



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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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. What is being sought at this stage is advice. The position of the British Government is that any dialogue could only follow a halt to violent activity. It is understood that in the first instance this would have to be unannounced. If violence had genuinely been brought to an end, whether or not that fact had been announced, the progressive entry into 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 had 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 such 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 this can only be 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 has 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 a way forward. The British Government would answer specific questions or give further explanation.

April 1993

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 longstanding position has been one of willingness to enter into dialogue with a view to resolving the conflict. In all of this we do not seek to impose pre-conditions nor should pre-conditions be imposed on us. This is not a position which 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. Pre-conditions 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 Féin'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.

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9. It is important to establish whether this provides a basis for a way forward. The British Government would answer specific questions or give further explanation.

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-county statelet has been in constant crisis. Its survival has always been dependant 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 a 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 of 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 found our preliminary meeting with your representative valuable. 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.

Received 5/11/93
Belhale 6/11/93

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 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.

23 NOV 1993 14:51 CSKR DUBLIN 522654 P.16

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 (e.g. 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 co-operation.
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.