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BRITISH EMBASSY  
DUBLIN

11 July 1972

The Taoiseach  
Mr J Lynch BL TD

*1. Ruifores 20.7.72*  
*2. Ruifores 21/7*  
*20.7.72*

*My dear Taoiseach.*

*Detached.*

As promised, I enclose a short note of the main points which I was instructed to make to you in the course of our conversation this morning.

At the same time you may find it useful to have the text of Mr Whitelaw's statement in the House of Commons yesterday afternoon, together with the main supplementary questions and answers.

*Yours very sincerely,*  
*John Peck*

John Peck

ENCLOSURES

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TEXT OF A STATEMENT MADE BY MR WILLIAM WHITELOW MP,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ON MONDAY,  
10 JULY 1972 IN THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS

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I will with permission make a further statement about Northern Ireland.

The House will have heard that the cessation of hostilities in Northern Ireland announced by the Provisional wing of the IRA of which I told the House on Thursday, 22 July, was ended by them on Sunday evening after fire had been opened on British troops. Security forces had been subjected for some time to assault short of shooting, arising out of communal argument about housing, a matter that had already been the subject of anxious discussion and about which a further meeting had been arranged. It was only after the Army units had been fired on that they returned fire.

This incident has been seized on by the Provisional wing of the IRA as a reason for ending their declared truce.

#### DISCUSSIONS

That truce had been discussed by me with some leaders of the Provisional wing on 7 July. I arranged to see them because I have, as the House well knows, discussed these grievous Northern Ireland problems with representatives of many shades of opinion.

Any action that I could honourably take that would save life or avoid further damage to property seemed to me should be taken.

#### DEMANDS

The IRA leaders complained that I had give nothing in return for their cessation of hostilities. They made demands that I could not accept but that I agreed to consider lest some peaceful way forward might be found.

The House may be interested to know what these demands were.

They called on the British Government to recognise publicly that it is the right of the whole of the people of Ireland acting as a unit to decide the future of Ireland.



(a) They called on the British Government immediately to declare its intention to withdraw all British forces from Irish soil, such withdrawal to be completed on or before the first day of January, 1975.

(b) Pending such withdrawal British forces must be withdrawn immediately from sensitive areas.

They called for a general amnesty for all political prisoners in Irish and British jails, for all internees and detainees, and for all persons on the wanted list. In this regard they recorded their dissatisfaction that internment has not been ended in response to their initiative in declaring a suspension of offensive operations.

Before I could even discuss these matters with my Cabinet colleagues the fragile truce was broken, as I have already set out. I deeply regret that the Provisional wing of the IRA has resorted to violence on the basis of one incident which could have been solved peacefully. I hope that it is not too late for even the Provisional IRA to think again and for the whole Northern Irish community to see the need for progress without violence.



SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THE STATEMENT BY  
MR WILLIAM WHITELOW MP IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON  
MONDAY, 10 JULY 1972

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MR MERLYN REES. Is the Right Hon Gentleman aware that, while we appreciate the need not to over-react to events in deciding the next steps in Northern Ireland, we want <sup>the</sup> security role in Northern Ireland made absolutely clear so that everyone knows what reaction will come in the face of the two armies, Protestant and Catholic, majority and minority - whichever is the best way of putting it - which confront the British Army, particularly in the face of the Protestant marching season which begins this week?

If not today, will the Right Hon Gentleman tell us more of what happened at the Lenadoon Estate confrontation which was the excuse for what has happened?

With regard to the Right Hon Gentleman's statement about the demands of the IRA, on the one point of unification it again shows a complete lack of reality about the political needs of the North. Has the Right Hon Gentleman noted that Mr Faulkner today made an appeal to the majority to keep the peace? Is it not a pity that he did not make it last week?

MR WILLIAM WHITELOW. I am grateful to the Hon Gentleman for the helpful way in which he has approached a very difficult situation. I would not accept that the policy of reconciliation of the communities in Northern Ireland either is at an end or can ever be at an end, because, frankly, there is no other way forward. These two communities have got to live together in peace in the future, and nothing can ever shake that fact. The sooner everyone realises it, particularly the extremists on both sides, the better. I regret that extremists on both sides make the task of anyone seeking reconciliation extremely difficult.

As for the security role of the British forces, their role, as always, will be to keep the peace and to prevent sectarian violence. I should make it clear - although I can go into ~~detail~~ further detail later - that the problem concerning housing in Belfast has, on both sides in recent days, become more acute. There has been extreme intimidation in both communities. I



therefore set up a public protection agency to do everything I could to prevent intimidation and to encourage those families in difficult areas to remain against it. In the particular instance involved, discussions took place with my officials and all those concerned yesterday in an effort to find a means of solving what was a difficult problem in a fringe area. It was agreed at the end of that meeting that another meeting would be held tonight to resolve that problem. I regret that there were those who were not prepared to wait for the meeting tonight and immediately demanded that the Catholic families must be moved in at once. It was the view of the Security forces that such action would undoubtedly have led immediately to sectarian conflict. That being their view, they were bound, in their duty, to resist it, which they did. That is how the truce, I regret to say, was finally broken.

I think that answers the Hon Gentleman's main points.

MR DEEDS: Is my Right Hon Friend aware that, while we are all acutely conscious of the special difficulties confronting him, one grave consequence of this development will be increased risks for our Security forces? Will my Right Hon Friend bear in mind that public opinion will be uneasy lest those forces be placed by their orders at any disadvantage?

MR WHITELAW: Yes, certainly. I am extremely conscious of what My Right Hon Friend says. I give him the assurance that they will not be placed at a disadvantage. I am bound to point out the desperately difficult role that they undoubtedly perform in keeping the peace. If extremists on all sides threaten them both ways, this is the great danger for them: but they will not be inhibited by their orders.

MR PARDOE: Is the Right Hon Gentleman absolutely certain that in this situation in the near future British people can any longer find a solution in Northern Ireland? Will he not rule out the possibility of involving the United Nations in this affair?

MR WHITELAW: I note what the Hon Gentleman says. For my



part, having been given the job, I will soldier through. Until I am relieved or until someone else is required I will soldier through, as is my duty to this country and to this House. I do not believe that if the British Government cannot solve this problem anyone else will.

MR MCMASTER: Is my Right Hon Friend aware that those who have suffered four hundred murders in Northern Ireland in three years feel that it is totally wrong and must always be wrong to attempt to talk or negotiate with those who have got the blood of these people on their hands? ...

MR WHITELAW: I certainly am not prepared to apologise to this House or to the country or to anyone else for any action which I took in the feeling that I might be able to save lives and prevent damage to property ... if I have to talk to anyone at all in order honourable and properly to follow that course, I will certainly do so ... I full realise the immense suffering that has been caused to the majority of the population in Northern Ireland, but I might also say that I do not believe it is any use reacting with violence against violence ... reconciliation of people in one community, living together in peace, is the only possible means of hope for the future.

MR FITT: Would the Right Hon Gentleman not agree that since he was so successful in negotiating a cease-fire, his greatest opponents since that time have been the myriads of Unionist Party supporters, including the former Prime Minister, the Vanguard Movement, the UDA Movement who have set out consciously and in concert to defeat the Secretary of State in his attempt to bring peace and reconciliation to Northern Ireland?

Would the Right Hon Gentleman not further agree that at present there are at least five hundred or six hundred Catholic families who have been viciously intimidated out of their homes by these same extreme elements, and that this led to the confrontation yesterday afternoon? Would the Right Hon Gentleman accept that in his efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland he should talk to all the interests concerned, including, as he has said in the House this afternoon, members of the



Provisional IRA? He has already talked to members of the UDA who in the final analysis may turn out to be a far more sinister and dangerous force than any other force in Northern Ireland?

MR WHITELAW: On the first point, no, I could not accept that these people have sought to frustrate any efforts that I had to make for peace. I think I have been long enough now in Northern Ireland to realise that whatever efforts one makes towards peace, there are bound to be grave difficulties, doubts and fears, because fear is at the root of all the problems in the community. Whatever one does, one arouses these immense fears, and I understand all that. But I will maintain that it must be right to continue, as I was strongly advised, doggedly on in the course of reconciliation, no matter what are the disappointments.

As to intimidation, I must tell the Hon Gentleman that there has been considerable intimidation on all sides. I deeply regret this because it leads to a polarisation within the communities and to the separate communities living in separate areas. This is not for the good in the future. This intimidation is there. The root of it is, I regret to say, this very fear which lies at the root of all Northern Ireland's problems.

... But however patient one is, one cannot have any mercy on those who are determined in the final event to use violence and the gun. If people are found using violence and the gun they have got to be properly dealt with, and that I will certainly do.

MR ORME: Would the Right Hon Gentleman not agree that however much it might appear desirable to people in the rest of the United Kingdom, it is absolutely impossible to disengage this part of the United Kingdom from the country of Ireland as such? Would he agree, therefore, that we have to find a solution to this problem, and in that regard apart from the breakdown of the truce this weekend, which I am sure everybody deplores, the other point has been the escalation this weekend of the UDA activities? Could the Right Hon Gentleman say how he expects to deal with this situation? Is he having talks with the UDA? Is there any way of de-escalating this situation?



MR WHITELAW: I have previously had talks on three occasions with the UDA and I have explained clearly to them exactly the various points of view I very much hope that they, in company with everyone else will see that barricades, violence and that sort of thing do not in the long run get anyone anywhere.

MR BIGGS-DAVISON: Having disagreed with my Right Hon Friend about his political initiatives, may I ask whether he is aware that this is no time for recrimination about the past but that it is a time for resolve to defend all sections against intimidation, to defeat the IRA by denying them their urban guerrilla bases and to end all no-go areas?

MR WHITELAW: I know that my Honourable Friend has not agreed with some of the things that I am doing and, therefore, I am all the more grateful to him for saying that at this time there should be no recriminations.

As for the future, I am most anxious to ensure that if there are extremists on any side of the community, those extremists, or terrorists if that is what they become, are recognised as such by their respective communities and are not encouraged by them. That is a very important factor and a policy from which I shall not depart in any way. It is most important in my judgement, that terrorists from wherever they come should be isolated from the various communities.

MR HAROLD WILSON: Is the Right Hon Gentleman aware that Honourable Members in all parts of the House approach this matter with a real feeling of sympathy and understanding for him? Is he aware that many Members would wish at this time to reinforce what has been said from both sides of the House, that though it is a great shock and a disappointment, nevertheless it does not prove that the policy is wrong? On the contrary, we are all hoping that the Right Honourable Gentleman have the courage to go on pursuing the policy that he has been pursuing so far, because this is the right policy.

Is the Right Hon Gentleman further aware that in so far as he has been criticised for meeting the Provisional IRA last



week, some of us do not share that criticism? Indeed, my Honourable Friend and I met some of the same people four months ago, and we believe that he was right to do that in the hope that something might have come out of it.

Fourthly, will the Right Hon Gentleman recognise that on the reports that I have so far read - he is much closer to the situation that the rest of the House - no blame at all can be attached to the Army or Security forces for this latest grievous development?

MR WHITELAW: I am most grateful to the Right Hon Gentleman for his last remark, and I entirely agree. I am grateful also for his personal remarks towards me. On the question of talking to the leaders of the Provisional IRA, in the very dangerous situation, as I saw it, towards the end of last week, I came to the conclusion that it was my duty to seek to save lives if I could do it in any way at all, and that was, therefore, the course which I took. I am glad to be supported in it, because I shall certainly never feel like apologising for it.

MR RONALD BELL: While everyone must see the latest development as a tragic occurrence, may not the truth be that the so-called leaders of the Provisional IRA are not able to commit or control their supporters for more than a couple of weeks, and that, if this be so, the problem cannot be solved by any negotiations or agreement with that particular group of men?

MR WHITELAW: I would not wish to speculate on that. There was no question of an agreement or negotiation with that particular group of men. I thought it right personally to see them just to find out what the position was when I saw them face to face; that this is what I did.

MR DUFFY: Could the Right Hon Gentleman confirm that the sixteen families who were at the heart of yesterday evening's confrontation had been properly granted tenancies? If that be so, will he say who persuaded the Army to deny them access? Was it the Right Hon Gentleman himself, or was it representatives of the UDA?



MR WHITELAW: I understand that three of these families in particular - I shall check the exact figures - were allocated houses in that area provided that the security conditions were suitable. That is always a proviso which the Housing Executive has to make in these difficult areas, and that was the proviso which it did make. It was on the judgment of the Security forces on the spot that it was not felt right that these families should enter at that time.

But I wish to make perfectly clear again that the whole question of the Housing of these families was still a subject of discussion yesterday and that a further meeting had been arranged for seven o'clock tonight, when the matter could be further explored. One of my officials was actually there, and he is ready to go there again tonight to discuss further with all those concerned, the particular problem involved.

It was only after that that the whole agreement which had been made was totally rejected and force was then used. The opportunity of this agreement, which had been actually come to and made at lunch time yesterday, seemed to me to offer a sensible way out of a very difficult problem.

MR DAVID JAMES: I congratulate my Right Honourable Friend on meeting members of the IRA. I concur with the Opposition; he was quite right. In future, though, will my Right Honourable Friend please not refer to Catholics and Protestants but to Anglo-Saxons and Gaels, since this is really a tribal dispute, not a religious dispute; and will he bear in mind that we must reach a solution ultimately in concert with Dublin?

MR WHITELAW: I note what my Honourable Friend says about nomenclature. I am sorry if I have been wrong, but for the first time in my life, since I have been in Northern Ireland, I have heard the expression Protestant and Catholic so often that I have become used to it and find it difficult to use any other.