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**SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE, SIR PATRICK MAYHEW MP
QC, TO MANCHESTER LUNCHEON CLUB, FREEMASONS' HALL,
MANCHESTER, 15 NOVEMBER 1996**

"I will try to look forward to the current situation in Northern Ireland, to give my assessment of developments over the next few months, always a rash undertaking. The current negotiations were launched on Monday 10th June by the PM and by Mr Bruton, the Taoiseach. Just five days later the IRA demonstrated their contempt for the process by setting off a bomb in your city centre. That attack was therefore in its final stages of preparation at the very time when Sinn Fein's representatives were turning up at the gates of Castle Buildings at Stormont where the negotiations were taking place in a publicity stunt designed to attract attention to their exclusion from the negotiations. As everybody knows it was a great mercy nobody was killed in that attack on your centre, but I know it affected all the businesses, for example within 3/4 mile of the Arndale Centre. I also know that the IRA managed to injure many innocent citizens of Manchester that day going about their lawful business.

"And we should be aware that even if the physical wounds heal, those scars of another character will remain. People caught on the streets that Saturday suffer in other ways too as I'm so often reminded in moving letters from members of the public who have been caught in outrages of that kind in the past. As for the material damage caused, well it was of course very great and it's taken a long time even to make safe the area in the immediate vicinity of the bomb blast. I was up there a few weeks ago and saw the enormous progress that has been made. It has impressed me enormously but what impressed me most was the enormous civic spirit and pride that has been displayed here by the people and by the businesses and by those who represent civic life here in Manchester. You have demonstrated a determination not just to return to normality but to seize the opportunity that this outrage presented and build a new and better city for the next millennium. I was interested to hear about the competition to redesign the Arndale Centre, the winner of which was recently announced and I've been tremendously impressed by all

the signs of rebuilding over the city. I saw quite a lot of those when I was here a few weeks ago. The reopening of M & S has been widely reported but there are numerous other stories of businesses picking themselves up which deserve an equal mention.

"And I think it's part of that invincible spirit which our people throughout this country, by which I also include that part of our country across the Irish Sea, always show when faced with this kind of attack. And I want to say to you this on behalf of the Government, the Government will not be deflected by violence or the threat of violence from its declared course. We will continue to help the politicians and the people of Northern Ireland to achieve a just and enduring settlement and it is to that issue that I would now like to turn. The current talks process started in 1991, following discussions with the main political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government. My predecessor Peter Brooke whom I owe so much to this day, was able to establish a basis for formal talks: all the parties involved accepted that discussions must focus on 3 main relationships or sets of relationships - those between Northern Ireland including the relationship between new institutions there and the Westminster Parliament; those relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and those between the two Governments. It is common ground between all the parties that hope of achieving a new broadly based agreement rests on finding a way to give adequate expression to the totality of those three relationships. Well those talks made progress, they ended inconclusively, in 1992. While they didn't secure overall agreement, we did identify the key issues in each of the 3 strands of relationships which are being built on now in the current negotiations.

"Since then, with much patient work, the Irish and British Governments have built up a common approach, based on the rejection of violence, on the principle of democracy and consent. A number of documents eg the Joint Declaration of 1994, the framework document of 1995 and a number of Communiqués issued since then was evidence to that. In August 1994 there

came the welcome - but long overdue - Republican ceasefire or putting it more accurately in the language they employ, "the complete cessation of violence". That was followed in October by the declaration of a ceasefire by the loyalists. What is the Government's objective in Northern Ireland today, knowing as we do that the Republican ceasefire was wantonly and wickedly abrogated in February of this year? Is the British Government's objective as some would claim to achieve victory, is it to support one tradition over the other? Is it deliberately to stall any prospect of progress in the hope of permanently excluding Sinn Fein? Well the answer is an emphatic "no" though of course it is our objective to achieve a defeat over terrorism. Our objective is to find a means by which violence and conflict can be permanently ended.

"We believe that the only basis for this and the only way forward is real negotiation on the basis of exclusively peaceful methods and an abiding commitment to the democratic process on the part of all. Our objective, therefore, is not to impose a particular outcome. Our objective is that the people of Northern Ireland, with our help, shall reach a comprehensive agreement with a democratic and peaceful legacy (?). We now have, at last, in place a process of negotiations which can deliver just such an outcome. History will show that the IRA made a tragic, fundamental and of course wicked mistake when they abandoned their ceasefire just when it became possible to see that negotiations with Sinn Fein included could be put in place. Throughout the ceasefire we tried to find:

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~~Throughout the ceasefire we showed real flexibility and took many political risks. Those risks were justified: but they were not reciprocated. Now we have such a basis - and the negotiations have started.~~

~~"Sinn Fein say they believe that real negotiations are the only way forward. I agree. The basis for real negotiations is already there. What is required for Sinn Fein to join them is an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire. They must establish their commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and show that they abide by the democratic process. Deeds as well as words will be needed. It is for them to find them. People of goodwill all over the world trust they will.~~

~~"In a speech last night Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness, after some stale and predictable criticism of the Government, set out his party's approach to the Talks process.~~

"Martin McGuinness says the Talks must be inclusive. We agree that they should be inclusive of all parties which make the necessary commitment to rely on peaceful and democratic procedures alone.

"Martin McGuinness says that decommissioning must, without blocking progress, be dealt with to the satisfaction of all the participants in the process of negotiations. We say the way forward is for decommissioning to take place in accordance with the recommendations of the Mitchell Report.

"Martin McGuinness says that if the conflict is to be ended permanently, and I note his use of that word, all should embrace the process in good faith, facing the challenges with imagination, honesty and flexibility. That is our approach, building on the rocks of democracy and consent.

"He invites the two Governments, British and Irish, to take the lead in providing the dynamic in pursuit of an accommodation between the people of these islands. He points to a wide-ranging agenda including the development of arrangements and structures which must afford to all, as the Taoiseach said, secure and satisfactory expression and protection in all spheres of public life. That is what we have been doing in all the steps I have described: including the Joint Declaration, the Frameworks for the Future and the painstaking laying of the foundations for the Talks process now under way.

"Finally Martin McGuinness said that real negotiations are the only way forward. We agree wholeheartedly. And that must mean dependably repudiating the bomb and the bullet and establishing a definitive commitment to peaceful methods.

"The dismay and the outrage in Northern Ireland in particular caused by the ending of the IRA ceasefire in February is impossible to exaggerate. Condemnation has been worldwide as well. All who uphold democracy and freedom are agreed that there is no justification for terrorism. The IRA

cannot reserve the option of violence to be used as Mr Bruton observed as and when it is deemed politically useful. That is not an option that they can reserve. I also agree with Mr Bruton's observations that the Republican movement as a whole must choose between violence and democratic politics? The IRA continue to try to portray themselves as "victims of British oppression or colonialism". Again, as the Taoiseach said in the same speech fundamentally the Republican movement appears unable to reconcile itself with the fact that the British presence in Ireland is not the British Army or State but a million Unionists. It seems, he said, that they cannot within their analysis address Unionist concerns other than with a framework which they know Unionists cannot accept. The negotiations which are currently taking place in Northern Ireland between political parties elected for that purpose provide the only acceptable and practicable means of resolving differences and achieving a settlement.

"I know that many looking at the current all-party negotiations from a distance felt and perhaps continue to feel disappointment that faster progress has not been made. But first the negotiations are happening and have been happening since 10 June, the date set by the Governments in their Communique of 28 February. Secondly, the important rules of procedure were agreed and within six weeks in the previous talks in 91/92 that took several months. These rules provide the comprehensive operative framework that the talks needed. That in itself is a significant achievement and those talks are going on. I never speak of optimism or of pessimism each of them is an irrational phenomenon: what I think is of importance is whether there are sensible rational grounds for hope. These negotiations represent such grounds.

"Well a word or two in conclusion or almost in conclusion, about the security situation. I preface it by saying that there does therefore exist a route into the talks for Sinn Fein should they choose to take it but we will continue pursuing those responsible for outrages like the Manchester bombing, we will ensure the security forces have the powers, have the resources that they need to tackle the

terrorist threat, co-ordination among the various agencies in the UK and mutual co-operation between our international partners are the best that they have ever been. Evidence of this includes the recent major arms find by the Garda Siochana in Ireland, the extradition of the Maze escaper Jimmy Smyth from San Francisco and the prompt work by the German authorities in naming their suspects for the Osnabruck bomb. In London a joint operation successfully frustrated a serious and imminent terrorist attack of a force of around 10 tonnes of home-made explosive or explosives in preparation was found - that's four times the amount that was used with such devastating effect here in Manchester. You can only guess at the death and destruction these materials would otherwise have inflicted. There is no doubt these successes will have dealt a significant blow to the IRA's capabilities in Great Britain. No-one should deceive themselves that the threat of bombs in cities whether in GB or in NI - that threat has not gone away. But I can tell you that there is no lack of realism in that regard at all within the Government nor among those who carry the heavy burden of protecting the public from terrorist crime. The vast majority of people in NI want to live in peace with their neighbours. They don't want another generation to live with the threat of terrorism hanging over them.

"As Mr Spring, the deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland recently observed, the IRA has continued to ignore the wish of the clear majority of Republicans and of an overwhelming majority of people as a whole for an immediate restoration of their ceasefire. And that I believe to be profoundly true. The threat to the UK is not a divisible one, nobody can justifiably claim: 'well it's in Manchester so it doesn't affect us in Leeds or in Bradford.' No one in England can justifiably claim a bomb in Belfast is of no significance to them. The threat is a common one to us all and as such it unites us in a common resolve. Breaking that common resolve, of course, is what the IRA would wish to see. Well it is not going to happen. We shall go on with dogged patience and firm resolve along our charted course. That is the way tranquillity can come to Northern Ireland and I think it will come to Northern Ireland and that is the way in which a true and lasting peace can be underpinned.