

Fordham International Law Journal

Volume 18, Issue 4

1994

Article 3

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Abstract

True unity, as I have said, is based on respect for diversity. In Ireland, we must build political institutions that reflect the diversity of all our people, both North and South. These institutions will allow us to work together in our common economic interests to create hope for all our people. In time, the old sectarian barriers will break down and, in a generation or two, we will see a new Ireland. It will be very different from the models traditionally suggested by unionists and nationalists because it will be built on consensus and acknowledge the diversity of our people. The complete cessation of violence in the North of Ireland for the first time in twenty-five years has created a great opportunity to move towards consensus.

ADDRESS

ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY: THE ESSENCE OF PEACE IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND

*John Hume**

There are many people in the North of Ireland¹ who have experienced little but despair over the past twenty-five years.² Providing these people with hope and encouragement is an important part of the current peace process.³ The tremendous in-

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1. See SALLY BELFRAGE, *LIVING WITH WAR* viii (1987).

Northern Ireland is the one-fifth of Ireland at the top right-hand corner which remained part of the United Kingdom when the rest of the island got independence [from Britain] in 1921. About 600,000 of the Northern population are Catholic, think of themselves as Irish, and many of them want a united Ireland. About 900,000 are Protestant, think of themselves as British, and most want to remain as they are. The British government is pledged to support this desire so long as it is reflected in an electoral majority within the province.

There is no neutral name for the place. The British call it "Northern Ireland", but the Protestants say "Ulster" - which the Catholics reject because the boundaries include only six of the nine counties of true Ulster, one of the four ancient provinces of the island. Catholics often refer to "the Six Counties" or "the North of Ireland" and call the Republic of Ireland "the twenty-six Counties" or "the Free State". "Eire" is unacceptable unless the speaker is using the Irish language, because the name is meant to refer to the whole island, and in hostile British mouths suggests that their truncated country is in fact complete.

Id.

2. See *id.* at xiii (explaining that Northern Irish conflict is essentially between predominantly Protestant unionists, who favor Northern Ireland's continued political union with Britain, and mainly Catholic nationalists, who wish to see Northern Ireland join with Republic of Ireland to create united Ireland). See generally J. BOWYER BELL, *THE IRISH TROUBLES* (1993) (describing modern conflict in North of Ireland); T.W. MOODY, *THE ULSTER QUESTION: 1603-1973* (1980) (providing history of conflict).

3. See Ric Clark, *Belfast, Northern Ireland*, UPI, Dec. 19, 1994, available in LEXIS, News Library, UPI File (discussing recent developments in peace process in North of Ireland, including Irish Republican Army ("IRA") cease-fire begun August 31, 1994 and loyalist paramilitary cease-fire begun December 15, 1994). Prior to the cease-fire, the IRA, a paramilitary organization, was dedicated to removing the British presence from the North of Ireland by force of arms. See generally TIM P. COOGAN, *THE IRA* (1993)

ternational support for this process has helped to provide this hope and encouragement. Thus, I warmly welcome the support and interest you are showing here today.

The basis of order in any society is consensus about how its citizens should be governed. Absent such agreement, instability, with its terrible consequences, results. Those consequences are always serious injustices of one sort or another, from discrimination in housing and employment, to the denial of voting rights, and even to the denial of the right to life itself. Each of these injustices has manifested itself in one form or another in the North of Ireland in the last seventy years and, in particular, in the last twenty five years. The last quarter century has seen violence escalate and claim the lives of over 3000 people⁴ in a population of only a million and a half, the equivalent of 16,000 deaths in a city the size of New York. In addition, this violence has maimed over 30,000 people.⁵ That is the terrible price that we have paid, that those victims have paid, for the failure of governments and politicians to resolve the conflict and to create the political consensus needed to restore order in Irish society.

The horrifying consequences of twenty-five years of violence are evident in the fact that Belfast, a city where church-attendance rates remain very high,⁶ has thirteen walls separating unionist⁷ communities from nationalist⁸ communities.⁹ One wonders where the essence of Christianity — “love thy neighbor” — has gone when it is necessary to build walls to separate one Christian community from another. Those walls, I believe, are an indictment of us all because our attitudes built them.

It is well known that we Irish are stubborn and cling tightly to the past. “Remember 1690” is still the favorite political slogan

(providing history of IRA). The term “loyalists” generally refers to more extreme unionists. BELFRAGE, *supra* note 1, at 302.

4. John Darnton, *Protestant and Paranoid in Northern Ireland*, N.Y. TIMES MAG., Jan. 15, 1995, at 32 (reporting 3171 deaths in violence in North of Ireland in last 25 years).

5. *Id.* (reporting 36,807 wounded in violence in North of Ireland in last 25 years).

6. See *The State of Society - State of the Church, the Northern Ireland Dimension*, GUARDIAN, Nov. 14, 1990, at 21 (“Churchgoing [in Northern Ireland] remains an essential element in most people’s lives: 54 per cent say they attend at least once a week, against 13 per cent on the [British] mainland.”).

7. See *supra* note 2 (defining unionist).

8. See *id.* (defining nationalist).

9. See JOHN CONROY, BELFAST DIARY 110-17 (1987) (discussing wall, commonly known as “peace line,” that divides Protestant communities from Catholic communities in Belfast).

of some unionists who fail to recognize that we are now in the 1990's.¹⁰ Similarly, coming from the nationalist tradition, I respect my own history and the patriots of the past. Too much respect for the past, however, tends to inhibit progress. Past attitudes built Belfast's walls, and the first step in bringing them down must be to reexamine these attitudes.

Careful observation of conflicts around the world has led me to conclude that the cause of conflict is always the same. Conflict is about people viewing differences among themselves as a threat and, therefore, refusing to tolerate such differences. Two mindsets can always be identified in areas of conflict. They are what I term the "Afrikaaner-style" mindset and the "territorial" mindset. Each of these mindsets is present in the conflict in the North of Ireland.

Unionists, who are predominantly Protestant and are a minority within Ireland as a whole,¹¹ want to protect their identity, their distinctiveness, their way of life, and their ethos. While I support the unionists' desire to preserve this difference, I object to their doing so by adopting the Afrikaaner method of maintaining power by excluding anyone that is different from themselves. Sadly, over the last seventy years, unionist discrimination against non-unionists in voting, housing, and jobs has resulted in serious conflict.

My challenge to unionists is a simple one. I ask them to understand that we nationalists are not interested in defeating them. Because of their geography and their numbers, we cannot solve the problems in the North of Ireland without them. Thus, they must have confidence in the strength of their own tradition.

The intractable siege mentality that underpins the unionist mindset has virtually smothered unionists' creativity. It has been said that if the word "no" was eliminated from the English language, Ian Paisley¹² would be left speechless. Mr. Paisley knows

10. See Darnton, *supra* note 4, at 35 (discussing continuing significance to Protestants of victory of Protestant King William over Catholic King James, rivals for British throne, at Battle of Boyne in 1690).

11. *Id.* at 33 ("Protestants are a majority in Northern Ireland but would be instantly transformed into a minority if [Northern Ireland] were to merge with the [Republic of Ireland], where 95 percent of the 3.5 million people are Catholic.")

12. See BELFRAGE, *supra* note 1, at 302 (identifying Reverend Ian Paisley as founder-leader of Democratic Unionist Party and Free Presbyterian Church).

what he is against, but, sadly, does not know what he is for.¹³ This reflects the unionist siege mentality, according to which everything unfamiliar is a threat. This siege mentality fails to reflect unionists' illustrious history and rich traditions. I want to see unionists stand confidently on their own feet and come to agreement with nationalists, the people with whom they share a piece of Earth, in Ireland.

Opposed to unionists' siege mentality is the nationalist perspective with which I was reared. This nationalist perspective is an example of a "territorial" mindset, the second mindset that can be identified in areas of conflict. In Ireland, this mindset is articulated as follows: "This is our land, and you unionists are a minority,¹⁴ so you cannot stop us from taking over." The flaw in this argument is that it is people who have rights, not territory. As I often say, land without people is nothing more than a jungle.

When people are divided, you cannot bring them together by coercion. You certainly cannot bring them together with guns and bombs; these will simply drive them further apart and deepen divisions between them. It is tragic that many people have been reared with the notion that guns and bombs would unite Ireland when, in fact, guns and bombs simply intensify bitterness and deepen division.

The real division in Ireland is not the line in the map that we call partition. That line in the map simply institutionalized a division that has existed for centuries in the hearts and minds of the Irish people. That is where the real border in Ireland lies — in the hearts and minds of the people. Guns and bullets cannot eliminate this division; they will only strengthen it by inflaming animosities. Ultimately, the principle of "an eye for an eye" that fuels the use of violence leaves everybody blind.

It is evident, therefore, that nationalists must also change their mindset to recognize that it is the Irish people who are divided, not their territory, and that only by achieving political consensus can people be brought together. Once such agreement is reached, whatever form it takes, and people live together

13. See Darnton, *supra* note 4, at 35 (describing Mr. Paisley as "unbudging obstructionist").

14. See *supra* note 11 (explaining that Protestants, who constitute unionist population, would be minority in united Ireland).

in peace, working together, spilling their sweat together, then the real healing process will occur, as the ancient barriers of distrust crumble. When this occurs, a new Ireland will begin to evolve, one based on agreement and respect for diversity, not on the victory of one side over the other.

In working towards this new Ireland, I have been greatly inspired by my own experience in the European Community, where I am a member of the European Parliament. I strongly believe that today's European Union is one of the greatest conflict resolution successes in world history. Who could have forecast fifty years ago that today the nations of Europe would sit together in one parliament as part of a united Europe. But it happened. And why did it happen? It happened because visionaries appeared who recognized that difference does not threaten humanity, but enriches it.

Where and what a person is born is an accident of birth, and that accident of birth can be of religion, creed, color, or nationality. Nobody chooses to be born what they are. Why, therefore, should that accident of birth be the cause of hatred and conflict? To cultivate peace, we must respect difference and build political institutions which reflect that respect and allow people to work together to advance their common interest — which is economics, not flag-waving.

My earliest political lesson occurred when I was ten years old. There was a nationalist political rally going on at the top of our street, and the Irish flag was being waved about a good deal. I was getting caught up in the emotion of the moment when my father, who was unemployed, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Don't get involved in that stuff, son. You can't eat a flag." I believe that there was great wisdom in what my father said because, in many ways, the problems in the North of Ireland stem from the conflict of two nationalisms. In essence, the conflict is about flag-waving.

Political discourse, in contrast, should be based on universal acceptance of each person's right to exist. First, the right to life itself, and then the right to a decent life, to bread on the table, and a roof for shelter. Working together to achieve these common goals, and leaving the flag-waving aside, the peoples of Europe have broken down the barriers of centuries. Spilling sweat,

not blood, they are creating a new Europe. By following suit, the peoples of my own island can create a new Ireland.

True unity, as I have said, is based on respect for diversity. In Ireland, we must build political institutions that reflect the diversity of all our people, both North and South. These institutions will allow us to work together in our common economic interests to create hope for all our people. In time, the old sectarian barriers will break down and, in a generation or two, we will see a new Ireland. It will be very different from the models traditionally suggested by unionists and nationalists because it will be built on consensus and acknowledge the diversity of our people.

The complete cessation of violence in the North of Ireland¹⁵ for the first time in twenty-five years has created a great opportunity to move towards consensus. This view, of course, has its skeptics and critics. In fact, I received heavy criticism and abuse from all quarters when I engaged in a dialogue with Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein.¹⁶ I was again criticized when we stated that our objective was a complete cessation of violence and an agreement among the British and Irish governments, and all the political parties in the North of Ireland, that would earn widespread support through its respect for diversity. Despite my having been in the forefront of the struggle against violence for twenty-five years, I was greatly criticized for purportedly lending respectability to a group that supported violence.

My response was that, in a quarter century, the British government had not stopped the killing, and 20,000 soldiers on the streets had not stopped the killing.¹⁷ I felt that if, as a public representative, I could save even one life by talking with somebody, then it was my duty to do so. Throughout my dialogue with Gerry Adams, the British and Irish governments were kept fully informed of the substance of our discussions. Eventually, our talks led to the Downing Street Declaration,¹⁸ which, in turn,

15. See *supra* note 3 (discussing IRA and loyalist paramilitary cease-fires).

16. Garret Fitzgerald, *Deadline Would Cut Talks' Propaganda Value for IRA*, IRISH TIMES, Aug. 21, 1993, at 8 (reporting that unionist politicians in Northern Ireland and political commentators in Republic of Ireland bitterly criticized Mr. Hume for engaging in talks with Mr. Adams, leader of Sinn Fein, political party associated with IRA).

17. See George Jones & Peter Almond, *Hurd Rejects Intervention in Bosnia War*, DAILY TEL., Jan. 28, 1993, at 1 (quoting British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd reporting that Britain had about 20,000 troops stationed in North of Ireland).

18. JOINT DECLARATION BY AN TAOISEACH, MR. ALBERT REYNOLDS, T.D., & THE BRIT-

led to a cessation of violence by first the Irish Republican Army and then the loyalist paramilitaries.

The cessation of violence has already caused a dramatic change in Ireland. There is a joy among the people who can now walk the streets without being stopped by armed soldiers. This joy alone is very powerful, but has been amplified greatly by tremendous international support for the peace process. In particular, I would like to thank the people of the United States for the wonderful role that they have played in encouraging this process. President Clinton, in particular, from day one, has made improving the situation in Ireland a top priority. I know, because he has talked to me about it regularly in a way that no other U.S. figure of his eminence has done. I must also thank members of the U.S. Senate and Congress, the Friends of Ireland,¹⁹ and others here that have lent their support to the peace process. I wish to convey to each of them the fact that their interest has been a wonderful encouragement to us in Ireland.

As I said previously, the focus of discussion in solving problems in the North of Ireland must be on economics. It is here that our friends in the United States can be of great assistance. It is well known that the Irish are a migrant people. Many Irish, descendants of those driven from home by famine and persecution, have prospered abroad in business, politics, and other professions. It is my wish to harness the great talents and resources of this Irish diaspora. The Irish nation today is not composed solely of the people who live on the island; it also encompasses this far-flung diaspora. This is particularly true given that technological innovation has effectively made the world a smaller place.

When people left Ireland in the last century, there was a custom to bid them farewell with what was called an American wake. That term arose from the fact that once a son or daughter

ISH PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. JOHN MAJOR, M.P. (Dec. 15, 1993) (available from Government Publications Sales Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth St., Dublin 2, Republic of Ireland); see *The First Step on a Better Path*, *GUARDIAN*, Dec. 16, 1993 at 25 (characterizing Downing Street Declaration, issued jointly by British and Irish governments, as document that creates possibilities for resolution of conflict in Ireland).

19. See William V. Shannon, *O'Neill's Quiet, but Important, Role in Search of an Irish Agreement*, *BOSTON GLOBE*, Dec. 15, 1986, at 15 (relating how late U.S. Congressman Thomas O'Neill, then Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, founded Friends of Ireland organization in Congress "to promote responsible views" about North of Ireland).

boarded the emigrant ship, they would never return to Ireland, and so, to their families left behind, it was as if they were dead in many respects. This is the subject of "Danny Boy," a song with which some of you may be familiar.

Today, however, circumstances are very different. Modern communications and air travel have created a much smaller world, and emigration is no longer the one-way journey it once was. Thus the opportunity has arrived to bring together the Irish diaspora as a major force contributing to development in its small island home. If we can successfully harness this force, I believe that we can look forward to a twenty-first century in which both political killings and forced emigration are things of the past in Ireland.

Such is the challenge that we now face. I am confident that we can meet this challenge and, in so doing, redefine Irish patriotism to mean living for Ireland, not dying for her. We must avail ourselves of the wonderful opportunity presented to us to build that new Ireland, a new Ireland in which nationalists and unionists, Catholics and Protestants, can live together in peace as brothers and sisters.