

British message sent on 17 July 1993

'The importance, seriousness and significance of your message of  
10 May was fully understood.

As you know, consideration was being given at the highest level to a far-reaching response. It would have replied to the questions posed and was intended to remove remaining doubts, misconceptions and suspicions. There was no ulterior motive in any delay, and you would have had the response as soon as it was cleared. But this response needed to be carefully and deliberately written to avoid misunderstanding or suspicion about bad faith. It also needed to be cleared at the highest level. You should understand this, as it took you some time to respond to the nine paragraph note, presumably for the same reasons.

Events on the ground shortly after the [Northern Ireland local] Elections of 19 May, however, made it impossible to proceed with this response. Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently made clear. We cannot conceivably disregard them. Although it was absolutely clear from the attacks which took place in March that events on the ground could halt progress, these attacks following the May elections went ahead. This has happened several times now with an inevitable result.

This said, the position of the nine paragraph note stands and progress is still possible. Does the ending of conflict remain your objective, and is there a way forward?

There is one very important point which needs to be answered to remove possible misunderstandings. Recent pronouncements, including the Bodenstown speech, seem to imply that unless your analysis of the way forward is accepted within a set time, the halt in violence will only be temporary. This is not acceptable.

The reasons for not talking about a permanent cessation are understood, but the peace process cannot be conditional on the acceptance of any particular or single analysis. The views of others involved must also be recognised as valid, though you will of course want to promote your own views. Paragraph 7 of the 9 paragraph note sets out our position.

Can you confirm that you envisage a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward?

If you can, we remind you that this process of dialogue leading to an inclusive political process can only start after we have received the necessary assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end. In the meantime progress has to be subject to events on the ground.

Note

The Bodenstown speech mentioned in para 5 was one made by Mr McGuinness at the annual Republican commemoration of Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown.

In the course of that exchange you asserted the belief that a two week suspension to accommodate talks would result in republicans being persuaded that there is no further need for armed struggle.

Because of our commitment to a lasting settlement and despite all of the difficulties involved we sought and received a commitment to

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Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 14 August  
1993

We are concerned at the inflexibility of your most recent communication. It does not reflect, in tone or content, the pre 10th May position. This coupled with recent political statements must raise a serious question over your commitment to a real peace process.

Sinn Fein is committed to securing peace and an end to conflict. In our view this requires 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 situation we are prepared to be as reasonable and flexible as possible.

There is a way forward for all who have the political will to grasp it. Our will to do so should not be in any doubt.

We are perplexed by your latest communication. In this you require a private unilateral assurance, that organised violence has been brought to an end. This is implicitly recognised in the contacts which have been made in the past several years. Without any such assurance we were prepared to proceed to the point of a face to face meeting. We welcomed this development.

In the course of that exchange you asserted the belief that a two week suspension to accommodate talks would result in republicans being persuaded that there is no further need for armed struggle.

Because of our commitment to a lasting settlement and despite all of the difficulties involved we sought and received a commitment to

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facilitate that step so that we could both explore the potential for a real peace process. We acknowledge this positive response to our request as a sign of the seriousness of those involved.

The commitment was conveyed to you by the intermediaries. You failed to grasp that opportunity. This failure has frustrated any further developments.

Your latest written communication states that the "importance, change, seriousness and significance" of this message "was fully understood". The logic of that should have been to move forward on the outlined basis. Regrettably that did not happen. Instead you did not respond to this development. ~~conditions or all to ongoing~~

We believe that this may be for expedient, internal and domestic party political reasons. If we are to move forward such narrow considerations must be set to one side. We are not interested in playing games.

In addition, much time prior to this was devoted by us to the drafting of an 11 paragraph response to your 9 paragraph document. This has been lodged with the intermediaries for some time now. It was our intention to put this on the agenda when the joint secretariat, proposed by us, met to agree procedures. Because of your failure to respond this did not happen.

The manner in which we have handled this project is a clear demonstration of our seriousness and commitment to bringing about a peace process. The way in which you have handled it has damaged the project and may have increased the difficulties.

Your failure to respond, coupled with recent statements by your Prime Minister and other senior ministers shows no flexibility or imagination.

As for events on the ground. The greatest number of fatalities for some time now in the conflict have resulted from the actions of loyalists groups acting both on their own agenda and as surrogates for British intelligence. South African guns supplied by British agent Brian Nelson with the full knowledge of the British authorities are being used for attacks on the nationalist population, members of Sinn Fein and their families.

This is the reality of events on the ground which we seek to change, so let us be serious. There is conflict. The issue is its resolution.

The absence of such a peace process condemns us all to ongoing conflict and tragedy.

Note

The statement in para 6 that there was a suggestion that a two week suspension could accommodate talks was incorrect. HMG's message of 3 September dealt with this point and a number of others raised by the 14 August message.

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Message from the leadership of the  
Provisional Movement, 30 August 1993

We reiterate our concern at the continuing leaks from your side. The Sunday Times story of 22nd August 1993 was but the latest in a recent series which include a previous Sunday Times article and several informed references in public statements by a number of Unionist spokesmen. We are also convinced and concerned that the recent Cook Report is connected to the above revelations.

Violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed or one side going forward. It depends on the other side's analysis and what they do. As far as a further point is at, the Government side has not asserted a belief that a two weeks suspension would have the result described in paragraph 6. On the contrary, it has been their consistent position that violence must be brought to an end before any process could begin.

Equally it is accepted that your side genuinely and reasonably believed it had made a serious and significant offer. If it is the case that your side believes it has been met with indifference, or worse, then it shows that both sides must strive to be more clear with each other.

6. The important thing, without raking over every point of detail, is to establish whether there is a clearly understood way forward which could be agreed and adopted, without sacrifice of essential principles on either side, in pursuit of the objectives of securing peace, stability and reconciliation.

7. Two points are of special importance:

- (i) since it is not possible to hold discussions under the threat of violence, there must be an end to violent activity before the process could begin.

British message transmitted 3 September 1993

1. The importance of clear mutual understanding has already been recognised. Minds do not seem to be meeting at the moment. This needs to be overcome.

2. The note you sent on 14 August did not deal with a crucial point. It did not confirm that you envisage a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward.

3. On a further point in it, the Government side has not asserted a belief that a two weeks suspension would have the result described in paragraph 6. On the contrary, it has been their consistent position that violence must be brought to an end before any process could begin.

4. Equally it is accepted that your side genuinely and reasonably believed it had made a serious and significant offer. If it is the case that your side believes it has been met with indifference, or worse, then it shows then both sides must strive to be more clear with each other.

6. The important thing, without raking over every point of detail, is to establish whether there is a clearly understood way forward which could be agreed and adopted, without sacrifice of essential principles on either side, in pursuit of the objectives of securing peace, stability and reconciliation.

7. Two points are of special importance:

- (i) since it is not possible to hold discussions under the threat of violence, there must be an end to violent activity before the process could begin;

(ii) the objectives of an inclusive process would be the pursuit of peace, stability and reconciliation on the widest possible basis. Beyond that, there would be no attempt to impose prior restrictions on the agenda. On the contrary it is assumed that each participant would enter such a process on the basis of their separately stated political analysis and objectives. The recent media Government's position is well understood publicly. The briefing. 9 paragraph note was entirely consistent with that position.

8. Against that background, can you confirm that you want a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward?

9. If you can confirm this, then we remind you that this process of dialogue leading to an inclusive political process can only start after the receipt of the necessary assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end. In the meantime progress has to be subject to events on the ground.

British message sent on 3 September 1993

**FREE-STANDING MESSAGE (in response to concern about press speculation)**

Recent media reports and speculation do not result from authorised briefing. Nor do they serve the interests of anybody seeking to bring these exchanges to a successful conclusion. As both sides recognise, that depends on maintaining maximum confidentiality. Recent reports are certainly not being inspired, let alone orchestrated, by the Government side to which they are most unwelcome. Accordingly, the Government side will continue to respect the confidentiality of these exchanges. It remains committed as before to the 9 paragraph note.

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Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 2 November  
1993

This problem cannot be solved by the Reynolds Spring situation, although they're part of it. You appear to have rejected the Hume Adams situation though they too are part of it.

Every day all the main players are looking for singular solutions. It can't be solved singularly. We offered the 10 May. You've rejected it. Now we can't even have dialogue to work out how a total end to all violence can come about. We believe that the country could be at the point of no return. In plain language please tell us through as a matter of urgency when you will open dialogue in the event of a total end to hostilities. We believe that if all the documents involved are put on the table - including your 9 paragrapher and our 10th May that we have the basis of an understanding.

Given the present and continuing positions of the British Government that any dialogue could only deliver a permanent and violent activity.

You ask about the sequencing of events in the event of a total end to hostilities. If, as you have offered, you were to give us unequivocal assurance that violence has indeed been brought to a permanent end, and that necessarily this time is now committed to peaceful purposes by peaceful and democratic means alone, we will make public our commitment to open, transparent dialogue with you. Our public statement will then make clear that your popular mandate is properly recognised, that you are entitled to govern, and that others are disengaged from contention with you. In this setting the British Government will then issue a formal statement of commitment to a political process.

British message transmitted 5 November 1993

**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.

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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.

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 (eg venue, transport, security and other

PROCEDURAL ANNEX

(negotiating matters) will need to have been settled shortly beforehand.

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 (eg 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.

They also supported the use of violence for political ends. Both governments were sceptical 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 views of the dialogue which she recently given to the Taoiseach and which had now been passed on to the British Government. They agreed that the two governments would continue to work together in their joint endeavour to promote peace, stability and reconciliation throughout the island.

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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 cooperation.
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

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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.

1. Regarding of role of Facilitators during  
relocation of Visits section from 3rd floor to 2nd floor.
2. It is, of course, not certain that such a concession will be put into operation, but we shall nevertheless be in a position to implement it swiftly if and when a date is fixed for the next set of Talks sessions and if it is decided to move the Castle as the Talks venue.
3. I would be grateful if you could let me have your comments on these proposals by Friday, 29 October.

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