

22 July 1993,

Lord Hylton,

[REDACTED]
BATH,
Somerset [REDACTED]

My Lord,

Thank you very much indeed for your note on Conflict-Resolution and its application to the problems in Northern Ireland.

I am very interested indeed in the theory and practice of conflict resolution, but the model you propose is only one form. It comes largely from a cognitive-behavioural school of psychology, and is the sort of thing that is used in some forms of marriage guidance. I think it inadequate in this situation. This is why I have for the past ten years or so been working theoretically, and pursuing in political practice a different and more psychoanalytically informed approach.

One of the benefits of this has been to force me to critically address much of the accepted wisdom which keeps us from the truth. Let me give you an example.

In your 'first phase' you talk about the elements of the conflict being disentangled by disinterested analysts from outside, and that this should be relatively easy because of all that has been written about it. I'm afraid this is exactly where the problem starts. I have had many years of speaking to such people who visit Northern Ireland (including the gracious gentleman Sir Ninian Stephen, to whom you refer). It is a soul-destroying experience, and in most cases an unprofitable one. You see, from my own explorations I have come to fundamentally disagree with the historical analysis that you outline on the first page. The struggle did not begin in the 17th century. It was present long before the English came to Ireland. These very same battles were being fought between the people of the north-east of the island and their Scottish kinsfolk one and a half millennia ago. The English involvement is certainly a nuisance, but it is not the first root of the problem. The problem is not particularly a religious one, though this has had its influence too, it has to do with the struggle between the majority of people on the

island, and those whose culture and history transcends the island, in particular those whose roots are in both Scotland and Ireland, and who live in the North-east of Ireland.

I could go on a great deal further, but the point I want to make is simply that while I agree that we need conflict resolution work, I do not accept the model of conflict resolution that you put forward. If you would be interested to pursue this question perhaps we could arrange to meet again when you are next over in Northern Ireland.

Again thanks for taking the trouble to send me your speech.

Kindest regards,

Dr John T Alderdice
PARTY LEADER

CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

I have in the past tried to explain how Northern Ireland has suffered from fears and difficulties, induced by a Double Minority situation. Today I would like to focus on the cultural frontier, the historic conflict and the scope for conflict resolution, as far as concerns that part of the United Kingdom.

Your Lordships will be well aware of other cultural frontiers. I have lately come back from Moldavia, on the border between Slav and Latin cultures. Other better known cultural frontiers are to be found in Alsace-Lorraine and in the South Tyrol. The cultural frontier in Northern Ireland is that between the Planter and the Gael - between the descendants of incomers from Scotland and England and those of the original population. The distinguishing difference is not one of language, but of Protestant and Catholic mental culture. Protestant culture argues from the particular to the general, Catholic culture in the opposite direction. Protestants emphasize the individual conscience, Catholics the general principle (from which there can, of course, be many exceptions or derogations). That helps to explain the important role of people who understand these differences, who can act as cross-cultural interpreters, thus preventing misunderstandings.

My next point is perhaps so obvious that it hardly needs mentioning. We are faced along the cultural divide by deep-rooted violent conflict. This conflict has broken out in various forms, at intervals since the early 17th century. Since 1969, the current phase of conflict has caused over 3,000 deaths. In case anyone thinks that is a small or acceptable figure, it is worth pointing out that conflict on the scale of Northern Ireland, happening in Great Britain, would have produced 100,000 deaths and vastly more injuries. It would have more than doubled our prison population (large as that is already). The regular Appropriations Orders for Northern Ireland reveal the size of the expenditure on security and law and order. I would go on to point out that security and anti-terrorist measures impose an even greater per capita burden on the Republic of Ireland. The conflict spills over into England and other countries of Western Europe, imposing still further costs.

In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, deep-rooted violent conflict expresses itself in struggles about identity and about territory. Whose traditions, symbols and emblems shall prevail; who shall have secure "turf" in what places? The flashpoints are the so-called sectarian interfaces. There can be little doubt that the conflict is both deep-rooted and violent.

The strategy adopted to bring an end to conflict has usually been that of mediation. Since 1969, Her Majesty's Government have attempted to mediate between the Northern Ireland Government and its opponents between Unionists and Nationalists and between Protestants and Catholics in matters of employment, education etc. I regret very much that these genuine efforts have been unsuccessful. With hindsight, I think they were bound to fail. Her Majesty's Government cannot be considered

a neutral and independent mediator, since they are responsible for governing the disputed territory and since their Army is engaged in aid to the civil power.

1985 saw the beginning of a new type of mediation. Following the Anglo-Irish Agreement, mediation has involved an advisory input from the Government of Ireland. Whilst this has probably helped the morale of the nationalist community, it has had a depressing effect on the unionist community. This is understandable, while the Irish Constitution contains a claim to the whole island and while the nominally Catholic population of the North increases gently year by year.

Neither of the two Governments by itself, nor both acting together, can be seen by everybody as disinterested, independent mediators.

That is why I venture to suggest, that the more radical strategy of conflict-resolution is necessary. I am not aware that this approach has been thoroughly attempted during the last twenty-four years. Much effort has been devoted to conflict-management and in the last phase of political talks Her Majesty's Government showed wisdom in appointing an Australian chairman.

Let me explain, what I mean by conflict-resolution. First, the elements of the conflict need to be disentangled by disinterested analysts coming from outside the problem. Since so much has already been written about the history, politics, sociology and dynamics of Northern Ireland, it may be that this first phase can be relatively brief.

The second stage is to identify those persons, whether in government or outside it, and including particularly the leaders of para-military groups, who are actually capable of delivering results. The third step, is for the conflict-analysts to persuade the persons identified to take responsibility for and in a sense to "own" the conflicts and their grim consequences. Once this has been achieved and each component of the conflict has stopped putting the whole blame and guilt on the other parties involved, it should be possible to discuss and eventually to agree proposals, whereby everybody benefits and gains and nobody is the loser.

This last stage will undoubtedly require generosity of spirit; it will entail clemency, amnesty and a degree of mutual forgiveness. I believe that these qualities exist in Ireland, in the North and in the Republic and they can even be found in Britain. They are precisely the qualities that have led to the successful rebuilding of Western Europe, since 1945.

Your Lordships may consider what I have been saying to be idealistic. My reply is that enormous sums of money are at stake. More important still is the well-being of the people of Northern Ireland and of those elsewhere, who become involved in the conflict. The strategy so far employed has not proved successful. Conflict resolution should now be attempted, with the full support of both Governments, of the EC and of all other relevant organizations.

HYLTON

12 July 1993