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St Andrews talks — a catalyst?



Some of the participants in the talks

The recent talks between the political parties in Northern Ireland, and particularly the reports of an agreement that was reached between the DUP and Sinn Fein, seem to have served as an “eye-opener” for many Protestants. There was a realisation, as never before, as to where these negotiations were finally going to take them — into a coalition between the DUP and a political party that had come to power through murder, terrorism and intimidation. It is a party that still retains the machinery whereby their campaign of terror was carried out.

Sinn Fein is still the IRA in political clothes. It is still linked to the IRA “Army Council”, which directly oversees the activities of its IRA “volunteers”. If the present outcome of these talks stands, then we will soon be under the joint rule of the DUP and Sinn Fein/IRA.

Politics in Northern Ireland are required to operate within parameters set by the British and Irish governments. The freedom enjoyed by the citizens of the UK who live here is like that freedom granted to the design engineers of Ford Motors by its founder, Henry Ford. “You may paint the cars any colour you like as long as it’s black”, he allegedly told them. Here in Ulster, we have absolute political freedom to choose whatever the government determines for us!

That basically means a government with Sinn Fein/IRA given a place as of right. It must be said that most citizens and all of the political parties, with varying degrees of acceptance, have gone along with that dictat.

For that reason, the negotiations at St. Andrews were all about accommodation between the DUP, the largest party, and Sinn Fein/IRA and just what roles each would permit the other to have.

For some, these political parameters are anathema. However, they did not make too much noise about the talks and negotiations and political coming and going for the simple reason that it was believed that no agreement could ever be reached between the DUP and Sinn Fein/IRA, given the strident demands of the DUP and the political ambitions of Sinn Fein/IRA. However, St. Andrews changed all that.

What the British Government is hoping for

“What we now have in prospect is the nomination, as quickly as November 24, of Ian Paisley the DUP leader as first minister, and Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Fein deputy leader and former IRA member, as deputy first minister,”

Peter Hain, NI Secretary of State.



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It appeared that agreement could be reached between the two apparently mutually exclusive parties and the dreadful prospect of Adams and McGuinness in government in Northern Ireland as a permanent fixture loomed large.

That is when many who before thought that such a thing was impossible became seriously alarmed.

Why is the prospect of Sinn Fein/IRA in government so objectionable?

I wish to answer that as a Christian.

1. To agree to Sinn Fein/IRA being in government is to devalue and debase the Law of God.

“Thou shalt not kill,” Exodus 20: 13. That is what God’s Law states on murder. To agree to the placing of murderers into high government office is to ignore and defy what God has said. It is to dismiss the Law of God as irrelevant in modern Ulster. That is a terrible and most foolish view to entertain.

2. To agree to Sinn Fein/IRA being in government is to hand them the prize which they by terror sought to attain and for which thousands of loyalists were murdered and maimed.

Undoubtedly, Sinn Fein/IRA is most desirous of getting into government. To obtain that goal, Adams and McGuinness have resorted to heavy-handed bullying of their own supporters who showed signs of objecting to their methods of obtaining their prize. After all, that is why there is a number of break-away republican terrorist movements such as the “Real IRA” and the “Continuity IRA”.

3. To agree to Sinn Fein/IRA being in government is to exonerate murder and terror and reward such evil deeds.

How can the Protestants of Ulster forget the grief and misery caused to innumerable innocent households by the activities of the IRA gunmen and bombers? How can such activities be ignored and the perpetrators of them be accepted into government? Such a prospect was utterly unthinkable but a short time ago!

4. To agree to Sinn Fein/IRA being in government is to go back on every promise extracted from our political representatives.

The majority of the unionist community believed that Sinn Fein/IRA would never be in office, because before Adams and McGuinness would ever be permitted into that position the IRA would verifiably cease to be.

There is not the slightest sign of that taking place nor is there any promise that it will take place forthcoming from Sinn Fein/IRA representatives.

5. To agree to Sinn Fein/IRA being in government would divide asunder the people of God.

For many Christians, politics at best is a necessary evil! But the prospect of agreeing to be ruled by Sinn Fein/IRA would be such a horrendous thing that it would become a source of division between those who heretofore had lived, laboured, witnessed and worshipped in harmony.

It would cause consternation amongst those believers across the world who constantly pray for us to be delivered from our enemies.

It would cause dismay amongst believers in the rest of the United Kingdom who look to Ulster as the last bastion of Biblical Protestantism.



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Political “success” is priced too high when it requires that outcome!

What Sinn Fein/IRA is aiming for

“Sinn Fein remains firmly focused on bringing about a situation where Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley would be equal partners at the head of a power sharing government in the north,”

Gerry Adams

6. To agree to Sinn Fein/IRA being in government would exalt wicked men into a place of unprecedented influence in Ulster and further afield.

Political commentators have already noted that Sinn Fein/IRA would dearly love to be in government in time for the next general election in the Irish Republic for such a status would undoubtedly increase their vote most dramatically and may even give them a majority in the Dublin parliament.

Further afield, the political rewards may be even greater. Every door to prime ministers and presidents would be open to them and that by the agreement of Ulster’s Protestants, long the target of Sinn Fein/IRA’s murderous campaign. Would that not be an irony indeed?

If Sinn Fein/IRA being in government under the terms of the St. Andrews Agreement is victory over them, then I dread to think what would have been the outcome of our being defeated by them!