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SECURE FAX 702

IMMEDIATE

31 August, 1994

Pages: 7

TO: HQ

FROM: BELFAST

FOR: A/Sec O hUiginn

FROM: Joint Secretary

Olles, A-I  
And W. Fox  
Sub - sent by source  
fax  
11/9/94  
Q.

British Reactions

I spoke to Martin Williams late this afternoon about the Secretary of State's comments in Downing Street of which I attach a transcript. I said we appreciated that the media had homed in on the absence of the word "permanent", that the Secretary of State had to deal with scepticism of IRA intentions in Unionist ranks and on his backbenches and that he had to be sensitive to the feelings of those who had suffered at the hands of the IRA in the past 25 years, but he had dwelt almost exclusively on the absence of the word "permanent" and we hoped he would not continue to do so. It would give an argument to Loyalists who might be disposed to continue their campaign and would dispirit those responsible for the IRA statement. It was important that the note of scepticism should not drown out the note of welcome.

*I remember this also in a conversation with Lord Balfour*  
*3/8*

I recalled our conversation yesterday in which Williams told me that the NIO would try to avoid distinguishing between the words "permanent" and "complete".

Williams noted my remarks. He said there was widespread scepticism in Northern Ireland which was something they had to deal with. They were aware that our Government were satisfied that this was a permanent end to violence but they did not have the same degree of conviction. I mentioned incidentally Deputy Bruton's statement in the Dail today that he was satisfied also although he understood why others might not agree or might come to our conclusion at a slower pace.

I drew attention to the reassuring remarks addressed to Unionists in the speeches of the Taoiseach and Tanaiste and provided transcripts. I drew attention specifically to our assurance that there had been no secret deals, which the British had hoped we would say.

**Comment:** The British Government's reaction has seemed to get harder during the day, which is a worry. Subsequent to conversation with Williams, I saw a transcript (attached) of the Prime Minister's interview on SKY which also dwelt on the need for the IRA to make clear that their complete cessation of violence was a permanent one, adding that only then could the British Government consider how to move forward, ie, that the ninety day clock, as journalists are calling it, would only begin to tick towards the exploratory phase after it was clear that the cessation was permanent and after that was shown to be the case by the IRA's deeds. The PM seemed to be demanding a further statement from the IRA, "I don't mind how they phrase it so long as it is unambiguously clear that this is the end of violence for good."

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Interview with Secretary of State  
Wednesday, 31 August, 1994  
Sky News - 4.15 pm

Secretary of State: .....adjustment of any way of any kind, to the constitutional guarantee which the Government has over so many years maintained, that there will be no change to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom except with the consent of the greater number of people living in Northern Ireland, something which is written into the Joint Declaration there between the two Governments, for example, in December last year. And it therefore followed that the greater part of the conversation centred upon the statement, the important statement made by Mr Adams in Dublin today. And there was naturally enough, welcome that, after so long, there is from midnight tonight to be no more murdering and bombing and maiming and violence generally. That, naturally is a matter to be welcomed very much. However, it was equally obvious as the Prime Minister's own statement issued shortly before one o'clock this afternoon had made clear that the word "permanent" didn't feature in the statement that was issued by Mr Adams. And everybody, I think will remember that the Irish Government, the British Government, with the approval of Mr Hume, and the American Government as well had expressed its approval for this, all of them had insisted that before the entry process into the talks process could begin for Sinn Fein as an elected mandated political party, there had first of all to be a permanent end to violence, a renunciation of violence and a permanent renunciation of the support for violence. Now it may very well be that that is the intention of the statement that has been issued by Mr Adams today, but it will be recalled that what he said was that there had been ordered as from midnight tonight a complete cessation of military operations, as they put it. And the Prime Minister's statement this afternoon, just before 1 O'Clock, drew attention to the fact that they had declared a cessation, a complete cessation of violence, but went on to say that we needed to be clear, it needed to be made clear that this

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was indeed intended to mean that it was over permanently, that is to say, for good. I understand that there are some who say that if you look at the whole body of that statement issued by Mr Adams that is the intention. But this is so important a matter, that the Prime Minister, and we, believe that it ought not to be left at large or able to be the subject of discussion and argument. If, indeed, that is the intention, it is surely the simplest thing in the world for it to be made clear that that is indeed the intention, that it is over for good. This is not just a piece of pedantry or nit-picking about a particular word, what lies behind it is the absolute essential importance that such talks and negotiations as may take place in future shall not take place under the implied threat that violence, which after all has gone on for so long, could be taken up again and renewed and resumed if people didn't behave during those discussions in a way that was congenial to the IRA. So that is what it is about and I very much hope that it is the case, that the intention is that it is over for good, the Prime Minister feels and we all feel very firmly that this is something that does have to be put beyond doubt. A very simple matter to do and we hope that it will take place, that it will be done very quickly whereupon the British Government naturally enough will start to put in place the timescale that is already being made public about the approach to preliminary talks and so on.

Interviewer: Sir Patrick, may I be very clear about that last sentence you just uttered. Are you saying, therefore, that the ninety day clock cannot start to run until the IRA makes clear that it is permanent, makes that statement about permanence?

Secretary of State: It couldn't possibly start to run until midnight tonight, because violence is said to be at an end only from midnight tonight. Plenty of time to make that clear before midnight tonight and it should be made clear.

Interviewer: What do you understand to be the meaning of the "cessation of military operations" - does it include punishment



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shootings?

Secretary of State: The Prime Minister has interpreted that, in a statement that he issued just before lunchtime today, as an end to violence. A cessation, a complete cessation of violence. But of course that should include violence of all kinds, not just the hideous abuses that have gone on in the form of bombing, but things such as punishment shootings and the like. And they should all be included.

Interviewer: .... renounce violence permanently...

Secretary of State: It does have to be made clear before the British Government considers that the timescale to which it is committed in public statements and most recently in the commentary that it made, to the twenty questions put to it in May, it does have to be made clear first that this is intended to be and it may very well be a permanent ending of violence, that is to say, for good. Once that is done, then that process begins.

Interviewer: .....this message through any channels directly to Sinn Fein/IRA?

Secretary of State: No.

Interviewer: In what way is that clarification, will it have to be a statement by Mr Adams of the same nature as the statement that we have had earlier today and as a follow-up question, can I ask you at what stage will the British Government withdraw the Broadcasting Ban on Sinn Fein?

Secretary of State: No it doesn't have to be made clear in any form or way, in any particular format. It just has to be expressed in a means that leaves ordinary people, let alone Governments, but leave ordinary people satisfied that that which the two Governments have said will be an essential, an essential before the talks

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process and entry into the talks process can be done, can begin, it does have to be made clear in whatever form is sufficient to make it perfectly clear to everyday people that that actually is what is intended to be delivered. And of course, indeed, as I made clear, as we made clear in the commentaries to the twenty questions in May after the word, there does have to follow a period of what I might call conduct, deed, behaviour, whatever you like to call it that is consistent with the word, and within three months we are into the preliminary talks which we are committed to.

Interviewer: And does the Broadcasting Ban go during the three months or only at the end of it?

Secretary-of-State: Everything will be considered step by step in the light of prevailing circumstances.

31/8/94

*W. J. ...*

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Interview with Prime Minister, John Major Sky News, 6.00 p.m.

Interviewer: It is the breakthrough that you have been waiting for but perhaps it doesn't go quite as far as you wanted. Will you be asking the IRA for clarification that does mean a permanent end to violence before you start the clock at midnight?

John Major: I think that is an extremely important point. The fact that there is to be a cessation of violence is very welcome but what I need to know and what the people of Northern Ireland need to know is that this isn't for a week, isn't for a month, is permanent and as soon as we know that that is permanent then we can begin to consider how to move forward. It may be that this is intended to indicate a permanent cessation of violence. I hope it is and I hope it will be made clear that that is the case.

Interviewer: Now you want those words actually said or stated somehow by the IRA.

John Major: I am not hung up on the particular words. I would like them to make it clear that as far as they are concerned what they have called the armed struggle is over. That they have finished with violence for good. I don't mind how they phrase it as long as it is unambiguously clear that this is the end of violence. That is what I wish to hear.

Interviewer: There are those Unionists who think the whole deal is totally inadequate so far as Ian Paisley for example is concerned that the document looks to him like a salute to the bombers and the murderers, there is a long way to go isn't there?

John Major: Well, there is still a great deal to be done. But I think if many people had said a year ago, could you reach the situation we have now reached they would have said no. Now we now have the position where there is a cessation of violence, perhaps it is permanent. I hope so. We can then move forward to a proper constitutional future for Northern Ireland. Now I think that is very great prize, what concerns me is not semantic criticism but the end of bloodshed in Northern Ireland.

Interviewer: But it is one of those situations in which you can only tell minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, the tensions are going to be enormous aren't they.

John Major: Well we need two things, don't we? We firstly need it to be made clear that this is intended to be a permanent cessation of violence, and then of course, we need to see those words carried out, we need to see the deeds. We need a period in which violence actually ceases. And as we set out in the Joint Declaration, if it is clear that it is permanent and if the violence then ceases for a period up to three months, within that three month period we will then begin to talk to Sinn Fein about how we bring them in to the constitutional talks, that is a great prize for everyone.

Interviewer: Those on your backbenches, including your former Chancellor Norman Lamont is saying the British Government must never talk, ever talk to those members of the IRA and Sinn Fein who have been responsible for this.

John Major: I think what people have been saying is that we mustn't talk to people who are dealing in atrocities. What we are saying is we are not talking to anyone until it is clear they are

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not involved in violence. That is absolutely the point. They cannot be involved in violence and also enter into the constitutional debate but what I have to do is to find a way forward. Ulster is full of history. It is full of old hatreds, it is time to exorcise those old hatreds, it is time to try a new future for them, it can only be done provided the renunciation of violence is permanent. And that is what I wish to hear.

Interviewer: How much do you fear the provocation that everybody expects from paramilitary loyalists on the wilder shores of the loyalist movement?

John Major: Well I very much hoped that the loyalists will also indicate without delay that they too propose to end violence, violence is equally evil whether it comes from the Nationalist side or the loyalist side. They must ~~talk~~ <sup>talk</sup> as well.

Interviewer: Well it is a long period in which all parties must be asked to hold their breath, but what do you think the future holds, is it a day by day matter, or will you see at midnight tonight the ceasefire and then have confidence that it will hold?

John Major: I think the ceasefire will come into force at midnight. I hope and believe it will hold. Only events will make that clear, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> I hope it will hold, I hope as it holds, people will build up their confidence and that over time, when it is clear that it is permanent, when it is clear that it is being held we can then talk about how to bring Sinn Fein into constitutional discussions to provide a future for Northern Ireland free of violence and that can be a very golden future.

Interviewer: But Unionists in Northern Ireland must be forgiven for being a little wary of this and there are those of them who are saying that this looks like a cave-in, like a sell-out, like the end of Northern Ireland within the union of the United Kingdom.

John Major: Well, I hear these comments, I don't know upon what they are based, everything that has been done has been done openly and in public, there are no secret deals, there are no secret negotiations, there is an absolute constitutional guarantee that for so long as the people of Northern Ireland wish to stay in the United Kingdom, they will do so. That is what people have asked for, that is what they have got. And what they have a right to beyond that is a future without bloodshed and that is what I am seeking to provide.

Interviewer: Will they also get a referendum?

John Major: In due course, we can look at all aspects.

Interviewer: Prime Minister, thank you very much for talking to us.