

SECRET AND PERSONAL

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF A DEFENSIVE STATEMENT ABOUT HMG TALKING TO THE PROVISIONALS WITHOUT A PERMANENT RENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE

If unsuccessful

- HMG is committed to eradicating terrorism; the most effective way of doing this is to remove it at source by encouraging Sinn Fein to seek to persuade PIRA of the error of their strategy of violence. No responsible Government could wantonly miss any opportunity of bringing violence to an end. [Indeed, it is the duty of Government to take an imaginative step where necessary.]
- I have always stressed the importance of dialogue as a part of the democratic tradition; I have also said that HMG's role is to help, enable and encourage the process of reconciliation. It seemed for a time that there was a possibility of bringing the violence to an end, and that was something which we could not simply pass by.
- [No concessions were offered to the Provisionals.] [No concessions were offered to Sinn Fein and there was of course no contact at all with PIRA.] The question of appeasement or of attempting to buy them off therefore does not arise. That much should be apparent from the fact that no substantive discussions took place.
- But I still believe that the overwhelming majority in the island of Ireland realise that there is no future for terrorism. I very much regret that overall [the Provisionals] [Sinn Fein] seem at present unable to [understand] [accept] this. Until they do, [their] [PIRA's] criminal acts (in common with those perpetrated by other sections of the community) will be met with a firm and resolute response.

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If successful

- We have gained a major prize. After 20 years the IRA have called off their campaign of violence which was becoming increasingly futile. This is a significant step in returning Northern Ireland to normality.
- I have always stressed the importance of dialogue as part of the democratic tradition; I have also said that HMG's role is to help, enable and encourage the process of reconciliation. There were signs that the republican movement was re-examining its espousal of the armed struggle and it was HMG's duty to grasp the opportunity to bring violence to an end.
- HMG has made no concessions of substance [and there has been no direct contact with PIRA]. In particular the guarantee remains that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom for so long as a majority of its population wish it.
- PIRA have finally realised that their campaign of violence was getting nowhere; it is now time for all of us to set about healing the divisions in our society which that campaign has exacerbated.

RN/6328