

ENTERED 24 NOV 1994



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British Embassy
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30 September 1994

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Mr Williams
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Mr Maccabe

Dear Jonathan,

VISIT OF DICK SPRING TO WASHINGTON

1. As you know, Dick Spring visited Washington from 29 September to 1 October. He had a meeting with Vice-President Gore which was joined by the President for 15 minutes. He has also seen Bob Dole, Bob Michel, Pat Leahy, and will see Secretary of State Christopher tomorrow. According to the NSC and the Irish Embassy there was nothing new. This was just Spring's annual pilgrimage.

2. Spring gave a speech at lunch-time today, most of which appears fairly anodyne. The one point that struck me was his justification for Adams's comments to the Boston Herald. Spring argued that any quest for a guarantee that nothing could go wrong that would tragically frustrate the hope for a permanent peace was unrealistic.

3. In reply to questions, Spring said there would be two separate referenda in the North and in the Republic. It was too early yet to decide what the questions should be. But they needed to carry a majority in both areas. He envisaged North/South bodies on tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

Yours sincerely
J N Powell

J N Powell

cc: G R Archer Esq, RID, FCO) BY
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AMDAID NA HEIFEANN

202 462-3939



EMBASSY OF IRELAND
2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE. N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

ADDRESS OF MR. DICK SPRING, T.D.,

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF IRELAND, AT THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL POLICY,

WASHINGTON D.C., SEPTEMBER 30, 1994

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Embargo 1:00 P.M.

AMBASAÍD NA hÉIREANN

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EMBASSY OF IRELAND
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NORTHERN IRELAND - A TIME OF HOPE

I expect that you will want me to talk today about recent developments in Ireland. I am very happy to do so, all the more because, for the first time in more than a generation, my message is one of hope. There is an opportunity now available which, if seized with courage and imagination, can transform the situation in Northern Ireland and set the whole island firmly on course towards lasting peace and stability.

My hopes are based on two related developments: Last December the British and Irish Governments signed a Joint Declaration which was a significant milestone on the road to an accommodation of the problem. Last August the IRA decided upon a complete cessation of military operations, and, crucially, this decision has been fully sustained on the ground since then.

Both developments, in their different ways, are a response to an insistent and heartfelt desire for an end to violence which is palpable as never before across the entire spectrum of the

population in Ireland. Taken together, they create a new political opportunity that it is vital to turn to good account.

The violence which has taken such a terrible human and material toll in Northern Ireland can be seen as symptomatic of a series of political failures. These were all, in different ways, due to the politics of denial.

PARTITION

After partition each of the two traditions in Ireland entrenched themselves in a mythology which denied the reality of the other. The nationalist tradition in the island as a whole dismissed unionism as a renegade tradition, sustained only by British manipulation. The unionist Government in Northern Ireland treated its large nationalist population as a disloyal underclass, to be ruthlessly disempowered rather than conciliated. Successive British Governments resolutely ignored grave abuses taking place over decades under their delegated authority. Terrorism and fear poisoned daily life and distorted political activity. All of these things have left a legacy of mistrust and suspicion which still has to be fully dismantled.

The approach to a solution must patiently undo the failed approaches of the past across all the different relationships - the wider British-Irish relationship, the relationship between North

and South in Ireland and the relationship between the two communities within Northern Ireland... New political arrangements are necessary across all three.

Agreement between the two sovereign Governments sets the tone for the other areas. It is the necessary, even if not sufficient, condition for progress in the other two strands. The serious challenges which the conflict has posed for both Governments has, fortunately, been matched by a steady growth of cooperation and solidarity between them. The Joint Declaration is a further decisive stage in that pattern, building on the foundations laid in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

JOINT DECLARATION

The Northern Ireland conflict might be summarised in technical terms as a disagreement about whether the application of the right of self-determination legitimately assigns the area to Irish or British jurisdiction. The Joint Declaration addresses this issue directly. The British Government recognise that it is for the people of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right to self-determination on the basis of free and concurrent consent, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish. The Irish Government accept that the right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved

and exercised with and subject to the agreement of a majority of the people in Northern Ireland. The British Government disclaim any selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland, and formally commit themselves to the role of promoting agreement in Ireland.

The Joint Declaration does not purport to be a solution to the problem. It concentrates instead on the vital preliminary of creating a peaceful process of negotiations. It seeks to accommodate the rival perspectives on self-determination in a way that both traditions can acknowledge.

By making the principle of free consent a key requirement in all arrangements, it seeks to eliminate unionist fears that nationalists will use their preponderance on the island to force the issue of Irish unity against the wishes of a majority in the North.

It offers nationalists the key reassurance that the obstacles to Irish unity are no longer those created by the actions or resistance of the British Government. There is now only the challenge of persuading the other Irish tradition of the desirability of that outcome. That in turn eliminates any vestige of justification for violence in the cause of the nationalist ideal.

The Declaration holds to the principle that negotiations must be confined to parties relying exclusively on their democratic mandates. At the same time, it offers a meaningful political alternative and an honourable avenue into negotiations for all those who leave violence behind and opt clearly for the political path.

The Declaration immediately attracted the support of a great majority of the people in Ireland, and across both traditions. Its importance as a statement of principle between the two Governments is independent of the reaction of the paramilitaries, but their reaction is nonetheless an important factor in the situation.

IRA CEASEFIRE

At the end of August, after a protracted internal debate, the IRA declared a complete cessation of military operations. That position was confirmed in a number of subsequent statements. Even more significantly, and encouragingly, it has been sustained in practice on the ground in Northern Ireland. This has moreover been achieved without any sign of splits and dissensions. It is therefore a development of the utmost importance and potential.

There has been something of a debate about whether this cessation can be regarded as permanent. I accept that this is indeed a crucial question.

The Irish Government has been clear and unambiguous from the beginning that a cessation had to be permanent. Our record of total opposition to violence means we would countenance no arrangement which implied, however obliquely, an acceptance that violence might be resumed in any circumstances.

However, we must be careful on all sides that we do not focus on an ideal of perfection in a way that hampers our ability to recognise and respond to the potentially historical change which has taken place.

If the debate on permanence amounts to the question of whether the cessation is merely a tactical ploy, or a cynical deception, I believe the great majority of informed observers would pronounce themselves satisfied that the statements which have been made by the IRA and the Sinn Féin President do indeed mean what they say, and that their decision to opt for the political path is genuine, and meant to be for good.

If, on the other hand, it amounts to a quest for a guarantee that nothing can go wrong which might tragically frustrate the hope of permanent peace, I think we must acknowledge realistically that political life rarely offers the ideal conditions we might wish, or any guarantees against failure of even the most sincere intentions. In that deeper sense, the issue of permanence is beyond the capacity of any individual to guarantee. It is rather a common

goal to be attained. The absence of violence is not peace. We know that serious political tensions remain to be settled. We know that there are still deadly arsenals of weapons in circulation - in both communities. Removing the bomb and the bullet from Irish life must not be just a figure of speech. It must be a determined programme of political and confidence-building measures which culminates, quite literally, in removing the weapons of violence on all sides. The moment when anyone can talk confidently of a permanent peace is still some way down the road, and it will only come after strenuous efforts in which all must play a part. The absence of violence is in itself, however, a major breakthrough and the optimum starting-point in the search for permanent peace. It should be welcomed and consolidated as such, and built on to its fullest potential.

The next step is to seek to ensure that the cessation by the IRA is followed by all others who have resorted to violence for political ends. There is an encouraging debate within the ranks of the loyalist paramilitaries. I would hope that unionist representatives, in particular, whatever their doubts about IRA intentions, will not be distracted by that debate from making their voices strongly heard against a campaign of violence that is still unequivocally on-going on the loyalist side. Many have honourably and eloquently done so already.

LONG-TERM GOAL

The longer term goal is an Ireland truly at peace, under agreed political institutions which cater both for our common interests and for our diversity, and so earn the allegiance of all. If the failures of the past were due to denial and coercion, the politics of the future must aim single-mindedly at consent and inclusiveness. That may require many unique arrangements, but the solutions must be designed to fit the unique problems of a divided society.

POLITICAL DIALOGUE

All paths lead through the process of political dialogue. We envisage this process on two levels: Irish history, and the violence of the last quarter century, has left grave barriers of mistrust, and serious failures of understanding and communication, in many of our relationships on the island. For that reason we propose to set up a Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, open to all democratic parties in Ireland who wish to join. Its task will be to explore, in a totally non-threatening and non-confrontational way, various approaches which would help to overcome these inherited barriers and promote the process of cooperation and reconciliation. It will not be a negotiating forum, but we would hope its deliberations will improve the climate in which negotiations take place.

Present indications are that the unionist parties, regrettably, will not feel able to participate, although it is greatly to be welcomed that the Alliance Party has agreed to do so. I would very much hope that the unionist parties who do not participate directly will find other ways, for example individual or informal contributions to ensure that their vital input does not go by default.

Sooner or later - and I very much hope sooner rather than later - we must come to comprehensive negotiations involving the two Governments and all the relevant parties in Northern Ireland. We must work out a new dispensation for Northern Ireland, which all can endorse, and new political structures to which all can give their allegiance. The cessation of violence by the IRA opens the way for the first time for such negotiations to take place on the basis of a shared commitment to peaceful, democratic values and to the principle of consent. It means they can include the entire spectrum of political opinion in Northern Ireland, and take place in a climate free of the grim shadow of violence and its attendant security repression. I believe there is now a golden window of opportunity for the two Governments to give the lead in this respect and build on the momentum for peace.

JOINT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

To advance this process both Governments are at present working on a Joint Framework Document to be put eventually to the political parties. This will not be a blue-print, to be summarily imposed. It will, however, be the considered assessment by both Governments of the broad lines of what might constitute a balanced and honourable accommodation, translating into practice the principles of the Joint Declaration. If it is to give real impetus to negotiations, it cannot merely settle for the lowest common denominator among the existing positions. That has often been tried, and failed. Rather, the two Governments, must create a new balance, challenging deeply all the existing positions, including their own. Unless the Joint Framework Document achieves this, it will fail in its purpose.

NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

Irrespective of the positions which may be put in this document, one can already postulate from the nature of the conflict what some of the key features of a solution must be:

Because the conflict is embittered by memories of past coercion - and indeed fears of future coercion, with unionist and nationalist roles reversed - the principle of consent, and, where possible, consensus, must be at the heart of all arrangements. Majoritarian

procedures of Government are inherently unsuitable for communities permanently divided along communal lines.

The conflict reflects opposing fears that either nationalists within Northern Ireland, or unionists in a united Ireland, will be the ultimate, disadvantaged minority on the island. Therefore the notion of minority in either context must be purged of all connotations of victory or defeat. That can be achieved through full respect for the validity of each tradition and for the right of each community in Northern Ireland to complete protection for all their rights and to rigorous equality of treatment.

Since the communities in Northern Ireland have an allegiance and identity which, in each case, goes beyond the confines of Northern Ireland, the Irish - and for that matter the British - dimensions of the problem must be reflected in all future arrangements. That includes new and meaningful North/South institutions, to cater adequately for current and future interrelationships on the island as a whole.

Since the Irish and British Governments are, between them, responsible for every aspect of administration which could touch in any way on the problem, new arrangements must be guaranteed and buttressed by full agreement between them.

Since new arrangements must win the allegiance of both traditions, we would propose that a new Agreement should be validated by referendum in both jurisdictions, and thus earn legitimacy in both unionist and nationalist perspectives alike.

It will not, of course, be easy to craft an Agreement which carries a majority in both areas: Nevertheless I believe it would be unforgiveable not to try.

CHOICE FOR UNIONISM

Just as this has been a time of difficult choice in the nationalist community, I believe the unionist community also stands, once again, at a cross-roads. One road might be to continue the politics of denial, of "no surrender". That will not prevent the world from changing, any more than it did in the past. It is surely clear by now that the future of unionism cannot be decided in disregard of their relationship with the nationalist tradition on the island. The alternative road could be a more constructive dialogue with nationalism about what the union means for unionists. Is it cherished as an expression of unionist allegiance and a protection of legitimate unionist rights? Or is it still thought of as an instrument to be brandished against the nationalist population, whether within Northern Ireland or in Ireland as a whole, or for asserting the dominance of the unionist community over them? If, as I believe, these negative dimensions of the

Union are ever less central to unionist thinking, then that in itself is a strong argument for unionists to join all the other parties who are ready, as of now, to go to the negotiating table. There is now a unique opportunity for the unionist community to leave behind for ever the old nightmare of being merely a beleaguered outpost on the island.

U.S. ROLE

In our search for a way forward the support of the international community is important for all traditions. I want to pay particular tribute to the role of the US Administration under President Clinton, and of our friends in Congress of both parties, and in the United States generally. As a concerned - and where necessary a candid - friend to both Governments and to both communities, President Clinton's interest has been an invaluable resource to all sides in the quest for progress. One can say, very simply, that many crucial advances in the situation would have been impossible without the American dimension.

This, as I have said, is a time of hope. We have not yet risen to the collective challenge of building the solution, but very solid foundations have been laid. The elements for an honourable

accommodation are now to hand. All that is needed now is the courage and imagination to put them together, and so to close a centuries old record of conflict in Ireland.

I am very hopeful that that will be achieved.