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**TEXT OF A SPEECH**  
**MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER**  
**THE RT HON JOHN MAJOR MP**  
**IN THE DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS**  
**ON**  
**THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 1993**

**PRESS OFFICE**  
**PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**  
**10 DOWNING STREET**  
**LONDON**  
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## NORTHERN IRELAND

Madam Speaker,

Despite our legislative programme Northern Ireland must remain at the head of our priorities.

Our outrage at repeated carnage must not be blunted because we have lived with the problem for so long.

The stark fact is that terrorism has claimed the lives of over 3000 people in Northern Ireland since 1969 - 75 of them this year.

There are, I believe, two moods in Northern Ireland.

There is a palpable mood for peace.

But there is also, among some people, a feeling that the dead must be endlessly avenged. That any accommodation with the opposing viewpoint would betray those who have died.

The right memorial to the dead is - surely - to make sure no one else is killed. Unfortunately, avenging the dead means more dead. And then they have to be avenged.

But we are not looking for peace at any price. A peace which involved conceding to terrorism or negotiating under its shadow would not be acceptable.

Nonetheless there may be a chance now that we should try to take.

I do not wish to raise false hopes. History and deeply entrenched positions can all too easily bring a sense of despair.

But, there may be an opportunity for progress and we must explore it. And if we do not succeed this time, we must keep trying.

Our chances improve if we have the support of both sides of the community, of all constitutional parties, and of the Irish Government. But no party or organisation can exercise a veto on progress.

That has been the basis of my consultations over recent months with the constitutional parties and with the Irish Government. We hope to make further progress before, during and after, my meeting with the Taoiseach in Dublin next month.

Our aim is clear.

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We seek both a permanent end to violence - and a political settlement.

We have made substantial progress in the three areas of the political talks.

We are talking bilaterally because a premature attempt to convene a round table conference would be counterproductive.

If, at an appropriate time, it will help the process to put proposals of our own on the table, we shall be ready to do so.

I said earlier this week that Sinn Fein could enter the political arena if the IRA's violence ended for good, and was so demonstrated over a sufficient interval.

If they send such a message we are ready to listen to them.

But a statement of intent by them is not - by itself - enough.

The violence must stop - and be seen to stop.

Our position should not be misunderstood.

The democratic process is there for all who can show they abide by its rules. But there will be no rewards for terrorists.

Nor will we compromise on the vital principle that there can be no change in Northern Ireland's status without the freely expressed consent of its people. It is for the people of Northern Ireland, freely and democratically, to determine their own constitutional future.

I warmly welcome what the Irish Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister have said to support the principle of consent and the talks process, and to accept the need for changes in the Irish constitution.

This is the framework within which we - and the Irish Government - will work for peace, stability and reconciliation.

We are ready to respond to a cessation of violence. I said so, with the Taoiseach, in Brussels on 29 October.

It is now for Sinn Fein and the IRA, and equally for the Loyalist paramilitary organisations, to draw the right conclusions.