

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Ceremony With Prime Minister
Albert Reynolds of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters
March 17, 1994

The President. It's a great honor for me to be spending my second St. Patrick's Day in a row with the distinguished Prime Minister from Ireland. He has a presentation to make and a few remarks, and then I'll have a word or two, and we'll answer your questions.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Reynolds. Thank you. Thank you again, and I'm really thrilled and delighted and honored to be back again for a second visit to the White House, especially on this traditional day for all Irish people around the world.

In this presentation of shamrock that I'll be making in a few moments, Mr. President, we symbolize the bonds of family, of history, and of common values that our two countries share. Because of the generations of Irish people who have come to these shores, St. Patrick's Day is perhaps even more honored here than in Ireland. Rightly and most importantly, today is a celebration not just for Irish America but for all in this great Nation who share our common values of justice and democracy.

We live in a time when ambitions for peace are tempered by the realization that old animosities and deep distrust often live long in the human heart. They can give rise to terrible and prolonged violence. In this context it is both right and important that I should pay the warmest tribute to you, Mr. President, for your exceptional efforts to bring peace to the tragedies of Bosnia and the Middle East.

We in Ireland know from direct experience that conflicts over territory, identity, and political destiny can only be resolved through peaceful negotiations. That profound belief informs everything that my government and I are doing to resolve the problem of Northern Ireland. Twenty-five years of conflict, the loss of over 3,000 lives, and an immeasurable quota of human suffering have not and cannot advance the search for a lasting and equitable settlement.

As you and I discussed, Mr. President, privately this morning, there has been significant progress in our search for peace. Central to this was the joint declaration signed last December by the British Prime Minister, John Major, and myself. This defines the common ground

between our two countries on the issue of Northern Ireland.

At its heart, the declaration states that it is for the people of Ireland as a whole and alone, by agreement between the two parts, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent. That and the other principles of mutual respect, tolerance, and reconciliation which underline the declaration do not have an expiring date. Rather, in establishing them, we have sought to open a door for all parties to embrace peace and enter the political process.

In our efforts to secure a lasting settlement, we wish, as I said, to embrace all parties to the conflict. We do so in the firm knowledge that the political process can and will resolve fundamental issues and bridge the impasse that presently blocks the road to peace.

It is our fervent wish, therefore, that violence will end and that everyone will embrace the new and inclusive instruments of peace, dialog, and negotiation that are available. We need a positive decision from those concerned to enable a general move in the next and much broader phase of the peace process and to bring to an end the isolation experienced by significant sections of the community.

Mr. President, we greatly value your personal commitment to help to resolve the issue of Northern Ireland. Your support for this has been really inspiring. You share our understanding of the need to bring all communities fully into the political fold in a manner consistent with upholding democratic principles. We take heart in particular from your readiness to contribute to the peace process when and if needed. It is an enormous source of encouragement to all of us devoted to peace and reconciliation to know that your advice and your assistance as a friend to all sides is as thoughtful as it is generous. For that you have our deepest thanks.

Peace comes dropping slow, Yeats once said. But let us hope, Mr. President, that through our combined efforts, on a day in the quite near future, the presentation of shamrock will be made to you in the White House from an island uniquely dear to you and to your people that has at last found peace.

Mile buichos leat agus go n'eiri an bothair duit.

The President. Thank you so much, Mr. Prime Minister, for the wonderful bowl of shamrocks and for the sentiments and the convictions you have just expressed.

From the earliest days of our Republic the American dream has often been the story of Irish-American achievement. I'm reminded of the words of the Irish poet Thomas Kinsella, who urged that we accept, and I quote, "no limit but the possible." That is the spirit that brought many Irish to our shores, and it enriches our lives still today.

Ireland has demonstrated its global commitment to peace time and time again. And I want to thank the Prime Minister publicly today for the work that has been done with the United Nations in Lebanon and with its continuing peacekeeping role in Somalia. But nowhere is that commitment more evident than in the efforts this Prime Minister has made in Northern Ireland.

We have seen historic progress since the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister made their agreement, and historic progress since Prime Minister Reynolds was here last year. That progress is in great measure the responsibility of Prime Minister Reynolds and Prime Minister Major. They have dealt with considerable challenges in their own countries to pursue this course, and we applaud them.

The joint declaration they signed on December 15th remains the best chance for a future of tolerance and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, especially in the wake of the bomb threats against the London airports. I call upon all those who practice violence for political aims to lay down their arms. Once again, I urge those who have yet to do so to endorse the joint declaration as the best, indeed, the only way forward.

And once again, Mr. Prime Minister, I pledge the support of the United States for your courageous peace initiative.

Across our country today, in parades, in classrooms, in churches, Americans are rejoicing in the nation and the unique friendship between our nations and our shared heritage and our shared values. Tonight the Prime Minister and I will join what promises to be a lively celebration of Ireland here at the White House, with Irish-Americans from all across America. I look forward to the celebration, and I look forward to working with the Prime Minister on St. Pat-

rick's Day and every day in pursuit of peace and prosperity for both our peoples in the spirit of "no limit but the possible."

Thank you very much.

Northern Ireland

Q. Having been briefed now on the peace process today by the Irish Prime Minister, what would you say now is the role of the United States in helping the peace process along? And more specifically, do you think that you should perhaps urge Britain, not just Ireland but Britain, to go the extra mile—that may be the extra inch now—and perhaps talk to Sinn Féin, which today has issued a very conciliatory statement saying it doesn't want to discuss constitutional issues but just simply wants to talk to see what the way forward can be?

The President. Let me say, first of all, I had a conversation with the Prime Minister this morning that is not all that different from the conversation I had with Prime Minister Major. I believe both of them are committed to keeping this process going. You know as well as I do what the obstacles for inclusion are. I was encouraged by the report I have received. I have not actually read the statement, but I am quite encouraged by the report I have received of Gerry Adams' statement today. It comes at a good time, and I hope it will have a good effect.

Q. Under what circumstances would you envisage granting another visa to Mr. Adams to visit the United States?

The President. I think it's premature to discuss that. I think now what—the issue now is what is going to be the role of Sinn Féin in the ongoing peace effort. Will they join? I hope they will. I still believe that the decision I made on the visa was the correct one. We all have to take some chances for peace. I think when he came here, he saw that the Irish in America want peace. They want him to be a part of the peace process, but they want peace. And I think that there was a sense of what a political process can be and how it can work.

And so I think we have served a good purpose in doing that. And I'm very hopeful. I'm more hopeful today as a result of the report I've received about his comments. But I think it would be premature for me to say anything about any other issuance, because the one thing we don't want to do in this country—not just in Northern Ireland but in the Middle East as well or any other place where we're working for peace

where others are at odds—is to do anything to disrupt the process. We’re trying to help make the peace, not to interrupt it.

Q. Would you address Irish-Americans today, that may on St. Patrick’s Day especially be listening to what is said here at the White House, who feel incumbent to contribute money to the IRA and for Republican forces in Ireland, since a great amount of the money that goes into that is coming from the United States?

The President. I would hope all Irish-Americans would embrace the declaration and the peace process. That’s what I think they ought to do.

Q. Given your role as President of the United States and given your relationship with the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and also your relationship with the British Prime Minister, what active role do you think the United States can play in trying to find peace in Northern Ireland?

The President. Well, right now I think we ought to give Prime Minister Reynolds a chance to work with Prime Minister Major to keep pushing it forward. I thought that we had a role to play in the issuance of the visa because I thought it would make a statement that the United States is searching for peace, wanted to give Mr. Adams a chance to have his voice heard here, make his statements here, articulate his concerns here, see the political process here, and hear from Irish-Americans that we support peace. I think that was the major thing that we could do at this moment. I think now we’ve seen a very heartening statement, apparently, by Mr. Adams today. I’ve had both the Prime

Minister of Great Britain and the Prime Minister of Ireland reaffirm their commitment to the process, and let’s see if we get a few breaks.

Whitewater Investigation

Q. Mr. President, on the Hill today you may hear from some Members, even Democrats, that the prospect of hearings on Whitewater is inevitable. What will you tell them?

The President. That it’s—the same thing I’ve always said: It’s up to Congress. I read a book the other night that in the early part of our century, one of our first four or five Presidents, a \$40 mirror was bought for the White House that was bought in another country, and the Congress in the early 1800’s spent several thousand dollars on hearings looking into this \$40 mirror. So I don’t know that—it’s up to the Congress. They’re an independent and coequal branch of Government, and they ought to do whatever it is they think is the right thing to do.

Bosnia

Q. Are you encouraged by Bosnia, sir?

The President. Yes, I am encouraged.
Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:59 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin. Prime Minister Reynolds’ closing remarks in Gaelic translate as, “A thousand thanks for everything you have done, and I wish you every success.”

Remarks at the Celebration of Ireland Dinner March 17, 1994

We are in the grip of the day, aren’t we? [*Laughter*] Thank you so much. Prime Minister and Mrs. Reynolds and to all our guests tonight, a warm welcome. *Ceade mile failte.*

Tonight we sought to honor the Prime Minister, his wife, and his family, and his family of fellow Irish men and women, in a way inspired by the warm and convivial hospitality of the Irish themselves that they have brought to our shores now through the ages.

There was a grand party in this house a long time ago, in 1829, when the first Irish-American

was inaugurated as President of the United States. Andrew Jackson was the only President in our Nation’s history whose parents were both immigrants to America. They came from Carrickfergus, a little town near Belfast. And their son grew up to be a great Democrat and a man of the people. When “Old Hickory,” as he was called then, opened this house to his people, so many came that the furniture was crushed in the excitement. That’s probably why so many of you have to stand tonight. [*Laughter*] The crowd squeezed so closely around the new