

# Alliance

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

## Headquarters

88 University Street  
Belfast BT7 1HE  
Northern Ireland

Telephone (0232) 324274  
Facsimile (0232) 333147

“ P R E S S R E L E A S E ”

BROADCAST BY ALLIANCE LEADER, DR JOHN ALDERDICE ON BBC  
SCOTLAND - SATURDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 1993

The Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Israeli Government surprised us all when the news began to emerge that they were moving, with extraordinary speed, towards mutual recognition and the signing of an historic peace deal.

After a momentary stunned silence, as the commentators sought to regain their composure, the excitement quickly grew, with the realisation that despite the setbacks in Somalia and the Balkans, something quite remarkable and positive was happening to the world order. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and the release of Nelson Mandela, had both heralded dramatic moves towards freedom and justice in the world, and there seemed to be every reason to believe that the peace deal hatched in secret in Norway, and consummated before a breathless world on the lawn of the White House in Washington, was further evidence that a sense of hope, and a hunger for peace, was truly redrawing the political map of the world.

With only a moments pause, the question inevitably rushed to the lips of commentators throughout these islands ... if the Israelis and the Palestinians can do it, then why not the divided people of Northern Ireland? Much more encouraging perhaps, those same words were being spoken by the people of Northern Ireland themselves, in the towns and villages of a community whose pain and despair is drifting towards a crisis. Is there hope? Are there lessons? Or will we find ourselves musing as Churchill did, as he gazed on a world transformed by the deluge of the First World War, and lamented that almost the only institution which had survived was the integrity of the ancient quarrel of those who lived and died in the shadow of the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone ... the ancient Irish feud.

Hope of a resolution was indeed an early casualty, when the Talks between the four parties and the two governments collapsed in November of last year, and everyone took a breather while elections were held in the Republic of Ireland, and then in May of this year in Northern Ireland. But the political vacuum left by the demise of the talks, has ushered in a major escalation in loyalist murders of Catholics, and of course we have, unabated, the IRA's increasingly expensive campaign of murder and economic destruction. So the new political season brings with it a sense of urgency on the part

of the two governments, and at least some of the politicians in Northern Ireland, to see progress made.

What are the lessons from the Middle East? Predictably each side makes its own interpretations. John Hume's supporters see justification for his talks with the political wing of the IRA, through the implication that talks with the Sinn Fein/IRA are like talks with the PLO. Unionists say that the key to the Middle East settlement was mutual recognition, and that in the context of Northern Ireland, that means the renunciation by the Republic of Ireland of its constitutional claim over Northern Ireland. And on the sidelines, some Americans are proposing an envoy, and adverting to the part played by the Norwegians.

The problem is that each is merely finding comfort for their own convictions, rather than accepting the challenge of giving up some of those convictions for the sake of an honourable compromise.

When Time Magazine summed up the deal, it described the peacemakers as "brushing aside the protests of hardliners on both sides, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, and the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist unmolested. Yasser Arafat also asked Palestinian residents of the occupied territories to reject violence and terrorism."

This is surely the key. So long as Arafat was preoccupied with winning the support of all his own people - even the most extreme of them - and so long as the Israeli Government was paying attention to Jewish fundamentalists, there was no hope. It is impossible to please the extremists on both sides and also find a solution. The only hope is to enable the majority of people on both sides to reach out the hand of friendship to each other.

There is real opposition in the Middle East to this deal. The indications are the Prime Minister Rabin will get the deal through the Knesset, but only by a narrow margin. Arafat too has his problems. He had to accept the resignations of 5 members of the PLO Executive. So the message for Northern Ireland, and for the two Governments as they address the problem is this. 'Do not try to please and appease the extremists on either side.' Talks with Sinn Fein, could be very dangerous if they take the SDLP away from an accommodation with Unionists. In the same way that in the past the Ulster Unionists made problems for reasonable talks, by looking too much to the DUP.

The radical thing about what Rabin and Arafat did was, that they stepped away from their own extremists, and took strength from the handshake between them, rather than from the

extremists behind them. That is also the radical lesson for Northern Ireland.

... and the Israeli...  
... which has now begun to emerge, that...  
... towards mutual...  
... of historic peace deal.

... as the commentators sought...  
... the setbacks in Israel and the...  
... and positive was happening...  
... the Berlin Wall, and...  
... but both heralded dramatic...  
... and justice in the world, and there...  
... to believe that the peace deal...  
... and committed before a...  
... the White House in Washington...  
... a sense of hope, and a hunger for...  
... the political map of the world.

... the question inevitably pushed to...  
... if the...  
... then why not the...  
... which were encouraging...  
... by the people of...  
... of a...  
... towards a crisis...  
... will be the...  
... world transformed by...  
... and revealed that almost...  
... the integrity of...  
... in the shade...  
... the ancient

... when the...  
... the government's...  
... and everyone took a...  
... of Ireland...  
... But the...  
... the...  
... and of...  
... expansion...  
... By the...  
... of the past