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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PRESS SECTION

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TO:

London

FOR:

Colin Wagner / A/Sec O. L. Vignery

FROM:

Rendall M. Martin

DATE:

14/10

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MESSAGE

Attached is advance copy of interview with
IRA Army Council which was circulated
to Journalists here this morning. The interview
will appear in the next edition of the Phylacker

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"We have a vested interest in seeking lasting peace" — IRA
(boxed intro.) The following is the full text of an interview given to AP/RN by a representative of the General Headquarters Staff, Oglaiġ na hÉireann.

An Phoblacht/Republican News: What do you say to those who claim that the IRA's armed struggle is the obstacle to peace in Ireland?

Oglaiġ na hÉireann: The obstacle to peace in Ireland is the British presence and the partition of Ireland. To claim that the resistance of the oppressed is the obstacle to peace is to stand logic on its head. The conditions which have given rise to Irish people of every generation having recourse to the option of last resort are the factors which rob not only the people of this island, but indeed the people of our neighbouring island of the peace which all right thinking people seek.

AP/RN: Loyalist attacks have escalated in recent months and many people in the nationalist community are living in fear of a further escalation. What is the IRA's response in these circumstances?

OnE: The facts as stated in the first part of your question are undeniable, but it is essential that loyalist violence is placed in its proper context. Loyalist paramilitaries are surrogates of the British state. They have been armed and supplied with intelligence and material assistance by the official state forces. No one would seek to deny that loyalists do have an agenda of their own which is characterised by naked sectarian hatred of all things Irish or Catholic, but over-riding this it is clear that their current campaign fully serves British interests.

Any examination of the facts will show the escalation of terror now facing the nationalist community owes its origins to a decision made at the highest level of the British state in the mid-1980s to rene and rearm the loyalist death squads. It is not a tactic which is unique to British occupied Ireland, it is found in every colonial situation.

It is worth drawing attention here to a number of points. Firstly, the British state, faced with a renewed and regenerated republican struggle in the wake of the hunger strikes of 1980/81, unleashed a wave of unprecedented oppression. Central to this was the creation of the RUC E4A death squads trained by and operating alongside the SAS and 14th Intelligence units of the British army. A shoot-to-kill policy was pursued with a vengeance. When it became too politically costly the shoot-to-kill policy was scaled down. But the policy objective of terrorising opponents of British rule was not about to be abandoned. In place of the official state death squads surrogates had to be found. The fact that the ready made death squads of the UDA/UVF were not

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sufficiently armed or in possession of enough raw intelligence was soon rectified by British military intelligence through Brian Nelson and other agents.

In the light of all this we in the IRA are very clear about a number of issues. One is that no one should respond to the activities of the loyalist death squads in anything other than a highly disciplined manner. We in the IRA will under no circumstances play into British hands by going down the cul-de-sac of sectarian warfare which would allow our enemy to portray itself as somehow holding the ring between warring factions in Ireland. But as we have demonstrated (most recently in the loyalist Shankill heartland when the local UFF military commander escaped forfeiting his life by nothing other than sheer luck — AP/RN 22 September), there is no hiding place for those involved with the loyalist death squads. We are determined to exact a price from them. No one should be under any illusions. Those involved with the loyalist death squads will be held accountable for their actions.

AP/RN: What do you say to those who say that economic bombings are causing unemployment or that they are dictated by what some commentators have called a covert sectarian agenda?

ON: In the political sium of north eastern Ireland one needs look no further than the policies of successive British governments for the real causes of endemic unemployment. Let us place the economic bombings in context. Firstly they are but one in a range of tactics employed by Oglagh na hEireann to serve the underlying strategic military objective of stretching and re-stretching the British forces to crisis point. Secondly they serve to dramatically blow holes in the British propaganda blanket which seeks to cover up the political crisis in occupied Ireland by presenting a normalised facade to the international community. Thirdly the attendant costs to the British exchequer of not only repairing damage but of deploying massive and ever increasing numbers of personnel brings closer the point when the British establishment will put the pertinent question to themselves.

On the question of some covert agenda there simply isn't one. The criteria for bombings are governed by military considerations and the geographical availability of targets. It is mischievous to suggest otherwise.

AP/RN: Has the great increase in British surveillance and intensified patrolling of recent years adversely affected the IRA's ability to operate against the crown forces?

ON: We are not so foolish as to attempt to dismiss the difficulties posed for us by the sheer material resources available to our enemy. Certainly we have had more difficulties facing us as the British, since the mid 1980s have been on a steep

upward graph in terms of the personnel and material resources committed to their war effort. Having said that, the unshakeable commitment, sheer determination and ingenuity of our Volunteers and the humbling commitment of our supporters has meant that our enemy, although vastly superior in technology and resources, has known no respite.

Each and every British innovation which comes in response to new IRA tactics comes at a high financial cost to the British. Then there is the time spent developing these countermeasures. Then with new defences hardly in place the IRA exploits some new weakness and the British are back to square one.

A good example of this can be seen with the new style barracks which were erected across the Six Counties in response to the IRA tactic of devastating barracks with large bombs, a tactic which left over 40 British army/RUC bases devastated in the mid to late 1980s.

The new blast walls rendered car bombing of these bases redundant, just as the heightening of the walls and the erection of wire-screening frustrated the use of the MK10 and MK11 mortars in the early 1980s. But five years into the multi-million pound British plan of converting all their barracks into what they believed were impregnable fortresses, IRA engineers perfected the new MK15, 'Barrack-Buster' mortar. This has been used to devastating effect in Counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Armagh, and this week County Down.

The message our enemy has long since learned is that no amount of conventional resources is any match for the skills, determination and sheer daring of those who have the will to win. It's a lesson which the Americans learned in Vietnam and it's one which has not been lost on British military leaders who have long advised their political masters that the IRA cannot be beaten.

AP/RN: Does the IRA have the capacity to continue with attacks on the scale of the Baltic Exchange and Bishopsgate?

ONe: In April 1992 when the Baltic Exchange and Staples Corner came crashing down around the bewildered heads of a British establishment which had made the fatal mistake of believing its own propaganda, media pundits talked in terms of a 'one-off IRA spectacular'. Our response then was to state publicly that the British would be foolish to underestimate the seriousness of the IRA's intention. Since then there have been over 50 bomb attacks in England, the most devastating of which was the Bishopsgate bombing.

Besides these successful operations which have seen London and other major British cities turned into armed fortresses, the British have had a run of extreme good fortune in stumbling across a number of major bombs which were in transit to their

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intended targets. Furthermore, the IRA last summer were forced into abandoning 18 tons of explosive which were destined for six simultaneous bomb attacks on prestigious targets in London. So I repeat, what we said in the wake of the Baltic Exchange bombing no one should underestimate the seriousness of our intentions. And as the last week has shown the IRA retains the capacity to strike when and where it chooses.

On the subject of the England campaign we again wish to avail of this opportunity to set the record straight over the question of bomb warnings.

The IRA has gone on public record on no less than five occasions in the past year to warn that there is a deliberate and reckless policy being pursued by the British authorities of not acting on precise and adequate warnings. That this is the case can be seen clearly when one recalls the circumstances surrounding the IRA bombing of the railway line at Four Arches Bridge in North London. On that occasion the IRA delivered very precise warnings and monitored the area to ensure that the British authorities were responding. When they failed to do so supplementary warnings were issued to sources in Dublin, where the garda authorities actually went on record stating that they had themselves made Scotland Yard aware of detailed IRA warnings some 50 minutes before the bomb finally detonated as a train passed over it. The British authorities failed to act. We now restate that the policy which they are pursuing is ill-advised and should be desisted from forthwith.

AP/RN: Some commentators in the 26 Counties have alleged that once the IRA has achieved its military objectives regarding the British presence in the North that it will in some way seek to destabilise the southern state. What is your comment?

OnE: This allegation and variants of it need to be firmly put to rest. The IRA constitution has historically laid out policy in regard to this. It is enshrined in General Army Order No 8, Part 1 of which states:

"Volunteers are strictly forbidden to take any military action against 26-County forces under any circumstances whatsoever..."

Part 4 states:

"At all times Volunteers must make it clear that the policy of the Army is to drive the British forces of occupation out of Ireland."

This order was most recently reaffirmed at the Army Convention of 1986. There are no circumstances in which this long-standing policy will be changed.

AP/RN: There have been repeated allegations of IRA racketeering and involvement in all kinds of activity from Angel Dust to drugs to videos. What is your response?

OnE: Let me state categorically that the IRA is not involved in racketeering of any description. These stories to which you refer are periodically regurgitated in certain sections of the Dublin press in particular and appear under the by-line of "Press Reporter" or in the names of a small circle of journalists. They need to be seen for what they are. They are not simply the disjointed rantings of vitriolic anti-republican hacks, who jump from one outlandish claim to another without ever producing a shred of evidence. No, they are the work of a psy-ops team based in the Garda Press Office who function exactly as do their counterparts in Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn.

As ex-British army press officer, Colin Wallace, has so ably testified these periodic bouts of black propaganda work on the assumption that if enough dirt is thrown some will eventually stick in the public mind. As to the veracity of the individual stories we can only respond by pointing out that were there even the remotest grain of truth in any of them then surely some republican at some stage would have faced charges arising out of the multiplicity of scams and shady deals which appear in these journalists' minds to make up the greater part of all republican activity. One only hopes that the plague does not resurface as a threat to human kind. Should it ever do so then some hack will no doubt discover the IRA link in it.

AP/RN: Can you clarify your attitude to the Garry Adams/John Hume talks?

OnE: On Sunday, 3 October the IRA leadership issued a public statement on the Adams/Hume initiative. It would be both inappropriate and unhelpful were I to say anything beyond that. The statement does however bear repeating:

"The leadership of Oglalgh na hÉireann welcomes this initiative. We are informed of the broad principles involved which will be for consideration by the Dublin and London governments.

"It is unfortunate that the British government reaction to this initiative, so far, has been negative and has fuelled unionist reaction. Nonetheless, if the political will exists or can be created, it could provide the basis for peace.

"We, our Volunteers and our supporters have a vested interest in seeking a just and lasting peace in Ireland. Our objectives, which include the right of the Irish people to national self-determination, are well known. Our commitment remains steadfast."

AP/RN: Recent events have given rise to speculation about an IRA cessation of armed activity. What is your response? Can you also comment on your hopes for the Adams/Hume initiative?

OnE: The IRA policy on cessations is well known. In regard to the Adams/Hume initiative as we have already stated if the political

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will exists or can be created then there is some hope that the situation can be moved forward. For our part, we in the IRA along with our supporters have a vested interest in seeking to establish a just and lasting peace in Ireland.

However, as we have also stated the British response to date has been negative. This has been reinforced by recent comments made by Patrick Mayhew. Moreover the rabble rousing 'Out, Out, Out' speech made by John Major to the Tory Conference on 8 October clearly indicates that his government is firmly locked into the failed policies of the past. The British government attitude seems set to condemn us all to continued conflict. They should find the courage and exercise the imagination which will move them away from their futile position and will help move us all in the direction of a resolution of this conflict.