

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES (CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN ETC)

What contacts/negotiations, direct or indirect?

- There has been none; I believe that Hon members will understand the great value that I attach to their being able to place their trust in me.

An undertaking there will be no contacts in future?

There are no negotiations with those who commit acts of terrorism. As my rt hon Friend the Prime Minister said in this House earlier this week (15 January 1991, Col 730) the Government has taken, and will continue to take the consistent position that terrorism should not be rewarded.

What about intermediaries/indirect contacts?

There have been no negotiations, direct or indirect. There have of course been many people, such as journalists, who speak to Ministers and others in my Department, who may also speak to those who support terrorism; that is unavoidable, but in no sense amounts to negotiation.

What about contacts with Sinn Fein?

Our position in relation to Sinn Fein, so long as they condone violence, is well established and understood. They chose not play a full part in the political process. They have an elected Member of this House, but he has chosen not to take his seat. They have elected representatives on councils in Northern Ireland, so it is inevitably the case that very limited contact will from time to time occur with them, but I have to tell the House there are great difficulties in dealing on a normal democratic footing with such people.

Ceasefire/in what circumstances/on what conditions would contact/negotiations be authorised?

My/the Government's position is very clear. Violence is futile, can never be allowed to succeed, and will always be met with a firm and resolute response. Only a final renunciation of violence would open the way for those who have espoused it to seek a role in the peaceful political life of the community.

Talks always better than guns or bombs - so why no contact?

You cannot negotiate on political issues with people who continue to use or threaten violence to make their argument.

(ii) it is a major factor in bringing some of the Provisionals to address the possibility of pursuing their ends peacefully.

(iii) However there does not have to be a choice between pursuing political development or pursuing peace. While none of us can perhaps see our way ahead very clearly as yet, it should be possible to weave together the open political process with any serious move towards peace by the Provisionals.

(iv) There can be no question of HMG setting its face against a serious move towards peace. But it will take time. Mr Hume's own efforts at dialogue have run for two years now. It would be wrong to think there was only a brief window of opportunity, and to delay all the progress made so far on political development on that mistaken assumption. Mr Hume understands very well too the acute moral and political difficulties standing in the way of responding to merely partial, temporary or conditional moves towards peace on the part of the Provisionals.

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