

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Clinton.eam

[Draft]

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON
VIA CABINET OFFICE/WHITE HOUSE LINK

16 November 1993

Dear Bill

I thought you would find it helpful to have a note on Northern Ireland.

May I first express my warm thanks for your support, including for my joint statement on 29 October with Albert Reynolds? The decision you took not to admit the IRA leader Gerry Adams to the United States was extremely well received in Britain. It demonstrated in the clearest possible light the stance of the United States against terrorism. I know it was not an uncontroversial or easy decision for you, which makes me all the more appreciative.

The Northern Irish problem has now been with us for a quarter of a century. We must be realistic about the huge obstacles to peace there. However, I believe that any opportunity for progress must be explored, tested and if possible taken.

The latest shocking exchange of sectarian brutality has generated an acute longing for an end to violence. I have been working intensively over the past three weeks to see whether we can harness this mood to induce the paramilitary organisations on both sides to give up violence; and the constitutional parties to

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

come together in negotiations for a political settlement. In my Mansion House speech last night I appealed for peace and reconciliation. (My office have sent Tony Lake the text.)

John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, is one of those I have met in my round of talks. He is a man of high courage and a strong opponent of terrorism. However, as Albert Reynolds and I have had to tell him, Hume's publicised dialogue with Adams has if anything made the search for peace more complicated. It has attracted wide support on one side of the sectarian divide, but for that very reason is unacceptable to the other. That fact alone - quite apart from its content - makes it impossible for my Government to endorse Hume's approach. Were we to do so, we would face huge political opposition from the majority community and the risk of a violent backlash by Protestant paramilitaries. This could set back the prospects for political progress and for peace in Northern Ireland by many years.

I hope that by other means, including the political talks process already under way, we shall be able to maximise the pressure for a permanent cessation of violence. I shall work unremittingly for this. I am prepared to take risks in the cause of peace. I shall not make concessions to one side which could only lead to even greater trouble from the other. But, if I see a viable way forward, I shall go for it. In all of this, it will be important to me to continue working as closely as I can with Albert Reynolds and Dick Spring. Cooperation between the British and Irish Governments has been seen widely as one of the more encouraging elements in a sombre picture.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

Copy the plans to:

Mr Thomas

Mr [unclear]

15/11

I much appreciate the interest shown by your Government in our efforts for peace, in which Ambassador Seitz and your Consul-General in Belfast have been most helpful. Needless to say, your continuing support will be enormously valuable to me.

Yours sincerely

Sir V. Dainton

NORTHERN IRELAND

John

It might just be worth recording the main points of a conversation that I had with Jim Helyar, former member of the Ulster Volunteers, at the reception after the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Cenotaph on 14 November. I had come across Helyar on various occasions while I was serving in Belfast between 1975 and 1978.

1. Helyar had heard during the last week from a contact associated with PIRA that there was genuine and widespread feeling now among the Provisionals that they were getting nowhere with their military campaign. Helyar had the impression that, whereas in the past there had been a division between the hawks and the doves as regards going down the political track, this had now changed. He said that there was a rather similar feeling among the "so-called loyalists" - ie the UDA, UVF, etc. Something of a balance of terror had been reached. The time had come to try to break out of the circle of violence.

2. Helyar said that he had good contacts with the Irish Government. The IRA/UDA/UVF/UVL had had some useful ideas and could have a number of proposals put forward. Helyar said that he had sent a message to Reynolds but had had no reply. The implication was that Helyar thought there was a way forward but Reynolds was not playing.

3. From another reference it emerged that Helyar thought very little of the Dumb/Adams plan (unsurprisingly).

4. Helyar said at the end, clearly expecting that I was in a position to do something about it, that he would be very willing to do anything which the UK would like him to "in a Privy Counsellor capacity", presumably by way of passing messages or making representations to the Irish.