

DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

His Eminence Cardinal Cahal B Daly
 Archbishop of Armagh
 Ara Coeli
 ARMAGH
 BT61 7QY

August 1996

Thank you for your letter of 28 July about recent events in Northern Ireland and their impact on the future of the peace process. I am

Private Secretary wrote to you, I was away on a mine break when your letter arrived.
 I am grateful for your continued support and for your prayers that a political settlement will eventually be achieved through dialogue.

The machinery is in place for all the political parties in Northern Ireland committed to constitutional methods to negotiate a resolution of the issues which currently divide them. *While* there is no doubt that ~~the events of recent weeks have~~ served to harden

attitudes on both sides, *in July* and I expect that when the Talks process recommences at the beginning of next month, we shall see evidence of this, but we shall do all we can to overcome ~~these~~ *mutual suspicions.* Our *own* determination to make progress, in close co-operation with the Irish Government and with others of good will, remains undiminished. ~~I am grateful for your own untiring efforts in this regard.~~

August brought news which was at least a little better. It is an event.
~~I am glad also that you found your discussions with Brian Mawhinney and Michael Ancram useful. I know you have spoken to them about the issues surrounding Drumcree, and I have read the comments in your letter with care. I will not revisit those unfortunate events here, other than to note that there are doubtless lessons to be learnt on all sides. Thankfully, the 10 August parade in Londonderry passed off peacefully. The independent Review of the arrangements for handling public processions and associated public order issues in Northern Ireland will I hope be able to come forward with recommendations which will secure cross-community support and~~

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provide a basis for resolving this highly contentious issue. I do not underestimate the complexity of the task ahead of the Review team but I am delighted that we have secured the services of Peter North, John Dunlop and Oliver Crilly to ~~carry out this work.~~

take it forward.

~~As you say, neither of us are pessimists.~~ My own commitment to achieving a fair and honourable settlement in Northern Ireland remains unchanged. Drumcree and its aftermath ^{has} ~~has been~~ a setback, but it will not be allowed to derail the process. ^{meaning} I am grateful for your continued support and for your words of encouragement.

1. As mentioned in the letter of 22 August, Mr O'Donnell (No 10) spoke to Peter North this morning to register the Prime Minister's concern that the bridge issue should not be mishandled. He is sending a note of his conversation, but told me afterwards that Mr O'Donnell has been receptive, and had promised to clear with Mr O'Donnell and ourselves the text of the latest draft being submitted to the President for despatch to the NSC (NSC members of the [T Board] and Atwood (USAID)).

2. I have spoken separately to State Department. George Talbot is meeting later at midday on other business, but is being briefed up on the bridge in helpful terms, emphasising the potential damage to US interests of either upsetting the 201 apple-cart or - more serious - undermining George Mitchell's position. Ambassador Crowe has already weighed in from London making the same points. And, as you know, Martha Pope will be at the NSC this morning speaking on Mitchell's behalf.

3. I think we have now done as much lobbying as the circuits will bear. The next test is to get our hands on the NSC's draft letter, and to feed in our comments urgently. I will pursue.

John MacArthur

Peter Westmacott

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