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Reference Code: 2021/48/332

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BBC Radio 4 - "Today" Programme - Interview with Martin
McGuinness - 1 September 1994

PST
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Alec O'Huigin
Dr Mangan
Mr F. MURPHY
SECRETARY
EMBASSY
WTEU
Campbell

Interviewer: I asked him (Martin McGuinness) what he made of the Government's reservations.

Martin McGuinness: The reaction here in Ireland is that most people are absolutely incredulous at the attitude and behaviour of the British Government. If we're talking about one word, I mean, what are we talking about, that we're not going to move forward into a new situation because the British Government have this difficulty? Now, I don't think the British Government have a difficulty at all. I think that what needs to happen is that the British Government should speak with Dublin and let Dublin interpret the IRA statement to them because they appear to have a very clear understanding of what it means and to have no reservations at all and Albert Reynolds has been very upbeat all day about that.

Interviewer: John Major has said it is essential that the statement includes the word permanent or the clarification, there must be some clarification that it means permanent. Now, he is quite adamant about that.

Martin McGuinness: He can be as adamant as he likes to be. The situation is that we've had a statement from the IRA which comes at a very decisive moment and the peace process and I believe that it is very bold and a courageous statement by the IRA and I don't think that this opportunity should be lost. The opportunity must be seized and nothing should be allowed to undermine it.

Interviewer: Well, lets look ahead a little. Now then, assuming that there is no clarification, that the word permanent isn't in some way or other inserted into this agreement and the British Government remains obdurate, could this ceasefire go on for month after month after month without the peace process itself, without any constitutional agreement being reached?

Martin McGuinness: Well, I think if the British Government adopt that attitude that the judgement of the international community and the people of Britain and most certainly the people of Ireland will be a very harsh one. I think it would be a very stupid thing for the British Government to do. I think that what they should recognise is that we have a real opportunity here to move the peace process forward. That opportunity must be seized and the British Government should not be getting themselves on hooks over one particular word.

Interviewer: But as far as you yourselves are concerned in Sinn Fein you would be quite prepared to see the thing dragging on like that?

Martin McGuinness: No we don't want to see it dragging on at all, as far as we are concerned. We have been one of the main initiators of the peace process and it appears certainly from

our point of view that the imaginative steps which are required in order to move the process on appear to be coming from Republicans and all we have is a British Government sitting with its thumb on its finger complaining about the content of statements especially at a time when everyone else seems to be quite satisfied with the wording of the statement.

Interviewer: I asked the question in those terms because what I am really asking is whether you believe the IRA has laid down its arms forever, that even if the process doesn't get taken any further on, that is still an end to the IRA and the war?

Martin McGuinness: Well, I can only go on what the IRA statement said and the IRA statement said that they were having a complete cessation of military operations.

Interviewer: So, you accept that then? You accept that that's what it means?

Martin McGuinness: I accept that it mean a complete cessation of military operations and there appears to be no one else in Ireland that has any difficulty with that at all.

Interviewer: Complete cessation under any and all circumstances?

Martin McGuinness: Well, I take it at face value that it does mean a complete cessation of military operations under all circumstances.

Interviewer: So that even if there is no further step towards involving you Sinn Fein in talks the ceasefire is there, it stands and that is it. That is an end to the IRA waging any kind of military operation in Ireland?

Martin McGuinness: Well, that is what the IRA is saying, that they have had a complete cessation of military operations and its not my task or job to reinterpret what the IRA means by that statement and I think what we need to dwell on now and consider is how we move the peace process on because its quite clear that here in Ireland people are quite anxious to do that and its quite clear that the Dublin Government has taken a very imaginative approach and are going to become wholeheartedly involved in recognising the mandate of Sinn Fein.

Interviewer: Well, you could of course move it on yourselves perhaps by encouraging the IRA simply to add that one little word permanent.

Martin McGuinness: Well, I think that what you have to appreciate in England is that the IRA have made a very historic statement. It is regarded as such by many people in Ireland. It has been welcomed wholeheartedly by everybody in Ireland. Everybody recognises the significance of it, its coming after twenty-five years of struggle and I think the

people in England certainly would need to get their act together and recognise the enormity of that statement.

Interviewer: Martin McGuinness, thank you very much.

BBC Radio 4 - "Today" Programme - Interview with Sir Patrick
Mayhew - 1 September 1994

- I Sir Patrick, Dick Spring the Irish Deputy Prime Minister made it quite clear this morning that he believes the IRA has given what it takes, what is needed. Why can't you say yes that's right, now we'll go on...?
- M I hope it's right. I very much welcome that statement as the Prime Minister did within two hours of it being made public yesterday. I hope that it does actually intend to say what both Governments said was essential, that it is a permanent end to violence, that violence is over for good. It would be so simple for that to be made clear by the IRA and I hope very much that they will.
- I As far as Dublin is concerned it is clear.
- M Well that's fine and if they know something that we don't know, well then we will be hearing about that but you see both Governments have said there has to be a permanent end to violence, a renunciation of the support of violence for political purposes and it would have been so easy for that to have been put quite clearly into the statement. Instead we have, there is a complete cessation of military operations as it's described. Now then, it can be very easily put right, we're not looking for any kind of formal statement or anything of that kind, for example, it would be quite enough for the IRA or for Mr Adams to say, the Taoiseach Mr Reynolds he understands what we intended and he's got it right and you've got it wrong.
- I Martin McGuinness said that effectively on this programme this morning.
- M Well, I would want to look very carefully to see what he did say, but let it be made clear that it doesn't need to be made clear in any special form of words. Let it be made clear informally in the way that I have suggested or any other way. What's really important is that this is not a bit of pedantry because what is essential is that the British Government is not seen to be sitting down hereafter and negotiating with people who may be holding over its head the threat of going back to violence if negotiations don't go their way. That's what it's about.
- I So it might be that you would appear in front of the microphone in another week or a fortnight or in three weeks without anything public having happened but able to say that I now understand as a result of discussions that have taken place, perhaps between Dublin and the IRA or Sinn Fein that this is what they meant and therefore we accept it and therefore we can get the process going.

- M Its got to go out publicly. We made that clear in the commentary we made when we had those twenty questions, remember, put to us in May of this year.
- I Clarification.
- M We made it clear that there has to be a permanent and public renunciation and after that, once that's been done and after a certain period, within three months have gone by with no violence then we are prepared to get into preliminary discussions. Of course it must be public and the reason is, as you know so well, there is an enormous amount of suspicion and fear here in Northern Ireland. Heavens above, we've had twenty-five years of the most terrible murder and violence and all the rest going on for so long. There is deep fear and if it is felt that the British Government has been accepting nods and winks, still worse if its been offering nods and winks, which of course it has not, that fuels suspicions. Now, if there is a difference between complete cessation and permanent end of violence we ought to know what it is. If there is no difference then let them say there is no difference.
- I Dick Spring said on this programme, we are beginning this process immediately, within a matter of weeks the forum for peace begins, in a matter of months we shall have people sitting at the table and talking. That's what he clearly intends to do. That's what the Irish Government clearly intends to do. Are you going to allow that to happen? Will you be a party to that process?
- M Well the forum for peace is an Irish initiative...
- I ...Indeed and you can't stop that but then it goes beyond that.
- M ...and I wouldn't wish for a moment to stop that but what I do wish to emphasize is the importance of holding to what both governments said was essential in the Joint Declaration and it is, let's not forget, from that historic joint declaration that what we now see and this is so very welcome, has sprung and is derived from the Joint Declaration. We do need to see that what both governments said was essential, has actually been delivered. Now, the difference is only one of interpretation. The Irish Government are saying we interpret what they said yesterday as meaning...
- I ...in a positive light.
- M Yes, as meaning...no, no, that's not quite enough to say in a positive light...we interpret it as meaning that they are saying that violence is over for good and we say we very much hope you are right, but the trouble is it just doesn't say that. We hope that's what they mean and its such a simple matter for them to make it clear if its right.

- I Martin McGuinness made it quite clear this morning that this ceasefire will go on and on and on come what may.
- M Well, we'll want to look very carefully at what has been said. I'll just say that its necessary for that kind of assurance that its over for good, permanently over, to be made publicly and then we can be as satisfied as the Irish Government apparently are that they have delivered that which both governments have said is essential.
- I Sir Patrick Mayhew, thank you very much.
- M Thank you.