

Dermot Nally Papers

UCDA P254/53

29 November 1993

FAX

Pages: 1 and docs as recd

*FRA statements etc -
(Warrington Bombing →)*

TO: HQ

FROM: BELFAST

FOR: A/SEC O HUIGINN

FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

House of Commons Debate

We asked if the relevant papers could be made available when we were informed of the NIO statement on Saturday evening. The British Joint Secretary informed us at that time that he could not yet do so but that we had had been briefed on Friday, as far as it was possible, in another channel (as you are aware). We have reminded the British side repeatedly of the importance and urgency we attached to obtaining the documents, particularly with a view to framing our own public response. We have now (4.45pm) received the Secretary of State's speech and documents which are being faxed herewith as they are received.

**PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT: MESSAGES
BETWEEN THE IRA AND THE GOVERNMENT**

Madam Speaker

With permission, I will make a statement about messages between the IRA leadership and the Government.

There has for some years been a means of communication by which messages could be conveyed indirectly, between the Government and the IRA leadership. Clearly such a chain could only function if its secrecy was respected on both sides.

At the end of February this year a message was received from the IRA leadership. It said:

"The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close. We wish to have an unannounced ceasefire in order to hold dialogue leading to peace. We cannot announce such a move as it will lead to confusion for the volunteers because

the press will misinterpret it as a surrender. We cannot meet Secretary of State's public renunciation of violence, but it would be given privately as long as we were sure that we were not being tricked".

That message came from Martin McGuinness.

Madam Speaker, I have placed in the Library and the Vote Office all consequent messages which HMG has received and despatched.

The Government had a duty to respond to that message. I will read to the House the substantive response which, after an intermediate exchange, we despatched on 19 March. The text published yesterday was no more than instructions as to how this was to be transmitted. The message was in these terms:

"1. The importance of what has been said, the wish to take it seriously, and the influence of events on the ground, have been acknowledged. All of those involved share a responsibility to work to end the conflict. No one has a monopoly of suffering. There is a need for a healing process.

2. It is essential that there should be no deception on either side, and also that no deception should, through any misunderstanding, be seen where it is not intended. It is also essential that both sides have a clear and realistic understanding of what it is possible to achieve, so that neither side can in the future claim that it has been tricked.

3. The position of the British Government on dealing with those who espouse violence is clearly understood. This is why the envisaged sequence of events is important. We note that what is being sought at this stage is advice, and that any dialogue would follow an unannounced halt to violent activity. We confirm that if violence had genuinely been brought to an end, whether or not that fact had been announced, then dialogue could take place.

4. It must be understood, though, that once a halt to activity became public, the British Government would have to acknowledge and defend its entry into dialogue. It would do so by pointing out that its

5. The British Government has made clear that:

- no political objective which is advocated by constitutional means alone could properly be excluded from discussion in the talks process;
- the commitment to return as much responsibility as possible to local politicians should be seen within a wider framework of stable relationships to be worked out with all concerned;
- new political arrangements would be designed to ensure that no legitimate

group was excluded from eligibility to share in the exercise of this responsibility;

- in the event of a genuine and established ending of violence, the whole range of responses to it would inevitably be looked at afresh.

6. The British Government has no desire to inhibit or impede legitimate constitutional expression of any political opinion, or any input to the political process, and wants to see included in this process all main parties which have sufficiently shown they genuinely do not espouse violence. It has no blueprint. It wants an agreed accommodation, not an imposed settlement, arrived at through an inclusive process in which the parties are free agents.

7. The British Government does not have, and will not adopt, any prior objective of "ending of partition". The British Government cannot enter a

talks process, or expect others to do so, with the purpose of achieving a predetermined outcome, whether the "ending of partition" or anything else. It has accepted that the eventual outcome of such a process could be a united Ireland, but only on the basis of the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. Should this be the eventual outcome of a peaceful democratic process, the British Government would bring forward legislation to implement the will of the people here. But unless the people of Northern Ireland come to express such a view, the British Government will continue to uphold the union, seeking to ensure the good governance of Northern Ireland, in the interests of all its people, within the totality of relationships in these islands.

8. Evidence on the ground that any group had ceased violent activity would induce resulting reduction of security force activity. Were violence to end, the British Government's overall response in terms of security force activity on the ground would still have to take account of the overall threat. The

threat posed by Republican and Loyalist groups which remained active would have to continue to be countered.

9. It is important to establish whether this provides a basis for the way forward. We are ready to answer specific questions or to give further explanation."

It is clear that this message was consistent with our declared policy: namely that if such people wanted to enter into talks or negotiations with the Government they first had genuinely to end violence. Not just temporarily, but for good. If they did, and showed sufficiently that they meant it, we would not want, for our part, to continue to exclude them from political talks. That remains our policy.

The IRA sent a reply on 10 May which did not constitute the unequivocal assurance of a genuine end to violence on which we had insisted. Clearly a temporary ceasefire would not do.

Substantive contact was resumed on 2 November.

The IRA sent the following message:

"This problem cannot be solved by the Reynolds Spring situation, although they're part of it. You appear to have rejected the Hume Adams situation though they too are part of it.

Every day all the main players are looking for singular solutions. It can't be solved singularly. We offered the 10 May. You've rejected it. Now we can't even have dialogue to work out how a total end to all violence can come about. We believe that the country could be at the point of no return. In plain language please tell us through as a matter of urgency when you will open dialogue in the event of a total end to hostilities. We believe that if all the documents involved are put on the table - including your 9 paragrapher and our 10th May that we have the basis of an understanding."

Our reply was despatched on 3 November:

"1. Your message of 2 November is taken as being of the greatest importance and significance. The answer to the specific question you raise is given in paragraph 4 below.

2. We hold to what was said jointly and in public by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in Brussels on 29 October. A copy of the statement is annexed. There can be no departure from what is said there and in particular its statement that there could be no secret agreements or understandings between Governments and organisations supporting violence as a price for its cessation and its call on them to renounce for good the use of, or support for, violence. There can also be no departure from the constitutional guarantee that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of a majority of its people.

3. It is the public and consistent position of the British Government that any dialogue could only follow a permanent end to violent activity.

4. You ask about the sequence of events in the event of a total end to hostilities. If, as you have offered, you were to give us an unequivocal assurance that violence has indeed been brought to a permanent end, and that accordingly Sinn Fein is now committed to political progress by peaceful and democratic means alone, we will make clear publicly our commitment to enter exploratory dialogue with you. Our public statement will make clear that, provided your private assurance is promptly confirmed publicly after our public statement and that events on the ground are fully consistent with this, a first meeting for exploratory dialogue will take place within a week of Parliament's return in January.

5. Exploratory dialogue will have the following purposes:

- (i) to explore the basis upon which Sinn Fein would come to be admitted to an inclusive political talks process to which the British Government is committed but without anticipating the negotiations within that process;
- (ii) to exchange views on how Sinn Fein would be able over a period to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland;
- (iii) to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

6. The attached Annex summarises the sequence of events and provides answers to the procedural questions concerning exploratory dialogue which have been raised.

7. If, in advance of our public statement, any public statement is made on your behalf which appears to us inconsistent with this basis for proceeding it would not be possible for us then to proceed.

8. If we receive the necessary assurance, which you have offered, that violence has been brought to an end, we shall assume that you are assenting to the basis for proceeding explained in this note and its attachment."

The House will appreciate from what I have read out, and from the other messages when they have time to study them, that our main objective has been to reinforce and spell out in private our publicly stated positions.

It is for the IRA and their supporters to explain why they have failed to deliver the promised ending of violence. They should do so at once. Murder in Northern Ireland is no more tolerable than murder anywhere else in the United Kingdom. We must never lose sight of the fact that it is the terrorists who must answer for the deaths, destruction and misery of the last 25 years.

It lies therefore with the IRA, and with them alone, to end their inhuman crimes. It is for them and those who support and justify them to explain why they have wickedly failed to do that.

I promise the House and the people of Northern Ireland that, for our part, we shall not cease our efforts to bring violence to a permanent end. As my right Hon Friend told the House on 18 November if we do not succeed on this occasion we shall keep exploring again and again the opportunities for peace. Peace, properly attained, is a prize worth risks.

If a genuine end to violence is promised, the way would still be open for Sinn Fein to enter the political arena after a sufficient interval to demonstrate that they mean it. Our message of 5 November again spelt that out.

The key to peace is in the hands of the IRA.

MESSAGES PASSED BETWEEN HMG AND THE PROVISIONAL MOVEMENT. FEBRUARY
AND NOVEMBER 1993

Notes

1. Dates of messages. The nature of the chain was such that transmission could take a variable length of time. The dates of transmission given are those on which the message was sent. The date attributed may not however be that on which the message was received.

2. Many messages were oral and these are marked with a star..

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement.
22 February 1993

The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close. We wish to have an unannounced ceasefire in order to hold dialogue leading to peace. We cannot announce such a move as it will lead to confusion for the volunteers because the press will misinterpret it as a surrender. We cannot meet Secretary of State's public renunciation of violence, but it would be given privately as long as we were sure that we were not being tricked.

Note

Accompanied by texts of speeches given to Sinn Fein Ard Fheis by Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams.

British Message sent 26 February 1993

We understand and appreciate the seriousness of what has been said. We wish to take it seriously and at face value. That will of course be influenced by events on the ground over the coming days and weeks. In view of the importance of the message it is not possible to give a substantive reply immediately. It is however necessary that this acknowledgement is given promptly. We are working to reply further as swiftly as possible. We understand the need for this.

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 5 March

We were pleased to receive this message and welcome the possibility of a meeting. We would like two representatives, Martin McGuinness and Gerry Kelly, to have an exploratory meeting with you as soon as possible.

British message sent 11 March 1993

Wishing to take seriously what has developed, we have been preparing a considered and substantive response.

But in the light of the continued violence of recent days since the first response we are not yet able to send a substantive response.

There must be some evidence of consistency between word and deed.

Given that background our ability to send a substantive response will depend on events on the ground.

British 9-paragraph note, sent on 19 March 1993

1. The importance of what has been said, the wish to take it seriously, and the influence of events on the ground, have been acknowledged. All of those involved share a responsibility to work to end the conflict. No one has a monopoly of suffering. There is a need for a healing process.
2. It is essential that there should be no deception on either side, and also that no deception should, through any misunderstanding, be seen where it is not intended. It is also essential that both sides have a clear and realistic understanding of what it is possible to achieve, so that neither side can in the future claim that it has been tricked.
3. The position of the British Government on dealing with those who espouse violence is clearly understood. This is why the envisaged sequence of events is important. We note that what is being sought at this stage is advice, and that any dialogue would follow an unannounced halt to violent activity. We confirm that if violence had genuinely been brought to an end, whether or not that fact had been announced, then dialogue could take place.
4. It must be understood, though, that once a halt to activity became public, the British Government would have to acknowledge and defend its entry into dialogue. It would do so by pointing out that its agreement to exploratory dialogue about the possibility of an inclusive process had been given because - and only because - it had received a private assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end.
5. The British Government has made clear that:

- no political objective which is advocated by constitutional means alone could properly be excluded from discussion in the talks process;
- the commitment to return as much responsibility as possible to local politicians should be seen within a wider framework of stable relationships to be worked out with all concerned;
- new political arrangements would be designed to ensure that no legitimate group was excluded from eligibility to share in the exercise of this responsibility;
- in the event of a genuine and established ending of violence, the whole range of responses to it would inevitably be looked at afresh.

6. The British Government has no desire to inhibit or impede legitimate constitutional expression of any political opinion, or any input to the political process, and wants to see included in this process all main parties which have sufficiently shown they genuinely do not espouse violence. It has no blueprint. It wants an agreed accommodation, not an imposed settlement, arrived at through an inclusive process in which the parties are free agents.

7. The British Government does not have, and will not adopt, any prior objective of "ending of partition". The British Government cannot enter a talks process, or expect others to do so, with the purpose of achieving a predetermined outcome, whether the "ending of partition" or anything else. It has accepted that the eventual outcome of such a process could be a united Ireland, but only on the basis of the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. Should this be the eventual outcome of a peaceful democratic process, the British Government would bring forward legislation to implement the will of the people here. But unless the people of Northern Ireland

come to express such a view, the British Government will continue to uphold the union, seeking to ensure the good governance of Northern Ireland, in the interests of all its people, within the totality of relationships in these islands.

8. Evidence on the ground that any group had ceased violent activity would induce resulting reduction of security force activity. Were violence to end, the British Government's overall response in terms of security force activity on the ground would still have to take account of the overall threat. The threat posed by Republican and Loyalist groups which remained active would have to continue to be countered.

9. It is important to establish whether this provides a basis for the way forward. We are ready to answer specific questions or to give further explanation.

Speaking note accompanying the 9-paragraph British side sent on
19 March 1991

This process is fraught with difficulties for the British Government, as must be obvious. They are nevertheless prepared to tackle these and accept the risks they entail.

But it must be recognised that all acts of violence hereafter could only enhance those difficulties and risks, quite conceivably to the point when the process would be destroyed.

If that were to occur the British would consider that a potentially historic opportunity had been squandered. =

The paper gives our substantive advice in response to the initial message. As it makes clear, we wish to establish whether this provides a basis for a way forward. We on our side are ready to answer specific questions or give further explanation.

You should also emphasise to your interlocutor the British Government's acknowledgement that all of those involved share a responsibility to work to end the conflict. We agree on the need for a healing process. We wish to take a positive view of these developments and hope that it will be possible to continue to do so.

Note: (Not part of speaking note)

The version published in 'The Observer' on 28 November 1993 contained, in addition, peripheral instructions as to how this 'speaking note' and its accompanying written note were to be used, ie it was prefaced with "The following instruction should be delivered orally to ... when you hand over Annex C in written form. In handing over this written message - and you need make no bones

about the fact that it is a written message that you are handing over - you should emphasise to ... the following points. You should emphasise that...", etc.

There was an additional paragraph added which said: "You should be aware that the above has been personally approved by SOSNI, in fact all but the first sentence of the first paragraph is his own wording, in other words it is not negotiable."

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement. 22 March 1993

It is with total sadness that we have to accept responsibility for the recent action.

The last thing we needed at this sensitive time was what has happened.

It is the fate of history that we find ourselves in this position, all we can think of at this time is an old Irish proverb: God's hand works in mysterious ways. Our hope is that this hand will lead to peace and friendship.

Note

The 'recent action' was the Warrington bombing on 20 March 1993.

British message sent on 5 May 1993

Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently made clear. We cannot conceivably disregard them. We gave in good faith the advice which was sought, taking what we were told at face value. It is difficult to reconcile that with recent events.

2. Nonetheless we confirm that we stand by the 9-paragraph document, which we prepared in response to that request for advice.

3. We have not received the necessary private assurance that organised violence has been brought to an end. We hope that we do so soon and that violence is genuinely brought to an end as, without that, further progress cannot be made.

British message prepared in response to an indirect oral inquiry, sent on 6 May 1993

"Yes, the order of events was the main problem. We will be back tomorrow with a more detailed explanation of exactly what we mean."

Note

The inquiry related to whether the British had difficulty with "the order of events", ie whether exploratory dialogue should follow, or precede, a halt to violent activity.

British message of 7 May 1993

"We confirm that we stand by the 9-paragraph document.

The Secretary of State will, as you know, be away until next week. This gives the opportunity for you to consider any other questions which you may wish to put to us or to seek further explanation.

We confirm that the ordering of events is important. The 9-paragraph note made clear in paragraphs 3 and 4 that any dialogue could only follow a halt to violent activity and receipt of a private assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end."

Message from the leadership of the
Provisional Movement, of 10 May 1993

We welcome face-to-face exchanges with your representative. Given the seriousness of this project we trust that this represents only the beginning of such meetings. We are concerned that the movement to further meetings has been delayed by your side. It is important that we are frank with each other. Our seriousness in addressing this project should not be in any doubt but it is greatly tempered by the caution occasioned by the far from satisfactory experiences in 1972, 1975 and during the Hunger Strikes of 1980 and 1981. It will be wrong to minimise or underestimate the problems which these experiences have given rise to. Having said that, we are responding directly to your request for advice recognising fully the sensitivity of any position from you or us which is committed to paper at this stage. Our response has been couched accordingly. But it is clear that we are prepared to make a crucial move if a genuine peace process is set in place. You say you require a private assurance in order to defend publicly your entry into dialogue with us. We have proceeded to this stage without assurance. We wish now to proceed without delay to the delegation meetings. In order to facilitate this step we sought and received a commitment which will permit you to proceed so that we can both explore the potential for developing a real peace process. This depends on agreement between us about the next stage and particularly about the seniority of your representatives. It is important that you understand how important a gesture this is; it underlines the sincerity of those involved and their faith in us.

We wish to stress that we will not be party to any dealings which would undermine this faith. To do so will serve only to damage our peace project and the overall quest for peace. Democratic reasons clearly determine that Sinn Féin's right to represent its electorate and to promote its analysis should be

accepted and acted upon. This is the basis on which we enter into dialogue.

We need to agree agenda and formats for meetings etc. We have appointed a small secretariat to assist in this task. We would like to nominate someone to liaise with Martin McGuinness on this. We also have a number of questions. They have to do with the mechanics of the sequence outlined by you and they are:

- (a) Who will represent you?
- (b) When will the British Government be politically represented in this process and by whom?
- (c) We need clarification of the phrase "progressive entry into dialogue".
- (d) When will this start?
- (e) Where is the proposed venue?

It would be more practical and quicker if these details could be agreed directly with Mr McGuinness. If this is not possible we ask that you proceed through the usual channel as soon as possible.

Note

The "face to face exchanges with your representative" referred to in the first sentence was the unauthorised meeting between Mr McGuinness and a British official.

Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 1 June 1993

The Provisional leadership is dismayed that it has not yet received a formal reply to its offer contained in the speaking note of 11 May 1993.

The leadership is particularly dismayed because it had placed on the table the offer of a total cessation which carried its hopes for the future of all the people in these islands.

The various incidents which have taken place are the inevitable result of this vacuum and without co-operation the future looks bleak for all concerned.

Note

The reference to the "offer of a total cessation" is to the message of 10 May. This was said to contain such an offer. Any such commitment would evidently have been equivocal and conditional.

Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement 11 July 1993

We are most displeased at what we read in the popular press. It seems obvious to ourselves that some of [your] colleagues are leaking what we had come to regard as a confidence between ourselves and [you]. The [RUC] are clearly well informed of whatever the situation was and even more clearly are briefing people like [a journalist is named]. As usual we have kept our word and there hasn't been any deviation from our established position of saying nothing. We view the latest breach with extreme disquiet and furthermore we seek an explanation as to what is happening and why [your side] are encouraging the position to develop.

Message from leadership of the Provisional Movement 22 July

1. We welcome this contact and hope it can help create a healing process which removes both the causes and the consequences of conflict. Everyone shares the responsibility to work to bring about a real and lasting peace in Ireland. Republicans are not reluctant to face up to our responsibility in this but the British Government clearly has the power and the major responsibility to initiate the necessary process.

2. Our long-standing position has been of willingness to enter into dialogue with a view to resolving the conflict. In all of this we do not seek to impose preconditions nor should preconditions be imposed on us. This is not a position we could easily recommend let alone successfully defend.

Dialogue and negotiations are necessary and inevitable if this conflict is to be resolved on a democratic basis. Preconditions represent obstacles to peace.

Moreover, after more than two decades of conflict and political impasse, we hold as self-evident the view that democratic, political and practical imperatives clearly require the open involvement and inclusion of all political views if a democratic resolution is to be sought and achieved. Democratic reasons clearly determine that Sinn Fein's right to represent its electorate and to promote its analysis should be accepted and acted upon. This is the basis upon which we enter into dialogue.

3. The route to peace in Ireland is to be found in the restoration to the Irish people of our right to national self-determination - in the free exercise of this right without impediment of any kind.

4. British sovereignty over the six-counties, as with all of Ireland before partition, is the inherent cause of political instability and conflict. This must be addressed within the democratic context of the exercise of the right to national self-determination if the cause of instability and conflict is to be removed.

5. We seek to assist the establishment of, and to support, a process which, with due regard for the real difficulties involved, culminates in the exercise of that right and the end of your jurisdiction.

6. We believe that the wish of the majority of the Irish people is for Irish unity. We believe that an adherence to democratic principles makes Irish unity inevitable. The emerging political and economic imperatives both within Ireland and within the broader context of greater European political union support the logic of Irish unity. It is our view therefore that the British Government should play a crucial and constructive role in persuading the unionist community to reach an accommodation with the rest of the Irish people.

7. Your disavowal of any prior objective is contradicted by your commitment to uphold the unionist veto. The consequence of upholding the veto is, in effect, to set as your objective the maintenance of partition and the six-county statelet. And, consequently, the maintenance of the primary source of the conflict.

Since its creation 72 years ago, the six-country statelet has been in constant crisis. Its survival has always been dependent on the

existence and exercise of repressive legislation, coercion and discrimination. Its existence lies at the heart of the present conflict and divisions, both in Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland.

8. We recognise that the concerns and perceived concerns of the unionist population about their position in an Irish national democracy must be addressed and resolved in the form of the greatest reassurance possible, including legislation for all measures agreed in the course of the process of negotiations. This process of national reconciliation must secure the political, religious and democratic rights of the northern unionist population.

That is not only the democratic norm but a practical necessity-if we are to advance the cause of peace in Ireland and find a way out the present impasse.

9. The most urgent issue facing the people of Ireland and Britain is the need for a genuine peace process which sets equality, justice, and political stability as its objectives and, has as its means, dialogue and all-embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles. In attempting to progress towards that position we are prepared to be as reasonable and flexible as possible.

In this context, we are willing to seriously consider any proposal which genuinely aims to set such a process in train and to take the accompanying political risks involved.

10. We accept, of course, that it is essential that both sides have a clear and realistic understanding of what it is possible to achieve. But we are sure you will agree that what is realistic is dependent upon the existing conditions at any given point and the political will to move the situation on. If the essential political will exists then the construction, at this time, of a peace process is clearly feasible.

11. We believe that there exists a basis for progress which can be developed into a genuine, realistic and democratic peace process. The potentially historic opportunity which this represents for the cause of peace in Ireland should not be lost. We have outlined our position. You have outlined yours. It is now time to move on. You should arrange for us to do so as speedily as possible.

Note

This paper is the response to the British message of 19 March, mentioned in the Provisionals' message of 14 August. It was belatedly passed to the intermediaries, but not formally 'tabled' - again, as the 14 August message points out.

British message sent on 17 July 1993

'The importance, seriousness and significance of your message of 10 May was fully understood.

As you know, consideration was being given at the highest level to a far-reaching response. It would have replied to the questions posed and was intended to remove remaining doubts, misconceptions and suspicions. There was no ulterior motive in any delay, and you would have had the response as soon as it was cleared. But this response needed to be carefully and deliberately written to avoid misunderstanding or suspicion about bad faith. It also needed to be cleared at the highest level. You should understand this, as it took you some time to respond to the nine paragraph note, presumably for the same reasons.

Events on the ground shortly after the [Northern Ireland local] Elections of 19 May, however, made it impossible to proceed with this response. Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently made clear. We cannot conceivably disregard them. Although it was absolutely clear from the attacks which took place in March that events on the ground could halt progress, these attacks following the May elections went ahead. This has happened several times now with an inevitable result.

This said, the position of the nine paragraph note stands and progress is still possible. Does the ending of conflict remain your objective, and is there a way forward?

There is one very important point which needs to be answered to remove possible misunderstandings. Recent pronouncements, including the Bodestown speech, seem to imply that unless your analysis of the way forward is accepted within a set time, the halt in violence will only be temporary. This is not acceptable.

The reasons for not talking about a permanent cessation are understood, but the peace process cannot be conditional on the acceptance of any particular or single analysis. The views of others involved must also be recognised as valid, though you will of course want to promote your own views. Paragraph 7 of the 9 paragraph note sets out our position.

Can you confirm that you envisage a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward?

If you can, we remind you that this process of dialogue leading to an inclusive political process can only start after we have received the necessary assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end. In the meantime progress has to be subject to events on the ground.

Note

The Bodentown speech mentioned in para 5 was one made by Mr McGuinness at the annual Republican commemoration of Wolfe Tone at Bodentown.

Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 14 August 1993

We are concerned at the inflexibility of your most recent communication. It does not reflect, in tone or content, the pre 10th May position. This coupled with recent political statements must raise a serious question over your commitment to a real peace process.

Sinn Fein is committed to securing peace and an end to conflict. In our view this requires a genuine peace process which sets equality, justice and political stability as its objectives and has as its means dialogue and all embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles.

In attempting to progress towards that situation we are prepared to be as reasonable and flexible as possible.

There is a way forward for all who have the political will to grasp it. Our will to do so should not be in any doubt.

We are perplexed by your latest communication. In this you require a private unilateral assurance, that organised violence has been brought to an end. This is implicitly recognised in the contacts which have been made in the past several years. Without any such assurance we were prepared to proceed to the point of a face to face meeting. We welcomed this development.

In the course of that exchange you asserted the belief that a two week suspension to accommodate talks would result in republicans being persuaded that there is no further need for armed struggle.

Because of our commitment to a lasting settlement and despite all of the difficulties involved we sought and received a commitment to

facilitate that step so that we could both explore the potential for a real peace process. We acknowledge this positive response to our request as a sign of the seriousness of those involved.

The commitment was conveyed to you by the intermediaries. You failed to grasp that opportunity. This failure has frustrated any further developments.

Your latest written communication states that the "importance, seriousness and significance" of this message "was fully understood". The logic of that should have been to move forward on the outlined basis. Regrettably that did not happen. Instead you did not respond to this development.

We believe that this may be for expedient, internal and domestic party political reasons. If we are to move forward such narrow considerations must be set to one side. We are not interested in playing games.

In addition, much time prior to this was devoted by us to the drafting of an 11 paragraph response to your 9 paragraph document. This has been lodged with the intermediaries for some time now. It was our intention to put this on the agenda when the joint secretariat, proposed by us, met to agree procedures. Because of your failure to respond this did not happen.

The manner in which we have handled this project is a clear demonstration of our seriousness and commitment to bringing about a peace process. The way in which you have handled it has damaged the project and may have increased the difficulties.

Your failure to respond, coupled with recent statements by your Prime Minister and other senior ministers shows no flexibility or imagination.

As for events on the ground. The greatest number of fatalities for some time now in the conflict have resulted from the actions of loyalists groups acting both on their own agenda and as surrogates for British intelligence. South African guns supplied by British agent Brian Nelson with the full knowledge of the British authorities are being used for attacks on the nationalist population, members of Sinn Fein and their families.

This is the reality of events on the ground which we seek to change, so let us be serious. There is conflict. The issue is its resolution.

The absence of such a peace process condemns us all to ongoing conflict and tragedy.

Note

The statement in para 6 that there was a suggestion that a two week suspension could accommodate talks was incorrect. HMG's message of 3 September dealt with this point and a number of others raised by the 14 August message.

Message from the leadership of the
Provisional Movement, 30 August 1993

We reiterate our concern at the continuing leaks from your side. The Sunday Times story of 22nd August 1993 was but the latest in a recent series which include a previous Sunday Times article and several informed references in public statements by a number of Unionist spokesmen. We are also convinced and concerned that the recent Cook Report is connected to the above revelations.

British message transmitted 3 September 1993

1. The importance of clear mutual understanding has already been recognised. Minds do not seem to be meeting at the moment. This needs to be overcome.
2. The note you sent on 14 August did not deal with a crucial point. It did not confirm that you envisage a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward.
3. On a further point in it, the Government side has not asserted a belief that a two weeks suspension would have the result described in paragraph 6. On the contrary, it has been their consistent position that violence must be brought to an end before any process could begin.
4. Equally it is accepted that your side genuinely and reasonably believed it had made a serious and significant offer. If it is the case that your side believes it has been met with indifference, or worse, then it shows then both sides must strive to be more clear with each other.
6. The important thing, without raking over every point of detail, is to establish whether there is a clearly understood way forward which could be agreed and adopted, without sacrifice of essential principles on either side, in pursuit of the objectives of securing peace, stability and reconciliation.
7. Two points are of special importance:
 - (1) since it is not possible to hold discussions under the threat of violence, there must be an end to violent activity before the process could begin;

(ii) the objectives of an inclusive process would be the pursuit of peace, stability and reconciliation on the widest possible basis. Beyond that, there would be no attempt to impose prior restrictions on the agenda. On the contrary it is assumed that each participant would enter such a process on the basis of their separately stated political analysis and objectives. The Government's position is well understood publicly. The 9 paragraph note was entirely consistent with that position.

8. Against that background, can you confirm that you want a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward?

9. If you can confirm this, then we remind you that this process of dialogue leading to an inclusive political process can only start after the receipt of the necessary assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end. In the meantime progress has to be subject to events on the ground.

British message sent on 3 September 1993

FREE-STANDING MESSAGE (in response to concern about press speculation)

Recent media reports and speculation do not result from authorised briefing. Nor do they serve the interests of anybody seeking to bring these exchanges to a successful conclusion. As both sides recognise, that depends on maintaining maximum confidentiality. Recent reports are certainly not being inspired, let alone orchestrated, by the Government side to which they are most unwelcome. Accordingly, the Government side will continue to respect the confidentiality of these exchanges. It remains committed as before to the 9 paragraph note.

Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 2 November 1991

This problem cannot be solved by the Reynolds Spring situation, although they're part of it. You appear to have rejected the Hume Adams situation though they too are part of it.

Every day all the main players are looking for singular solutions. It can't be solved singularly. We offered the 10 May. You've rejected it. Now we can't even have dialogue to work out how a total end to all violence can come about. We believe that the country could be at the point of no return. In plain language please tell us through as a matter of urgency when you will open dialogue in the event of a total end to hostilities. We believe that if all the documents involved are put on the table - including your 9 paragrapher and our 10th May that we have the basis of an understanding.

British message transmitted 5 November 1993

SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE

1. Your message of 2 November is taken as being of the greatest importance and significance. The answer to the specific question you raise is given in paragraph 4 below.

2. We hold to what was said jointly and in public by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in Brussels on 29 October. A copy of the Statement is annexed. There can be no departure from what is said there and in particular its statement that there could be no secret agreements or understandings between Governments and organisations supporting violence as a price for its cessation and its call on them to renounce for good the use of, or support for, violence. There can also be no departure from the constitutional guarantee that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of a majority of its people.

3. It is the public and consistent position of the British Government that any dialogue could only follow a permanent end to violent activity.

4. You ask about the sequence of events in the event of a total end to hostilities. If, as you have offered, you were to give us an unequivocal assurance that violence has indeed been brought to a permanent end, and that accordingly Sinn Féin is now committed to political progress by peaceful and democratic means alone, we will make clear publicly our commitment to enter exploratory dialogue with you. Our public statement will make clear that, provided your private assurance is promptly confirmed publicly after our public statement and that events on the ground are fully consistent with this, a first meeting for exploratory dialogue will take place within a week of Parliament's return in January.

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5. Exploratory dialogue will have the following purposes:

- (i) to explore the basis upon which Sinn Fein would come to be admitted to an inclusive political talks process to which the British Government is committed but without anticipating the negotiations within that process;
- (ii) to exchange views on how Sinn Fein would be able over a period to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland;
- (iii) to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

6. The attached Annex summarises the sequence of events and provides answers to the procedural questions concerning exploratory dialogue which have been raised.

7. If, in advance of our public statement, any public statement is made on your behalf which appears to us inconsistent with this basis for proceeding it would not be possible for us then to proceed.

8. If we receive the necessary assurance, which you have offered, that violence has been brought to an end, we shall assume that you are assenting to the basis for proceeding explained in this note and its attachment.

PROCEDURAL ANNEX

1. This Annex covers procedural questions concerning the exploratory dialogue which may be initiated on the basis, and only on the basis, that violence has been brought to a permanent end, and that a private assurance to that effect has been given, and confirmed publicly, and which has been demonstrated to have been put into effect.
2. The sequence of events would be as follows:
 - (i) There is an unequivocal private assurance that violence has been brought to a permanent end, and accordingly that Sinn Fein has affirmed that it is henceforth committed to political progress by peaceful and democratic means alone;
 - (ii) soon after receiving the necessary satisfactory assurance, and on the assumption that events on the ground are consistent with this assurance, we will make a public statement, indicating our agreement in principle to enter exploratory dialogue in January provided the private assurance is promptly confirmed publicly and continues to be demonstrated on the ground;
 - (iii) if a genuine end to violence is brought about within the next few days, a first meeting for exploratory dialogue would take place within a week of Parliament's return in January. This interval is to demonstrate the genuineness of the ending of violence, and the meeting will only take place if events on the ground have remained consistent with the assurance that violence had genuinely been brought to an end. Logistical arrangements (eg venue, transport, security and other

administration matters) will need to have been settled shortly beforehand.

3. At the first meeting of exploratory dialogue each party could field up to three delegates to be seated at the table. The possible need for the additional presence of advisers on each side is something which could be addressed at the logistical meeting.

4. It is for each party to decide who should represent it at this and at subsequent meetings. (The composition of each party's team may of course be changed from time to time, as each party wishes.) It is assumed that each party will wish its representatives to have the seniority appropriate to its authorised representatives. The British side will be represented by senior officials acting under political authority and direction.

5. At the first, and any subsequent, exploratory meeting the delegation size or other logistical arrangements can be modified with the agreement of both parties.

JOINT STATEMENT OF 29 OCTOBER 1993

1. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach discussed a range of matters of common interest, with particular focus on Northern Ireland.

2. They condemned the recent terrorist outrages as murderous and premeditated acts which could serve no end other than to deepen the bloodshed in Northern Ireland. They expressed their deep sympathy to the innocent victims, children, women and men who had been injured or bereaved.

3. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach called for restraint from all members of the community in Northern Ireland; expressed support for the security forces in their fight against all forms of terrorism; and noted the recent successes of cross-border security cooperation.

4. They utterly repudiated the use of violence for political ends. Their two Governments were resolute in their determination to ensure that those who adopted or supported such methods should never succeed.

5. The Taoiseach gave the Prime Minister an account of the outcome of the Hume/Adams dialogue, in the light of the Irish Government's own assessment of these and other related matters. They acknowledged John Hume's courageous and imaginative efforts. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach agreed that any initiative can only be taken by the two Governments, and that there could be no question of their adopting or endorsing the report of the dialogue which was recently given to the Taoiseach and which had not been passed on to the British Government. They agreed that the two Governments must continue to work together in their own terms on a framework for peace, stability and reconciliation, consistent with their

international obligations and their wider responsibilities to both communities.

6. Against this background the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reaffirmed that:

- The situation in Northern Ireland should never be changed by violence or the threat of violence;
- Any political settlement must depend on consent freely given in the absence of force or intimidation;
- Negotiations on a political settlement could only take place between democratic governments and parties committed exclusively to constitutional methods and consequently there can be no talks or negotiations between their Governments and those who use, threaten or support violence for political ends;
- There could be no secret agreements or understandings between Governments and organisations supporting violence as a price for its cessation;
- All those claiming a serious interest in advancing the cause of peace in Ireland should renounce for good the use of, or support for, violence;
- If and when such a renunciation of violence had been made and sufficiently demonstrated, new doors could open, and both Governments would wish to respond imaginatively to the new situation which would arise.

7. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach renewed their support for the objectives of the Talks process involving political dialogue between the two Governments and the main constitutional parties in

Northern Ireland. They regard that process as vital and its objectives as valid and achievable. They urged the Northern Ireland parties to intensify their efforts to find a basis for new talks. The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister agreed that the two Governments will continue their discussions to provide a framework to carry the process forward.