

A Vision of the Future: Celtic Identity and Cooperation – 1994

Resolution on foreign affairs passed at Ard Fheis (National Conference) 1976

(a) That Sinn Féin recognises that the only realistic future for Ireland in relation to the world at large lies in disentangling our people from economic and political power blocs and possible military alliances such as the EEC and joining with the post-colonial and non-aligned countries of the Third World of Africa, Asia and Latin America in their struggles against all forms of imperialism and in their endeavours to build a new International Economic Order.

(b) That we declare our support for those throughout the world engaged in struggles for national liberation and invite their explicit support for the struggle in Ireland . . .

At the Ard-Fheis of Republican Sinn Féin each year the flags of many small nations struggling for liberation and the banners of national liberation movements are prominently displayed.

Further, fraternal delegations are often present and invariably address the gathering to warm and welcoming applause. Messages of support are read from solidarity groups and movements around the world.

But the warmest greeting is reserved for the most frequent visitors to attend, The Corsicans and the Bretons. While the former identify closely with “Sorella Irlanda” the latter are invariably introduced, correctly in my view, as “our Celtic cousins”.

While the Welsh have shown up on occasion, the Scots have been careful and very proper in any contact and the Manx and Cornish have met us at congresses abroad and at cultural events here in Ireland.

At all times Irish Republicans have indicated to our fellow-Celts that we support very firmly their aspirations to their own national identity and even to independence.

The means to be employed by them is always stated to be their own business and for decision by their own people. Of course it is invariably put to them that a study of the Irish people’s struggle down the centuries is bound to be rewarding to them.

The cultural aspect of nationalism is of course central to all this and it is not surprising to find fraternising on a large scale at the International Celtic Music Festival in Lorient, Brittany

each August and at the smaller and less spectacular Pan-Celtic Festival in Ireland in April or May.

Without a vibrant culture — and language is a central and essential ingredient here — our claims to separate national identity before the world fall down. Strengthening our respective cultures is therefore a vital part of any forward movement in all our countries.

To put our own movement's stand with regard to the Celtic countries into perspective, I wish to quote from our Ard-Fheis Clar (or Agenda) of 1976 when a resolution defining our stand internationally was passed and an active "Foreign Affairs Bureau" set up.

The resolution defined the Republican view of the future Ireland as disentangled from economic and political power blocs and possible military alliances and joining with the post-colonial and non-aligned countries of the Third World against "all forms of imperialism" and endeavouring to build a new International Economic Order.

That said, the resolution declared "our support for those throughout the world engaged in struggles for national liberation" and we invited "their explicit support for the struggle in Ireland".

In proposing the resolution, I as President said: "We also support the captive nations of Western Europe, the Bretons, the Basques, the Corsicans and the Catalans to name but some of those struggling for liberation and national identity.

"In particular, we support the efforts of the Scottish and Welsh peoples for self-government and freedom from English control. Their struggles are part of a common effort which was initiated in Ireland to throw off the imperial rule of London which has had such dire effects on all the Celtic nations.

"We look forward to the day which is not far distant when the Irish can resume those direct relations with our Celtic brothers which have been interrupted by the divisive policies of London. Not merely that, but we look ahead to the establishment of active political and economic co-operation between our three liberated countries."

In developing our International policy we came to describe Ireland as standing in the centre of three concentric circles:

the first to be a Celtic League, on the lines of the Nordic Council or the Arab League, which would include all Celtic countries:

the second, “a free federation of free peoples in Europe” (James Connolly’s words) — a Europe of peoples not of states. (In achieving this the struggles of the nationalities on the periphery of Europe would be linked to the struggles of the workers at the centre.)

The global dimension which has been outlined in the resolution itself.

This was and still is our vision of the world and especially of relations with our Celtic neighbours. In 1987, following reorganisation of our movement, the basic resolution was re-adopted and the Foreign Affairs Bureau re-named the “International Relations Bureau”.

Without dwelling on past history, I would like to add one further quotation. It is relevant and is from the “S-Plan” (General Staff Plan) followed by the Irish Republican Army in 1939-40 when the London Government did not respond to its Ultimatum to evacuate British troops and administration from Ireland.

The extract in question is to be found in paragraph 2 (d) (i) entitled “Proclamation”. It said that copies of the Proclamation and the Ultimatum would also be sent to among others (and at the head of the list too) the Scottish Nationalist Party and the Welsh Nationalist Party.

It reads: “(i) The Scottish and Welsh Nationalist Parties will be assured of the sympathetic interest of Ireland in their aspirations and of the abiding affection of the Irish people for them as kindred of a common race. Assurance will be given also that there can be no enmity between these peoples and ours and that no conflict of opinion or loyalty can eventuate unless in these countries their own best national interests are subordinated to alien imperialist interests”.

And so, before the outbreak of WWII, hundreds of Irish men and women laid their lives on the line as they went out to engage in a Sabotage Campaign in England to force a British withdrawal from Ireland.

In their statement of aims the rights and liberties of Scotland and Wales were guaranteed as their fight was for all mankind: the two British Labour Parties received the documents also with an indication that no nation could be liberated while it enslaved others.

Today the aspirations of the Celtic peoples to national identity and independence remain valid. The work of building and strengthening the peoples' will in each nation goes on as they draw support from each other. It is a cause well worth struggling and sacrificing for, the common cause of six nations with but a single soul.

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