

**Dermot Nally  
Papers**

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# Reynolds's persistence helps make history

Albert Reynolds has made the achievement of a comprehensive settlement in Northern Ireland the cornerstone of his period as Taoiseach, writes Geraldine Kennedy, Political Correspondent

**T**IME Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, may be closer now than any of his predecessors over the past 50 years to fulfilling the national aspiration of reconciling the peoples of Ireland. He is poised on the brink of the most comprehensive settlement in Northern Ireland for at least 25 years, playing such a strong political, constitutional, even military hand that he could break the stalemate of almost three-quarters of a century.

That this historic opportunity has come about by design, rather than by accident, is the single greatest—if not the only—testament to Mr Reynolds's political judgement since he entered politics. For in the absence of Albert Reynolds, as Taoiseach, the Home/Adams dialogue might not have been legitimised, the British Prime Minister, Mr John Major, would not have been educated into the "Irish problem", there would be no Downing Street Declaration, and President Clinton could not have been a key international player in the peace process.

In the coincidence of fortuitous circumstances culminating in yesterday's announcement of a complete cessation of IRA violence, Mr Reynolds won his most important achievement at this juncture of events. He managed to impose upon the IRA army council the value of a complete end to their campaign rather than the open-ended ceasefire originally intended.

What's afraid of peace? was the simple, oft-repeated, Northern policy slogan from Mr Reynolds on February 10, 1992, the day that he was elected leader of Fianna Fáil. He said, from the first day, that he would "put no limits" on what he would do and the energy that came from "a dwarfed and twisted patriotism which was inflicting death as instruments of change". He also foresaw a trade-off between Articles 2 and 3 and the Government of Ireland Act, 1920.

Shortly after his election as Taoiseach a week later, he tossed the idea of a peace process and the Government of Ireland Act with

Mr Major at their first Anglo-Irish meeting in London on February 26th, 1992. Mr Major turned to Desmond Nally, the secretary to the Government, at the discussion despatched, to say "let there be no peace". He admitted, in the unrecorded meeting, that he knew nothing about Northern Ireland, that he had never been to Ireland since 1990, and that he had never read the Government of Ireland Act.

Mr Reynolds brought the whole idea of a joint Anglo-Irish declaration to bring about peace in the North into the political arena. It had come to him from a most unusual source. In April, 1992, he met a small group of Redemptorists from the Clonsilla Monastery in Belfast who convinced him that there was a fundamental change of attitude occurring within the Provisional IRA which was not being appreciated by anyone in power. He was persuaded that there was a real chance for peace.

Soon after that meeting, he contacted John Hume, the leader of

the SDLP, who had had a range of discussions with the president, Mr Sean Potts, Gerry Adams, from 1988. Mr Hume confirmed the Clonsilla agreement that a peace deal was possible. That was some 10 months before Mr Hume began his official dialogue with Mr Adams in the spring of last year.

Mr Reynolds asked Dr Martin Mansergh, whom he had retained as Northern Ireland adviser when Mr Charles Haughey left office, to begin work on drafting a peace declaration, known to his Progressive Democratic colleagues in the then Fianna Fáil-led coalition government. Mr Reynolds led Fianna Fáil through its most disastrous general election in history

in November, 1992, and re-emerged as Taoiseach with Dick Spring as Taoiseach in the Fianna Fáil/Labour Coalition in January, 1993.

The first draft of the declaration, which is now known to be the so-called Hume/Adams document, was completed by Dr Mansergh in June, 1993, and passed on to the British government before the summit meeting between Mr Reynolds and Mr Major later that month. That draft formed the basis of the historic Downing Street Declaration last December.

Mr Reynolds witnessed many up-and-downs in the peace process as Sinn Féin/IRA considered

the Downing Street Declaration over the past nine months. He broke through the stand-off with the British government on the issue of clarification. His response to his critics, "have patience for peace", had become a cliché in internal circles. He stuck with Sinn Féin and every Tuesday at Dail Question Time became a surmise from the mount to the republican movement.

He reached his lowest ebb with Sinn Féin/IRA a month ago when Sinn Féin presented its formal response to the Downing Street Declaration at their much-heralded convention in Letterkenny. Alone of all leaders, Mr Reynolds saw some "positive signals" when Mr Spring, Mr Major and the media at large interpreted their resolutions as a comprehensive rejection of the underlying principles of the document.

The Taoiseach had been supplied with a copy of Mr Adams's presidential address to the convention prior to making his statement. He had informed himself of

the contents of the resolutions. Notwithstanding that, he took a strategic decision to wait positively to Sinn Féin's response. His assessment was based on the informed judgement that the IRA was contemplating a ceasefire, that Sinn Féin was informed about progress in the discussions, the framework document, and that time was running out for Sinn Féin/IRA unless they could recover quickly from the disaster.

**T**HE fact that Mr Reynolds publicly stood by Sinn Féin at Letterkenny gave him the bona fides to force the IRA to accept that a limited ceasefire, of whatever duration, would not bring political dividends.

Albert Reynolds is presiding over momentous developments in Irish history today with key political, constitutional, and military cards turned up on the table for the first time. This could not have happened without the dialogue between Mr Hume and Mr Adams. It could not have happened with-

out Mr Spring's insistence at his last meeting in the Washington Hotel about the formation of the Government that Mr Reynolds would become the first Fianna Fáil leader to offer to change Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution in certain circumstances as a referendum.

It could not have happened without the support of Mr James Moynihan, the leader of the United Unionist Party, for the Downing Street Declaration. And, finally, it could not have happened without the support of non-Fianna Fáil voters who, despite the wranglings of some Opposition politicians and some national newspapers, suspended their judgement on the peace process throughout all of Mr Reynolds's postscript-for-sale, Longford coming, and beef tribunal controversies in the past year.

Mr Reynolds's long-term political standing is now so dependent on the success or failure of the peace process that he is trapped, for good or ill, in his absolute commitment to it.

## Unionists of all hues fear redefinition of the Union by reference to a nationalist agenda

### Major's negotiating skills



## THE IRA CEASEFIRE

# Loyalist assassination campaign may have been a factor in the ceasefire



ONE of the largely unexplored factors in the Provisional republicans' reasons for moving towards ceasefire is the effect that quite intense loyalist violence directed at the IRA's political wing, Sinn Féin, and other vulnerable members of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, has had.

Although, with a few exceptions, IRA violence has tended to end headlines, loyalist violence is outstripping republican violence. Loyalist killings this year outnumber republican killings by ratios of almost two to one.

There has been an unrelenting loyalist assassination campaign in recent years, against Sinn Féin and IRA members, but which has also murdered dozens of uninvolved Catholics.

Sinn Féin members in Northern Ireland live under constant threat of assassination by Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Ulster Defence Association (UDA) gunmen. The threat has grown steadily over the past five years when the two loyalist paramilitary organisations were at the height of a new campaign of violence.

The greatest threat of violence in the North is now posed by two loyalist paramilitary organisations and the splinter republican group, the INLA, writes Security Correspondent Jim Cusack

was carrying out work at the house, was shot dead in May last year.

In a series of attacks earlier this year the loyalist gunmen came close to assassinating a number of people said to be close to the Provisional republican leadership in Belfast. In some cases, these attacks appear to have been directed with the use of security force information leaked to the loyalists by sympathetic serving members of those forces.

Despite the joint statement issued earlier this month by Commander Loyalist Military Committee (LMC) condemning the

attacks in the pub, would have brought down the side of the building, causing multiple deaths, mostly from suffocation and compression injuries, in the downstairs bar.

The electronic sound equipment being used by the band at the republican function in the upstairs lounge could also have then started a fire in the collapsing rafters and this could have caused further deaths. A UVF bomb, placed in similar circumstances at McGuck's public house in north Belfast in December 1971 killed 15 people.

If the Widow Scallans bomb had been detonated, it ap-

The shipment was due for the UVF in Belfast which had made contacts earlier in the year with British army divisions. Had the shipment arrived it could have had a major impact on the conflict. Claims, mostly from republican sources, that the shipment was somehow an elaborate ploy by the British intelligence services to intimidate the Dublin Government and Northern nationalists are dismissed by the UVF.

While the UVF has been emerging in the single most dangerous threat, the other, numerically larger loyalist organisation, the UDA, has also been sending out quite chilling signals in the past year. In January a Belfast journalist received a copy of the UDA's "downside" plan including maps and directions on the setting up of an "ethnic Protestant homeland" in the event of a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

Responsibility for dealing with the loyalist paramilitaries and, generously, providing protection for former Provisional republicans who supported the IRA's killing of prisoners, will continue with the RUC.

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