



## Text of lecture by John Hume, given at Mount Hoyoce College on March 14, 1995

(The following is an initial transcription of the lecture by John Hume.)

Well, thank you all very much. I hope I can follow that. I'm sorry that I am suffering from a pretty severe flu, so if I lose my voice, I'll do my best to keep talking. Somebody told me earlier today if you lose your voice you should take the advice of President Roosevelt, which is to speak in a very low voice, but make sure you've got a big stick with you. I don't believe, as you will find out, in using coercion of any description to achieve my objectives, whether they are big sticks or not.

But, I am very happy to be here this evening and I am delighted with the turnout of people here because what your presence says to me is something that has come over very powerfully to us in the streets of the North of Ireland. The size of the number of people in this room tonight, tells me very clearly that peace in our land is center stage with so many people across the world and the powerful interest that there is in it, because, you know, it wouldn't be often that you would get audiences of this size anywhere. I was particularly glad to accept the invitation from Richard Neal to come to Massachusetts because from our troubled start of 25 years ago, the first phone call I got when I was just a young representative. I was lying in bed one morning, Pat was lying beside me, the phone rings and the voice said: This is Ted Kennedy. I said: Pull my other leg. But, it was. He said, I believe I should be talking to you about what's happening over there and I'm coming to Bonn in Germany. So I went to Bonn and met him and from that day onwards we have kept in the closest contact. Tip O'Neil, Massachusetts, first speaker of Congress to come on our streets - walk the streets of the Bogside with me, pass the tanks and the barricades, the bombs to see for himself, so that he would be fully informed. And, of course, Congressman Neal, no sooner was he elected, that he came onto our streets as well. That expresses for me, as your presence does tonight, the

very strong bond between Massachusetts and our part of the world. The saying in my city, the city of Derry, which is the closest harbor to North America, where the sailing ships took most of the people from the famine 150 years ago, the saying there is: the next parish is Boston. It's true.

Anyway, I'm glad to be among you tonight to talk about what is happening at this great moment of hope in our country.

The quarrel, as has already been said, in Ireland, is the longest standing quarrel in Europe. It has gone on for centuries. It started in the 17th century at the time of the Reformation, as you know, because of Ireland's links with Spain. England came into Ireland, colonized, as the word was then, and the settlers settled in the northern part. Here is a map of Ireland. It looks very much like one, doesn't it. The settlers settled in the north and because of the time that was in it, the settlers were Protestant and the natives were Catholic. That is the origin of the problem. It is not a simple religious war as some simple people across the world try to present it. At the beginning of this century, when Ireland sought its independence from Britain, Unionists reacted, the Protestant population reacted violently and the British backed out and drew a line on the map, and drew the line carefully to make sure that on one side of it there was two Protestants for every Catholic and then they let the rest of Ireland go free. That is the origin of what I'm going to talk to you about and it stayed like that for seventy years until the last 25 years which have seen the worst violence in the three centuries. In those 25 years we have lost 3,200 people. That is the equivalent of 100,000 people in Britain because we have a population of 1,500,000. In the north of Ireland 30,000 people have been maimed - in other words, 30,000 people in the wrong place at the wrong time when a bomb or bullet would go off, crippled for the rest of their lives. That, in population terms, is one out of every 500 people. As I always say, there's not a single person in Northern Ireland who doesn't know personally someone who has lost their life. That is the extent of that problem. In other words, a huge enormous problem that demands of everyone, particularly those involved in public life, to do everything in their power to stop the killing on our streets. It wasn't just the killing on our streets that made it such a terrible problem. The City of Belfast, as I often say, which is the highest church-going city in Western Europe, it's been necessary there to build 13 walls. I was in Berlin the week the wall fell. I was giving a speech in the Reifstaag, invited by Willy Brandt. I spoke of the walls of Belfast. Those walls are central to the whole debate that we have conducted in recent times to try to bring peace to our land. What those walls scream at all of us, if we are serious and sincere, and if we want to resolve our problem, it is that our past attitudes have built them and therefore it is our past attitudes that created the situation that lead us where we are today. Unless all sides are prepared to reexamine their past actions, we are not going to resolve our problem. That is the challenge that was before us. It is very easy, as I know, in Northern Ireland, to blame the other side. And it's also very easy to blame those on your own side that you don't agree with. Sinn Fein and ourselves have been very bitter political opponents for the past twenty years and so have the Unionists. It is very easy always to point the finger at other people and blame them for what they did in the past. The other side does the same back at you. You end up preserving the problem. As I say, it's very easy.

The past is so respected in Northern Ireland that the political slogan used in every election by a particular political party lead by a certain gentleman with a collar around his neck - Remember 1690 - that's how important the past is. So, as I am saying, all sides have to be prepared to reexamine the past if we are going to resolve the Irish problem. What does that mean? It means that there are two basic attitudes, two mentalities, two mindsets in our conflict. If you study them or, if indeed, you study conflicts in different parts of the world as I have done, because when you're in the middle of conflict, you do everything in your power to see if you can find answers.

When you study conflict across the world, you will find that everywhere it's about the same thing, although the people might be different. The actual reasons are the same and the mindsets, the mentalities are the same. There are two fundamental mindsets that exist in most places where there

is conflict. In the north of Ireland the two mind sets are: the Unionist mindset and the Nationalist mindset. The Unionist, which is largely the Protestant population, is an Afrikaaner style mindset. Because the Protestant population is a minority within Ireland, because they feared they were going to be subsumed into a united independent Ireland against their will, they felt that they wanted to protect their identity and the integrity of their identity. I don't quarrel with that because every society has diversity and is rich for diversity. Uniformity is not the basis of stability in any country. My quarrel with the Unionist mindset wasn't with their object of preserving their difference and their identity, but with their methods. Their methods, which reflect the mindset, is, hold all power in our own hands and exclude the rest. Give them nothing. What we have, we hold. That's another one of their slogans. What that meant in practice, and I grew up with it, as many of my generation did, widespread discrimination in voting rights, housing and jobs, designed to insure that the minority never became a majority. But, when you conduct that sort of mindset, it's bound in the end to lead to conflict. The challenge that we put to that mindset today is: look, Unionist people, we are telling you that we are a divided people. Victories are not solutions in a divided society. We are not looking for victory over you. Neither are we looking for revenge for the wrongs of the past. We are looking for agreement. Because of your geography and numbers, you Unionist and Protestant people in the north of Ireland, we can't solve the problem without you, so come to the table now. Sit down with us, the rest of us, and let's agree on how we share that lovely piece of earth called Ireland. That's the challenge to the Unionist mindset.

Then you come to the Nationalist mindset. That's the section of the community from which I come myself which is largely the Catholic population of Ireland. There is a mindset which exists in most parts of the world where there's conflict. It's what I call a territorial mindset. This is our land and you Unionists are a minority and you can't stop us uniting and taking it over. The challenge to that mindset is that it's people who have rights, not territory. If you look at the history of the world, you'll find that the error of the nation state was an error in which territory was more important than people. It's an error that led to imperialism of our territory as well and two world wars. When the history of the world is written, in my opinion, that period will go down as one of the worst in the history of the world when you think of the slaughter and the suffering caused by the mindset. It's natural when you talk of nation, you think of your land, you don't think of people. When people are divided as they are in Ireland, as they are in Cyprus, as they are in Yugoslavia, as they are in South Africa, they can only be brought together by agreement. They can't be brought together with guns and bombs. They can only be driven further apart. When you produce a gun to unite a divided people, the other side produces a gun to shoot back and then you're into what Martin Luther King so eloquently described as the doctrine of an eye for an eye, which leaves everybody blinded.

But, it's easy for me to stand and criticize the past. It's rather more difficult to produce new ideas for the future, given the length of our quarrel and how long it has lasted. However, we're living in a new world today and that is what gives me great hope. We are living in a new Europe. The world we live in today is a much smaller world than the world of the 1920s when the Irish border was drawn. Then it was a straightforward conflict of sovereignty between Britain and Ireland. Britain wanted to close the back door, which was Ireland, to her European enemies. But in today's Europe, Britain and Ireland are together with France, with Spain, with Germany. Therefore, that has changed the nature of our problem. The problem is no longer the British presence. The problem today is the divided people. The answer is agreement.

Given that all the mindsets and all that I am saying, a change in both mindsets leads in the one direction and in one word: agreement among the divided people over Ireland. The task then is to get all resources devoted to promoting such an agreement. The dialogue between Gerry Adams was about how we did all that. And we stated very clearly from day one that our objective was a total cessation of violence and killing on our streets, followed by dialogue involving both

governments and all parties whose objective would be agreement among our divided people and that that agreement had to earn the allegiance of all traditions.

In my own approach, I am a member of the European parliament and am a very totally convinced European. I am a Derryman. I'm known as a Derryman because I am an Irishman. I'm known as an Irishman because I am a European. The world has become a smaller place today with the telecommunications revolution, the technological revolution, the transport revolution. The world is a far smaller place today than it was 50 or 100 years ago and that's reflected in relationships between peoples. We don't have independent countries anymore, we are interdependent. We cannot live apart. The peoples of Europe, when you study European union, the peoples of Europe are now united. I sit in Strasbourg with representatives of peoples from all over Europe and I cast my mind back 50 years. Cast your mind back 50 years last week - the holocaust. One hundred and thirty-five million people dead across the continent of Europe for the second time in the century. Of course, for the nth time in centuries, because the peoples of Europe spent centuries slaughtering one another. Who could have forecast then, that in 50 years time, we would have a united Europe and the Germans would still be German and the French would still be French. But, it happened, and what European union represents, in spite of the right wing conservatives of the British Conservative Party, is the greatest example in the history of the world of conflict resolution. Therefore, those of us involved in conflict have a duty to study how they did it and that's what we in Ireland did.

How did they do it? They decided that difference is not a threat. When you boil down conflict everywhere in the world, it's all about the same thing. It's about seeing difference as a threat. The peoples of Europe decided at last that it wasn't. Of course, when you think about it, it's an accident of birth what you're born and where you're born. Nobody chose to be born. That accident of birth, whether it's your race, your nationality or your religion, should never therefore be the source of hatred or conflict, since nobody chose to be born or what they were born. The answer to difference - there's not two human beings in the entire race who are the same. Not two in this entire room who are the same. Difference, difference is of the essence of humanity. The first message of peace is to respect difference and not to fight about it. What the peoples of Europe did was the accept that simplistic principle. But as in all profundities in this world, profundities are simple. They decided to build institutions in Europe which respected their differences. The French are still French and the Germans are still Germans. They allowed them to build their common ground together, that is, economics. So, they set up institutions, a council of ministers representing the governments of the countries. A commission representing the civil servants of the countries and a parliament representing the peoples of the countries, all countries. They agreed for a substantial number of years that all decisions would be taken by agreement. There was no takeover bids. By working economics together, what politics should really be about in every country, should never be about waving flags or wrapping flags around you, because if you're unemployed, as we know in Ireland, you can't eat a flag. You have to go elsewhere to earn your living. The flags not much use to you. What they did was recognize that the right to existence is what politics should be about everywhere. The right to life, to bread on your table, a roof over your head and a decent income. Therefore, they worked the economic common ground. As I say, they spilt their sweat, but not their blood. By so doing they broke down the barriers of centuries of prejudice and hatred and grew together a new Europe whose unity is based on respect for diversity. That's the message that we have to learn in Ireland. I'll come to that in a moment. But that message was learned by Europe two hundred years after the message was learned by the founding fathers and mothers of this country.

I often express regret that American now sees itself in the world as a military or as an economic power and not what it really is, a moral power. Two hundred years before we learned the lesson in Europe, the lesson was learned by the founding fathers and mothers of America. When you study the American constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Those peoples who founded this

country were driven out of Europe by intolerance, by famine, starvation and want. They decided that that was not going to be repeated in this land. When you think of the philosophy that founded this country, it is the philosophy that should be screamed out everywhere for peace. How many of you know what's printed on a dime in your pocket. It's the message of the greatest wisdom in the world. If you don't know what's printed on the dime because it's very small and you might not be able to see it, go to Abraham Lincoln's grave and there you will see it in large print in front of his grave: E Pluribus Unum, three latin words, from many we are one. The essence of unity is the acceptance of diversity. There is no country in the world that is peaceful unless it's differences are respected and accommodated, that is the real message of peace.

That is the challenge that now faces us in Ireland. For the first time in our history not to be seeking victory by one side over another, but to build institutions which respect the diversity of our people but following the European example, allow us to work our common ground together, which is economics. We spill our sweat, but not our blood, to break down the barriers of prejudice that have divided us for centuries and begin the healing process of breaking down the barriers that divide the people of Ireland. The real border of Ireland isn't a line on a map, it's a border in the hearts and minds of the people. That can only be done by the healing process.

Therefore, while we are now going to talk about reaching political agreement, my hope is, and we've already begun this, that we will talk together and work together on our common ground of economics in that island, both sections, the Unionists and ourselves. Spill sweat but not our blood. That is where the Irish abroad come in. We are, as I often say, the biggest wandering people in the world. There are 42 Million people in this country at the last census saying that they are Irish. There are Irish all across Europe, Australia, Canada. Now because it's a smaller world we can at last harness the energies and talents of the Irish everywhere. Let our identity today be not about territory but about our roots and our blood and let us harness the strength of the Irish all over the world to give back to that small island, in terms of inward investment and marketing the products made in that country. That can be done today because of the new world we're living in. As I often say, if every single person in this country who said in the last census that they were Irish, 42 million, only spent \$5.00 a week in Ireland, we'd have ten billion dollars a year that would put our economy through the roof.

President Clinton has picked up that message very powerfully. Strongly encouraged by representatives from this state, he is having a major international conference in Washington in May to look ways of economically regenerating Ireland. He has appointed George Mitchell as his special economic envoy. The challenge is now there before us. We have had six months of peace in our streets. The joy among the people has made that peace stronger because the mood is so strong that no one dare go back to the trenches of the past. As we face the next century my dream, the dream of all Irish people, must be that it will be the first century in our island's history in which we will have no blood on our streets, no killings on our streets and no young people having to immigrate to other lands to earn a living. Thank you.

(applause)

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