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Tape Four

15th November 1985

Brian Farrell

Congressman Tom Foley the friends of Ireland have issued a statement they call this agreement not a final answer but an important step towards reconciliation. Is that reflected generally in the congress?

Congressman Foley

I believe so. There is a very broad range of agreement to this statement. It is signed by the leaders of the House and the Senate in both Parties and I think it can also be said that it reflects the opinion across the philosophical and regional spectrum of the congress house and senate it is very unusual.

Brian Farrell

And, of course the President himself adding his endorsement

Congressman Foley

The President and the Speaker met this morning and added their joint statements of approval to the agreement.

Brian Farrell

You have been a founder member of the Friends of Ireland, you are close to Irish affairs. Do you read this new agreement as being in the spirit of the New Ireland Forum?

Congressman Foley

Yes, I believe it is. We have no desire to intrude into the process of consultation and consideration that will be given by both parliaments in Dublin and London and to the agreement and consequently there will be no formal action or statement by the Congress until those events have occurred, consideration and approval have occurred. My own feeling is that it is very much in that spirit.

Brian Farrell

Are you surprised that the immediate response from Provisional I.R.A. the immediate response on the whole Unionist side has been hostile?

Congressman Foley

Not surprised, I am not at all surprised ^{about} by the reaction of the I.R.A. and the Provisional element, but I hope that it will be given more careful examination perhaps or more consider examination by the Unionist side. Because I think it would be unfortunate that opposition would become entrenched.

Brian Farrell

What about the division that has occurred now in the Republic, Mr. Haughey the Leader of the Fianna Fail Party former Taoiseach has condemned this agreement. He sees this as a repudiation of national aspiration?

Congressman Foley

Well I don't think it is appropriate for me to comment on Irish affairs internally. I would have hoped that there could have been a broader support for it and I think we will just have to see as the matter comes before the Dail and Seanad for consideration how Irish opinion develops. Its initial reaction here was very positive across a broad spectrum as I have said of American opinion.

Brian Farrell

You speak in your statement Congressman about working in the weeks ahead in Congress with the President to provide appropriate assistance including financial and economic support. Now there has been speculation that some very large scale economic package might be made

available or have you any information on that for us?

Congressman Foley

Well there has been no specific decision or even discussion about that matter in the Congress but it is important to remember that two administrations, the administration of ~~Jimmy Carter~~, President Jimmy Carter and the present Administration of President Reagan have said on a number of occasions that they want the United States to be in a position if it can be to play a positive and constructive role in assisting the path of peace in Ireland and that would include an opportunity perhaps to be of some material assistance but again this agreement is seen here as historic. It is understood that it will be considered in Dublin and London by the parliaments of each country before any other action or comment is taken in a formal way by the Congress we would of course think that the appropriate thing is to await the approval of the two parliaments. After that time there may be some more formal response here but it is the statement reflects the position that has been taken now in two administrations, one democratic and the present republic administration.

Congressman Foley

Your a senior politician, your a close student of Irish Affairs and indeed a genuine friend of Ireland but you have the advantage of distance, when you look at this agreement between the two governments do you see this special relationship as been as important as Mr. Dr. FitzGerald is making it. He is saying the

obligation of the British to consider representations is that this goes really beyond consultation, would you read that into this agreement?

Congressman Foley

Well I think the agreement is historic, my own view is that it represents for the first time since perhaps the early twenties a real movement in the affairs of the North, obviously the statement reaffirms ^{the} that present constitutional arrangement and makes representations on the sovereignty of both countries but it does say in a very positive way that if in the future a majority of the people in Northern Ireland were to desire a unified Ireland that the government will undertake to present that to their parliament. It gives a legitimacy to the activities of the republicans, a concern of the republic in the affairs of the north that is unprecedented.

John Bowman

What is your view of this initiative today?

Kevin Boyle

I think it is imaginative, ^{it} courageous initiative ^{at} that the Inter Governmental level aspect of the problem. I have been disappointed to see so much disagreement emerging in the comments that have been made. I would have liked to ^{have} had more indication from people that they would reflect what people as a whole must feel, a sense of gratitude to the Taoiseach and his Ministers and to the officials for the enormous work that has been put into this what I think is the most important agreement in this century in relation to Ireland and Britain. I think, the difference, that have emerged

between people nevertheless do not really have much substance. They reflect a lot of emotional feeling and hopefully in the days and weeks to come that will emerge more clearly. On the constitutional side, I see really no difficulties with this agreement, as you know it will come before Dail Eireann and if Dail Eireann approves it then the state will be ^ubond_n by it and I hope that there will be much closer examination of this concept of sovereignty which has been thrown and batted about a lot.

John Beaumont

Is it an out of date concept in your view?

Kevin Boyd

It is very largely, at least in the context we are talking about. We have been talking about it tonight, ^{we seem} to forget that the two states on these islands ^{have} for over a decade now have been part of the ^{supra}supranational community, the European Community, where both states along with the other community partners share power, share sovereignty and where the Irish state and the British state have irreversibly transferred sovereignty to the organs of Brussels and Luxembourg. I see this agreement as a formalising of a process, a relationship between Britain and Ireland, which is two community partners coming together, in cooperation along mechanisms which have been well established within the European Community itself.

John Beaumont

What is your view of the initiatives taken today?

Joe Lee

Well I haven't seen the text John, of course so I can't comment on the ^{semantic subtleties}summatic subtleties of the exchanges. I

Michael Heseltine
Coak

I think it is a potentially historic document but I don't think one can say at present that it is such, because it all depends how it works out. If it conforms to Dr. FitzGerald's most optimistic expectations it will certainly prove historic, ^{if} if it doesn't then the whole affair will prove to be a massive exercising ⁱⁿ futility. The real problem seems to me is ^{that} we remain so dependent on British ^{good} will and how far we can rely on that in the long term I just don't know. Dr. FitzGerald thinks ^{that} the British are hooked into it, shall we say, and can't afford to be seen not to make it work, but then so is the Dublin government, ^{and} they are both caught in a situation ^{from} which they may in due course wish to try and extricate themselves.

^{Beaumont}
John Beaumont

It is a complex document and a difficult process perhaps to get into place particularly with all Unionists parties saying that they will not cooperate at all, even with Northern Ireland Ministers or civil servants while it is been attempted to be implemented.

Joe Lee

Absolutely! I might just say that I think the level of political maturity displayed by the Unionists spokesmen was most disappointing. Unfortunately, there ^{it} was almost rival ^{led} by some of our own, I think in a sense it was premature to ask so many politicians to take up firm positions so quickly after the emergence of the document.

John Beaumont

Constitutionally, you said it becomes the policy of the state once its implemented, what would an incoming Fianna Fail government if they didn't like it and obviously they don't like it, but if it was in place and was working what would there options be?

Kevin Boyle

There^{These} options would include^{an} International leg, an international treaty they could renounce the treaty on behalf of the state. That is certainly an option but the way I would look at it is again on a model of the European community. There has been too much emphasis I think on whether the Irish state has gained more than a consultative role and so on. What is being laid is the basis out of which may mature and grow and develop a new framework between the two islands and within Northern Ireland between the two communities. The important point also I would make John, if I may in relation to this question of the concept of unity, I really do think it is time for blunt talking and I hope it happens over the next weeks. I personally would argue as a lawyer and as a person who has studied the constitution that in reality^{with} the ink hardly dry on this agreement it is more important international recognition of the concept of Irish unity than the Irish constitution is, because over the years parties in power in the republic, while the constitutional claim so-called is there, in articles 2 and 3 nothing has ever been done about it. And if a government, supposing there is a breakdown of relations between

Britain and Ireland and they went across ^{to} an international court and said that look we want you to adjudicate ^{on} ~~this~~ ^{this} ~~mis~~claim between us, the case wouldn't last a day because the Irish would have nothing to say. We joined the European community, Jack Lynch, Fianna Fail Taoiseach, joined the community alongside an entity called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, ~~We~~ made no protest, ~~our~~ practice has been in effect to recognise the reality that Northern Ireland is within the United Kingdom and in that sense we have in national terms, we have accepted ^{the} a legitimacy of Northern Ireland.

^{John}
John Beaumont

What of this agreement today, what affect will that have?

Kevin Boyle

Well in my view as I set at the outset it formalises ^{if} you like, certainly the recognition of the reality that Northern Ireland may not constitutionally change until the majority wish it to do so. But as I said it also very directly indicates the importance of Irish unity not only for the nationalists population but for the Irish government, ~~and~~ I would argue that in international terms this document is much more significant in reinforcing or affirming Irish unity as an aspiration ~~than~~ the constitution and constitutional practice debate. ^{to date.}

^{John}
ohn Beaumont

Gerry Collins, what is your view of those points you have heard there

Gerry Collins

Firstly, I feel that if this agreement is a failure, and that view is held by many, then we must also know now, that we will have already have registered with the United Nations the agreement and by so doing we are registering that the Irish Government are accepting British sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

^{Woman}
John Beaumont

But his point was that for instance when the government that you are a member entered the EEC that you did as much.

Gerry Collins

No I don't accept that at all. I think for the first time now that we are clearly spelling out in this agreement the question of British sovereignty over Northern Ireland. This is what I regard as a bad day's work for the people of this country and this agreement is being registered and will always be there and available to the British government to ease international pressures ^{that} which might or could have been brought to bear on the British ^{Govt.} to do something about the question of unity of our country.

Kevin Boyde

I really do think that this ^{is} with respect to Gerry Collins, fantasy. If you look at for example when the Market was set up, France and Germany, in the 1950's, they had a dispute over the ^{Saar} Saar territory. They exchanged notes between themselves when they signed the treaty ^{is} making clear that it was without prejudice ^{to} that this issue of the ^{Saar} Saar territory. We did not do that.

Gerry Collins

But We have never recognised, in a formal way, the fact that the British government have sovereignty over Northern Ireland, that we are doing today.

John
John Beaumont

Did Lemass not do it in effect when he met *the* ~~F~~?

Gerry Collins

No he did not.

John
John Beaumont

Did your All party committee 1967 not suggest a change in article 3?

Gerry Collins

We did not recognise that *or* we didn't become part of an international agreement saying that Britain has sovereignty over Northern Ireland, and if this agreement is a failure which I believe it will be, we have to face the fact that this agreement is registered with the United Nations.

John
John Beaumont

If it was working, if it was in place and Northern nationalists were working within in it and it *all* look to be good and an incoming Fianna Fail go in, what would your party's view be then.

Gerry Collins

Naturally we would have to examine the situation closely, but the leader of our party has already said tonight that we are not satisfied, we are not *it* and we are going to oppose it in the parliament.

Dick Spring

Firstly, I think that what Professor Boyd *is* was saying makes absolute perfect sense in terms of the situation in Northern Ireland and the South, and I think politicians have not faced up to this

through the years, coupled with that no change has taken place in the Irish constitution today. I think ^{as} the Taoiseach made perfectly clear all through the course of this day, ^{no} change has taken place in the status of Northern Ireland, ^{we} are taking part in a process, and I believe that this process deserves the opportunity of succeeding if we are ever going to achieve peace and stability on this island. We have to be bigger than just petty politics. I think every sensible person on this island North and South will have to work within the framework which has been established as of this day between the two governments.

Seán De Rossa

Could I say that I am not at all surprised, but I am really appalled at the irresponsibility of some of the people around this table.

^{John}
John Beaumont

Which people?

Seán De Rossa

Mr. Collins, Neil Blaney and to some extent Mr. McManus here who are adopting positions which inevitably result in the loss of life, because they are adopting positions which is lending legitimacy to the paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. Mr. Paisley is doing exactly the same thing on his side of the fence. Now unless we are prepared to accept that some political movement has to take place in Northern Ireland and that we are prepared to give ^{them} a chance to work, to some extent then we have no right to be in politics at all.

Neil Blaney

Could I just say this, that we seem to be giving all and getting nothing in the sense that we do as Mrs. Thatcher has said on no less than three occasions today given legitimacy to the situation in the six counties and what do we get in return? A role which is strictly confined to the minority interest and that ^{is} within this agreement and never mind your issue of whatever the document was that followed there after and in addition to that we lose sight of the fact totally lose sight of the fact that the cause of all the conflict in this island as a whole down the centuries not alone just in the last decade is caused by the occupation of part of our country by Britain and that we are not dealing with the cause rather are we ^{Copper-}proper fastening the cause.

John Beaumont

You predicted civil war in the South if an agreement along these lines was signed do you still predict that?

Neil Blaney

What I predicted was that there could be civil war because we are infact selling out as we sold out in the '20's and we could be in for very great trouble. I hope we are not.

Frank McManus

My fear for this is similar to the fear that I had which unfortunately was borne out with the Sunningdale agreement, that it will fail and the only thing left will be this bit of paper recognising our legitimising in some way the Unionist position from which the Irish people can never retreat and, the second and more important and more unfortunate result of that failure will be a further increase in the arrogance and intransigence of the Unionists. Twice the British and Irish will

have tried to do something, twice the Unionists will have stopped them and they will be harder to deal with in the end.

John Beaumont

Would you like it to succeed?

Frank McManus

I would like something to succeed.

John Beaumont

Would you like this to succeed?

Frank McManus

But this is not capable of success.

John Beaumont

No but would you like it to succeed?

Frank McManus

If it were possible, absolutely.

John Beaumont

You would

Frank McManus

Of course I would, but it doesn't contain within itself the possibility of success that is what I deeply regret and I would have loved after a year of labour that something other than a mouse would have been produced.

Dick Spring

I am at a loss to understand. This agreement will succeed if the Fianna Fail party and Mr. McManus take a positive attitude to it. Likewise if those who are opposing it in the North as we saw today and I certainly from my knowledge of what was happening up there today could see no aspect of collusion, as Mr. Blaney was suggesting. If the opponents of this agreement were prepared to let the agreement to stand on its on feet, let the people of this country have an opportunity, I mean, the Fianna Fail party were in government in this country for long enough and never made any progress in relation

to solving the problems of this island. Now let them give us our opportunity. Let them support us where it is positive and let's work for a solution for once and for all to make a solution on this island.

John Beaumont

What ^(incredible) change did Fianna Fail make in opposition?

Gerry Collins

The Taoiseach here tonight said and I quote "that this agreement is built on good faith, and Mrs. Thatcher agrees with this as well". Now the good faith that he is talking is seemingly ^{just} something that has come into being as and from only today and one would also think from this discussion that the difficulties which the minority community are faced with have only come to the notice of the British government today for the first time.

John Beaumont

Surely Mr. Haughey informed them of all of that and there was good faith between Mr. Haughey and Mrs. Thatcher

Gerry Collins

Of course he did at every opportunity and I am quite sure that Dr. FitzGerald and Peter Barry did as well. But nothing has happened for instance with regard to the supergrass trials, of the Diplock courts, of the UDR. All these things are well known before now and I feel that if new system of bringing these problems to the attention of the British government by putting forward views and putting forward points of discussion if that's what the agreement is all about well then it is going to be very difficult for it to succeed.

Austin Currie

The SDLP never believed that the conclusion of these discussions would be a final settlement of the Irish problem, ^{we} we never believed that, we never thought that that would be the case. As far as this agreement is concerned we think it is a step forward, ^{it} it is in some respects a major step forward and the important thing is the implementation. Now Gerry Collins has referred to the Diplock Courts and the other matters and I refer particularly to prisoners and particularly to those prisoners who are held on the Secretary of state. We do not even know when they will be ^{released} realised and the comminque tells us that one of the first things, the first item on the agenda, when this new body meets is a discussion in relation to those matters.

^{John}
John Beaumont

Including the release of prisoners

Austin Currie

Well, talks about the justice, talks about the different matters that would win over the minority community, The different measures that are necessary to win over the Northern community and I would have thought certainly a release of those prisoners was one of them. The SDLP's position is that as I said earlier it all depends on the implementation of this agreement. We will monitor to make sure that this implementation is that this ^{agreement} is implemented to the extent that we feel ^{if} necessary. I would hope, even at this late stage, that in the monitoring of the implementation of that agreement that we would have support of all of the parties involved in the ^Forum, because I think there

is a way forward here for constitution^{al} and nationalism. There is away in which as was stated earlier by the government that the lot of the Northern minority can be bettered.

I am prepared to say to the Taoiseach, thank you, to the Tanaiste, thank you, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, thank you, and to Charley Haughey, for starting this process, I say thank you as well, now help us to make sure that this is a success and that the lot of Northern Community is bettered.

^{John}
John Beaumont

Gerry Collins, your party doesn't believe it will work, but what in the meantime, are you going to continue to suggest are you going to give it any support Are you going to hope that it might work in some way?

Berry Collins

We believe that this agreement is not going to work and there is ample evidence there as to why one could be fairly sound on that. I tell you why, for instance the items we have already mentioned that affect the minority community have been brought to the attention of the British government time and time and time again and nothing has been done about it. It isn't that we have to wait until today to bring the plight of those held in the prisons in Northern Ireland to the attention of the British government to do something about it. you know one would think that they knew nothing about it until today and they are going to do something about it tomorrow.

John Beaumont

A very brief and final question Austin Currie, alienation of the Northern nationalist that's what a lot of this has been about do you think they will support this agreement?

Austin Currie

I think the great, great majority of Northern nationalists will support this agreement, as far as the alienation is concerned we now have created a framework whereby something can be done about that alienation, I repeat it depends on the implementation of the agreement. The basic agreement in itself is alright, it is to be welcomed, it is the implementation with the assistance of Peter Barry and the job that he has now got, it is up to us to ensure that it is properly implemented and if what Gery Collins has said, it is an indictment of what has happened in the past, surely we surely we have learned the lesson for the present and the future.

ENDS Today Tonight