



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/95/45

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

cc'd: Mr. Donoghue

~~W. Mc Donoghue~~
 JH
 17
 12
 93

SECURE FAX 1441

IMMEDIATE

16 December 1993

Pages: 2

TO: HQ

FROM: BELFAST

FOR: A/SEC O HUIGINN

FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

The Declaration: NIO view of reactions

1. Martin Williams described the general reaction, leaving aside the DUP, as "cautiously favourable". His analysis of the different elements, however, was less encouraging.
2. The early statements yesterday by Taylor and Trimble were welcome, all the more so because they were not expected. I noted that Molyneaux seemed to grow stronger in support in later interviews yesterday. Williams agreed but said most UUP leaders were sitting on the fence; it remained to be seen what their eventual attitude would be. The reaction of working class Unionists was critical of the Declaration. More worrying was the reaction of the middle class and intelligentsia which was also "pretty critical". The NIO was pleased with Alderdice's support. Alderdice was so neurotically sensitive, there was always uncertainty how he would react. Overall, Williams thought mainstream Unionist reaction might well mirror The Newsletter editorial this morning (copy attached for convenience) which describes Northern Ireland's position within the UK as now less secure, but goes on to say about the Declaration "if it did (bring peace), then a multitude of sins could be forgiven." (comment: the editorial echos the message we have been getting all year from people of Unionist background which is that movement towards some kind of united Ireland is now inevitable although it may take some time, but that there will be a violent backlash if we push too hard or too fast).
3. There is relief in the NIO that the great majority of Conservative MPs support the Declaration. There had been concern that a hostile letter circulated by the Conservative Party here (Fee) would have a serious impact. Hume's support was warmly received; the NIO had no other indications of SDLP reaction but assumed the party would take its line from their leader.
4. The great question was the reaction of Sinn Fein, about which the NIO is not certain. Williams said the NIO is uncertain also about the Loyalist paramilitaries who were "reactive" not only to actual violence but to anything they thought threatened their position.

cc: Ambassador London

Acid test: How strong is the Union this morning?

NORTHERN Ireland's majority community may not have been sold out by yesterday's London-Dublin declaration but the Province's position as an integral part of the United Kingdom seems less secure than it was before John Major and Albert Reynolds shook hands

on the deal. If the majority people of the Province still believe they are as British as those in Fife, they are not doing themselves any good. They should closely study the statement signed by the two premiers yesterday.

John Major's statement that the British have "no selfish strategic or

MORNING VIEW FOUNDED 1947

with Ulster and is ambivalent towards the preservation and integrity of the Union.

On the plus side, John Major did give a clear message of good intentions to the majority population in this country. But when the fine print of the declaration is examined in full, several strands come to light that

could prevent grave implications to the Union in the months and years ahead. And, in the passage of time, if the declaration and John Major's reassuring words, that will cast the future for the people of the Province.

The declaration, couched in language no unambiguous as to frankly

Union weaker

Morning View - from Page One

And both a favourable and unfavourable reaction from the differing political standpoints on our island is aimed, the two premiers assure us, at achieving peace. If it did, then a multitude of sins could be forgiven. But will it?

Even though it may state the obvious about the constitutional status quo of Northern Ireland (which is ours by birth-right and not by gift of either government), the declaration has undeniably been compiled to assuage nationalist opinion - buoyed over recent months by the expectations emanating from the Hume/Adams talks and illustrated by the enthusiastic welcome afforded Albert Reynolds on his return to Dublin.

More worryingly, it is also quite clearly framed to offer something worthwhile to the IRA and Sinn Fein in return for a cessation of violence. The two governments may want to get the IRA "out of the trees" but by doing so they risk sending a clear sign to the public that violence pays.

The declaration has thrown up many unanswered questions - primarily among them: will the IRA voluntarily give up all its arms, ammunition and explosives before taking its seat at the negotiating table in the event of a "permanent" ceasefire? This was a valid question which the Prime Minister was unable to answer satisfactorily in the Commons yesterday.

The test of the determination of both governments to get to grips with the terrorists will come if the IRA decides to continue its murderous campaign.

The Prime Minister has indicated that the declaration offers a last chance for the men of violence to put away their arms and follow the constitutional path. If they do not, can we look forward to the aggressive pursuit and prosecution of the armed gunmen and bombers on both sides of the border? That will be the real litmus test for John Major and Albert Reynolds should their peace gamble be treated with the contempt the IRA has shown for past initiatives.

The ball has been lobbed into the IRA's court and their response is awaited with bated breath by many people on both sides of this tragically divided community.

The two governments have staked their reputations on achieving a positive response from the Provos and, ultimately, from the loyalist paramilitaries whose violence is considered in both London and Dublin to be reactive.

But the first priority must always be to safeguard the peaceful aspirations and constitutional rights of the vast majority of people in this Province, both Protestant and Roman Catholic.