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24 FEBRUARY 1993

TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON
FOR MICHAEL COLLINS FROM NOEL KILKENNY

*Mr Dalton
TO JCU
Pl.
Lw. 25/2.*

(PLEASE CC MR GERRY CORR)

CLINTON-MAJOR PRESS CONFERENCE

The Clinton-Major Press Conference was held after one hour of talks and before the more substantive working dinner session. Northern Ireland had not been discussed but was on the agenda for the dinner discussions.

The following are the President's and Prime Minister's responses to questions on the North and on the Envoy:

Q: Do you still want a US envoy in Northern Ireland? (Inaudible)?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, let me answer the first question. If the United States can in some way make a constructive contribution to a political settlement, of course we'd be interested in doing that. But that is not a subject we have discussed in any way so far, and I think I'd rather wait to make further comments until after we have a chance to discuss it.

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Q: You said you may discuss Northern Ireland this evening. Would you expect to discuss (both the special envoy?) issue and the human rights issue, and do you share the view expressed by some members of Congress -- senators and representatives -- that there are abuses of human rights in Northern Ireland that need to be addressed? And perhaps the Prime Minister would like to address that allegation.

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR: Well, I'll address that point first. The real abuse of human rights in Northern Ireland is the abuse of human rights of people who find bombs in shopping malls when they're going about their ordinary everyday business. I think that is the abuse of human rights that is overwhelmingly the concern of everybody in Northern Ireland on both sides of the sectarian divide.

Over the past two or three years, the British government, with the Taoiseach and with the political parties in Northern Ireland, have been engaged on talks to try and find a political settlement to a problem that has existed in Northern Ireland for generations. We are seeking that agreement. Those talks, I believe it is fair to say, have made more progress than most people believed was possible. The talks came to a halt with the general election in the Republic of Ireland and the forthcoming local elections in Northern Ireland. But it is the policy of my government to resume those talks -- to resume those talks with all the parties in Northern Ireland and try and reach a satisfactory political settlement and remove many of the disputes and hatreds that have existed for generations. Those disputes and hatreds are worsened by violence, whether it is the IRA violence or whether it is the response to IRA violence, which has also been prevalent over the last year or so. I condemn both unreservedly and without any distinction.

Q: (Inaudible)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: - Well, I believe that obviously there has to be a political solution there or there will be no solution at all, and that the human rights issues will have to be addressed in that context. Whether the United States can play any sort of constructive role is something that we want to discuss later this evening.

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Q: Mr Prime Minister, do you think there's any constructive role the United States can play in solving the Northern Ireland problem?

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR: I think from time to time distinguished visitors from the United States in Northern Ireland have come back to the United States and they have actually explained the remarkable changes that have taken part in Belfast. There was a delegation that was there recently. And the reality is that anyone who knew the place 10 years ago and knows the place today will see there is an absolute and total sea change. And I think the fact that there is a greater knowledge about the will for peace amongst people in Northern Ireland, and especially the ordinary people of Northern Ireland of both sides of the sectarian divide, the more that is understood the better. And what is actually needed in Northern Ireland to help speed that is more understanding of the process, more support for the talks, more investment for job creation, and less money to fund terrorism. And the more people know about that, the nearer we come to a solution.

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TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES: (3)

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