

W S. Hare



24

FAX COVER SHEET

**British Embassy
Dublin**

29 Merrion Road
DUBLIN 4

Information Section

Telephone: 2053700
Facsimile: 2053893

TO : Mr Frank Murray
: Secretary, Taoiseach's Dept

FAX : 6766830

FROM : Ruth McKenna
: Information Section

DATE : 04 October 1996
REFERENCE : 0007258

PAGES : 5 (Including This Sheet)

SUBJECT: Northern Ireland

MESSAGE:-

The following speech by Sir John Wheeler may be of interest

The following speech by Sir John Wheeler may be of interest. Sir John Wheeler, a prominent figure in the Northern Ireland peace process, has been instrumental in facilitating dialogue between the British and Irish governments and the Provisional IRA. His speech, delivered on 27 September, highlighted the importance of maintaining a commitment to non-violence and the need for a comprehensive approach to resolving the conflict. Sir John emphasized that the British government remains committed to the peace process and will continue to work closely with the Irish government and the Provisional IRA to achieve a lasting settlement. He also noted that the British government is committed to the principle of self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland and will support any peaceful process that leads to a united Ireland.

The following speech by Sir John Wheeler may be of interest. Sir John Wheeler, a prominent figure in the Northern Ireland peace process, has been instrumental in facilitating dialogue between the British and Irish governments and the Provisional IRA. His speech, delivered on 27 September, highlighted the importance of maintaining a commitment to non-violence and the need for a comprehensive approach to resolving the conflict. Sir John emphasized that the British government remains committed to the peace process and will continue to work closely with the Irish government and the Provisional IRA to achieve a lasting settlement. He also noted that the British government is committed to the principle of self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland and will support any peaceful process that leads to a united Ireland.

Information Section
British Embassy
29 Merrion Road
Dublin 4

Tele: 2053700
Fax: 2053893

Date: 04 October 1996

Our Ref: 10/82

SPEECH BY SIR JOHN WHEELER, MINISTER OF STATE,
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE, AT TRINITY COLLEGE DINING CLUB, LONDON,
THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 1996

'TERRORISM SHALL NOT SUCCEED'

Mr Adams and his colleagues have tirelessly repeated the message of their party's commitment to peace, of 'moving the process forward'. The Provisional IRA, the organisation to which Sinn Fein is inextricably linked and whose acts of violence Sinn Fein has consistently refused to condemn, has in addition to resuming its indiscriminate bomb attacks continued to train its members and to develop and test its improvised weaponry. It continues to target members of the security forces and security force bases and to raise money through extortion and racketeering. The party has itself been busy fomenting street disorder over the summer, exploiting the controversy over loyalist marches. Is this a commitment to peace? Is this moving the process forward?

Let me cut through Sinn Fein's doublespeak, fine tuned over years of disseminating slick propaganda and distortion.

The political reality which cannot be wished away is that for negotiations on Northern Ireland's future to succeed, trust and confidence between the parties are essential. In simple terms, this includes the confidence on the part of the unionists that the Provisional IRA will not retain the option of resorting to violence if the talks are not going their way. The breakdown of the ceasefire and the subsequent horrific attacks in London and Manchester, together with the massive arms cache uncovered on 23 September, have tragically confirmed doubts about the Provisionals' commitment in this respect. It must be clear therefore that a new ceasefire, which I urge them to declare, must be unequivocal to retain any vestige of credibility. Loyalists too, although they have held their ceasefire, must ensure that their abstention from violence remains genuine in the face of what appears to be the gathering momentum of attacks carried out by elements within, or close to, their ranks.

There have been calls for the admission of Sinn Fein to the political talks. Surely, it is argued, this is a price worth paying to overcome the current, seemingly intractable, impasse. Our response, which is entirely shared by the Irish government, is both clear and rational. Sinn Fein has consistently refused to condemn the terrorist attacks carried out by the Provisional IRA since the ending of the ceasefire. Therefore by its implicit support for those who continue to carry out these attacks, the party has excluded itself from the political process.

Let me be clear. The Government does not want Sinn Fein's exclusion, and gains nothing by it. We want them at the table. Sinn Fein has a democratic mandate. But republicans must also conduct themselves democratically by establishing an unequivocal ceasefire and then joining the nine other parties in the talks in committing themselves to exclusively peaceful methods and abiding by the democratic process as expressed in the six Mitchell

Principles.

Republicans profess to seek Irish unity. In reality however, the Provisional IRA does not aspire to Irish unity in the sense that Tone and Emmet understood it, a unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. Rather it continues the blind pursuit of a historical reversion from the bitter origin of which the Irish people, north and south, have moved on. I respect the entirely legitimate aspiration of a united Ireland. But I believe that using the bomb and the bullet in a futile attempt to achieve it is abhorred by the Irish people both as morally wrong and as an unqualified imperative whose day has gone. Those who insist on its continuation must surely realise that their past wholly counter productive efforts have sown the seeds of deep and bitter division which, even after twenty five years of conflict, has in recent months revealed a virulence not previously seen in Northern Ireland.

Since the start of the troubles, the proportion of northern Protestants who support an end to the division of Ireland has shrunk from over 20 per cent to a few percent now. The proportion describing themselves as Irish has similarly fallen from 20 per cent then to around 8 per cent now. For all the sophistry of Sinn Fein's propaganda, for all the relentless efforts of the Provisional IRA, it is clear that the 'long war' has only succeeded in alienating the very hearts and minds which nationalism claims to seek to win in order to realise its cherished aspiration.

The events of the summer past confirmed that those elements committed to the destruction of the optimism for Northern Ireland's future which so many share are not confined to one side of the political divide. While the Government recognises and will uphold the democratic right to march and demonstrate irrespective of religious or political affiliation, these disturbances were, as the Prime Minister subsequently said, inexcusable, and far beyond the legitimate demand for people to have the right to express their views and opinions.

Undoubtedly the parades issue is complex and difficult. Although the vast majority of parades pass off peacefully, there are residents in some nationalist areas who do not wish loyalist marches to pass through the areas in which they live. It is therefore vital to find a solution to which both sides of the community can lend their support. The Government has accordingly established an independent review of the parades issue under the chairmanship of Dr Peter North, which is currently accepting submissions from interested parties. I am cautiously optimistic therefore, despite the depressing turn of events over the summer, that this will tackle the problem effectively and that we will not in future witness the dreadful scenes which marked this year's marching season.

Some unionists have chosen to interpret the curtailment of their freedom to march as further evidence of the Government following a pro-nationalist agenda. I say to them that this is not the case, but they have more than my word to reassure them. Quite simply, the mechanism for any political settlement on the future constitutional status of Northern Ireland requires the consent of both unionists and nationalists. This is not just the consent of political representatives, but the consent of the people of Northern Ireland, expressed in a referendum. This constitutional safeguard is intrinsic to any political settlement, which can no more be imposed by governments through coercion than it can by terrorists through violence.

Critics of the Government's security policy in the wake of the ceasefires asked why counter terrorist measures, whether in the form of additional deployment of troops, emergency legislation, or security fortifications could not now be swept away in the new era of peace. The Provisional IRA gave the answer on 9 February at Docklands.

With predictable cynicism, Sinn Fein have blamed this return to moral

disruptcy on 'British intransigence' and 'lack of imagination'.

In fact the Government announced over one hundred de-escalatory measures in response to the reduction in the terrorist threat over the seventeen months of the republican ceasefire. These included the re-opening of all 104 border crossing points formerly closed on security grounds; the reduction in the Army's presence on the streets, with routine military patrolling in support of the RUC cut by 75 per cent; the removal of many major security installations; and the return of three Army units to their bases here and in Germany. These very real developments underlined the Government's commitment to the restoration of a peaceful environment, to the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland. There is no question - Northern Ireland was on its way back to normality before we were once again forced to batten down the hatches and return to the atmosphere of tension and fear which so many had already endured for so long.

These reductions in security, carefully assessed at the time, were right and appropriate. They were not 'concessions' to terrorism but rather reflected the changed security situation on the ground. We were particularly careful to ensure that these steps could be reversed to take account of exactly the contingency with which we are faced today. Against the background of what the Government did to reflect the change in security requirements in this period, I would ask you to set the activities of those who claim to be committed to peace.

I have not omitted the loyalists from their share of criticism for the iniquities of intimidation and punishment attacks. We should, however, recognise that their ceasefire, however tenuous, remains intact. I would urge them to maintain their restraint, although recent signs appear ominous.

This, then, is the message I wish to convey this evening. We will remain utterly resolute in our determination to resist and bring to a full and permanent end the scourge of terrorism which has blighted the lives of so many in Northern Ireland, and indeed elsewhere on these islands. We are willing to be positive, imaginative, constructive, as we clearly demonstrate during the brief respite afforded by the men of violence. Neither I nor any of my colleagues have any desire whatsoever to see a checkpoint or a fortified border crossing in Northern Ireland for one moment longer than necessary. But you may be assured that these measures will be in place for as long as they are needed, and for as long as the people of Northern Ireland require the protection of their government against indiscriminate violence. This is our first duty, and we will not flinch from it.

Our determination is shared, I know, by the Irish government, for whom terrorism represents just as serious a threat as it does to the United Kingdom. Any who doubt this might remind themselves of the despicable murder of Garda McCabe. I cannot overstate the vital importance of the co-operation between the security forces of our respective countries in mounting an effective challenge to the terrorists. In recent months, major arms and explosives finds and important arrests have undoubtedly saved lives both in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain, and I would like to pay tribute to the superbly professional and determined work of the Garda in bringing this about.

I have set out the depressing course of events during which the people of Northern Ireland have had their hopes of a new era of peace and stability cruelly thrown back in their face. I remain firmly optimistic, however, that this future will be achieved, and that the vision of a new millennium in which the guns are removed forever from Irish politics will be realised.

Optimism must be tempered with realism, but I believe that the momentum created by the seventeen months of relative freedom from violence has given rise to an irresistible will for peace in Northern Ireland. There is an

unprecedented resolve not to subject the next generation to a further twenty five years of despair.

The attainment of this goal will, we know, require a collective act of immense political will. Michael Collins described the settlement of 1921 as the 'freedom to achieve freedom'. What must be achieved in Northern Ireland and what both sides of the community there agree on and desire above all, is freedom from fear: fear of the bomb in the shopping centre, fear of the doorstep assassination, fear of the barbaric 'punishment' beating, fear of the shadow of the gun cast over democratic political negotiations.

Only by acquiring this freedom, and the trust which flows from it, can we forge an acceptable and just settlement which will bring lasting peace and stability to Northern Ireland. Surely this is the future we wish for all our children and for which we must continue to strive, undeterred by those whose vision of political destiny is rooted in a tragic and embittered past.

ENDS