but more importantly, we will be organising an sponsoring a series of mini-forum around the country where

the general public and local organisations will be given an opportunity to voice their opinions and then send the results of the debate to the forum in Dublin Castle.

The INC hopes that every town in Ireland will have its own local forum and that on a national level, trade unionists, unemployed groups, women's groups, cultural groups, etc, will take the opportunity to debate their views on the peace process and then seek to have their views heard by the national forum.



● The INC congratulates the communities along the border whose campaign over the last number of years placed this issue at the top of the British government's agenda and ultimately forced them to act.

Defend Articles 2 & 3

— no swop for British claim

Over the past four months there has been a shift in the position of those seeking to delete or dilute Articles 2 & 3. Those who sought a unilateral move by the Irish government have lost the argument and are silent. This is obviously welcome and is in no small measure due to the campaign in defence of Articles 2 & 3 spearheaded by the INC.

There is now another form of attack and this is to suggest that Articles 2 & 3 could be deleted in return for a British government agreement to delete Section 75 of their Government of Ireland Act which claims that

"the supreme authority of the parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters and things in [Northern] Ireland and every part thereof".

Obviously nationalists would welcome the removal of such an offensive claim but it would be a mistake to see a 'swop' for Articles 2 & 3 as a fair agreement.

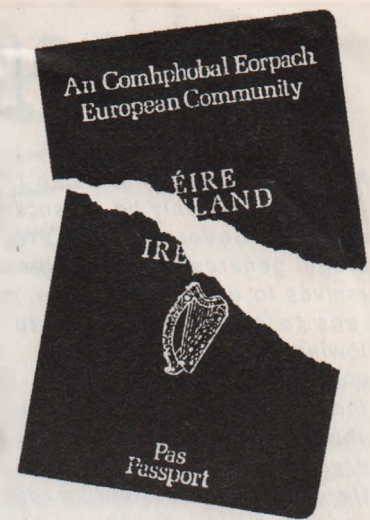
● Deleting Section 75 still leaves the British government with many other legal claims to the North, eg, Section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act. Deleting

Articles 2 & 3 would leave no legal expression of the Irish peoples right to Irish unity and would therefore leave the British claim to sovereignty over the North of Ireland uncontested in law.

● Deleting Article 2 or amending it to an aspiration would strip people in the North of Ireland of their right to hold an Irish passport. There would be no such loss for anyone wishing to hold a British passport if Section 75 were removed.

● Deleting Articles 2 & 3 would remove the constitutional right of and indeed duty of the Irish government to intervene in the North to secure basic human rights and equality.

● Section 75 of the British Act is an offensive claim over "all persons, matters and things" — Articles 2 & 3 simply state



that the national territory is the whole island and that until Irish reunification laws shall only apply to the 26 Counties.

Section 75 of the British Act is not a mirror image of Articles 2 & 3; They should not simply be exchanged for each other. Section 75 is an offensive claim which could be repealed without affecting the rights of any unionist supporter. Articles 2 & 3 could only be deleted by denying Irish passports, citizenship and constitutional protection to those in the North of Ireland who currently seek and need them, and have a right to them.

Consent or Veto?

As the peace process moves forward the issues of consent and the unionist veto are becoming increasingly central. It is being argued that the only way to measure consent is by enshrining the unionist veto into any settlement. The British government has gone further and said that any agreement, even if it does not end the British claim to the North will be put to a referendum, guaranteeing that unionists will have a veto over any progress.

The INC believes that offering any group a veto over progress only increases the possibility of stalemate, as those who support the status quo or who prefer the status quo to a more equitable arrangement can veto change.

There are precedents for different definitions of consent. In South Africa, all parties and groups had a place at constitutional talks and great efforts were made to get their consent but no group could veto the ending of Apartheid. The ending of Apartheid was going to happen with or without groups' consent, but what would replace the Apartheid regime was open for discussion, with the consent of all for new arrangements essential.

Up to now the issue of consent has been very one sided. There has been little attention paid to nationalist consent. Nationalists have never given their consent to British rule. They do not consent to the present constitutional arrangement. It cannot be assumed that everyone consents to the status quo until a new settlement is agreed. Consent must also include the right to reject the status quo.

The civil and human rights of unionists and nationalists must obviously be protected in a new agreed Ireland. But all aspects of the 'tradition' of unionism are not compatible with civil rights for others. There is no doubt that discrimination, repressive majority rule and ignoring the civil rights of nationalists are part of the unionist tradition. These cannot be acceptable. Likewise, there is no absolute right to 'British rule' as this can only continue by ignoring the presumably similar 'right' of nationalists to a united Ireland.

This issue cannot be resolved simply by a majority vote in a referendum as the boundaries of the Northern Ireland state were designed to ensure a majority of unionist voters. If you say that local communities have a right to self-determination regardless of how the border originally was drawn then that 'right' should apply to the nationalist majorities of South Armagh, South Down, Derry city, Fermanagh/South Tyrone, Mid-Ulster and West Belfast. This is not to argue for repartition, but simply to show that consent is not a simple matter of giving unionists a veto over change by way of a referendum. Consent must come through negotiation; it cannot be guaranteed to one party and one party only, in advance of talks.

FINANCIAL APPEAL

As we go to press the national executive is in the final stages of negotiating a lease for a national office in a city centre location. The office, which is a ground floor premises, will enable a shop and provide an information resource where people can easily drop in to collect literature, etc.

This office will be a major organisational advance for the INC and the executive is

hopeful that it will become a worthwhile resource for branches, individual members and campaign groups which we support. However, such resources do not come cheaply. We require your financial help to maintain this service. We also would welcome any office equipment which supporters might be able to offer us — a computer, fax, photocopier; even office furniture, heaters, etc. All help will be gratefully received and acknowledged.

If you would like to join The INC, fill in the form below and return to:

Irish National Congress, P.O.Box 2814, Dublin 7
Membership fee £5 waged/£3 unwaged.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____