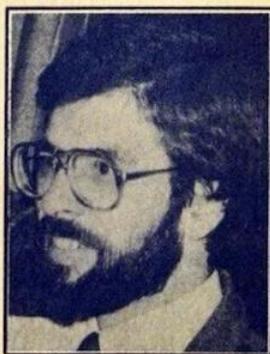


85th



ARD FHEIS

**Presidential address by
Gerry Adams MP**



**Oráid an Uachtaráin
Gearóid Mac Adhaimh MP**

Mansion House, Dublin
Saturday 3rd February 1990

Fearaim fáilte romhaibh arais chuig Ard Fheis ar bpáirtí.

Bliain eile de streachailt, de fhulaingt agus de ghníomhaíocht do phoblachtóirí Thuaidh agus Theas a bhí ann. D'ainneoin sár-iarrachtaí ár naimhde táimid anseo go fóill ag lorg ár gcearta agus ár saoirse. Níor éirigh leo le gunnaí, le himeagla nó le geallúintí bréagacha ár streachailt a stad, a mhoilliú nó a thiontú arais.

This is Sinn Féin's 85th Ard Fheis, evidence in itself of the ability of British colonialism to survive. The continued existence of colonialism and all its symptoms in Ireland to this day is a measure of the Intransigence of the forces of reaction in our country. That our struggle continues against all the odds, is a measure of the courage, self-sacrifice and tenacity of successive generations of republicans.

Our party is almost as old as this century. Our struggle is older still, as old as the conquest itself.

Without the commitment and loyalty of the men and women who have gone before us there may well have been no Republican Movement when the reaction of the British state to the civil rights struggle in the North brought the question of the British partition of our country back on to the political agenda.

Throughout Ireland older comrades played an outstanding role in support of the youth who rushed into struggle. As we face into the 1990s we salute them. Some of them are at this Ard Fheis today. I would like to make a special tribute to Rita McGlynn from Dublin, Gerry 'the Bird' Doherty from Derry, Clement Geeney from County Louth, Dan Gleeson from Tipperary and Liam Mulholland and Brigid Hannon from Belfast. All have given decades, some have given 60 years service to this struggle. They, like many others, not present here today, have always been at hand when we needed them.

So also have our friends throughout the world particularly in Britain and the USA. We extend greetings and solidarity to all supporters of Irish freedom everywhere but I would like to select, for special mention, our friends in the Irish Northern Aid Committee (INAC) in the USA who recently celebrated 20 years of solidarity work which parallels the last 20 years of struggle here in Ireland. The INAC has a proud record. We applaud it.

PRISONERS

There are almost 800 republican POWs in jails throughout the world. Regardless of their location all republican

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POWs are political hostages. They and their families all suffer some form of brutality, isolation and victimisation. In recent years the prison struggle has often taken the form of a psychological battle. This arises from the refusal of both the London and Dublin governments to give release dates for POWs serving indeterminate sentences, the refusal to transfer Irish POWs imprisoned in England to jails closer to their families, the strip-searching of women prisoners, and the everyday harassment which families face when visiting the prison.

Among the POWs there are 174 men and women serving life sentences. The majority of these prisoners have served over 12 years and over 20 of them are in the 17th and 18th years of their sentences.

Sinn Féin supports the campaigns in the Six and 26 Counties to secure release dates for all political prisoners.

We extend greetings to all republican POWs and to their families. We extend greetings to our outgoing Director of Publicity Danny Morrison and the other victims of the latest RUC frame-up.

We condemn, as hypocritical, Dublin's refusal to give release dates for prisoners in Portlaoise while at the same time Dublin ministers congratulate the British for the minor reforms they have introduced.

The battle of wills between repressive regimes and individual prisoners is not unique to Ireland of course. In South Africa it is personified by Nelson Mandela's heroism. Despite almost three decades of imprisonment, he continues to set the political agenda from his prison cell. He refuses to be used as a bargaining counter in the struggle for democracy or to allow the South African government to set preconditions for his release.

We extend solidarity to Mandela and his people at this historic phase of the liberation struggle in South Africa, and to all other political hostages.

Since we last assembled here we have lost several friends and comrades. I want to extend a much sadder message of solidarity to the comrades and families of 20-year-old IRA Volunteer James Connolly who died on active service just one year ago. I extend solidarity to the men and women of Oglai na hEireann. I extend solidarity and sympathy also to the families of Councillor John Davey, IRA Volunteer Gerry Casey and Phelim McNally, brother of Councillor Francie McNally, all

victims of pro-British death-squads. There was a direct British crown forces involvement in their killings, just as there was in the murder of civil rights lawyer Pat Finucane.

Sinn Féin's claims that this was so were dismissed by our opponents. Revelations of collusion after the killing of Loughlin Maginn in County Down showed the depth of crown forces involvement with these death-squads.

In the last 12 months we also saw the passing of two pioneers of this phase of the struggle, IRA Volunteers Seamus Twomey and Mossie Prendergast.

Cuimhneoidimid orthu go léir sna blianta atá romhainn.

I extend best wishes on your behalf also to Councillor Brendan Curran, wounded in a murder attempt and to other comrades who had narrow escapes.

THE POLITICAL REPORT

This Ard Fheis is considering the Political Report from the Ard Chomhairle. It is offered as a guide to discussions which will set programmes of work, and in a democratic fashion, reach agreement on priorities for our struggle for the year ahead.

We have a clear strategic and tactical perspective. We need now to develop a programme of work around which our members can unite in pursuit of common objectives. We must all involve ourselves directly in organising the struggle. We need to continue to build, especially in the 26 Counties and in some parts of the Six Counties.

In a few months time, Sinn Féin's Education Department will begin implementing our new education programme. This programme is not an academic exercise. It is political training for the purpose of giving leadership in this struggle.

We need a politicised leadership in order to defend the gains we have made and to use these gains to step up the struggle.

We also need to consider why we are not as strong as we could be. We have not done and are not doing sufficient political work. Why? We need to review our experiences and draw the necessary conclusions. We must correct our weaknesses in a determined and systematic manner. Failure to do this, and especially a failure to maintain and strengthen our dialogue with the base, will have serious consequences for our struggle. Time and time again in the last 20 years, our movement and struggle was and is seen by huge sections of Irish people as of

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vital importance to them.

It is the responsibility of Sinn Féin to build upon such moments. We cannot do this unless we are part of them. This is what I mean by dialogue with the base. In other words, it is part of our responsibility as republicans to confront all our problems frankly and to find solutions so that we can move forward. This applies to all aspects of the struggle.

The priorities for Sinn Féin in the year ahead are to develop and strengthen our party organisation, to improve our publicity output and to overcome the effects of censorship. This requires forward planning for phases of five-year programmes. An essential part of this political offensive is active campaigning on relevant issues which affect people in their daily lives and putting our republican analysis to their problems. Our struggle has both class and national aspects which influence one another. We must resist any temptation to separate these aspects either politically or organisationally. This, the national liberation phase of our struggle, must encompass both. This is natural given the nature of society in Ireland, our historical experience and the effects of British imperialism and partition as the major cause of poverty, unemployment and emigration in both parts of our country.

The record of the Dublin government and the other Dublin parties on these issues is a disgraceful one. This week we have seen yet another book-keeping budget. The fair economic forecasts now being made ignore the fact that this improvement for the few has been achieved at the expense of our health and education, with the assistance of the emigrant ship or plane and the creation of a mass of low paid workers, intimidated from demanding their rights in an employers' market.

The divisions between rich and poor in this two-tier society will be intensified with the advent of the Single Market in 1992. Consequently, the urgent measures necessary to alleviate poverty, and to begin the process of ending it, will be harder to achieve as power is increasingly transferred to the bureaucracy in Brussels.

Such a prospect and the failure of the conservative parties in Leinster House should concentrate the minds of all republicans, socialists and democrats on the need to build a real democratic alternative that can give working-class people an effective voice.

In challenging the dominance of the conservative establishment we must continue to build support for a democratic solution to the national question and promote the demand for Irish

Independence and national self-determination as central to solving the many problems facing Irish people today.

We will face elections in the near future. In the 26 Counties this party will contest the next local government elections on as wide a base as possible.

In the Six Counties we must begin the preparatory work now for the next British parliamentary elections and for other elections if the British decide to organise a Six-County electoral contest to yet another version of Stormont. In such a contest we will be reiterating Sinn Féin's opposition to any Six-County arrangement whether or not this has the support of the Dublin government.

There is no partitionist solution to the problem of British interference in Irish affairs.

Indeed, in the unlikely event of the British government cobbling together some durable Stormont arrangement, its existence will perpetuate the conflict and delay a democratic solution. Is that the limit of an SDLP vision? Do SDLP supporters really wish to be responsible for British prison policy, the continued administrative practice of discrimination or the actions of British crown forces? Do they wish merely to be place seekers and time servers, castle-Catholics in a discredited British colony?

A return to Stormont is certainly the blinkered ambition of the unionist leaderships. It is a primary objective of British policy. It will be opposed by Sinn Féin. After 20 years of British failure, I take this opportunity to appeal to the SDLP leadership to abandon their support for British strategy. The failure of the SDLP to do this on many occasions has sustained the British in their search for an arrangement which suits British interests. A forthright declaration by the SDLP that there is no partitionist solution, indeed that there is no British solution, would concentrate the mind of the British government and advance the search for peace in Ireland.

COLLABORATION

In this respect the role of the Dublin government is crucial.

That role is dominated by Mr Haughey's government's willingness to collaborate with the British state. Extensive use of coercive legislation, backed up by sizeable economic, military and police resources, is used in an effort to destroy republicanism. Section 31, recently

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copied by the British, has been used to silence the voice of dissent, and revisionism has reached deluge proportions.

The active collaboration of the 26-County government with the British government in terms of anti-republican propaganda and censorship, collusion with the British forces, and use of diplomatic activity to justify Britain's interference in Ireland rather than making the case for Irish independence, is a major aid to British policy in Ireland. We can be assured that this crucial Irish and European issue will not feature during Mr Haughey's much-publicised EC presidency.

This support for British policy is not just delaying Irish independence and self-determination. Information passed by gardai to the British crown forces has undoubtedly been used by loyalist death-squads to target uninvolved nationalists and republican activists alike. By its extradition policy with Britain the 26-County government is handing people over to face the same treatment meted out, for example, to the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Winchester Three and Judith Ward.

Jim Clarke, Dermot Finucane, Owen Carron, Dessie Ellis, Tony Sloan, Robert Campbell, Paul Magee and Michael McKee are the latest potential victims of Dublin's subservience to Thatcher.

The Dublin government has, thankfully, not got everything its own way, and there is widespread discontent at the government's refusal to stand by its own policies.

Sinn Féin welcomes the developments which have taken place in the last 12 months when broad-based efforts to mark the last 20 years of British occupation and the 70th anniversary of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil were morale-boosting successes. The organisers deserve hearty congratulations.

We welcome other initiatives to mobilise progressive opinion behind democratic demands. These are small but hopeful signs of a changing mood and auger well for the future when a mass democratic movement will be built out of such activity, with its own agreed demands on democratic, political, economic and cultural issues.

Such activity needs to be built also at local level. The 1980s was a decade when, on this island, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. This is the Ireland of Mr Haughey and Mr Brooke, Mr Paisley and Mr Hume. It is not an Ireland for the Irish people. We deserve better than that.

Campaigns against poverty and exploitation need to be

intensified. Thatcher's social and economic vandalism affect working-class Protestants as well as Catholics in the North. The unionist leaderships are not concerned about the plight of their poorer constituents. They represent different interests and are content to play the same old "no surrender" games. Working-class people deserve better than that.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that any sizeable section of working-class Protestants in the North will desert the unionist parties while the union with Britain remains. This is one of the points which was confirmed in a series of discussions which I and others had with some Protestants in the Six Counties in the last few months. Other members of our leadership had separate discussions with other representatives. I welcome the opportunity these discussions gave us to hear, at first hand, views which many republicans are not exposed to, certainly not in the frank but friendly way which we experienced.

I appreciate the real risks for those involved. It is a courageous thing for representatives of Protestant or unionist opinion to talk to any non-unionist representatives and especially with Sinn Féin.

It is our intention to continue with these discussions with as wide a spectrum of unionist opinion as possible. It is pointless at this time, given their present position, for me to invite the main unionist leaderships to discussions though I look forward to such dialogue in the future and I would welcome it at any time. Sinn Féin has nothing to fear from such conversations. Indeed we are morally bound to seek dialogue as part of our search for peace in our country and among our people.

CULTURE

At our last Ard Fheis I warned British Minister Brian Mawhinney that he was making a mistake in assuming that opposition to his proposals to downgrade the Irish language would be confined to Sinn Féin.

I commend all the Irish language organisations and activists, including our own republican Gaeilgeoirí for forcing Mr Mawhinney to backtrack considerably on his original proposals. There is no room for complacency however. There is still work to be done. There is a need for a renewed effort this year to reverse the British government's policy of cultural discrimination and to publicise the Dublin government's lip-service to the Irish language and to the wider issue of culture.

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Ag an Ard Fhels dheireannach dúirt mé leis an Aire Briotanach, Brian Mawhinney, go raibh dul amú air má shíl sé nach mbeadh ach Sinn Féin ag cur in éadan a phlean le deireadh a chur leis an Ghaeilge sna scoileanna o Thuaidh. Molaim mar sin na heagraíochtaí Gaeilge sin uilig agus na díograiseoirí teanga, ina measc na Gaeilgeoirí poblachtacha, as tabhairt ar Mawhinney na bunmholtaí a bhí algea leasú go mór. Ní tráth bualleadh sciath é afach, tá alán oibre le déanamh. Tá gá le feachtas nua i mbliana le polasaí leatromacha rialtas na Breataine i dtaobh na Gaeilge a bhriseadh.

This Ard Fhels's experiment with translation equipment is an example of what can be done as is the work of those local government councils which have cultural subcommittees. I congratulate our Cultural Department for their contributions to the cultural struggle.

Cruthaíonn úsáid thrialach an choras aistriúcháin cad is féidir a dhéanamh ar son na Gaeilge. Smaoinigh gur sinn an chéad pháirtí sa tír a chuir ar fáil aistriúcháin comhuaineach ag Ard Fhels cé gur páirtí sinn atá ar bheagán airgid agus áiseanna. Tá súil againn go leanfaidh na heagraíochtaí eile sin a bhíonn ag maíomh as a seasamh ar son na Gaeilge — agus go háirithe páirtí Aire na Gaeltachta Charles Haughey, Fianna Fáil — ár ndea-shampla ar an cheist seo.

Béalghrá don teanga is mó a thagann ó Rialtas Bhaile Atha Cliath. Is é an cruthú air sin ná a laghad Gaeilge — an chéad teanga náisiúnta de réir bunreacht an stáit — a chraoltar ar an 'teilifís náisiúnta', mar dheá. Faoi Margaret Thatcher tá a deich oiread Breantnaise ar theilifís na Breataine Bige ná tá de Ghaeilge ar RTE. Treasaíonn muid mar sin leis na dreamanna Gaeilge sin atá ag fogairt anois gurb é stáisiún teilifíse agus chan mionchlár anseo is abhus atá uathu. Teilifís Ghaelach lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht ach ag freastal ar an tír uile an dushlán atá roimh Rialtas Bhaile Atha Cliath. Ní ghéillfear don éileamh sin go heasca ach is féidir é a bhaint amach le tacaíocht ó phobal na Gaeltachta, tacaíocht ó phobal na Gaeilge sa Ghalltacht agus tacaíocht ó gach daonlathai sa tír.

Ach níl mid ag iarraidh ligint don BBC nó don IBA a ndualgaisí féin a sheachaint mar tá na cearta ceanna tuillte ag Gaeilgeoirí na Sé Chontae.

EASTERN EUROPE

Last year's Sinn Féin Ard Fhels welcomed the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika being pursued by Soviet leader

Mikhail Gorbachev.

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These policies have encouraged the development of a scenario in which talks about nuclear disarmament, and the ever-attendant threat of nuclear holocaust, have moved from the realm of political jockeying to the realm of the possible.

Concurrently, the debate has also moved to encompass the reduction in conventional forces also. All of this augers well for real world peace. The freeing of resources, formerly spent on armaments, should be constructively used in the service of humanity and our environment.

Political developments in the socialist countries have also moved abreast of the world peace debate as a result of those policies. While the ultimate outcome of those developments yet remains to be seen, we welcome all measures and events which help the creation of genuine and lasting democracy and self-determination.

It is worth noting that those who vilify Irish nationalism and deny its legitimacy are fulsome in their praise of the nationalist movements sweeping the Soviet Union. We remind them all that there can never be a united Europe unless there is a united Ireland.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

It is also worth mentioning our efforts to upgrade our own international work. Sinn Féin is, contrary to enemy propaganda, a poor organisation with meagre material and financial resources, two essential and basic requirements of international work. However, we have in conjunction with those involved, started to modernise solidarity work in the USA, and in Europe, and we are currently reviewing this work in Britain, and, at a slower pace, in Australia.

The British government is sensitive to political pressure exerted by solidarity activity in the USA. The success of the MacBride Principles campaign, the Joe Doherty campaign, and the gathering momentum of efforts to expose the International Fund for Ireland as a political prop for the Hillsborough Treaty will greatly assist the developing unity of purpose among the serious campaigning groups in the USA. Groups which are concerned with human rights abuses by the British government in Ireland and which are challenging the US state departments support for British policy here. Activists there now realise that

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they can exert pressure on these issues. This is why so many British ministers spend so much time in the USA defending their government's actions in our country. I am confident that our friends, internationally as well as in North America will continue to put them under pressure in the future.

DISCRIMINATION

One important issue which I have already mentioned is the issue of discrimination in the Six Counties where the structural nature of discrimination and its consequences remain intact.

The British government has never shown good faith on this issue.

While billions of pounds have been poured into Shorts and the Belfast shipyard in the privatisation process, West Belfast, with head of household unemployment levels of 80-90% has received crumbs. Other areas have received even less.

The new British legislation is generally accepted, by objective observers, as being a political response to the political pressure brought to bear on the British government as a result of the MacBride Principles Campaign in the United States.

The new legislation is a purely cosmetic response and not one aimed at bringing about significant positive effect.

Monitoring of the workforce, affirmative action, and contract compliance are all acknowledged key elements in any anti-discrimination legislation. The new British act is deficient in all these areas.

For example the British government refuses to adopt the modest proposal of its own standing advisory commission on Human Rights to set itself the target of changing the current unemployment ratio of 2¹/₂ to 1 between Catholic and Protestant males to one of 1¹/₂ to 1 over a five-year period.

Despite the cynical and cosmetic nature of the British government's response, its methods have been widely exposed internationally. So too has the opportunism of the Dublin government and the SDLP. It is to their everlasting shame that even the British Labour Party leadership had a stronger position than theirs.

Dublin's opportunism on this issue should come as no surprise to any Irish citizen. It is perfectly in keeping with its attitude on a wide range of issues.

For example, the last 20 years have seen the perfection of

counter-insurgency techniques by the British government. In recent years these techniques have been fused into a multi-faceted pacification programme which is increasingly dependent on co-operation by the Dublin government. The Hillsborough Treaty was described recently by British Minister Brooke as a treaty "where the Irish government have subscribed to and endorsed the principle that it is the majority in Northern Ireland who should actually determine the constitutional future of the province" (mar dhea).

This treaty continues to be the kernel of British government strategy. It seeks to introduce limited reforms of the British state in order to satisfy international opinion and in an effort to draw the Catholic middle class into an alliance with pragmatic unionists. At the same time it harmonises military and other methods of repression while attempting to develop economic, social and other measures to isolate us, to marginalise us and, in the final analysis, to destroy us.

Imperialism is bound to use all the means and methods at its disposal to defeat us. The Dublin government and the SDLP leadership (heavily subsidised and resourced by reactionary elements) play a major part in this project as does another arm of the Irish establishment — the Catholic hierarchy.

In this century colonialism was in retreat throughout the world. But the defeat of the colonial forces wasn't due to moral pressure from the churches or because of a change of heart on the part of the imperialists but rather because they couldn't smash the desire of subject peoples to be free.

If the church hierarchies really wanted justice and equality in Ireland they would be in the leadership of a revolution. Instead they are in the leadership of a counter-revolution.

Propaganda, enhanced by the censorship of this party, is a key element in the full frontal assault on us and our supporters.

Again and again and again we have been told that we cannot win. Again and again and again a chorus of mediocre nonentities have mouthed this line. How many times have we heard it in recent months?

Tom King flew in after the IRA attack at Derryard to tell the British army, and the rest of us, that he wasn't going to give in. Then he flew out again.

The aim of all this implacable no-can-win nonsense is obvious of course. It is aimed not only at IRA Volunteers. It is aimed at us. It is aimed at the republican base. And it is aimed also at the British forces crumbling morale.

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The British government's partition system in Ireland is in a crisis. It cannot rule as it did before 1969. It has tried relentlessly to find an arrangement, any arrangement, which protects its interests or brings stability or contains the situation. And just as it thinks it is getting somewhere it finds it is back where it started, minus yet another option.

The continued widespread use of British military force and the near hysteria at times of its supporters reflect the depth of the crisis for the British and Irish establishments arising from their failure to suppress our will to be free.

They have tried for 20 years to kill us, to imprison us, to marginalise us. They have tried to isolate us, to out-manoeuvre us. They have tried to buy us off, to patronise us. And they have failed, again and again.

In the last months of 1989 we were treated to incessant and at times almost hysterical declarations from the British establishment that the IRA would never succeed. British Minister Peter Brooke's 100 days interview in November provided an interesting insight into the real mentality of the British establishment and its attitude to the republican struggle.

Most significant, of course was his admission that there can be no military defeat of the IRA. Not only did this admission fly in the face of years of British propaganda but it represents a clear acceptance that the British forces are fighting and dying in a lost cause. Mr Brooke says they cannot defeat the IRA. This is a pressing and compelling reason for them to stop fighting now in order that the conditions for justice and peace in Ireland can be agreed.

Serious observers of the conflict in Ireland, including the British government, know that talks with Sinn Féin are inevitable. But Mr Brooke's remarks represent a public acceptance of these realities by a British minister. They are an implicit, but clear, public admission that present British government policy on Ireland has failed.

The British government knows that if the conflict in Ireland is to be resolved talks are essential and inevitable. What then, is the justification for refusing to talk now? The failure to do now what they know they will do in the future is prolonging the conflict and perpetuating the suffering for both the Irish and the British people. The only logic for such a delay is our contention that the British government lacks the moral courage to confront the political conditions which exist in the North of Ireland. Sinn Féin has a democratic mandate to represent the political

views of our constituents. To demand that we condemn armed struggle as a precondition for our inclusion in talks is a pretext for delaying the inevitable. It ignores the fact that every political party in Ireland, and in Britain, supports in some form the use of military force. Peter Brooke has no democratic mandate. Yet he has under his direct control in Ireland, 30,000 armed members of the British forces. It is particularly hypocritical for the SDLP to mimic the British line in support of such preconditions when the SDLP leadership engaged in a lengthy round of talks with Sinn Féin without any suggestion of such preconditions.

Of course the response of the Irish establishment in general to Mr Brooke's remarks has been predictably weak-kneed. Instead of tackling the British government for pursuing a policy which condemns us all to unnecessary conflict, Dublin and the SDLP launched their now customary attack on the republican struggle. They blame the victims of a failed British government policy rather than confronting those responsible for that failed policy.

The reason for this is obvious. They support British policy. Its failure is their failure. They have, consequently, squandered yet another opportunity to stand up to Britain, to demand that the conditions for real peace be created now rather than later.

Sinn Féin is ready, at any time, to discuss the conditions in which peace and justice can be established. We are actively endeavouring to create such conditions.

It is Peter Brooke who is delaying this process. It is his government which is prolonging the conflict.

It was the ongoing failure of the British and their unionist allies to subvert a popular struggle of resistance to British rule in the Six Counties, allied to the emergence of Sinn Féin as an electoral force in the wake of the heroic hunger-strikes and the IRA's continued ability and capacity to strike telling blows against the colonial regime, which led to the Hillsborough Treaty. Its aim was to defeat us. It has failed to do so.

Sinn Féin support remains intact and the IRA continues to demonstrate its ability to shatter the British propagandistic myth of the invincibility of the British army and its most elite regiments.

Young British soldiers, and others in the crown forces, are questioning whether they should allow themselves to die in defence of a system in which they have no stake. They and we have a number of things in common. Among other things, they

and we know that the British army fights in a lost cause. The justness of our cause speaks for itself and must be guarded jealously. It must never be undermined by any republican actions. The last few years and the last two decades, conclusively demonstrates that we enjoy sufficient support to defend and advance the interests of our struggle if we do so intelligently. Regardless of the means and methods our enemy uses to subvert us and regardless of the support it enlists from its allies, our supporters have remained staunch. They have my humble and everlasting admiration and gratitude. They are the heroines and heroes of this struggle.

In focusing its attention directly at them and at our base, British strategy aims, as we have seen, to psych us out, to convince us of the futility of our efforts and to demoralise our supporters. In many ways it seeks also to use the length of our struggle against us. None of this comes as any surprise. We cannot expect anything else.

What should our response be? Should we retreat before this counter-offensive? Should we submit to revisionism, neo-colonialism and the perpetuation of British rule with all its evils? Does Thatcher expect us to say "well we've done our best, what's the use, there's no point in going on"? If by chance she and her cronies think this will be the message from this Ard Fheis then once again they have got it wrong.

Our message is one of continued resistance and popular struggle. We have a lot of lost ground to make up in the 26 Counties but in the Six Counties we are committed to continuing to dictate the political agenda. We are not merely going to respond to what our opponents are doing. We are going to move things on at our own pace.

This is the attitude of mind which we intend to inculcate throughout the ranks of our party and among our supporters. We have the will to win. We also have the ability to win. It will not be easy. But the prize — freedom, justice and peace — and the tide of history demand that we continue going forward. Our message for the 1990s is a reasonable one. Britain out of Ireland. National self-determination for the Irish people.

Saoirse, Ceart agus Síochán

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