

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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NORTHERN IRELANDCessation of violence

1. The Taoiseach submits this note as a background document to any discussion in relation to the continuance of the cessation of violence on or after 16th January, when the present ceasefire is due to expire.
2. On 10th December, 1974, a group of five Protestant clergymen, including the Right Reverend Dr. Arthur Butler, Bishop of Down and Connor, the Reverend Jack Weir, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, the Reverend Ralph Baxter, Secretary of the Irish Council of Churches, his assistant, The Reverend William Arlow, and the Reverend Eric Gallagher, a former President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, met a group of representatives of the Provisionals in Feakle, Co. Clare. The proposal which the churchmen left with the Provisional representatives was that they should consider that their requirements precedent to a permanent ceasefire were met if the British Government issued a policy statement which included the following:-
  - (1) HM Government solemnly reaffirms that it has no political or territorial interests in Ireland beyond its obligations to the citizens of Northern Ireland.
  - (2) The prime concern of HM Government is the achievement of peace and the promotion of such understanding between the various sections in Northern Ireland as will guarantee to all its people a full participation in the life of the community, whatever the relationship of the Province to the EEC, the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland.
  - (3) Contingent on the maintenance of a declared ceasefire and upon effective policing, HM Government will relieve the Army as quickly as possible of its internal security duties.
  - (4) Until agreements about the future Government of Northern Ireland have been freely negotiated, accepted and guaranteed, HM Government intends to maintain the presence of the armed forces in Northern Ireland.
  - (5) HM Government recognises the obligation and right of all those who have political aims to pursue them through the democratic processes.

(Although we have no definite information to this effect, there

are indications that these points were originally made out by Sir Frank Cooper, Permanent Secretary of the Northern Ireland Office, informally, and written on the back of a menu;)

3. On the 20th December, 1974, a statement was given by the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau to Radio Telefis Éireann in which it was stated that as a result of the Feakle meeting, the leadership of the Republican Movement had ordered a suspension of offensive military action in Britain and Ireland over the Christmas period. The statement indicated that written observations on the points made by the churchmen at Feakle had been drafted, embodying the three basic demands of the Republican Movement, and forwarded to the British Government. The statement continued that the Army Council had decided to order a suspension of operations from midnight Sunday, December 22nd to midnight Thursday, 2nd January, 1975, on the clear understanding that a positive response would be forthcoming from the British Government. The statement continued that the Provisionals had noted the statement from Mr. Rees to the effect that there would be a positive response by the British Government to the suspension of operations; and that a cessation of aggressive military action by crown forces, an end to all raids, arrests, and harassment, and no reintroduction of RUC personnel in uniforms or plain clothes into areas where they are unacceptable, would also be expected. The statement added that it was trusted that the British Government would avail of the opportunity for bringing an end to "the evil of internment".
4. A copy of the text of the Provisionals' reply to the proposal of the churchmen was delivered by the British Ambassador to the Department of Foreign Affairs in December. It is attached as Appendix A to this note. Briefly, the reply said that the cessation of violence would be total and complete providing that -
  - (1) British Army raids, harassment and arrests cease for the same period;
  - (2) no show of provocation is carried out by the crown forces;
  - (3) the reintroduction of the RUC into areas<sup>in</sup> which they are not acceptable is not attempted. (This includes any of the crown forces in or out of uniform);

- (4) any breach of these terms will be considered as a refusal to accept the eleven day cessation and appropriate action will be taken to protect "our people".

The statement also replied in some detail to the five points made in the churchmen's proposals.

5. The Irish Government made no formal comment on the cessation of violence. They briefed, informally, that the growing revulsion of public opinion North and South to the violence of the IRA in Ireland and Great Britain has led to a temporary cessation of this violence. The possibility of this respite being extended beyond the Christmas period clearly depends upon the maintenance and reinforcement of the strength of public opinion throughout this island against all those responsible for the carnage of the past five years. The Government also reiterated their determination to work with other elected representatives of the Irish people and of the people of Great Britain for peace, reconciliation and justice in Northern Ireland.
6. The British Government, through Mr. Rees, made two statements over the Christmas and New Year. Basically, these statements indicated the intention of the British Government that there would be no negotiations with the Provisionals, but that a continued cessation of violence would be met with a positive response. Some twenty detainees were released in December and arrangements were made to parole other detainees over the Christmas period. These arrangements were availed of by all the loyalist detainees to whom they were offered. Only two or three of the Provisional detainees, however, availed of them. This limited response was due to instructions from the Provisional leadership.
7. On 2nd January, the Government Information Services got by telephone from a Dublin newspaper office a statement on the

extension of the ceasefire. A rough précis of this statement is as follows -

"The IRA leadership is not satisfied with the response of the British Government to the ceasefire. The moves which were made are not sufficient to warrant a permanent ceasefire.

It is illusory and deceptive for the British Government not to tackle the root causes of the problem. A permanent peace can be established only when the causes of the situation are courageously examined by the British Government. Nevertheless to permit the Government to make progress towards a lasting solution the Army Council has ordered an extension of the ceasefire for another fourteen days. If substantial progress is not made before January 16th the situation will again be examined with a view to the resumption of offensive action. The present peace can be enjoyed on a permanent basis if Britain pursues a reasonable and responsive policy.

The attitude of the Dublin Government has been most disquieting. It appears that there was no desire in Dublin for the truce. Action in relation to the political prisoners in Portlaoise was deliberately provocative. We call on the public at large to call for an end to the dangerous policies of the Dublin Government."

This statement was circulated at the meeting of the Government on 2nd January. The Government decided informally to withhold comment, at least for the present.

8. On 4th January, the Taoiseach met the Apostolic Nuncio who gave him a document received from the Holy See. This document had the British Minister to the Holy See for transmission to been handed to the British Government. The document proposed that the British Prime Minister should appoint a team of three mediators with full powers to discuss with all interests involved and seek areas of common agreement - so as to extend the ceasefire. The mediators proposed were Mr. Sean MacBride, Mr. Desmond Boal and a British appointee such as Lord Gardiner, Lord Carridan, Lord Ritchie Calder etc. The function of the mediators would be to have informal talks with all sections in Northern Ireland, to seek areas of agreement, to seek a permanent ceasefire and an end to internment, and to prepare the ground for the proposed Northern Ireland Convention.
9. It is not known definitely where these proposals originated, or what sort of backing they have. They are similar to proposals supported by Deputy John O'Connell. There are indications also

that the proposals originated with Bishop Daly of Derry.

10. The Nuncio also handed the Taoiseach three other documents dealing with internment, concessions in relation to Portlaoise and to Mr. Joe Cahill, who, it was indicated, was seriously ill from a heart condition. The document indicated that it would help to create a climate of goodwill if the Government were to release him. A personal guarantee could be given that he would never participate in any IRA activities or make any speeches or associate with IRA colleagues if he is released. On Portlaoise, the documents indicated that concessions to the IRA prisoners there, such as providing crafts for them, would lower the tension at the present time, and further help the climate of goodwill towards a permanent peace. It was also indicated that it would also help if the Special Branch were not to harass IRA supporters in Southern Ireland. The contents of these documents were discussed by the Government, shortly after their receipt by the Taoiseach and an attitude was taken to them.
11. On 9th January, Mr. John Bourn, Security Liaison Officer in the Northern Ireland Office, called to brief the Departments of the Taoiseach and of Foreign Affairs on the situation in Northern Ireland. He was accompanied by the British Ambassador and other officers from the Embassy in Dublin. Mr. Bourn said that Mr. Rees would be giving the British attitude to the cessation of violence, early in the week beginning 13th January. He said that the Gardiner Report on detention was expected to be published some time in the following week and that the discussion document on power-sharing would be published soon after that.
12. Insofar as Mr. Rees's statement was concerned, Mr. Bourn said that the attitude of the British Government could be summarised in two catch-phrases. The first of these was "no negotiations". The second was that there would be a positive and measured response to the cessation of violence and its continuance. Mr. Rees's statement would reiterate what he had said at

Christmas and the New Year. He would indicate the actions the British Government intended to take in relation to security, detention and policing if the cessation of violence continued.

13. On security he would indicate the intention of the Government to scale down army etc. activity in a measured way as the peace continued. There would be no timetable for this - the operation would depend on performance in relation to the peace. The British were particularly wary of lowering their guard prematurely.
14. On detention, Mr. Bourn said that they would look for releases on a continuing scale if peace continued, in addition to the twenty persons who had been released in December. Since the cessation of violence the Emergency Powers had not been used in the North to detain people. Arrests on ordinary criminal charges would, of course, continue in the ordinary way.
15. Mr. Bourn said that the British reading of the reasons for the cessation of violence was -
  - (1) the success of the security forces in making life difficult for subversives;
  - (2) reflection by the Provisionals on the effects of the UWC strike and the strength shown by the majority community on that occasion. If the feelings of the majority were as strong as then indicated, there was obviously just no hope of attaining what the Provisionals regarded as their aim, by present methods; and
  - (3) the revulsion in public opinion particularly after the Birmingham bombings. This was strengthened by the fear that barriers could be imposed by the British on movement between the two countries which would make this next to impossible.

Mr. Bourn said that they were reasonably hopeful of the continuance of the ceasefire. The British Ambassador was somewhat less hopeful. He said that the cessation of violence could well be used by the Provisionals as an opportunity for regrouping. This was a possibility which should never be far from our minds. A further reason for the cessation of violence, mentioned during the discussions, was that the recent spate of sectarian assassinations had shown beyond all doubt that the Provisionals could not protect the minority

population. However, nothing in the past activities of the organisation had shown that they were in any way subject to pressure from public opinion and to say that they were now starting to turn to democratic methods could well be to misread the situation completely. The British side at the meeting were particularly happy, subject to some minor reservations, with the arrangements which had been made on security following the meeting between the Minister for Justice, Mr. Cooney and the Secretary of State, Mr. Rees, in Baldonnell in September.


16. On 8th December the Rev. A.J. Weir, Clerk of the Assembly and General Secretary to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland wrote to the Taoiseach, indicating the intention of the leaders of the four largest churches in Ireland to launch a campaign, beginning on Thursday, 12th December, to press for a cessation of violence in Ireland, beginning at the Christmas season. The letter indicated that it appeared to the Church leaders that this may be the psychological moment for the Churches and, indeed, for the people of differing political loyalties or of none, to make a bigger effort than has heretofore been attempted by any of us. The Taoiseach replied to this letter on 12th December, as in Appendix B to this note. The Church leaders had meetings with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson and with the Taoiseach and Tánaiste. The meeting with the Taoiseach and Tánaiste took place on Friday 10th January. It was attended by Cardinal William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, The Most Rev. Dr. Simms, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, The Rev. Desmond Morris, President of the Methodist Church and The Right Rev. Dr. G. Temple Lundy, Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly. A joint communique issued after



the meeting is attached as Appendix C to this note. The Church leaders indicated clearly that it was not their intention to carry messages or to act as negotiators or mediators in the present situation. Their basic purpose was to ensure a continuance of the momentum for peace which had got under way at present. They stressed the extreme importance of avoiding actions which, though slight in themselves, could well provoke a return to violence.

17. On 13th January, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Sunningdale Ministers who were available in Dublin met a delegation from the SDLP. The basic purpose of the meeting was to exchange views on the current situation in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to the cessation of violence. The SDLP view was that the Provisionals had ceased their campaign, basically from a feeling of weakness, <sup>and</sup> particularly because of the reaction following the Birmingham bombings. If their cessation of violence could be answered by a continued dismantling in the British military machine then there was considerable hope for the North. The main message left by the SDLP, following the meeting, was that there was a great necessity to postpone the convention election from about mid-March, when it had been originally intended to hold the poll. They felt that, without such a postponement, the holding of an election could well confirm hardline Unionist attitudes and ensure that these attitudes were represented in the convention. If time were allowed, for informal contacts and discussions, then a much stronger middle ground could well develop in the North. A period of about six months from March was mentioned as being desirable for this purpose. The SDLP delegation emphasized that a further political failure, in a time of peace, could well be disastrous for the North. The delegation also mentioned, in particular, the need to sell the benefits of the Irish dimension, in practical terms, such as the benefits of the regional fund to the whole island, the new £51 million subsidy for hill farmers and the Green Pould etc.

SECRET



Following is text of reply from the Provisional Army Council to the proposal handed by the Protestant Churchmen to the Sinn Fein representatives at the meeting at Feakle last week.

Begins:

We have considered at length the points you submitted to our colleagues. We wish to make the following observations:

Point One: It is sovereignty rather than political or territorial interests, which is the basic issue. Until Her Majesty's Government clearly states it has no claim to sovereignty to any part of Ireland, the statement is meaningless.

We accept that economic commitments must be honoured.

Point Two: A noble wish with which we concur but we believe it can only be realised in the full community of the people of Ireland.

Point Three: We feel you are referring to a truce. We see no difficulty in maintaining community peace if a bi-lateral truce is agreed to between the British Army and the Irish Republican Army. We would welcome discussions with Loyalist groups to secure their co-operation in maintaining peace.

Point Four: We accept that following a declaration of intent to withdraw, a limited British Army presence will be maintained while a negotiated and agreed settlement is sought and implemented.

Point Five: - It is meaningless to talk about democratic processes while, among other things, 2000 political prisoners are in jail.

/We submit

SECRET

SECRET



We submit for your consideration and for forwarding to the British Government the following set of proposals.


To provide the basis for a lasting peace, the Republican Movement calls for the implementation of the following measures.

1. The establishment of a constituent assembly elected by the people of Ireland through universal adult suffrage and proportional representation. The assembly to draft a new all-Ireland constitution which would provide for a provincial parliament for Ulster (9 counties) with meaningful powers. The constitution to be submitted in national referendum within six months of the first meeting of the assembly and its adoption to require two-thirds support of the total valid poll.
2. A public commitment by the British Government to withdraw from Ireland within twelve months of the adoption of the new all-Ireland constitution. This commitment to entail an immediate end to all raids, arrests and harrassment of the population and a withdrawal of troops to barracks.
3. Declaration of amnesty for all political prisoners, in Britain and Ireland, and all persons on the wanted list. The amnesty to be given effect by immediate releases and to be completed not later than 30 days prior to the date of the general election for the constituent assembly.
4. On the acceptance of these terms the Republican Movement would be prepared to order a total ceasefire. A number of matters would require further clarification and elaboration which would be discussed as soon as the ceasefire is established.

The Republican Movement for its part would welcome tripartite talks with Loyalist and British Army forces to secure their co-operation in the implementation of the ceasefire and the maintenance of community peace.

/Finally:

SECRET



Finally:

Having discussed the terms offered by the Church representatives, and found them to be unacceptable, we, the Republican Movement, will declare a temporary cessation of activities from midnight on the 22nd of December, 1974, until midnight on the 2nd of January, 1975, to enable the British Government to reply favourably to the counter proposals we have made to them. This cessation will be total and complete providing that,

1. British Army raids, harrassment and arrests cease for the same period.
2. No show of provocation is carried out by the Crown Forces.
3. The re-introduction of the R U C into areas in which they are not acceptable is not attempted. (This includes any of the Crown Forces in or out of uniform).
4. Any breach of these terms will be considered as a refusal to accept the eleven day cessation, and appropriate action will be taken to protect our people.

We wish to have an indication of the British Government's attitude before the 28th of December 1974.

The Army Council Oglaiġ na Heiream.  
December 1974.

Ends.

12th December, 1974.

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APPENDIX B

Dear Rev. Sir,

Thank you for your letter of the 8th inst. about the Joint Peace Campaign which has been launched to-day by the leaders of the four largest Churches in the country. I would like to congratulate you and your co-workers on sponsoring this Campaign which seems to have got off to a good start so far as publicity is concerned. Perhaps you would be good enough to convey these congratulations to Dr. Lundie.

You will be aware, I hope, that the one thing I have stressed in every public statement I have made on the situation in Northern Ireland, is that violence must cease and peace be restored. Violence brings with it only death, injuries, bereavement, heartbreak and bitterness. It prolongs and intensifies divisions and postpones any hope of a just settlement which will satisfy the wishes of all the parties concerned. If political discussions are to bear fruit, we must have peace. I have emphasised these points again and again and will continue to do so.

The Campaign is well-timed. The more recent incidents of violence, both in Northern Ireland and Britain seem to have brought a great many people across a new threshold of revulsion and anger. I would hope that, even now, those responsible for violence will be affected by this growing insistence on a restoration of peace and, in response to the campaign now being launched, will call a halt to their campaigns.

The Government will do all they can, positively to advance the prospects for a just peace in Northern Ireland. However, you will appreciate that it is for the representatives of the different sections of the Northern community, and for the British Government, in the first instance, to seek a measure of agreement on the future government of Northern Ireland. Activity, to this end, on our part, can, as you well know, be counter-productive.

At the present time, one of the ways we can contribute to progress is to ensure that our territory is not used as a base from which to launch violence in Northern Ireland, or as a source of arms or explosives, or as a haven for fugitive participants in the campaigns of violence. This we are doing with all the resources at our command and, I think I can fairly say, with conspicuous success.

- 2 -

Whatever small scope may have existed for the activities I have just mentioned will be eliminated, I trust, by the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill, now before the Dail, and by the even closer co-operation with the security forces in Northern Ireland which is being developed, following the recent Ministerial meeting on this matter. On another plane, we are ready - as I know many men of goodwill in the North are ready - to co-operate in a practical way for the good of the entire community living in this island.

May I conclude by again commending the Churches on the Campaign and by thanking them for their generous offer of help. If the Campaign is successful in its objective the Church leaders will have put all the people of Ireland and Britain greatly in their debt.

Yours sincerely,

LIAM COSGRAVE

The Rev. A.J. Weir, M.Sc., D.D.,  
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Confirmation Copy.

The following statement has been issued on behalf of  
the Taoiseach, Mr. Liam Cosgrave T.D.

Campaign of Prayer for Peace.

Meeting between the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste  
and Church Leaders.

The Taoiseach, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, T.D., and the Tánaiste, Mr. Brendan Corish, T.D. met the leaders of the four main religious denominations in Ireland, Cardinal William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Most Rev. Dr. Simms, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, Rev. Desmond Morris, President of the Methodist Church and Rt. Rev. Dr. G. Temple Iundie, Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly.

The meeting was arranged at the Church Leaders' request, to enable them to inform the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste of the progress of the Irish Churches Joint Campaign of Prayer for Peace.

The Church leaders thanked the Taoiseach for his message of support on the initiation of the campaign. They reported on the progress of the campaign and on the widespread feeling of hope among the people of this island during the present cessation of violence. The meeting was agreed as to the importance for the sake of all people of maintaining the momentum of the present initiative for peace.

The Taoiseach and Tánaiste welcomed the impact of the campaign. They indicated their hope that in the present atmosphere the elected representatives of all political parties in Northern Ireland would now take the initiatives open to them with a view to establishing a just and lasting peace on the basis of political institutions in Northern Ireland commanding widespread acceptance among the people there. The Irish Government would do all in their power to help in the achievement of these aims.

10 January, 1975.