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Mr. Thomas
Mr. Cooke

284/54/93

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 November 1993

R. Howard

Dear Cardinal Hume,

Many thanks for your letter of 12 November. It was kind of you to write about my meeting with Cardinal Daly.

Since I talked to him last week, I have taken matters further with my speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet. You may find it useful to have the full text of my remarks on Northern Ireland. This is enclosed.

I hope that Cardinal Daly will find that the position which I set out with deliberate frankness responds to some of the points which he was making to me. His long perspective and his judgement are, as you say, to be respected. I was encouraged that he seemed to share my view that there was a tide of opinion in favour of peace which - for all the well-known obstacles - we should try to catch. I tried to explain why the Hume/Adams dialogue, and public reactions to it, have unfortunately made the search for a settlement if anything more complicated. This is in no way to deny John Hume's sincere and courageous efforts. The sad fact is that, with Northern Ireland so sharply polarised, it is well-nigh impossible to secure general acceptance on both sides of the community of proposals (whatever their merits) which come from one half of the sectarian divide and result from negotiation with PIRA. That is why

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the Irish Prime Minister and I had to agree in Brussels on 29 October that there could be no question of adopting or endorsing the outcome of the Hume/Adams dialogue. We concluded instead that our Governments should work more closely than ever to try to create a framework for peace, reconciliation and stability in Ireland.

You spoke of the reactions of the nationalists. I hope that nationalists at large will react positively to my call for a permanent end to violence, and will exercise the greatest possible pressure on those who use or support violence now to renounce it in favour of democratic means. I could not have been more explicit in saying that the door will open to involvement in the political arena if this is done. I would value your support in this.

Yours sincerely
John Major

His Eminence Cardinal Basil Hume

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