

NORTHERN IRELAND

LINES TO TAKE

Guildhall Speech

1. The Prime Minister wanted to make explicit what was implicit. If the IRA end violence for good then, after a suitable interval to ensure the seriousness of their intent, Sinn Fein can enter the political arena as a democratic party and join the dialogue on the way ahead.
2. In the Brussels Joint Statement made on 29 October by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach they said that there could be no talks or negotiations with those who use, threaten or support violence for political ends; nor could there be any secret agreements or understandings between governments and organisations supporting violence as a price for its cessation. They urged all those claiming a serious interest in the cause of peace in Ireland to renounce for good the use of violence and made clear that when such a renunciation had been made new doors could open.
3. This is not a reward for terrorism. HMG has consistently made clear that there can be no negotiations to end violence, but once it had ended there would be a new situation. Sir Patrick Mayhew said in his speech at Coleraine in December 1992 that

"In the event of a genuine and established cessation of violence, the whole range of responses that we have had to make to that violence could, and would, inevitably be looked at afresh ..."

4. The point is that Northern Ireland is a democracy. And in a democracy everyone can make their views felt through the ballot box. In a democracy terrorists are the enemies of the people, all the people, and no one believes we should negotiate with someone who is going to leave the table and go out to murder and maim.

5. If Gerry Adams is serious about peace he should stop trying to blame everyone else for failing to secure it and recognise the truth that it is his party which supports the IRA's use of violence, and it is for him to renounce that. He should call unequivocally on the IRA to stop their violence now for good.

Have there been talks with Sinn Fein?

6. The position is perfectly plain - we will not engage in talks or negotiations with those who use, support or threaten violence to advance their political objectives.

Intermediaries?

7. No one has been authorised to have talks or negotiations with Sinn Fein or the IRA on behalf of the British government. Ministers have always, of course, been anxious to ensure that HMG's position, as publicly stated, is fully understood by anyone who is or may be in a position to influence Sinn Fein's thinking. If asked about its position, The Government has said it means precisely what it says in public.

Hume/Adams?

8. The Prime Minister has had an account of the outcome of the Hume/Adams talks, both from the Taoiseach and Mr Hume. Not right to reveal the detail. But it is clear, as the Prime Minister and Taoiseach said in Brussels, there can be no question of adopting or endorsing the report.

9. Mr Hume's talks with Gerry Adams are entirely a matter for him. He has not been acting, either directly or indirectly on behalf of the British government.

Political talks: where next? Sinn Fein in, DUP out?

10. Much too early to speculate about what might happen. Important thing is for the terrorists to stop their violence now for good.

11. The government has made it clear that it wants political talks between the two governments and the main constitutional parties to begin as early as possible. But whenever that happens it will be for the different parties to make their own decision about whether to attend.

12. The British and Irish governments have both emphasised their commitment to new talks and the responsibility which lies on everyone involved in constitutional politics to respond constructively to the present situation. But there are no rabbits to pull from the hat. Building a political settlement which obtains the consent of the people, and leads to lasting peace will take time, patience and commitment.

Is it peace first or talks first?

13. Peace and talks are not rivals - it is not a case of either/or. We want to achieve both. Of course people want the paramilitaries to stop their violence - and they should stop it for good today. But an enduring peace will only be achieved through a political settlement which has the consent of all the people of Northern Ireland.

14. The Prime Minister's forthcoming meeting with the Taoiseach [in Dublin on 3 December] will provide a further opportunity to both governments to explain where they stand and how things may be carried forward.