

1993: Our Northern Editor Anne Cadwallader looks back EVERYTHING TO WIN,



FOR most people 1993 will go down in history as the year both Irish and British Governments put the North at the top of their political agendas — the year that peace seemed a faint prospect rather than a complete impossibility.

Sinn Fein now says it will be well into January before it gives its final response to the Downing Street Declaration, although it's looking increasingly likely that the party will not accept it in its entirety.

It's become a cliché. Every year journalists write that the following one will be crucial in the history of the North, but rarely has that been more true than it is now. We face 1994 with everything to play for, everything to win, everything to lose.

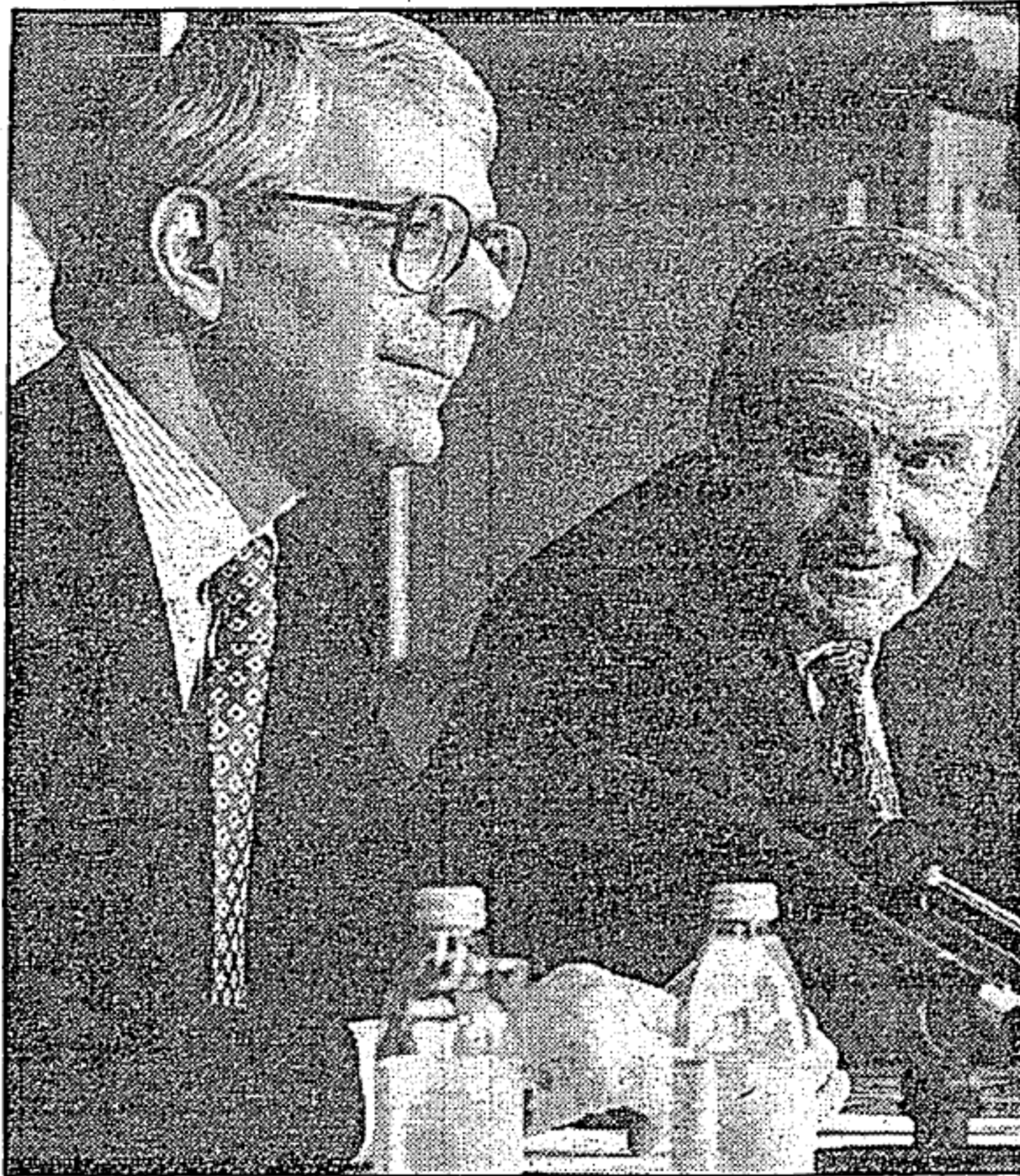
If the momentum of the latter part of 1993 can be maintained, then the political landscape of the North could be very different this time next year — although, tragically, it's difficult to see how more deaths can be avoided.

All the political punditry and speculation seems very remote to the families and friends of the 50 people killed by loyalists and the 33 killed by republican paramilitaries in 1993. For them, peace, even should it come tomorrow, is already too late.

In a bloodcurdling message at the start of 1993 the UDA had threatened to unleash its forces with "a ferocity never before imagined" on the nationalist population in the North. It was not an idle threat. Three days into the new year came the savage killing of father and son, Patrick and Diarmuid Shields, and the serious wounding of another son, Davog, in their remote shop-cum-home in Co Tyrone. Had their mother, Brid, not barred the living room door with a sofa, the entire family would have been wiped out. At the time, there was no talk of any "pan-nationalist front", no Hume/Adams talks, no "excuse" for the killings.

A month after the deaths of Pat and Diarmuid Shields, a beautiful young girl with everything to live for, a student at Queens University, took her own life. In her diary, left behind for her grieving parents, Julie Statham explained she could not live without Diarmuid. Her death highlighted the misery the gunmen and bombers leave behind them.

SOME commentators talk about "the decreasing death rate" in the North since the 1970s. They point out that more people get killed on the roads than from



■ PEACE HOPES: John Major and Albert Reynolds at the Dublin summit.

It's impossible to say whether or not 1994 will be a better, quieter, more peaceful year

paramilitary violence. The implication is that people in England and the Republic find the level of violence — running at between 80 and 90 people at year in the North — "acceptable." That is the ultimate obscenity for the victims and their families.

In January eight people died. Five were Catholic victims of the UVF and UFF, including Sharon McKenna, shot dead in North Belfast as she delivered a meal to a sick pensioner friend who, ironically, was a Protestant.

The IRA killed two people that month — one a young Catholic RUC man who died from a single bullet wound in Derry city centre. At his funeral, the Bishop of Derry, Dr Edward Daly, appealed to

Catholics to help the RUC find those responsible.

February saw the deaths of seven people. Two innocent Catholics shot dead in country areas by loyalists. During one killing, three children saw their father being gunned down. The same month, the IRA killed five people — an alleged informer, a British soldier, a part-time RIR man (formerly UDR), and two policemen, one of whom had just left his Catholic girlfriend home.

Loyalists killed seven people in March, one a member of Sinn Fein, one a member of the IRA. They were none too choosy about their targets. Damien Walsh, 17, one of the youngest victims of the Troubles this year, was

working in a coal yard when he was shot down. The same day loyalists killed four men in Castlerock.

This was the month of Warrington: the IRA killed Jonathan Ball, 2, and Timothy Parry, 12, with a bomb placed in a rubbish bin on a busy shopping street in the Lancashire town. Fury and shame at the IRA's action led thousands to O'Connell Street and the foundation of Susan McHugh's Peace '93 movement.

In the North, the scenes in Dublin caused great hurt and resentment. People wondered why Southerners had never taken to the streets in such numbers in protest at the deaths of children in Belfast and Derry.

Peace '93 never really took off in the North, where most people believe a hard-won political solution is the only answer, not just marches or demonstrations for peace, although they demonstrate that everyone is demanding peace.

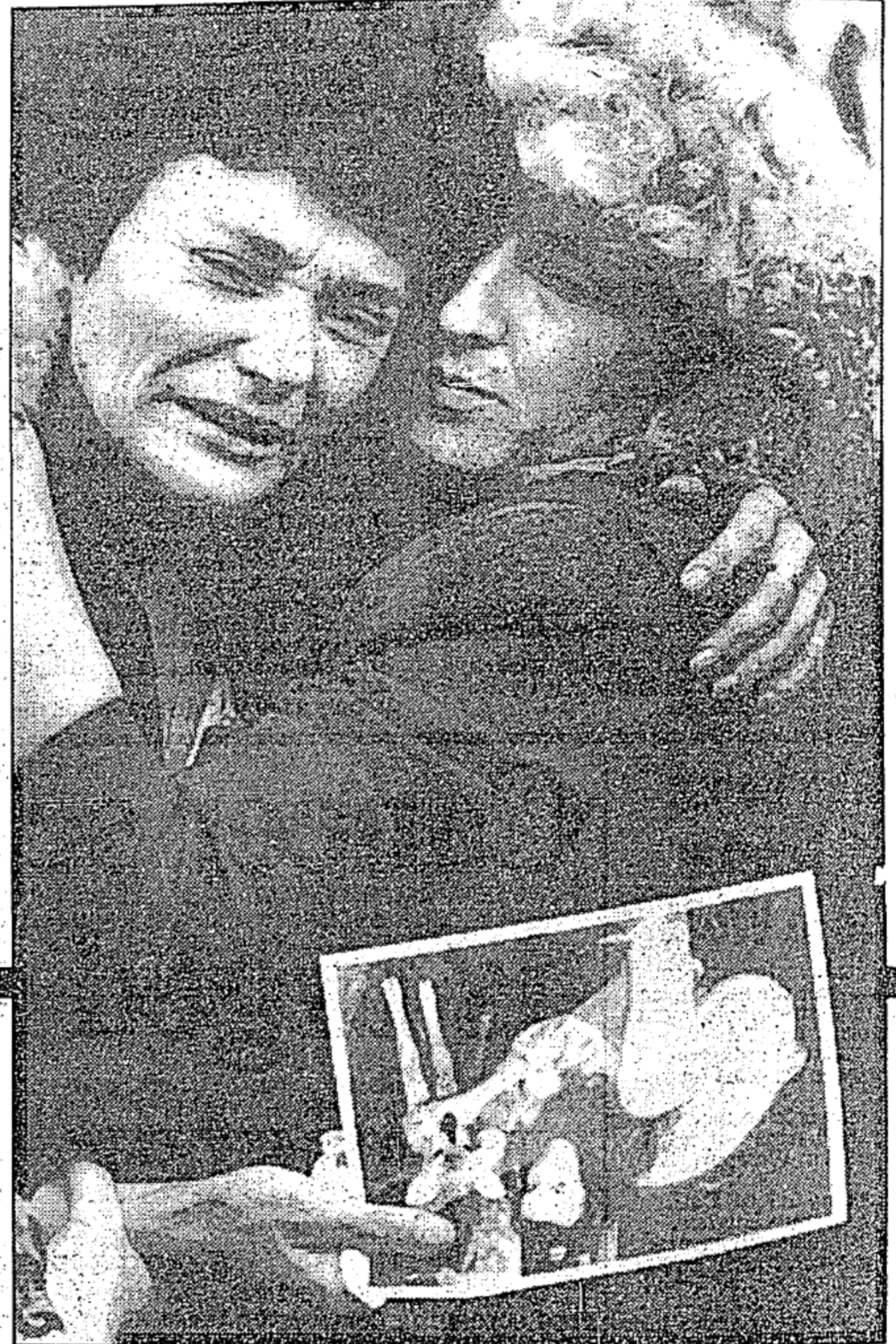
April saw what was, arguably, the single most significant bomb in the IRA's history. On the 24th, it bombed the City of London, causing millions in damage and hurting the capital city's image as a stable, safe place.

April also saw, arguably, the single most significant political event of the year when it became known that SDLP leader John Hume and Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams were having

talks. It's understood these actually began in February, but the two were spotted in Derry at Easter and the cat was well out of the bag.

ALTHOUGH there had been many loyalist killings before, as well as attacks on the homes of SDLP members, from now on the phrase, "pan-nationalist front", was used increasingly by unionist politicians. Some Dublin commentators also took up the phrase, to the disgust of the SDLP and others.

In May loyalists shot one of their own as well as a Sinn Fein member, Alan Lundy, who was helping a friend, Councillor Alex Maskey, put up more



■ SHANKILL: Gina Murray holds a photograph of her daughter, Leanne, one of the victims of the IRA bomb in Fizzell's chip shop.