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DRAFT STATEMENT ON SINN FEIN'S RESPONSE TO JOINT DECLARATION

Final text to be confirmed with NIO when details are known

[We shall study Sinn Fein's statement carefully.]

The Government's position has always been perfectly plain. What we want is a permanent end to all violence. [Nothing less than that is acceptable.] And it is not something which can be negotiated or bargained for. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach spelt it out in Brussels last October when they agreed that 'there could be no secret agreements or understandings between Governments and organizations supporting violence as a price for its cessation' and that '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.

The simple fact is that it would be a betrayal of all those - republicans and nationalists among them - who have put their faith in the ballot box and the power of democratic argument over the years to negotiate with someone who prefers the bullet if they do not get their own way.

The same principle is also at the heart of the Joint Declaration, as one of its supporting pillars. There both Governments said 'that the achievement of peace must involve a permanent end to the use of, or support for, paramilitary violence.'

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The other dimension to the Joint Declaration - the second of twin pillars - is the unswerving commitment to democracy and the consent and wishes of the people.

On the basis of those principles the Joint Declaration confirmed that 'democratically mandated parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they abide by the democratic process, are free to join in dialogue in due course between the two Governments and the political parties on the way ahead'.

We have gone further and also set out our firm pledge to enter preliminary exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein within 3 months of an end to violence. We did that last November and again most recently in May when we published our commentary on Sinn Fein's 20 questions on the Declaration.

The commentary set out too, in some detail, the Government's view of the issues which could be discussed. It is a serious, substantive agenda. Our offer remains open.

But we shall have to see what happens in the coming weeks/days/months before we can see whether this is a genuine end to violence. [The Chief Constable will make his own operational judgement of the situation, but, as he wrote last week (15 July) 'when, and only when, there is a significant reduction in terrorist violence, will the current pattern of policing

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'change'.] Of course, any halt to the killing in Northern Ireland is welcome. [But no thanks are due to the executioners who promise only to squeeze their triggers gently/not to pull their triggers yet.] [Let Sinn Fein now demonstrate their genuine commitment to peace.] [They have taken a tentative/faltering first step. Now they must take the rest.]

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON

24 June 1974

Dear Sir,

SINN FEIN 'PEACE COMMISSION' REPORT

I attach the 30 pages or so of this report. On a very quick skim, the key points that stand out are:

this does not appear to be Sinn Fein's response to the Declaration; the report is described as 'one of the elements which is helping to inform our response';

the report is divided into three main sections: an historical account of Sinn Fein's peace strategy in the form of a compilation of statements, articles and speeches already on record; a summary on (selective) quotes from the various statements made by the Irish and British Governments since 15 December; and an account of the submissions made to the Commission;

the introduction summarises views received both in qualified support of the Declaration and critical of it. It reports a number of submissions (up to 250 on some interpretations) calling for various ways for the IRA to

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a list of issues 'which we feel are of interest and need further debate and discussion';