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Correspondence From Various Organizations re: the Northern Ireland Peace Process:
[Letters of Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.] [loose]

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JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

January 19, 1998

Mr. Larry Butler
National Security Council
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Butler,

As promised, here is the stack of my more recent correspondence regarding Northern Ireland.

I always kept Anthony Lake informed about these things, feeling it was right that the U.S. Administration know of any such dealings with people in a conflict situation that it was dealing with intensively itself. I've done that about my dealings with other conflicts as well: Israeli--Palestinian, Lebanese, Kurdish, Bosnian. But I've had no contact to whom I could send these things since Anthony Lake's departure from the White House.

The loosest of loose ends here is a follow-up to MP Martin Smyth's last letter, to which I owe a careful reply. Martin and I have been in communication all the time since 1972, and I know these letters get about among the rest of the UUP faction in the Parliament and the all-party talks.

Best wishes,

sincerely,



Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

July 1, 1997

Dr. Martin Mansergh
The Dáil
Leinster House
Dublin, IRELAND

Dear Dr. Mansergh,

Christ's Peace!

Thank you for so kindly receiving me at Leinster House June 5th, so close before the election. I congratulate you and your Fianna Fáil friends on the new government. It's my feeling that you will be good for the peace of Ireland.

I was very anxious, as you know, that the approach I have been making recently to the central figures of The Republican Movement should be known to Irish government at the right level, and that was my reason for going to you. I was recommending the available services of the Harvard Negotiating Project and their Conflict Management Group, but acting also on my own. On returning, I reported my findings to the Harvard people, and asked that they send the formal proposal that had been requested. They will do so, but move relatively slowly, with a bundle of institutional cares burdening them. They have a reluctance to go our advertising their wares, and prefer to have people come to them with requests.

And with the time pressing, I've written myself to Gerry Adams, the FAX of which I enclose a copy here for your information. I think I have to let the approaches I have already made play themselves out. There is the request I made to Martin McGuinness, through Gerry ó hEára, to help me through to more central figures. I promised, in my letter to Adams, to write again directly to Martin when I have the Harvard people's written proposal. And there is my request to Adams himself from which to await results. I did learn a long time ago not to sit about waiting too long.

I would be happy enough to drive right up to the front door of some of these persons, but I think it better to have some degree of introduction, at least at the level of a trusted person's having let them know I would come by. That may not be the Sinn Féin figures I have been appealing to. If my analysis is right, as I think it is, Gerry Adams' recommendation may not be the right one, nor even Martin McGuinness'. I think the right person for me to approach first, for introductions, may be Tom McMann, the Engineer, out from Port Laoise for the cease-fire in '94 on the expectation that he would help.

Hence my request to you. I don't know where to find Tom. I would think it too much to ask you to introduce me, but I would appreciate it if you would give me an address to write to him. I would propose to him that I come over and talk with him, and would hope that he might bring or send me to see the others. Can you do that?

With best wishes,

in Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

10 October 1997.

Fr. Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.,
Jesuit Community,
Boston College,
Chestnut Hill,
Massachusetts 02167-3802,
United States of America.

Dear Fr. Helmick,

I apologise for not getting back to you sooner. Considerable progress has been made, since we last met, with the ceasefire restored and all-party negotiations started (albeit without Paisley's and McCartney's parties).

Mr. Thomas McCann has no standing with the Sinn Féin leadership, though he likes to claim that he does. It would be better for you to approach Mairead Keane in the Sinn Féin Information Office in Washington, or Rita O'Hare in the Sinn Féin HQ in Dublin. However, Sinn Féin like others are now in the thick of negotiations, so unless during a natural break (such as in the Christmas/New Year period) I don't know whether they would have much time to attend a course. However, that would be a matter for them and you, and I am sure they would be interested in what you have to offer.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Martin Mansergh,
Special Adviser to the Taoiseach.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

October 23, 1997

Dr. Martin Mansergh
Special Adviser to the Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Dublin 2
IRELAND

Dear Dr. Mansergh,

Christ's Peace!

Thanks for your very gracious letter. Things are indeed much better than when I wrote to you July 1st.

I am still in pursuit of Army Council people and still stymied in making the contacts. I'm afraid I may have created confusion when I wrote to you in July by misspelling the name of Tom McMahon, in whom I was interested. I had been hearing of him in conversations, rather than seeing his name written. I automatically Americanized the spelling of what I heard to "McMann," which you then reconstructed as McCann. I don't know who Thomas McCann may be, but had in mind instead the man released from Port Laoise, where he had been serving a life term for the killing of Lord Mountbatten, at the time of the 1994 cease-fire. My supposition is that he was released on the understanding that he would be helpful to the purposes of the cease-fire, and so might be the right person for me to approach in South Armagh.

Circumstances have changed a lot since I wrote. In my own court, the Harvard Conflict Management Group have backed off the proposals they were making to me, and through me to the IRA. They have a project under development with some RUC people, funded by USAID, and the USAID people asked them not to get involved with any other parties there. It isn't normal for them to let themselves be warned off in such cases, but this is then about money, and even they are vulnerable when it comes to that. I have great respect for them, and would like to keep the door open for them for such time as they can be a resource, as they will likely be. In the meantime, I am keeping contact with John Paul Lederer, to be sure I am not trying to do this simply out of my head. I've explained this to Martin McGuinness long since.

What impresses me most strongly in the present situation is that the South Armagh Brigade of the IRA is still not engaged in any way in the peace process. I see that as very dangerous. I've vacillated a bit as to whom I should approach to open a conversation with them, and thought it might even be best to contact Kevin McKenna in Monaghan, talk with him and ask his introduction to South Armagh people -- Murphys, Martins, Linehan, Carraher, etc. Again I'm working on suppositions there. I expect Pat Murphy to be the key figure, but it may be one of the others. Initial contact is difficult. I still haven't an address to write to Kevin McKenna, or to McMahon if he is the right person.

One of the most encouraging things, as I see it, is that Kevin McKenna himself is apparently represented in the actual negotiating team at Stormont by Gerry Kelly, who at first was ears for Kevin and now actually speaks. Martin Ferris' presence is also a good sign. Kelly, of course, is Belfast, but close to McKenna.

I take it that everyone engaged in the process, including these, understands that the outcome by next May, to be put to referenda in both parts of Ireland, will not be the United Ireland of Republican aspiration, but some sort of reconciliation of the two traditions in the Northern community that both can accept. There should be devolved institutions that will relate to the two governments, British and Irish, in ways to be defined, somewhat on the lines of the Framework document.

Everyone going into the talks on behalf of Sinn Fein accepts the Mitchell Principles. I don't suspect any equivocation about that, and it must mean Gerry Kelly and those he answers to. Then there is the statement published in *Republican News* that the IRA "has problems with some aspects of the Mitchell Principles." Most people I've spoken to took that as very alarming. I saw the actual text as encouraging. It means, at the least, that there are aspects of the Mitchell Principles with which the IRA does not have problems. But better than that, the statement is written in as conciliatory language as its author could construct. I've speculated a bit about authorship. I don't think this is McKenna language, nor that it is he who has the problems it refers to. It doesn't sound to me like a Murphy, though I expect it speaks for that circle. Tom McMahon could actually have written it, judging simply by how articulately it is expressed, but by now this is all just guesswork.

To the point, though, that the South Armagh Brigade, the most important part of the IRA, always law unto themselves, is not engaged. It has been my contention that the people with the real power need to have positive involvement in making the peace. The right Unionists are actually engaged now, however warily. I think Paisley and McCartney have made a mistake, and made themselves less rather than more important. I have too much respect for Paisley's intelligence to believe he will indefinitely let himself be left out. But the missing Republicans are the most important, so much so that I would fear their absence means the process won't be brought to a helpful conclusion. There are rejectionists like the INLA and this new Continuity crowd. Unless the process is so thwarted that the Catholic public in the North is alienated from those who make the settlement, the rejectionists will be simply a police matter. But South Armagh and its community solidarity with its IRA Brigade can't be treated that way.

When I started on this line, and when I spoke to you in early June, I had only that to go on, that a way had to be found for the real power people to engage themselves in making the peace. I couldn't then anticipate that Kevin McKenna and his East Tyrone group would so engage themselves, as it seems they have. Just much more recently I have been asking myself how the South Armagh leadership could take part. It's not for me to dictate a policy, but I have the glimmering of an idea.

These are people, and a community, who will simply not be reconciled to a co-existence in Northern Ireland. They command the ground, have fought the British Army to a stand-off in their area, defeated even the best efforts of the SAS, and will not accept a settlement that means British Army and Portadown police back on their turf. I think they need to be outside of Northern Ireland, and that this is what they should engage themselves to negotiate.

I've mentioned this to a few people I regard as knowledgeable, and find that I generally get a first reaction of simple disbelief: "Jaysus, not repartition again!" A couple of people have said to me: once you let that genie out of the bottle, what next? Will Derry City or East Tyrone want to be let out of the North too? I don't think so. Derry is already talking reconciliation, and has done so for years. They are ready for it. East Tyrone is a different sort of community, a mix of Catholics and Protestants, however bitter their relation has been, that has to go for reconciliation. The signs noted above from them, of engagement in the process, are reason to expect that they know that.

Another objection I've heard is that, for the South Armagh people themselves, with their rigid "Brits out" United Ireland position, repartition would only be a new betrayal. This is where I read the *Republican News* statement, about the "problems with some aspects of the Mitchell Principles," as really encouraging. There is, as I read it, at least a hope there not to be an obstacle to everyone else's peace.

It depends on how they understand what is really in prospect. Their commitment is to a United Ireland. They also have already accomplished the "Brits out" objective in their area, and don't want to lose that. They have to know that is too fragile an accomplishment to be a permanent local independence.

Dr. Martin Mansergh, October 23, '97 -- 3

But the United Ireland isn't on offer. There is a political dynamic within the North that has the prospect of leading to a united Northern Ireland, for the reason that everything in the North is about the relation of these two traditions, Protestant and Catholic, Nationalist and anti-Nationalist. That's not what political life is about in the Republic. There aren't enough Protestants, or Unionist feeling, to make it so. That means that reconciliation, if it is to happen, will come about in the North, not the Republic. If there is ever to be a United Ireland, then, it will come about because the North has first found the way for these two traditions to live alongside one another, and the Republic finds it worth its while to join itself to that solution.

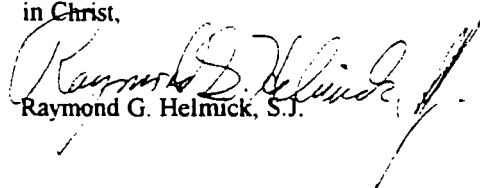
If that is understood, and it seems it is what's sinking in, then I would think South Armagh might find its way to being part of the Republic, where it belongs, rather than the North, where it is merely a provocation and is tortured itself by confinement within the North. That won't happen unless people there see their future in those terms, and work to make it so. But I think it may be one of the keys to making reconciliation possible within the North.

That's something I will talk, not prescriptively but as one idea that might have promise, when I get to some kind of contact with South Armagh people. The more essential thing is to recognize that the peace, for all their neighbours in the North as well as themselves, won't happen unless they take part in making it happen. I'm not sure I'll get through to them, and so I think it well to put that idea about among some others. I expect you would not want to be thought the source of it, as that might simply put it out of reach, but I thought I should mention it to you.

The people I need to talk to, then, are not Sinn Fein. I know Mairead Keane, but not Rita O'Hare. I've dealt also, on this matter, with Larry Downes in New York. More important, I've been to both Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness about it, and to Gerry O'Hara. I find no rebuff there, but I believe they cannot touch it, that South Armagh is its own show, and has little interest in them. And it's the essential piece. I'll keep with this.

Best wishes,

in Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

17 November 1997.

Fr. Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.,
Jesuit Community,
Boston College,
Chestnut Hill,
Massachusetts 02167 - 3802,
USA.

Dear Fr. Helmick,

Thank you for your letter of 23 October. In general, it would be better for you to make your own contacts with army people, as our relations would be exclusively with those who have a role in Sinn Féin.

I understand what you say about South Armagh. You might be interested in a patriotic letter written to W. T. Cosgrave in 1925, by the P.P. of Jonesboro (enclosed).

To be frank, we would not see even the most limited form of repartition as a realistic prospect. It would raise a hornet's nest of questions about other places, and could trigger off a spate of ethnic cleansing. Republicans in South Armagh, I suspect at this stage, would have little interest in giving allegiance to a 26 county state with the main problem left unresolved.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Martin Mansergh,
Special Adviser to the Taoiseach.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

November 28, 1997

Dr. Martin Mansergh
Special Adviser to the Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Dublin 2
IRELAND

Dear Dr. Mansergh,

Christ's Peace!

Thank you, once again, for your very gracious letter of 14 November. I'm very glad I did write to you, as I will take your observation very seriously, that even the most limited form of repartition could let loose a spate of ethnic cleansing. As I wrote to you, I had been looking at that as a possibility already, and calculating as carefully as I could what other places might be tempted by the thought of repartition if it were to happen for South Armagh, and reckoning that in the two most obvious places, Derry City and East Tyrone, there were good reasons, which should be obvious to the people of the places, why that would not be their solution.

I am familiar, though, with Protestant border farms set, quite defensively, in otherwise Catholic country areas, where they could be in danger. I'm sure there are also border areas where Protestants might feel their safest bet, in such a case, would be to have no Catholic neighbors. I agree entirely that this is something with which to take no chances. The idea does have its attractions, though, for South Armagh in particular, if, at a late stage of the negotiations, a settlement for other areas were well enough nailed down to obviate that danger. It might then be worth floating, on the theory that South Armagh is really indigestible in the North.

When Mo Mowlam was here in Boston a couple of weeks back, I raised the matter of the non-engagement of South Armagh in the process, and she asked, if I had ideas on that, that I write them to her. I will do so on this, mentioning and assenting to your precaution on it, and observing also that it is not anything that British participants in the talks could raise or do anything about, but could only be something that the South Armagh people themselves brought up and worked for. And of course, I will not dangle this before South Armagh, IRA or Sinn Fein people without proper care, and in fact not without first consulting with you, as I see you understand so well what is at stake.

It was kind of you to fish out the 1925 letter of the Jonesboro P.P. to W. T. Cosgrave, which I did indeed find interesting.

I'm sure you are right, also, about my needing to make my own contacts with Army Council people. This is difficult, and has taken me a long time, but I'm not without means to do it. I don't want to do it, for instance, through journalists, some of whom must know who and who, as that would be the wrong approach to the people themselves. I did bring it up in a brief conversation with Martin McGuinness, who was here in Boston at the same time as Mo Mowlam, reminding him of the letters I'd written him and others, about which he was very welcoming, and that there were people I wanted to talk to: now, since the Gweedore meeting, no longer so much Kevin McKenna but South Armagh people themselves. His response was to ask that I hold on for a short while, until things settle down somewhat, and I took that as meaning I would get to see them in good time. I'm all impatience about this, as you can imagine, knowing that these matters are urgent for the present integrity of the talks. And at the same time I know both that I should take Martin's advice, and that this is the right channel through which to make the approach. I may burst, but I'll do it quietly in my own corner.

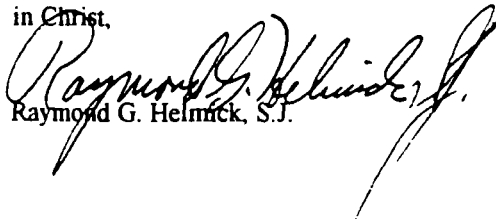
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Meanwhile, I was well impressed with Mo Mowlam's insistence that she would sleep on anything that sounded such bad news as Gweedore, expecting to find that it didn't look so bad the next morning. And my own reading is actually rather reassuring. The report of Kevin McKenna's resignation altogether from the IRA from being Chief of Staff turns out to be untrue, as he left the Chief of Staff position, as I'm told, back in September and remains now on the Executive with no hard feelings. The passing of the Chief of Staff position to South Armagh, already in place before Gweedore, actually means some level of the actual engagement of South Armagh people with the process that I have been looking for.

And in fact the appointment of Pat McNamee (I hope I am spelling his name right, another name I have heard rather than read) to the Decommissioning Committee is the most positive news of direct engagement of South Armagh with the real questions under negotiation that I have heard. I assume he is there to say no, much as the UUP people are present in the talks for purposes other than agreeing with Sinn Fein. But here is someone who really speaks for South Armagh actively addressing what, for the people he represents, is a most central question. That means that Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams are doing their work well, and has to be reason for encouragement. I take it that also confirms what I have heard, the the *Irish Times* report of mass defections from the IRA in South Armagh over these issues is untrue. If this sort of thing can be accomplished without my sticking my oar in, all the better.

More than anything else, what I want to convey in this letter is that I know I am talking about very sensitive things, that I intend to take care that I don't create added trouble by messing with them, and that I will keep you informed of what I am about in these matters, even giving you the chance to head me off before I do anything you would find ill-advised. Best wishes,

in Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

August 13, 1997

Mr. Martin McGuinness
Sinn Féin Advice Centre
64b Racecourse Road
Shantallow
Derry BT48 8DS
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Martin,

Christ's Peace!

Our local BBC broadcasts on Public Radio radio gave us just a short snippet of your TV debate with Ken Maginnis, but I was delighted to hear that it had been held. That's an important step to direct meetings. I respect Ken's having decided to do it too, and will write to him so.

What pleased me even more was the presence of Martin Ferris at your meeting with Mo Mowlam. I'm not sure just how much to make of that, whether he was there on behalf of the people I've been writing you about, on their decision that they should have their man participating in such talks, or whether it is simply on the basis of his Sinn Féin position and his having been an almost-successful candidate for the Dáil. I think I understand how he relates to them, from his Kerry position, and I realize that he is strongly Sinn Féin, where many of the Northerners never join Sinn Féin. In any case, I take it as a very positive step that he is there.

I had my own information on this first from Kevin Cullen's piece in *The Boston Sunday Globe*, which doubtless you've seen, but I include a copy in case you should not have seen it. The other name he mentions is one that I have never before seen in print. I've even wondered, often, at not finding his or a few other important names in Tim Pat Coogan's oft-revised book, and thought their absence might mean that Tim Pat actually doesn't know. While I mentioned, in writing to you, Tom McMahon as a first person I would be anxious to talk with on that matter, as having the confidence of others, the man Kevin Cullen mentions is, from the start, one of the principal people I would like to meet.

I don't want to annoy you on this. I realize, from the lack of response, that this whole proposition represents worry to you. I want simply, and very respectfully, to argue to them the reasonableness of their taking a positive role in the process that is now unfolding, to oppose any notion that their record of activity excludes them from it, and to help in clearing away any obstacles to it. I have no desire to breach any anonymity that they want to preserve.

I had a curious meeting with Adam Ingram when he was here in Boston recently. I liked him better than the stuffier variety that the Tories put in the Northern Ireland Office. I put the proposition to him that the real power-holders of The Republican Movement need to be part of the making of the peace. His response was uncertainty whether you and Gerry might not actually be those power-holders. That's bad mis-information for him or any official of the NIO to be carrying about. Best wishes,

in Christ,

Ray Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

August 13, 1997

Ken Maginnis, M.P., Fermanagh and South Tyrone
20 Brooks Street
Dungannon, BT71 7AN
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Ken,

Christ's Peace!

You were so ready to help when I was arranging meetings for my Boston Theological Institute grad student group a couple of months back that I've been meaning to write and thank you. I did try to call your office while I was in Belfast the week before the others arrived, but somehow the numbers I had were wrong, and then Jim Wilson was tremendously helpful in setting up a group of UUP people who came out to dinner to talk with my students at Millisle. Martin Smyth was there, Dennis Rogan, Robert Coulter and May Steele.

I was very glad this morning to hear, on the radio, that you had had your TV debate with Martin McGuinness. The BBC broadcast I picked up gave just a snippet, and it was a little hard to make out the two voices simultaneously, but I thought it an excellent thing that there had been such a meeting.

I know how apprehensive you all are over this new cease-fire, and the distrust there is for becoming involved in direct discussion. I don't expect to see this cease-fire broken. The Republicans were so wary of reinstating it themselves, and looked the horse so carefully in the mouth, that I take it they are very serious in embarking on it again. It would represent terrible failure for them if it fell apart again, or if they let it do so.

But most of all I believe, given the evident lack of trust between your Unionist selves and them, that trust has to be built by actually encountering each others as persons. You can't be sure of them now, in the sense of their not having some agenda unacceptable to you, nor can they be sure of you, in the sense that they have to be afraid that you will simply evade the need ever to acknowledge them as real persons with rights or respond to any overture they can make to you. I've always been convinced, since the issue arose, that decommissioning of weapons was no road to that, or guarantee of it. You have no inventory of their weapons holdings to verify their disarmament, and what they use is so easily replaceable, if the relation were to break down again, that you couldn't put any reliance on decommissioning, if you had it.

The only thing you can put reliance on is the people themselves, and they have to be reconciled to living fully respectfully with you, as you with them, before you cease to be a real danger to one another. They are always going to be there, and there is no substitute for coming to terms with them. However little you trust them, and however real a danger they are to you, you will never change that without talking to them. So I was glad to hear you talking with Martin McGuinness, even in a shout. I'm sure you have to start that way before the volume can come down. It's a good beginning.

Best wishes,

in Christ,


Ray Hermick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

July 28, 1997

Mr. Martin McGuinness
Sinn Féin Advice Centre
64b Racecourse Road
Shantallow
Derry BT48 8DS
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Martin,

Christ's Peace!

Back in May I was out to your office a couple of times, during a week that was just the wrong one to see you, while the local elections were going on. I talked with Gerry ó hEára about a suggestion from the Negotiation Project, established some years back at Harvard by Roger Fisher, that they would be happy to be of any help they could to The Republican Movement as the talks process developed. On my second trip out from Belfast, I brought a FAXed letter, a "menu" of their available resources, from Diane Chivas of the Conflict Management Group, a section of the Harvard project.

I wrote to Gerry Adams last month, filling him in, as I needed to, on what I had talked with Gerry ó hEára in May, and promising that I would write to you also once I had the formal proposal from the Harvard people that Gerry ó hEára had asked for. They were edgy about writing that, promising to do so and to give me a look first at the draft version, although it's their normal habit to respond to requests for their services rather than advertising their wares. Since then, however, I hear from them that they have been warned off. They had proposed (not yet begun), by another channel, to mount a training project for the RUC. It is to be funded by the USIA, which frightens easily, and the USIA asked them not to do anything with anyone else in Northern Ireland. It is uncharacteristic of them to back off that way, since they, like myself, make it a point to talk with anyone in a conflict situation who will talk with them, not looking for secrets and carefully respecting confidentiality.

I'm not inclined to back off with them. They are large enough to have institutional worries and vulnerabilities that I manage to avoid by working on so little money as not to be susceptible to that kind of pressure. I think the Harvard people have much to offer that would be of value to you, and I'd like to keep a door open for them against the time they would be free to walk through it. I suspect that the cease-fire, which you in The Republican Movement have now so skillfully reinstated, will be a big factor in what they feel free to do and whom they feel free to talk to. They haven't been hesitant before to talk with ANC, with Chechens, etc.

What I want to pursue, even without them, is an analysis I talked of with Gerry ó hEára, to which one of their people first drew my attention. As I told Gerry, I felt very stupid not to have thought of this first myself, and it raised the level of my respect for the Harvard people that they pointed it out to me. The point is that the people who have all along been the central leadership of The Republican Movement are sidelined by the process that is going on now, since the original cease-fire of 1994, and ought not to be. When I spoke of this with Gerry ó hEára, he seemed to take it mainly in terms of internal dissension within the movement, and told me circumspectly that he wouldn't comment on the supposition. I've never known any serious movement in which there wasn't some internal argument, and it wouldn't much worry me if some of the argument everyone else is commenting on goes on. But the issue I want to raise is really something much different. It is that you and Gerry Adams, who have worked so long to persuade the movement to take this new course, are the ones who do the public dealing, while those who, even now, have the real power to accept whatever is decided or not have no positive rôle, only a negative one.

I know that has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. It is different from what I have known in dealing with Arafat, with Lebanese militias of many varieties, with Kurdish leaders and others, where everyone knows who is in charge and they are up front making the decisions and answering for them. In your situation, there is for one thing proper delegation of authority and rôle. In that, your movement is better served by you and Gerry Adams, you as chief negotiator, than, say, Arafat is by the people who currently carry on the negotiation for him. I don't at all suggest interfering with that. There is also protection, for people whose enemies would probably want to punish them for their activity, and I accept entirely the importance of not revealing any identities that people want or need to protect.

I'm sure it is also a convenience for them that they don't have to answer to any public for their decisions, or as I put it to Gerry Adams, that no reporter shoves a microphone in their face when the news is ugly. That's a mixed blessing even for them: it detracts from responsibility, and in the special conflict circumstances of Northern Ireland, it confirms to the Protestant and Unionist mind something they identify as typically Catholic and unacceptable: a culture, just as in the church hierarchy, of autocratic decision by people who need consult no one and who issue their decrees without accountability to anyone.

What I see as the worst of it, though, is an assumption that the people who have governed the campaign of The Republican Movement are morally disqualified for a positive rôle in making the peace settlement. That's an unacceptable false premise, and it is my impression that even they themselves have bought into it. I do see the advantage of not further provoking the Unionists (or the British) by asking them to deal with people they are even less willing to deal with than yourselves. No one should do that, and you are not in a position to do it, simply as a way of humiliating them. But the premise is a damaging one. It enables the Unionists to keep asking you, the Sinn Féin leadership, to repudiate actions of these "men of violence," and to keep calling on them to do things that amount to surrender or acknowledgment of having been in the wrong all this time. In that way it impedes negotiation. It's a ready source for all the delaying tactics you've faced. The advantage of not provoking them is less than that liability. Doubtless this has to be dealt with carefully, but the fallacy of the premise should be clearly seen.

Worse still, it robs these people, who hold the real power, of their dignity, now and in the future. If, as we all hope, peace is really the outcome, do they go into everyone's memory as the ones who were just an obstruction to it, or as those who, after the long principled struggle, helped bring it about? That's very important, and no one, you or they or anyone else, should ignore it.

I could expand on this further, but I trust you see the point. I've made it to Gerry Adams and to Martin Mansergh. I'd like to make it to these people themselves, and be helpful in breaking out of the fallacy involved and their non-involvement in the positive process, whether they wanted to be in public or not. In proposing that first, through Larry Downes and then through Gerry ó hEára, I expected the Harvard people to be available, as they may yet be a little later. I'd like to have more experience than my own available in approaching something of this importance. As it happens, the Harvard people's experience is much more with the actual negotiating process, mine more with this kind of thing. I have written to John Paul Lederach, who I think is known to you, and would like to have his help with this.

If that is not something welcome to you, I hope at least that you will be discussing the point with those involved, and will see it as something that really needs to be resolved. For me to make an approach, I think the right way would be through Tom McMahon, whose release from Port Laoise was a help with the 1994 cease-fire, and who carries the confidence of the people I speak of. I'd be very open to his opinion of how any of this should be handled. I don't even know where to find him, but would appreciate it if you were willing to make the introduction, even just letting him know that I was coming. I'd very much welcome a chance to talk this through with you beforehand, as I don't want my suggesting this to be a complication of your own work.

Martin McGuinness, July 28, '97 -- 3

It won't be any mystery to you, after all I've written to you and Gerry Adams over these recent years, that I wished the cease-fire had been reinstated sooner, or not have been broken at all. I think I know why it was. As a determined anti-violence type, I won't easily offer any bouquets for successful violence, but I do appreciate the clarity with which the leadership of the movement defined what was necessary for a return to the 1994 offer, and the skill with which you negotiated it. I'm anxious to see, now, that the enterprise is successful. And though these folks have been doing things that I have been, for the last twenty five years, working to end, I don't doubt that they, in their own way and at great personal risk, have been doing the same. I respect them, and will treat them with respect.

I will be over there promptly if you will open this for me. My greetings to Gerry ó hEára and thanks for his courteous hearing. I'm most impressed with your valiant work in reopening the pursuit of peace. I know the burden lies now with Unionists to respond, and take part in the process. Most of my writing these days is going to people like Martin Smyth, Robert Saulters, Ken Maginnis, David Trimble, and others who will have a part in the decisions they make over the coming weeks. Best wishes,

in Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

December 6, 1997

Mr. Martin McGuinness
Sinn Fein Advice Centre
64b Racecourse Road
Shantallow
Derry BT48 8DS
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Martin,

Christ's Peace!

It was good to have you here in Boston again. I reminded you, when I saw you, that there are people over there I am anxious to see, especially in East Tyrone and South Armagh, and you asked that I hold off a bit while things settle down some. I do hope I may have the chance soon.

Actually, I am much encouraged to see what is happening now. I've worried all through this last year about what seemed non-engagement, by people in those areas, in the process of peace-making. They seem now to have engaged in some very positive ways, whatever reservations they may have about where this is coming out. I take that to mean that you, Gerry Adams and others are working very effectively at building the prospect of peace. I congratulate you on it. If this can happen without my butting my nose in, all the better, though I have been at it intensively enough now that I would like to help, if anything I can do is help.

I felt rather directly addressed by what you had to say at that lunch meeting in Boston, about the responsibility of the British for the historic harm done in Ireland and for building a settlement. You fairly set out that day to embarrass the several ranking Brits in the room, and I thought that appropriate enough. It must be a rare occasion when you would have Consul General and staff, the Northern Ireland liaison man from the British Embassy in Washington and several others in front of you among a good assembly of really interested Irish-Americans. You've heard and read me, often enough, talking about the internal problem between the two communities as the basic problem, and you were anxious not to let that be the definition.

I know the problem with the British, that they always discriminated, and I know the problem *for* the Northern Protestants, that they've felt the need to be protected from something, and the British have been their ace in the hole. My feeling, when I heard you that day, was that what you were saying was exactly what needed to be said to the British, and what I habitually say is what most needs to be said to your folks: that the Northern Protestants do need protection, just as the Catholics do, and that you both need to be one another's guarantee.

I'm always hung up about what names to call people in Ireland. "Catholic" and "Protestant" aren't right, because religion has been so misused as loyalty test that it itself isn't about religion there. "Nationalist" is fine, but "Unionist" isn't, because thinking themselves British is only extrinsic protection for the Protestants. What they are, as distinct from "the (Catholic) Irish" is something they haven't successfully defined, though it has a character that I know deserves my respect.

When I asked you a question during that lunch meeting, it was about the report, as we had it then from the *Independent*, of dissent at the Gweedore meeting, and the conclusion that this peace process was "unconstitutional," in terms of Republican constitutionalism, what I would understand as realisation of the one United Irish Republic of the 1916 declaration.

Your answer pointed rightly to the Mitchell Principles as focus of the question at that meeting, the "problems with some aspects of the Mitchell Principles" (to use the language of the *An Phoblacht* article) that some members had. I tend to frame it in terms of the Republican constitutionality of the current peace process itself, as leading to an internal settlement, what some people fear would "copper-fasten" partition and the U.K. status of the North. I think it can be fairly argued that the process is constitutional in those terms, and deserving of Republican support. That is really what I would like to discuss with people in those areas of East Tyrone and South Armagh.

It seems to me that everyone in the Republican Movement understands that this process is not going to produce the United Ireland next year, and that is what the constitutionality question is about.

For the last three years I've been fascinated by what I've called "the questions of 1921." It was always intriguing to me that Irish politics was divided between parties for and against the 1921 treaty, especially since the De Valera Fianna Fail Party, once it came into Dail politics, lived effectively by the "stepping stone" policy of Michael Collins. I used to wonder what that division had to do with anything in contemporary Irish life. But with the 1994 cease-fire, I realized that all at once the central questions of Irish political life were right back to the two main questions of 1921:

1. How the two traditions of Ireland are to relate to each other. I don't mean by that the two sides of a border, but the two traditions themselves. The 1921 answers were, from both sides, to overcome the other, with the possible exception of a few people like Collins himself, who saw that these two had to find a way to accommodate each other. (This is where the British role, of supporting the partition, was a complicating factor, throwing the weight of superior power unfairly on one side, much as American power is thrown exclusively on the side of the Israelis against the Palestinians today, in a question that really has to be settled by accommodation between Israelis and Palestinians. I'd argue that it was still an extraneous factor, that it must yet be prevented from prejudicing the outcome, but that its elimination would be prelude to a solution, not the solution itself.)
2. Whatever the ultimate solution was to be, whether it had to be accomplished altogether, in one stroke, or whether it could be a cumulative process, to be built up additively. This is what the Civil War was fought about in Ireland, the "stepping stone." I hope that doesn't have to be repeated.

In those terms, it seems to me to be recognized all around that a United Ireland will not be produced by coercing the Protestants. It isn't going to happen at all without a reconciliation of the two traditions within the North, and the building up of an institutional structure that guarantees the integrity of both and gives the adherents of both full equality. Whether a United Ireland will follow on that, most likely only after a period of years, I couldn't predict with any certainty. But it won't happen any other way. And for that reason, I would argue that building up a pluralist society in the North is the only really constitutional choice, in Republican terms, with any prospect of eventually leading to a United Ireland.

What would actually happen if an agreed settlement is reached in these talks, and put to the two referendums that are projected in the two parts of Ireland? I noticed Gerry Adams' stroke, when he met British Prime Minister Blair at Stormont, in welcoming him (in the name of the Irish) to Ireland, and expressing the hope that his would be the last British government to claim sovereignty over any part of Ireland. I would be surprised if an agreement reached in the current process included a British agreement to renounce sovereignty over the North, despite what Bertie Ahern said this week. Instead, I figure that a "devolved" administration could be constructed, agreed by both traditions and approved by British and Irish governments, with its own legislature and executive and pretty full internal powers to be exercised in

Martin McGuinness, December 6, '97 -- 3

accountability to all the people who live in the North. Both British and Irish governments would then make it their business to keep hands off. They'd be watching, but always anxious not to interfere. The impingement of British government authority on people's lives would become, over a number of years, more and more rare an experience. What comes out of Track 2, the relation of the two parts of Ireland, would be an important factor. Less progress seems to be made on that track than anything else, and it could be that much of that had to be further "stepping stones" to be put in place over some time, but it isn't beyond doing. Remoteness of British control, even with the formality of British sovereignty, and constant contact with the rest of Ireland would mean that people became increasingly used to each other across the various divisions. All this will be happening in the context of relations with Europe, which will develop in parallel in the two parts of Ireland, and become far more important than the relation of either part to Britain, to the point that the link with Britain might become no longer important enough even to the Unionists to maintain.

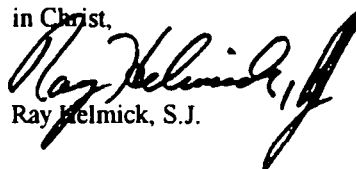
In that setting, division, partition in Ireland would become more and more a phantom. Setting up formal unity, in federal or whatever form, could come but would not necessarily.

It's been my contention for a long time that there is a political dynamic in the North by which everything that happens has to do with the relation of these two communities, and while much of what has happened between them has been negative, it should eventually work toward their reconciliation. That isn't true in the South, where the Protestant tradition hasn't enough importance to make it basically what political life is about. I know that, in Republican terms, the unification of Ireland is not seen as the North joining the Southern state, but rather a new Ireland that would supplant and surpass both. I would see it, instead, in these terms: that if, in the North, a society were created that was satisfying to people of both traditions, there would then be the option, for people in the South, to join themselves to that society, if it seemed important enough and worthwhile to them. The South would be joining a transformed North rather than vice versa. Put another way, if there is to be a United Ireland, it has to be built first in the North, and will be a unity of people before it can be one of territory.

That's my outlook, that means this course is the one, and the only one, with even a probability of getting to a United Ireland, and is therefore constitutional in Republican terms. How high a probability? Pretty high, I would think. Whereas a United Ireland that was the result of coercion, and trauma for the Protestants, would be just a time-bomb.

I'm very admiring of what you and Gerry and your colleagues are accomplishing. I truly expect your success now, and the peace will be due to your persistence on a terribly hard course. With all best wishes,

in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ray Helmick, S.J.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ray Helmick, S.J.



From the Minister

Department of Economic Development

Father Raymond Helmick
Jesuit Community
Houston College
Chestnut Hill
MA 02167

7 September 1997

Dear Father Helmick

Thank you for taking the time to come to dinner at the Ritz Carlton, during my trip to Boston.

It was most useful to meet those with an interest in Northern Ireland. Both Mark Durkan and Jeffrey Donaldson found it very valuable to hear the views expressed and I hope you found it a useful insight into events here.

I know the Consulate in Boston is in regular contact with you, but if you feel I can be of any help please let me know.

Yours Agra
Adam Ingram

ADAM INGRAM JP MP
Minister of State



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

September 17, 1997

Mr. Adam Ingram, JP, MP
Minister of State
Netherleigh, Massey Avenue
Belfast, BT4 2JP
NORTHERN IRELAND -- FAX: 011 44 1232 529545

Dear Mr. Ingram,

Christ's Peace!

I was very glad to get your kind letter, which arrived yesterday. It had been a privilege for me to meet you on your visit to Boston, over that splendid dinner. I was not only very well impressed with you and with your new Government and the Ministry under Mo Mowlam, really very serious signs of hope for all of us who are looking for better things for Northern Ireland, but I was all the more impressed that you had brought Mark Durkan and Jeffrey Donaldson with you. I've had lots of admiration for both of them for a long time -- curiously, it is Jeffrey whom I have known rather well, and this was my first actual meeting with Mark Durkan. The impressive thing, though, was a new way of operating. The Northern Ireland Office has, in my understanding, been from its beginning a proconsulate with no adequate accountability to the people of Northern Ireland of either tradition, and has always tended to operate pretty independently of them. Your bringing Jeffrey and Mark on such a visit was the sign of a very different manner of governing, and I welcome it.

I had meant to write to you sooner than this, because there was one response of yours at the dinner that I had wanted to address. If you remember, I had brought up the subject of the absence of the real power-holders of the IRA from the process of making the peace. My suggestion of working to bring them into the process was troubling to Jeffrey, as I knew it had to be, though I found he had understood the point. He was concerned, properly, at letting too many people, or too wide a spectrum into the process, and of course worried of frightening other people out of it. I felt that, since I have been raising the matter to the IRA and Sinn Fein people themselves since early in this year, I needed to bring it up at such a meeting as ours.

Your own response, though, after making several other observations, was that there was no certainty that Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Fein leadership, were not the actual power-holders of the IRA. Certainty, of course, is an extravagantly rare commodity, but I thought that an unproductive way of approaching this problem. It is, of course, a regularly stated position of many UUP and all DUP or UKUP people that the IRA and Sinn Fein, what they prefer to call, in a single hyphenated term, IRA-Sinn Fein, are one and the same. Gerry Adams has more and more frequently been saying that they are two different organizations, and been regarded as disingenuous in saying so. Either of those, complete identity or total differentiation, seems simply a strategic arguing position.

I've long realized that, within any government or organization, there are many voices that can't be reduced to a uniform policy. Within your British governing establishment, many people, especially in the military and the intelligence agencies, have a vested interest in ignoring the distinctions between IRA and Sinn Fein, and reducing it all to one entity, distinctly an enemy to be opposed to the point of ultimate defeat. That has not been the policy of your new Government. I don't think it was the policy of John Major's Government either, but as time went on he and his NIO appear to have come much more under the sway of intelligence briefers with that agenda. As I've discussed this with some other knowledgeable people, I've actually heard some of them question whether your giving ear to it meant lack of full support for Mo Mowlam's and Tony Blair's effort. I won't subscribe to that.

What I will do, though, is to outline a counter-explanation of what we are looking at.

You just had the spectacle, this last week, of Sinn Fein formally subscribing to the Mitchell Principles on Tuesday, and the anonymous IRA spokesman in Thursday's edition of the *Republican News* writing of the IRA's "problems" (unspecified) with the Mitchell Principles. That he also declared their unreadiness to do any disarming/decommissioning before the deal was done doesn't distinguish the IRA at all from the Loyalist position, and isn't the problem. That apparently is now recognised by the UUP leadership, who have identified the principle of consent, rather than the decommissioning issue, as the real crux of the problem. News reports, like that in the *Irish Times*, identifying the *An Phoblacht* writer as a bachelor in his fifties in South Armagh, seem to indicate one of the two most obvious power figures there rather than his married brother. It's curious to me that, knowing that much, the newspaper reporter doesn't name the names. But here is an individual powerful enough to have his statement on such an issue printed in an IRA paper (it is not, to my understanding, a Sinn Fein paper but an organ of the IRA as such) as the word of the IRA itself. Gerry Adams then describes the IRA statement as "unfortunate," and Martin McGuinness declares himself "surprised" by it. I take those statements as genuine, no masquerade. They mean the threat (not a completion) of a split between Sinn Fein and IRA. Division and denunciation between those two has been the desire, of course, of many Unionist and British voices over these recent years, especially over the period of the broken cease-fire. It's a silly objective, as it would mean that no one was in a position to speak for the IRA, probably the mischievous purpose of those who looked for that sort of division.

I've understood that the structure -- of "The Republican Movement," the name they prefer -- has always been dominated by the Army Council, a group of seven supposedly anonymous persons, not on the run or involved in actual operations, who make the policy decisions, and that in their capacity as military command. There is an operational level of command as well, with commanders of a number of brigades, such as Belfast, Derry, South Armagh, East Tyrone, etc., and a Southern Command that may recently have been subdivided as well. These commanders don't make policy decisions but carry them out, and the only simultaneous membership of both Army Council and operational command would be a Chief of Staff, who might or might not have a Council position. The IRA has done worse at the task of keeping policy command in civilian hands than any other state or militant organisation I know. Sinn Fein, as the civilian political leadership, has never had the authority, within the structure, to do or say or agree to anything except by the consent of the Army Council. (I was told by Sinn Fein officials last May that they do not even use the name "Army Council" any more, but that is only embarrassment at this structure.)

What changed, to produce the cease-fire of 1994 and subsequent internal development, was a campaign of persuasion, led by Adams with the strong support of McGuinness, and with a number of other persons involved, to get the Army Council's consent to a different policy. That could only be done because the Army Council members -- a stunningly stable membership all the time since 1969 -- accepted that new options should be explored. I knew this as very immediate experience in 1981, when I was mediating between Army Council members and NIO over the hunger strike, and found that the Army Council members even then regarded Adams as their pacifist, were proud of his being that and licensed his probing these new possibilities. It took a great number of years for them to mature.

But with the declaration of the cease-fire, the actual balance of authority changed. Adams and McGuinness, Sinn Fein leaders, were now not only out in front of the public, voice and face of the movement, but actually dealing with other parties: public, British, Irish and American governments, etc. Their authority was still limited, their leash tight, but there were things they could do that the Army Council itself was unable to do. The Army Council was left without a positive role, only its leash, a veto power which was exercised in breaking the cease-fire. They could not, in fact, reverse the situation entirely. Sinn Fein continued to have its new role, still with all its restrictions.

Are Adams and McGuinness actually members? I'm quite sure they are not. Either of them may have held some position either on the Army Council or in the operational command at some time in the past, but they are genuinely separated from the military structure now, and have even been able to conduct their program of persuasion, all these years since at least 1981, only on the basis of being firmly separate. During the period in which the cease-fire was suspended, February '96 until recently, we often heard them say that they could not yet bring to the IRA a recommendation to renew the cease-fire. That was because they knew the IRA was not prepared to accept such a recommendation until certain conditions obtained, and they knew better than to squander the new authority they had gained.

Where does that leave us? As I pointed out that evening when you were in Boston, this is a different structure than in the PLO, where we know Arafat is the man to deal with, who can make decisions, the PKK, where we know it is Ocalan, ZANU or ZAPU at the time of the campaign against white-dominated Rhodesia, where we knew it was Mugabe and Nkomo. The real power in the IRA is with people who are not engaged in the positive process. The Sinn Fein leaders are not ciphers, the wrong people to deal with, as they have accomplished that task of persuasion that has opened up possibilities of peace, and remain the figures in the movement who can continue to move the absent power figures. But without the active consent of the Army Council (or in fact of a small clique of people whose opinion has weight with the Army Council members), the decisions for the peace are not going to be made. I see this as a fundamental structural defect in the process.

Worse than this. There is a hard core to the IRA that remains unpersuaded. Apart from a few isolated "hard men" in Belfast or as far afield as Kerry, the solid core of this is localised in South Armagh and East Tyrone, for reasons that are intelligible. The East Tyrone leader, living just across the border in Monaghan, faces a situation of unmitigated communal rage within both communities, and is in agreement with the South Armagh leadership. Their situation is different: they have had practical control of their area for a great number of years now, limiting the British garrison there to just occasional forays, and those only on terms of massive military deployment that cannot often be repeated.

These people, in the rural areas, are practically without politics. They have no part in the socialist positions of Belfast Sinn Fein, or the more fascist politics of Dublin Republicans that have given rise in later years to "Republican Sinn Fein" and the Continuity Army Council. For the most part, the leading figures are not even members of Sinn Fein, care nothing for its politics and suspect it of selling out. Their only political objective is "Brits Out," and in South Armagh, the real core area, this is long accomplished fact. They've turned, Mafia-fashion, to other interests, some lucrative ones like smuggling. The decommissioning demand made during the time of the 1994-96 cease-fire meant, to South Armagh, returning that hard-won local authority back to the Army and RUC, and to the RUC in the persons of the toughest cops from Portadown. For that reason, it was the South Armagh brigade that broke the cease-fire, and required the rest of the IRA to go along with it as the price of not having a disastrous split. Bringing that about may even have been the purpose of those of their enemies who insisted on the decommissioning issue.

Worse still. The South Armagh brigade has always been the rogue element of the IRA, the living refutation of the idea that the IRA's Army Council is able to maintain a disciplined submission to its authority. In the 1974-76 period, South Armagh IRA members were the "Catholic Reaction Force" that murdered groups of Protestants on border farms and a lorry-load of Protestant workers that they ambushed on the roads. This was in contradiction to clear and generally enforced Army Council policy, was done without authorisation but unpunished by the IRA. "Catholic Reaction Force" was a flag of convenience for the South Armagh brigade, like "Ulster Freedom Forces" for the UDA, or like the "Guardians of the Cedars" in Lebanon for the Forces Libanaises. It was not acknowledged by the South Armagh brigade, and the Army Council, in practice, recognized that it could not bring it within discipline.

Mr. Adam Ingram, Sept. 17, '97 -- 4

In order to sabotage the Feakle cease-fire, which they opposed, they set off bombs in Dublin, deceiving the Army Council into believing that the bombs were placed by the UVF. (The UVF was uninformed enough actually to lay claim to those bombs when they were attributed to them.) And it was from South Armagh that the 1996 bombings in Britain were managed, simply forcing the hand of the rest of the IRA.

And now you have this new bomb yesterday in Markethill. The IRA, i.e. spokesmen for the Army Council as a unit, deny responsibility for it. It is attributed to the Continuity IRA, the breakaway group which on its own blew up the hotel in Enniskillen just after the 1994 cease-fire. Their relation to other Republicans needs special understanding.

To this rural, "Brits-Out" brand of Republicans, the more obvious breakaway group, INLA, are red-red communists, political in the way that South Armagh despises. If they were to try anything like this, the real IRA would move against them. But Republican Sinn Fein and the Continuity IRA are the upholders of the old IRA faith, at a time when the whole Republican Movement, Sinn Fein and Army Council, realize that they now have to compromise. They are not flag of convenience to the IRA or to its South Armagh brigade, as were the Catholic Reaction Force., i.e., they are not the same people. But they are the temptation to the South Armagh brigade. It embarrasses the whole Republican Movement to denounce them, to excommunicate the old faith. You notice how even Gerry Kelly yesterday found their bombing "disappointing" but did not want to be heard condemning them.

How did it happen? That is South Armagh turf, right on the boundary with Protestant Armagh, but nothing happens without the South Armagh brigade of IRA knowing all about it. Different people, but there was no interference in the complex mounting of that operation. It goes with the statement in *Republican News* last Thursday, a blow against the Mitchell Principles declaration by Sinn Fein, threat of a split but not the split itself, done with the complaisance of the South Armagh leadership but not by them, a shot across the bow of Adams, McGuinness and Sinn Fein rather than anything they have any part in. Therefore a very dangerous situation for the peace effort. The South Armagh folks have found a way to say that even the allowing of this bombing is not the work of the IRA, and at the same time to act as if they, by themselves, are the IRA.

I spell you through this, as I understand it, aware that Government has known better than to fall in with those who wanted to lay the blame on Sinn Fein and the whole Republican Movement (IRA-Sinn Fein as they like to call them). I feel the whole sequence, Thursday's *An Phoblacht* statement and this bomb, underline my contention that the real power leadership of the IRA needs to be positively engaged in the making of the peace or that it will not be made. I write all this with some trepidation, as you might decide that the course is to root out this South Armagh leadership. That would be, I believe, a mistake, as a war solution in South Armagh has eluded British power all this time and would still elude it. I've a much different idea of how this problem could be addressed.

The IRA has entered on a durable and credible cease-fire, as British and Irish governments have recognized, and as they have accepted as basis for allowing their political representatives to take part in the All-Party Talks. The Loyalist paramilitary organisations have done the same, with the LVF forming the same kind of breakaway exception as these rogue Republican groups. I think the right strategy, while they maintain their cease-fires, is to legalize the organisations, as the UDA was a legal organisation for much of its history.

I understand that this would be a difficult thing for Government to do, and that you would have to endure some screaming and hollering from the political parties. But you would flush out the real power leadership of all these organisations by removing the necessity for them to remain anonymous.

Mr. Adam Ingram, Sept. 17, '97 -- 5

One of the pernicious things in the whole conceptual structure is the commonly accepted idea that these people, the real power leaders, have made themselves morally unfit for making the peace. That hasn't happened in other conflicts. Israelis did want, for a very long time, to reject Arafat as a negotiating partner, but they got nowhere, even with the whole Madrid Conference apparatus in place, until they went to him. Other parallels are easy to see. In this peculiar IRA case, with the Army Council cultivating an appearance of anonymity, its members themselves seem to have bought into the proposition that they have to be excluded. That may contribute to the satisfaction of people who think themselves better than them, but it is structurally untenable. It opens the way for their opponents to declare the Sinn Fein leaders themselves unclean, or to demand that they denounce the power leadership of the people for whom they speak.

This contradictory behavior of the IRA's South Armagh leaders makes the situation more acute. If these people don't have a role in making the peace, it won't be made. What I am proposing is really a choice between two possible splits. A split is threatened between Sinn Fein and the IRA. It would make Sinn Fein incompetent to agree a peace, as they would no longer represent those with whom peace had to be made. The alternative is a split, already formally existing, between the IRA and this Continuity group. By legalising the organisations that have credibly renounced violence, and not these dangerous splinter groups, you would flush out anyone who was playing games between the two. The barons down in South Armagh and Monaghan, without further need to conceal their identity, would have to choose between taking a positive role in making the peace or identifying themselves with breakaway splinters. You may find them unappetising persons, but they are the ones with whom the peace has to be made.

This is not, by the way, a proposal to bring them into the room at Stormont, which would of course mean that other parties would walk out. The Sinn Fein representatives are the ones who have won an electoral mandate, and are entitled to sit at the table. What this legalisation of the organisations that have renounced violence would do is to allow an expression of the genuine relation between the parties.

I thank you again for writing. I take it as saying "penny for your thoughts," and perhaps specifically on this subject. I feel it was much more for me to thank you for our meeting over that dinner. I believed I was rather delinquent in not having written to you sooner, but now I find it a bit serendipitous that this letter should have been delayed until the situation unfolded as dramatically as it has in the last few days. When I received your letter yesterday, before there was word of that bombing, I had meant to write today and simply put this in the mail. Because it is now of more immediate concern, I will send it by FAX.

With all best wishes, for you personally and for your work,

in Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



Minister of State

Raymond G Helmick SJ
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Boston College
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14 October 1997

Dg er Raymond

Many thanks for your letter of 17 September. It was very good of you to fax it to me urgently in the light of recent events.

It was also kind of you to set out your thoughts in such detail. There was much that I recognised in your analysis.

From the Government's own perspective, however, we would not tend to draw quite such a sharp distinction as you do between the political leadership of Sinn Fein and the rest of the Republican movement, including its terrorist side. In our view Sinn Fein and the IRA are inextricably linked; they are neither one and the same nor entirely separate. We view them as part of the same Republican movement with a degree of commonality in terms of membership. As this is so, we proceed on the premise that the political leadership can be taken to represent the movement as a whole, both political and military.

Of course, it is widely believed that there are stresses and strains in the movement and that Sinn Fein's involvement in the political talks may well have heightened anxieties of a sell-out or that the political leadership will embark on a major departure from republican principles. In that event it would be logical, as you suggest, if hard liners in the IRA were to derive comfort from the Markethill bomb, now claimed by the CAC.

But I do not quite recognise the picture you portray of, in effect, a complete separation between the political leadership and the hard-line terrorist side of the movement. If that were the case it would not have been possible, for example, for Sinn Fein to declare that in its dealings with the Mitchell Commission on decommissioning it could "speak authoritatively" on behalf of the IRA.



It follows from this that I would not regard legalising the IRA as a necessary step to assist the peace process. Indeed, on an objective analysis, this could not be justified given that the IRA still has the potential to pose a very serious threat to public safety. Any move in that direction would also, I am sure, provoke outrage in the unionist community and probably in Great Britain too.

Against this background, we remain firmly of the view that Sinn Fein are able adequately to represent Republican interests in the political talks. As you would expect, however we are very alive to the risks you identified. The history of the Republican movement has, over the years, been one of repeated splits and most informed commentators would agree that a further split is something which the current leadership would want to avoid.

I hope this is helpful. I really am most grateful to you for setting out your views for me; I will continue to reflect on them in the months ahead. They are another reason for me to remember my happy visit to Boston!

I was also grateful to you for your kind words about new Labour and the Secretary of State. The Prime Minister, Mo Mowlam and I share exactly the same views on the peace process and vision for the future; we all look to the time when there will be lasting peace in Northern Ireland and will go on doing everything we can to help achieve it.

With all best wishes.

*Yours Aye
Adam*

ADAM INGRAM JP MP
Minister of State



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

December 5, 1997

Mr. Adam Ingram, JP, MP
Minister of State
Netherleigh, Massey Avenue
Belfast, BT4 2JP
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Mr. Ingram,

Christ's Peace!

Your letter of 14 October quite delighted me, as it showed so much attention to the matters I had felt so urgent in writing to you. Thank you for that. I knew, at the time I had your letter, that I would be meeting Mo Mowlam soon after, and waited to write until after that. I owe her a letter now too.

I had the feeling that you somewhat over-interpreted the distinctions I was making between IRA and Sinn Fein, to the point of understanding it as complete separation between the political leadership and the military/terrorist. I hadn't seen it as so absolute, in fact find the lines that have to be drawn between them very fine and subtle. But I think you were yourself seeing them rather much as I did.

I was glad to see, also, that you had noted and discussed the issue of legalizing the IRA. I'm sure you're right, that that would provoke a lot of outrage in the Unionist community and could, at this stage at least, hinder progress. I think it worth keeping in mind as a possible future contingency, for the reasons I gave in my September 17 letter.

In fact, I find that IRA behavior has been relatively encouraging in the time since then. A concern of mine all this year, well before the restoration of the cease-fire, has been that important segments of the IRA have been unengaged in the peace effort, standing back in utter skepticism, as if awaiting the moment the moment when they could tell the Adamses and McGuinnesses: we told you so, that it wouldn't work. When the first reports of the Gweedore meeting came out, I thought at first that a terribly destructive drawing back had occurred, that would make their disengagement an irreversible thing. But as the supplementary reports have emerged, the news turns out to be much better. I thought your Mo Mowlam quite remarkable, again, when at the Boston meeting where I met her she spoke of her habit of sleeping on bad news with the expectation that it won't look so bad in the morning. Her interpretation of this development, even before much of it had worked through, was quite impressive.

What I see now as having happened is that the East Tyrone Chief of Staff of the IRA, far from resigning at the Gweedore meeting as first reported, had already resigned his position because of illness some while before, and retains his position on the IRA Executive, without prejudice to the political process going on. The Chief of Staff position resides now in South Armagh, and its holder, for all the reservation on the process that is at its strongest in that area, gives his backing to the efforts of Sinn Fein to achieve a settlement. Reports of mass defections from the IRA in South Armagh, in protest against its sanctioning this process, turn out to be false. And in the presence, even if only as a kind of monitor, of Pat McNamee on the Decommissioning Committee, I would see the most encouraging evidence yet of actual South Armagh engagement with the process of achieving a genuine settlement. That's good news. I take it as meaning that Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness have done their work, internal to the movement, well. South Armagh leadership evidently does not want to prevent peace from happening.

There remains the resolution of the Gweedore meeting that the process was "unconstitutional," i.e., in terms of the 1916 GPO declaration of the Republic, though they permitted members to pursue it.

Mr. Adam Ingram, December 5, '97 -- 2

I argued to Martin McGuinness, whom I saw in Boston the same day as Mo Mowlam, that in the Republicans' own terms the process actually can be seen as constitutional, and I will follow that up in a letter to him. The Republicans in fact know that there will not be a United Ireland out of this process. They acknowledge that as fact, even as they take the position, as Gerry Adams did at Stormont, of welcoming Prime Minister Blair to Ireland and expressing the hope that his will be the last British government to claim sovereignty there. Even South Armagh people are now expressing the hope simply that the talks process will produce a livable situation between the two Northern Irish communities, to my thinking the central issue from the beginning.

What will happen, though, if such a workable arrangement is reached in the current talks and a devolved internal government, fair and acceptable to both sides, installed, is that both British and Irish governments will keep their hands off, and British control, direct from Westminster, will become less and less the central fact of government. Parallel to that, there will be increasing cooperation between the two parts of Ireland, and as much in the way of cross-border institutions as the present relation will bear or as will develop gradually over some years. My expectation is that the two parts of Ireland will become used to each other, and unalarmed at each other's presence or influence, but that that is a process that will be some years in developing. Both parts, in the meantime, will be relating increasingly to the European Union and its institutions, and that in close parallel to one another.

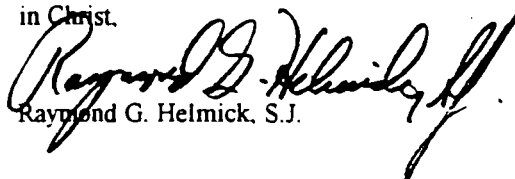
Will that lead to a United Ireland? It might or might not. If it did so it would be in a manner that was not trauma to the Northern Protestants. And if it did not, it would be no tragedy to anyone. But it is clear to me, and must be increasingly clear to the Republicans themselves, that it will not happen in any other way. Hence, as I see it, the "constitutionality" of the current process even in Republican terms.

When McGuinness was here in Boston, he didn't want to acknowledge the scenario I so often write to him and others, that the heart of the problem is the internal relation between the two traditions of Northern Ireland and their learning to live as guarantors to one another. Instead he laced into yourselves, the British, as the spoilers of Irish history, and urged your admitting that and taking responsibility for the healing of Ireland. The situation must have been an unusual one for him, having a number of British officials before him along with an audience of informed and interested American outsiders. I could understand his taking that occasion to stress that interpretation, and feel that what he said was the right thing for him to be saying to you, while what I consistently say is what the Republicans themselves most need to hear.

There is a lot lacking in this process yet. I don't see that the reluctance of the Unionists has been overcome, and that is critically important. On our American side of the water I hear voices urging pressure on them to conform to others' expectations of them, and I know that isn't what will do it. They have to move of their own volition. I think they have a public that wants them to do so. I've just this day written at length to my old friend Martin Smyth, talking of reasons why they should do so.

With all best wishes,

in Christ,



Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

Jan.
~~December~~ 3, 1998

Mr. Adam Ingram, JP, MP
Minister of State
Netherleigh, Massey Avenue
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NORTHERN IRELAND
FAX: 011 44 1232 529545

Dear Mr. Ingram,

Christ's Peace!

It was a delight to have your Christmas card. Thank you, and the best of the New Year.

I write now with the haste indicated by using the FAX because of the ugly situation brought about by the murder of Billy Wright in the prison. I look at it from the viewpoint you are already familiar with, balancing out relations among parts of these various movements, and probably come up with things you are well aware of, but I thought I should spell them out.

What the INLA did was calculated to produce just the effect it did. These folks are very far from the IRA. They are not even much interested in The United Ireland as the center of their dream. Their objective instead is the Socialist Republic, the workers' state. The nucleus of the group, the IRSP of the 1970s, were people of the old Official IRA who had abandoned the "physical force" ideology in the '60s and still wanted the Marxist state without violence. They had broken from the Officials as a spent party, and were disillusioned by the Provisionals' abandonment of politics. But the INLA, attaching itself to the IRSP even against their will, has always seen violent shattering of the society as the only way to achieve their objective. The cease-fires and the peace process, to them, are just nuisance interruptions of what they are looking for. They knew exactly what to expect of the LVF when they murdered Billy Wright, and it suits them just fine.

The LVF resembles the INLA in their rejection of the cease-fire and peace process, not in their ideology. They are operating just now largely out of uncontrolled rage, and that may have them distracted a bit in planning their moves, but there is a pattern, and that's really what I'm writing about.

The LVF's objective now should be to shake the IRA out of its cease-fire, and in that way effectively end the peace process. The two attacks they've made so far, on the hotel in Dungannon and on the pub in Cliftonville, were both intended to be mass killings, on the scale of the Fish-and Chips store or the country pub attack that followed it in 1994. Both failed of killing more than one person each, and you can expect more attempts until they get a large number of deaths in one blow.

The IRA in Belfast can be expected to hold to its cease-fire resolve. The peace party within it has apparently enough discipline, and enough understanding of the cynical thing the INLA did, to keep it that way. That the second LVF attack was in Belfast was less in expectation that that would provoke the IRA out of its cease-fire than a demonstration that the LVF could appeal to some people (dissident UDA?) outside of their bailiwicks in Portadown and Ballymena.

The shakier part of the IRA, as I keep mentioning, is in East Tyrone and South Armagh. The LVF folks surely understand that as well as any of us, and it will be the reason their first attack was in Dungannon. A real massacre somewhere in Mid-Ulster is the thing they would rely on to make the IRA, the local folks there, break their cease-fire, and with that the LVF objective would be achieved.

Adam Ingram, January 3, '98 -- 2

I write all this because I think the security problem that police and Army have to meet is heavily concentrated right down there in Mid-Ulster. I see where the Army has resumed day-time patrols, in Belfast and, I presume, everywhere, and I assume the RUC are on full alert. The Army can be seen for the moment as protectors in the Catholic areas, and that's probably welcome to it. That is reminiscent of 1969, and like it a situation that can last only a short time, especially since IRA and all the grievances it represents are already in place now, unlike 1969 when it took time to build all that.

With the real danger, as I see it, concentrated around Portadown and Mid-Ulster areas that the LVF can be expected to attack, I'm not sure how Army and RUC can approach the situation. This will be their main responsibility in this particular crisis. I reckoned a while back that, with the main-stream of the various paramilitary outfits committed to cease-fires, any small breakaway groups were a manageable police matter. That still seems a reliable measurement now, except that the LVF seem to have some appeal to unhappy elements in the Belfast UDA. The UDA has had a corrupting kind of history, with the amount of Mafia-style activity it carried on in East Belfast over a long period. With great respect for Gary McMichael, I doubt that he carries the authority with UDA people that David Ervine and his colleagues do with UVF. Often enough I've questioned, to you and others, how much respect the IRA gives to Adams and McGuinness, and this problem is much more acute with Gary McMichael, who is young and has never been an actual member of the UDA, only of UDP. The likelihood of UDA people being involved in the Cliftonville shooting -- UDA defectors to the LVF, people living a double life with mixed allegiances to UDA and LVF, or actual official UDA decision? -- says to me that the LVF situation down in Portadown ought to be cleared up before a real epidemic of defections happens among the Belfast UDA.

Tough job for the security forces! What is familiar to me is this, that both Army and RUC must have far more intimate knowledge of every member of the LVF than they have of IRA. Over the years, there were frequent and believable stories of complicity between security forces and the death-squad fringes of the Protestant paramilitary. Of course, that was rogue behavior, not policy of government, and that means those who know the situation best, being the rogues, will be least help to you. But there must be people in both police and Army who have a good idea where the bodies are buried, and can get the information out that would give you effective control.

I take it that law-breaking activity by security forces, of which we used to hear often enough in worse times, is not the way this government would choose to operate against LVF marauders. With the information that must be available within Army, UDR and RUC, even from rogue sources, it should be possible simply to monitor what is going on among the LVF and prevent the kind of mass-killing attack that can be expected from them.

I'm very confident of the good faith of this government. I don't think I could, with confidence, have written this kind of analysis to earlier governments. I wish you well, and anticipate that, with other people all over the community committed to the peace, you will win your way through this crisis, and probably some others, to achieve it. Best wishes,

in Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

December 6, 1997

Secretary of State Mo Mowlam
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast BT4 3ST
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Secretary of State Mowlam,

Christ's Peace!

It was very good to see you here in Boston recently. I had looked forward to that since you became Northern Ireland Secretary.

I brought up the question, at the Irish-American Partnership breakfast, of the non-engagement of some folks in the peace process, both the Paisley and McCartney parties from the Unionist side and people in East Tyrone and South Armagh among the Republicans. I quite liked the straight way you respond to questions. You added that, if I had any bright ideas about this, I should let you know, and having already raised the subject in correspondence with Adam Ingram I thought I ought take you up on that.

The IRA is performing better than most of us expected, and I thought you did well to read the reports of the Gweedore and Dundalk meetings as less catastrophic than they first seemed. The way the IRA in these rural areas has kept distance from the peace process has preoccupied me all this year, and I've made a lot of effort to communicate to them how necessary it is that they engage with it. Now it turns out that the East Tyrone leader, whom I had taken to be Chief of Staff, had actually stepped down earlier than the Gweedore meeting, for genuine reasons of health, and far from having walked out in protest he remains on the Executive, giving his assent to the process. The reports in *The Irish Times* of mass defection in South Armagh turn out to be untrue, and the South Armagh figure who is now Chief of Staff indicates an unexpected level of engagement by authorizing Pat McNamee's participation in the Decommissioning Committee. I take that as very good news, and an indication that Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, from their Sinn Fein base, are very successfully shepherding the whole Republican Movement through the troubling pangs of peace-making.

I do have a bright idea, one that needs to be treated with a lot of caution, and less urgent now than it would have been if this level of engagement had not come about. I learned a long time ago that bright ideas are cheap, and are useful only if people really want to come to an accommodation and are looking for a way. As I asked myself, over the year, what reason the South Armagh people might have to engage in the process, it struck me that they are the most indigestible part of Northern Ireland, most alienated from the Northern state. You may have seen earlier analyses I've written of their situation: with no real political philosophy beyond a "Brits out" Republicanism, and that objective already accomplished these many years in which their South Armagh Brigade has had actual command of the ground in the area, has held off even the SAS. They were the element most opposed to the decommissioning idea (which would have meant, in their understanding, restored Army and RUC control of their area), and consequently the part of the IRA that brought about the breaking of the cease-fire in February '96.

My bright idea was a revision of the border, to put their territory outside Northern Ireland, as an objective on which they could engage with the peace process. As I see it, the primary requirement is to reconcile people of the two traditions in Northern Ireland, to develop attitudes and institutions by which each of these populations would become the guarantors of each other's freedom and integrity. It would be easier for everyone else to do that if South Armagh were not a part of it.

I know the problems with this. The first would be that the repartition might become contagious. That's a terrible risk, and reason not to talk of this carelessly. My calculation is that the other areas that might be tempted are Derry City and East Tyrone. But Derry City, with its majority-Catholic population, has already been working at a reconciliation model for many years and would not be frivolously diverted, and in East Tyrone the two populations are so evenly balanced, in a Bosnia-like enmity, that only a reconciliation model will serve there. However, those are only the most obvious places. The whole immediate border region is sown with Protestant farms, purchased long ago specifically to defend the border. These people, and others of either community who live in areas of delicate balance, could be put at risk of "ethnic cleansing" violence if the ghost of repartitioning were heedlessly raised. That is reason not to dangle this idea before South Armagh people or any others in the Republican Movement unless there could first be full assurance that the idea would not be catching elsewhere, in other words that the rest of the community was already sold on the idea of internal reconciliation. That won't be clear until a rather later stage of the negotiations.

The other problem is that the South Armagh people might see this simply as another betrayal, repartition as a substitute for the holy dream of the United Ireland. This is the very issue that came up in the Gweedore meeting, which concluded both that the current process was "unconstitutional" (in terms of the Constitution of the Irish Republic as declared in front of the Post Office in 1916), since it was leading toward an "internal settlement," hence a recognition of the Northern state, even as part of the U.K., but also that IRA members who were also members of Sinn Fein (*not* coterminous) were permitted to pursue the process.

Two things, inconsistent with traditional Republican orthodoxy, seem evident now. One is that everyone, even of the South Armagh and East Tyrone Republicans, knows that there is not going to be a United Ireland as the outcome of the current process, and they accept that. As I read it, the underlying meaning of the IRA cease-fire, from its first inception in 1994, is to accept that the Protestant/Unionist community has to be treated with a respect that it has never had from Republicanism before. "Principle of Consent" is still hard to formulate for the Republicans, but it is the fundamental message of the whole development on their part. Even with the breaking of their cease-fire, they were unable to renege on the recognition of the other community that they had made, and they and their public were really anxious all through the period of the broken cease-fire to restore it.

The other thing is evident in Martin McGuinness' response when Bertie Ahern spoke, this week, of dropping the territorial claim in the Irish Constitution. Martin was anxious to say that the problem wasn't Irish territorial claim, but long-time British domination, with accompanying discrimination. The day Martin was here in Boston, speaking to us at a lunch right after the breakfast at which you spoke, he was very hot on the subject of British responsibility for harm done historically and future settlement in Ireland, exercising himself to embarrass the British officials who were present. It seems to me that your present Labor government has more insight into this whole historic problem than any British government that has addressed this issue in the past. I wrote to Adam Ingram just yesterday of ways I am prepared to argue to the Republicans that the current process should be seen as "constitutional" in their terms, as there is certainly never going to be a United Ireland without there first being a reconciled Northern Ireland, and that there might or not be one some years later after such a reconciliation. But at the heart of this, even as Martin sticks it to "the Brits," is a recognition that the problems are of fairness and non-discrimination within Northern Irish society, and not about constitutional relation to Britain or Ireland except as one or other (Britain in Republican eyes) is the source of inequity.

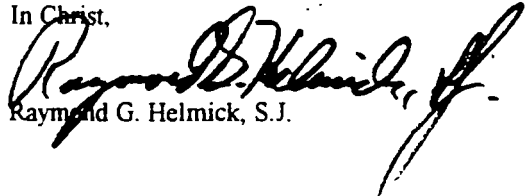
That, at any rate, is my bright idea for a limited but important part of the problem, how South Armagh people could be expected to engage themselves. It is not something that representatives of Britain could do anything about. It won't happen unless the locals want and work for it themselves.

Secretary of State Mo Mowlam, December 6, '97 -- 3

I mentioned this in writing to Martin Mansergh recently. He reacted basically in terms of the risk of ethnic cleansing if the idea of repartition were cast out. I'm very aware of that, and had spoken of it already even in writing to him. South Armagh is not only, as I put it, the most "indigestible" area for the Northern state, but pretty unappetizing for the Republic. I am really encouraged, though, to see the responsible way the South Armagh leadership is responding now to a process about which they have clear reservations. It appears to me that they are truly anxious not to be the obstacle to other people's desire for a peaceful solution. I have been many years writing and talking with people in both IRA and Sinn Fein, as in many other parts of the Northern Irish community, and all this year working hard to communicate with the East Tyrone and South Armagh elements, first about restoration of the cease-fire, and then about their sealing the peace effort with their own positive engagement. It isn't easy to get to them, and I've concentrated on doing it through the Sinn Fein leadership, and especially through Martin McGuinness. When I saw him on his Boston visit, I reminded him that I was anxious to talk directly to some of these people, and he asked me to hold on for a bit while things settled down. I take it that I will have my chance soon, and think it well that you should be apprised of what is going on.

I like your style, and am impressed with the whole way you and the Tony Blair government are approaching this problem of Northern Ireland. I'm used to British Prime Ministers and governments ducking this issue, and know the quagmire it has been for British politicians who made some effort at it. I gave John Major credit for having given it higher priority than any Prime Minister since Gladstone, but then he waffled terribly once the cease-fires were in place and he was hobbled by his dependence on the Unionists with all their understandable anxieties. I see Tony Blair's statements that this is at the top of his agenda, and think that is in fact very good policy for Britain. My very best wishes to all of you in this.

In Christ,


Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

July 22, 1997

Rev. Martyn Smyth, M.P.
117 Cregagh Road
Belfast BT6 0LA
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Martin,

Christ's Peace!

I've wanted to write a thank-you for your coming out so generously to Millisle to talk to my graduate student group from the Boston Theological Institute. That was a very good thing. These students, coming from the whole range of Christian traditions as we have them represented in our consortium of theology schools, got a very good comprehensive view of Northern Ireland over the course of their time there, and I was determined that they should have a real view of Unionists. You provided them that, with a chance to meet you informally, a good talk and chance for questions. That you did it on a bank holiday evening, coming all the way out there, makes it all the more splendid on your part.

I thought the Orange Order showed its real responsibility and Christianity this summer. The decision not to have the marches through places like Lower Ormeau etc. must have been very painful, but it was tremendously constructive, a deference to the neighbor, even intransigent neighbor, that was the making of peace. Even where it produced internal tensions, I think it is a part of the Order's orienting itself to the protection of all the freedoms, including the freedom of your opposites. I have much greater hope for Northern Ireland because of that.

And now the cease-fire. I'm glad to see it, and have argued it to the IRA all this time, as, I believe, have the Sinn Fein leaders. I hear Robert Saulters, who has been a pillar of good sense and responsibility, at great cost to himself, as new head of the Order, calling it a poisoned chalice, and I know why he sees it so. Ken Maginnis, too, points out, in statements I've seen, that the word "permanent" still doesn't appear in the announcement. I think I know why that is so, too, and it is not that the IRA's leaders plan on a return to violence if the outcome of negotiations doesn't please them, but simply that they are reinstating the cease-fire as it was in 1994, precisely.

I have a more hopeful view of this cease-fire, and I've tried to assess it very realistically. You've heard me say, and seen me write, that the meaning of the 1994 cease-fire was recognition, by the whole Nationalist community and Republican movement, of the legitimacy of the Protestant and Unionist community, and their rights. It was an ambivalent recognition on the part of some in the leadership, a "preponderance of opinion," as I've called it, which they couldn't resist. That preponderance of opinion meant really solid recognition by the bulk of the community that the Unionists were not to be coerced: that that was injustice. The Loyalists responded in kind, with a reciprocal recognition. You suspect them of being red, red Communists, I know; I don't share that, and welcome their response of recognition for recognition, the acceptance of the other community reciprocal for the receiving of recognition. That's something very new, much like the mutual recognition given the previous year, 1993, by Israelis and PLO Palestinians -- i.e., the Palestinians -- of one another's legitimacy as peoples, recognition offered publicly and solemnly, after all the years they had both refused to concede it. Even now, when it is the central function of the Netanyahu government to withdraw that recognition, it turns out to be practically impossible for him to do.

Martin Smyth, July 22, '97 -- 2

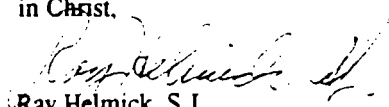
That recognition was not reciprocated by Unionists, for reasons that, again, I quite understand. I don't hold that as a moral judgment against Unionists, but as a misfortune. You've heard me urge that people programmatically overcome that distrust and deliberately engage the other side in dialogue. I held it more against government than against doubting Northern Irish people that no steps were taken to promote that kind of choice for dialogue while it was offered, but instead reasons sought and found to keep away from it. There were specific things that brought about the breaking of the cease-fire, power jockeyings among elements of the IRA leadership, all important to understand. But the over-riding thing, that those who really just didn't want talk and mutual recognition with the Unionists could seize upon as argument for their position, was that there was no response: that an offer of recognition and of dialogue for peace was made, and not so much rejected (as in the late 1960s) as avoided. Opportunity lost.

With the new cease-fire, I see that David Trimble has announced his intention to bring the UUP into the talks, and I respect him for that. That Paisley and McCartney will stay out doesn't matter much now: after their performance in the elections, they aren't really needed, although their solidarity would be an advantage to real Unionists as you engage the Nationalist community in dialogue. I don't think that decommissioning is the real issue that deserves attention here. It has acquired symbol importance for both sides, and both really need to deflate that symbolism. Noone is really talking about removing the IRA's physical capacity to reopen a violence campaign, which they, or angry substitutes/replacements for them, could do readily even after a full disarmament, if such a thing could even be monitored. The demand is rather that they make, symbolically, a recognition that it is they who have been wrong, the "men of violence," all along, and neither side is willing as yet to recognize its own responsibility for what has gone wrong in Northern Irish society, much as the Serbs or the Croats don't want to admit that they ever did anything wrong.

But what is necessary, I believe, is not to chew over those bones, but to get to the point, in both communities, of recognizing and accepting one another's full humanity, rights and needs, knowing one another as persons and a people, as the neighbours you live with. That is what is going to guarantee disarmament and the end to communally organized and accepted violence. A few crazed or intransigent individuals, if there should be such left then, can be dealt with, but a community that feels itself despised and dishonoured, not. If the present situation, in talks or in avoidance of talks, is construed in a purely adversarial manner, that recognition and trust will not be built. Talking common needs, common fears, common sufferings, common desires will build it. What I'm saying is that treating the talk process as "poisoned chalice" will perpetuate enmity, whereas use of the opportunity to talk can bring a kind of mutual recognition that will actually create the peace. That is the opportunity that was squandered before, and ought not be squandered again.

I haven't yet met Robert Saulters. We haven't yet become persons we know to each other, though I greatly respect the way he has dealt with this overwhelmingly difficult situation this summer. I want to get to know him, but would appreciate it if you, who know me and, I hope, know that I am truly saying what I believe here, would put this before him. I wish you peace, with every opportunity to be fully yourselves in peace.

in Christ,


Ray Helmick, S.J.

From: The Reverend W. Martin Smyth, M.P.
(Belfast, South)



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13th August 1997.

RM

Mr. Ray Helmick, S.J.,
Jesuit Community Boston College,
Chestnut Hall,
Massachusetts.

Ref: WMS/MC.

Don Ray

The Grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

I thank you for your letter of 22nd July which awaited my return from a brief holiday, mixed with work in London.

I was happy to be able to be with you. Coincidentally I met Bishop McMullan on the street in London a week ago in which he gave me the other insight that you received when one of your number was involved in the road accident.

I welcome your acknowledgment of the lead that the Orange Institution showed. However, it has not settled things and perhaps, although you have kept a close watch on what is going on, you may have missed that even in 1994 in a rally in Botanic Park I stretched out a hand of friendship on behalf of the Institution which was immediately rejected, not by the people, but by self-appointed spokesmen on the Ormeau Road.

I trust that your more hopeful view of the ceasefire which you have sought to have accessed realistically will be fulfilled. I think that you have made a basic mistake in considering that the bulk of people in Northern Ireland from the Protestant tradition have not recognised others as individuals and as people. I think perhaps one has got to pay more attention to a particular philosophy which has been inculcated, dare I say it, by spokesmen of Roman Catholicism and nationalist leaders, like John Hume, who have contrived to give the impression that they were always treated as second class citizens. The very fact that our education laws were extended to everyone. Those who suffered most, if I dare to approach the subject again, under the Unionist administration, were the Presbyterian authorities of Magee University College where I studied as a student. Because it was a Presbyterian foundation no grants were available either for students going there or for the College to develop and the development only came around when they not only detached the Theological Hall from the University, but then brought it to Belfast. Magee then became a constituent part now of the University of Ulster.



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I don't wish to get in to semantic arguments. However, you may have read more in to my response when you suggest that I thought that the loyalists were communists. Some of them have a very strong tradition of that nature and it will be interesting to see in the end whether the Martin Meehan philosophy prevails, bearing in mind that again he has come out very strongly on the issues and made it plain that they will not as I.R.A. be satisfied until they have a united socialist republic of Ireland.

I will be speaking hopefully in the near future to Robert Saulters and will pass on to him your concerns and hope for a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'W. Martin Smyth'.

W. Martin Smyth, M.P.



JESUIT COMMUNITY BOSTON COLLEGE CHESTNUT HILL MASSACHUSETTS 02167-3802

December 5, 1997

Rev. Martin Smyth, M.P.
117 Cregagh Road
Belfast BT6 0LA
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Martin,

Christ's Peace!

Christmas approaching, I realize how long it is since I wrote you last, and want to wish you and all the people who are so important to you all the blessings of peace that we celebrate in the coming of Christ. All of you, who are Protestant and Catholic both, will be in my prayers, as you always are. I'm hoping I might see you over the season, when we will be having our Christmas break between terms.

I'm impressed by the progress of the talks process, though there are things lacking still. I've harped, all this year, on the absence from the process, or non-engagement in it, of critically important parts of the Republican movement, with all those fine lines to be drawn between its military and political leaderships, particularly the absence of East Tyrone and South Armagh elements. I've been working full-out all that time to communicate with the most recalcitrant of them, and urge the necessity of their taking part if the peace is really to be made. We had the great blow-up of that Gweedore meeting recently, and it turns out that things are not so drastic as they first seemed. I find now that the military leadership has passed from East Tyrone, mainly because of the illness of the principal figure rather than rejection of the process, to South Armagh, the region in which the IRA is hardest to convince of the virtue of seeking peace, and that in fact their leadership has cooperated significantly in promoting the effort. I take that as meaning that Adams and McGuinness, whose authority as advocates of the peace effort seemed so much under challenge from dissident elements of the IRA, have done their work well. The appearance of Pat McNamee, hard-line South Armagh figure and an elected Sinn Fein Councillor from there, on the Decommissioning Committee, is the most encouraging evidence I've seen of meaningful engagement from that quarter.

I do indeed value every move of outreach across such barriers, even the ambiguous ones (as I'm sure one of McNamee's purposes on that committee is to take care that his group's interests are not infringed upon). I was very aware of the friendly overture you made at that Botanic Park rally of 1994, and of the suspicion with which it was received by the Ormeau Road spokesmen. Their suspicion was the old and long received element, your outreach the new and significant initiative, which they weren't yet equipped to recognize. That doesn't at all surprise me, though I know how disappointing it is to have such an initiative rebuffed. I'm making such initiatives all the time, you know, in many different situations -- to Israelis and Palestinians, to every kind of faction in Lebanon, to Kurds of both enemy factions (both my friends) in Northern Iraq, to the PKK Kurds in Turkey and to Turkish government, to my own American government figures, to whom I am always appealing on behalf of all these people, and who do listen carefully, but put up all the obstacles they can think of -- and have gotten used to most of them being rebuffed. It's the eventual acceptance of a peace-making initiative that counts, not the fifty or a hundred refusals that precede it.

I was left very puzzled last summer, when you so kindly came out to my students at Millisle, by a strictly theological point you made, that reconciliation, in New Testament terms, was only to be sought between God and ourselves, whereas between human antagonists the best that could be sought was conciliation. I spoke of this with Bishop Gordon McMullan at one point, and we heard something very similar said by David McIlvine, which left me thinking this must be a more widely received conception.

Martin Smyth, December 5, '97 – 2

I'm not really sure what distinction was being made by either of you, and don't want to get stuck in semantics over a prefix. But I always take it as one of the most basic Christian instructions that we be reconciled with one another as well as with God, and that the one reflects the other. "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matt. 5, 23-24.) "Forgive us our debts (trespasses), as we also have forgiven our debtors (as we forgive those who trespass against us).... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you." (Matt. 6, 12. 14.) "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Matt. 7, 1-3.) It's particularly in Matthew, here in the sermon on the mount and elsewhere, but sometimes even stronger in Luke (e.g., 6, 27-38). In John, there is the foot washing, in the setting of the Last Supper, where the Synoptics put the institution of the Eucharist, the foot-washing expressing for John the heart of the eucharistic action itself: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 13, 14-15.) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13, 34-35.) "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." John 15, 12.) This goes on and on, through other parts of the New Testament as well as the Gospels, and I don't need to give you Scripture lessons. But I just can't reconcile all this with a sharp break between the reconciliation of God and man and a cut-off before reconciliation between man and man. It seems very fundamental and important to me, and I wonder what is being said.

I put it all in the context of complaints -- basically from Sinn Fein people; not, I notice, from SDLP -- that UUP representatives simply will not address them, even in the context of the talks. I hear this in Ken Maginnis' regular assertion that he will not talk with murderers, though Reg Empey, when he was in Boston, put it differently: that UUP people would address those from Sinn Fein within the formal sessions, but not in social conversation outside them. I've seen something similar in Palestinian assertions: the negotiators who went to Oslo valued the fact that they had socialized with their Israeli counterparts and built up an appreciation of one another's humanity, whereas the Madrid Conference representatives, Haidar Abdel Shafi and others whom I also much respected, had pointedly refrained from addressing their own Israeli counterparts outside the formal sessions.

Recently I read a complaint by Niall O'Dowd, the Irish-American editor of *The Irish Voice* and one of those who had most to do with the American urgings for an IRA cease-fire. He pointed out that the 1995 Framework Document had pledged the two governments, British and Irish, in the event that the All-Party Talks didn't get anywhere because of any party's intransigence, that they would then proceed to make new arrangements between themselves. O'Dowd's complaint was that Mo Mowlam, on her American trip, would not re-assert that. He felt that the UUP were in the talks basically because of that pledge, for fear that otherwise new arrangements would be made by the two governments over which Unionists had no say, but that now, once in the talks, Unionists doubted that the governments would do it, and hence felt no need to produce anything other than objections to procedure.

I had the chance to discuss this the other day with Dick Spring, the former Irish Foreign Minister, and found that he reacted very much as I did, that any effort, politically or otherwise, to coerce or pressurize any of your parties would bring about no trustworthy agreement, and that only new insight and appreciation of one another by the parties would serve. We both remembered how the carrot-and-stick policy, visible in the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, had first been adumbrated when Mrs. Thatcher visited Charlie Haughey in Dublin in December 1980, and they had opined that, if the Northern Irish parties would not come to agreements, the two governments would make the agreements for them.

Martin Smyth, December 5, '97 -- 3

I wrote to Ken Maginnis last August, congratulating him that he had then just held a Television debate with Martin McGuinness. Ken too had been tremendously helpful to me in setting up that student visit, and I've always had great regard for him. I told him this:

I know how apprehensive you all are over this new cease-fire, and the distrust there is for becoming involved in direct discussion. I don't expect to see this cease-fire broken. The Republicans were so wary of reinstating it themselves, and looked the horse so carefully in the mouth, that I take it they are very serious in embarking on it again. It would represent terrible failure for them if it fell apart again, or if they let it do so.

But most of all I believe, given the evident lack of trust between your Unionist selves and them, that trust has to be built by actually encountering each others as persons. You can't be sure of them now, in the sense of their not having some agenda unacceptable to you, nor can they be sure of you, in the sense that they have to be afraid that you will simply evade the need ever to acknowledge them as real persons with rights or respond to any overture they can make to you. I've always been convinced, since the issue arose, that decommissioning of weapons was no road to that, or guarantee of it. You have no inventory of their weapons holdings to verify their disarmament, and what they use is so easily replaceable, if the relation were to break down again, that you couldn't put any reliance on decommissioning, if you had it.

The only thing you can put reliance on is the people themselves, and they have to be reconciled to living fully respectfully with you, as you with them, before you cease to be a real danger to one another. They are always going to be there, and there is no substitute for coming to terms with them. However little you trust them, and however real a danger they are to you, you will never change that without talking to them. So I was glad to hear you talking with Martin McGuinness, even in a shout. I'm sure you have to start that way before the volume can come down. It's a good beginning.

When you last wrote, Martin (August 13), the one thing on which you felt hurt in my letter was the matter of non-recognition, a supposition you found in what I had written that "the bulk of people in Northern Ireland from the Protestant tradition have not recognized others as individuals and as people." I don't know about the bulk of people. When it comes to decision of the leaders and policy, it is hard to read the history otherwise, at least as it is presented to us who didn't experience it ourselves. But true or not, it is really the perception among your Catholic neighbors that they were treated as second class citizens, and that perception is a present fact in itself. It is the most basic thing that needs to be addressed from you to them, and even with the clear conviction on your own part that it is not true, it can't be addressed without acknowledging at least, as something undeniable, that that is their perception.

I've learned a lot about the piety and faith, the genuine commitment to personal freedom and conscience, the openness to one another and to God's will of the Protestant people of Northern Ireland, and seen great generosity of spirit among many of them, yourself notable among them, in the context of the troubles and the more recent hopes for peace. I'm very aware, too, of the alarm they feel that Irish nationalists are about to take their heritage and all those values from them, and how much more acute that anxiety is now than it has ever been before. I still think every word of what I wrote to Ken is true.

And so I'm hoping that, in the intensive meetings among party leaders that will be going on between now and Christmas, there will be some more direct contact between the opposing sides than has been true so far. There is a danger that people on the Catholic side of this may be disillusioned, and draw the conclusion: well, it didn't work. We tried to address them and they wouldn't respond. That, in large part, was what happened when the IRA broke its cease-fire in February '96.

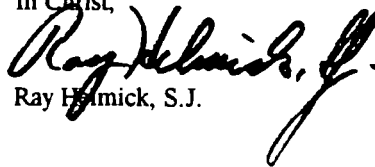
Martin Smyth, December 5, '97 -- 4

I think, at that time, they broke the hearts of most of the Catholic people, who didn't want that cease-fire broken, and believed that with more persistence the refusal to respond could be overcome. But they all felt -- matter of perception, whether it was true or not -- that that was the case, and many of them consequently even refused to condemn the IRA's action. That Protestants were equally heart-sick was not part of their perception, for the reason, basically, that there was still so little real human communication between them.

God help us all, Martin. I value it enormously that you and I can write and speak to one another with the freedom we do, and with a trusting confidence born of long practice. I am constantly at pains not to let myself offend you, even while equally at pains not to let any necessary thing go unsaid.

This Christmas is a very important time, time of grace as always, critical time in the confidence-building process of the talks now going on in Northern Ireland. People on both sides of that divide have put themselves at great risk by taking daring steps already to bridge the gulf between them. I pray that God will help them through this time to see his great love approaching them, even if fearfully, from one another, even from those most conditioned to enmity one to another.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Hermick, S.J.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ray Hermick, S.J.

From: The Reverend W. Martin Smyth, M.P.
(Belfast, South)



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15 December 1997

Rev Ray Helmick SJ
Jesuit Community
Boston College
Chestnut Hill
Massachusetts
USA

Dear Ray

May the true joy of Christmas be yours as we share the memory of the first Advent, even though it possibly was not on 25 December.

I am not sure how our times will cross over the period. I have to go to the Sudan dealing with some of the issues there and may not be in Belfast at the time you would be here, particularly with some of the other appointments I have already made to deal with issues including meeting at least one American who is doing some research on the situation.

Dealing first of all with your puzzlement. As I understand it, reconciliation means being one. I use the context, actually, of the Trade Union business of conciliation for whether we are prepared to recognise it or not, there are people with different interests and different positions as an employer and an employee. Working together they can be of mutual benefit to one another, but that does not necessarily mean that the worker has got to accept the lowest wages that the boss is prepared to offer and on the other hand the boss should not be treating the worker simply like a slave. Conciliation is where they come together to find a degree of mutual understanding that will be of help.

In that context, the Republicans, Nationalists, are looking for equality of identity with their aspiration to a United Ireland. The Unionists are prepared to treat all citizens as equal but are not prepared to surrender the reality of being part of the United Kingdom just to have an aspiration to be part of the United Kingdom. It is in that context that we seek to come together and live together in a conciliatory way without Unionists denying the rights to a Nationalist aspiration, and without Nationalists denying reality to the Unionists' national identity.

I hope that I have made it, in the context of the letter, as simple as I can. If true reconciliation as I understand it were to take place, then it does mean that either Nationalists become United Kingdom people or Unionists become Irish Nationalists, even for that matter Irish Republicans.



If you find it difficult to reconcile this concept with love then I am not sure that I can help you, because as an individual I hold no animosity to anyone. I certainly have my misgivings about the actions of certain people and I believe even loving people, loving ones enemies, does not mean that they can set aside the law of the land, or for that matter the law of God, and not face the consequences. Therein lies not perfect love, but absolute anarchy.

While you quote, understandably, Matthew 7, 1-3, do you deny the other side of judgement that we have got to judge righteous judgements, and every day in life we have got to make decisions which are judgements on the rightness or wrongness of certain situations in which we find ourselves. We certainly have got to always bear in mind to judge with the judgement of charity and not always absolute certainty, and that's something that one seeks to do.

When we actually come to the Ephesians passage, we discover that people who have been reconciled to God must be reconciled one to the other. Perhaps that is a greater difficulty when people do not even accept the God that we believe in, and in that context I would suggest that my own involvement with people from a Roman Catholic background, and going further out, those who are from a Jewish, Moslem, Hindu or a Buddhist background, shows that one can actually work with people and seek to understand their situation and seek to help them, without necessarily accepting their dogmas.

Perhaps your own participation within the Society of Jesuits would help you to understand that likewise because one of your colleagues, Paul Simons, was on Radio Ulster no later than Sunday last, in which he said that he lived by the rule although at times that caused him problems. That was dealing with the concept of President McAleese taking communion in the Anglican Church, or should I say Episcopal Church in that context.

On the local situation with which you began, I would like to think that your estimation is correct. I certainly believe that on the one hand there are elements within Republicanism who are not happy with what is going on and they reflect, if I might say so, the position that both Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness have taken up when they keep harping on the fact that Nationalists were not consulted in the division of the country. I am afraid that anybody who knows anything of history would know that they were involved in that. They were not happy with it any more than Unionists were happy with it, but it was accepted in 1921 and ratified in 1925. Tragically De Valera broke it clearly with a unilateral change of constitution in 1935/37, which has led us through these last number of years into the morass of murder and mayhem.



There is always the possibility that if Gerry Adams goes down the road that he is travelling, he may end at the same decision as Michael Collins. One hopes not, but one is trying to analyse the thinking that is going on. It would appear to me, and to others, that some of the perceived splits in the IRA/Sinn Fein are actually to keep pressure on the one hand upon the British, and on the other hand to present a picture of Adams and McGuinness in control. I perhaps have no difficulty in seeing them in control because some of the things that have happened could not have happened without their permission.

Are you aware, for example, that they have been having week-end training seminars in Belfast under the auspices of Sinn Fein to have estate control, where committees are to be set up throughout the Province with at least one former prisoner on the committee? These of course then can be presented as bona fide residents groups. We have seen how that has worked out on the Ormeau Road where people who were prepared to work together for a common good have been squeezed out, and the groups with which they are identified absorbed but their names retained under the so-called Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group, LORAG. As a result, interestingly enough when one realises the small area that the Ormeau Road section represents, it is amazing to realise that from the community representatives on the newly formed South Belfast Partnership, five out of seven are from LORAG.

Concerning the talks that are going on at the moment, it would appear to me while the Unionists have gone in against the wishes of many within the Party because the Governments have surrendered the basic concept of decommissioning and have not yet advanced their scheme of decommissioning to keep in line with what is going on in the discussions, that on the one hand our representatives deal through the chair in the discussions and on the other hand they still get from the Sinn Fein, understandably in one sense, the same broad generalisations and claims without any attempt to move forward. Again one understands this, but it would appear at times that greater understanding is given to what is perceived to be a minority position rather than to a majority.

I think that you have touched on a real issue when you refer to Niall O'Dowd's complaint. There is no doubt about it that having pushed the Unionist participation out prior to the 1995 Frameworks Documents the Irish, working on behalf of Sinn Fein and SDLP, managed to put their position clearly forward whereas the British negotiators were completely hoodwinked, and as a result language was used capable of misinterpretation, as has happened time and time again, and the harsh reality is that the triple lock has been there throughout and Niall O'Dowd is wrong when he would say that the two Governments are in a position to force ahead. The pattern was consent between the Parties, consent and referendum, and then it would have to go to the Parliaments to devise the schemes of implementation.



Niall O'Dowd presents himself as a very broad minded person. I have met him and I have done an interview with him, but he comes to it with his clear Nationalist agenda and of course there is no acceptance of the fact that Unionists were there to argue their case, to hold their corner in a very difficult position, and we have had to join with representatives of two paramilitary bodies, for without them there could be no consent in so far as the DUP and the UK Unionists have absented themselves from the talks because they believe they have been conned by the Government. That of course might be the position that Niall O'Dowd is working on, that the Governments have conned the Unionists. Time alone will tell.

When you talk about the perception of how Roman Catholic neighbours have been treated as second class citizens, have you ever considered what has gone on in countries where the Church of Rome held predominant sway, where even members of their own flock have been mistreated as second class citizens? It does seem to me what has happened in Northern Ireland, allowing for the failures of the past and I have no doubt about that within the South of Ireland in particular, but as a Presbyterian who knew what our forebearers had to struggle with which led of course to the early exodus to the United States in the days of the colonies, and of course to Canada and Australia; the so called Irish migration coming much later, is that various attempts have been made but significantly the second class citizenship has been indelibly pushed into the psyche of members of the Roman Catholic community by their mentors.

I regret so say that because over the years both as a family, and as a member of various groups, we have had fine relationships with the Roman Catholics. I am not now talking about the upper class so-called who can cushion themselves in any community, I am talking of ordinary people who have worked together and who have played together, and it has been one of those aspects that sometimes we have not really understood. It is because of that false perception which has gained credibility abroad, that many Protestant people are now so disgusted that they are beginning to react violently themselves. It is an aspect that I fear is being missed, but now is beginning to be revisited upon us.

I responded frankly to you as I believe you are wanting us to do in so far as I think the hurt that is felt on the part of many people with whom I work, both within the Protestant community and without, and their desire to see a better place here for all of us, needs to be equally understood and I know that you will be addressing it with those that you approached from the other part of our community.

Yours sincerely

W Martin Smyth MP