

**A record of communication between
Sinn Féin and the British government
October 1990 - November 1993**

October 1990: Meeting between Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle member Martin McGuinness and British government representative.

The meeting was initiated by the British government representative. He informed McGuinness of his imminent retirement and intimated that there would be an effort to reactivate a long-standing line of communication.

Martin McGuinness attended the meeting on a listening brief. Subsequently an advance copy of Peter Brooke's Whitbread Speech, The British Presence, was forwarded to Sinn Féin. Brooke made this speech on November 9, 1990.

January 26, 1992: Oral message from the British government

This drew Sinn Féin's attention to comments made by Peter Brooke in the course of an interview.

April 1991: Oral message from the British government.

Sinn Féin was informed via the (now retired) British government representative that the loyalist death squads were about to announce a ceasefire for the duration of the inter-party talks.

June 1991: British government appoints new representative.

In June of 1991 the newly appointed British government representative introduced himself to the contact. He verified his status by producing a letter signed by the then British Secretary of State Peter Brooke. This letter was read by the contact and retained by the British government representative. His status was also verified by the former British government representative. Sinn Féin was informed that the appointment was made by London.

August and September 1991: Oral messages from British government

Clarification was sought on two confusing messages which the NIO claimed to have received from people claiming to be in contact with republicans. They speculated about an extension of the Irish Republican Army's traditional suspension of operations for three days at Christmas. Archbishop Robin Eames was, it was claimed, one of these people.

The matter was clarified.

October 1991: Oral message from the British government.

This gave Sinn Féin prenotice of a speech by Peter Brooke in Enniskillen.

November 1991: Oral message from the British government

It sought Sinn Féin advice on the usefulness of setting up, as a point of contact, the home of a retired civil servant in County Derry.

Sinn Féin responded orally saying we were more interested in the substance of communications than the means. However, if the British government had something solid to say Sinn Féin would be listening.

January 7, 1992: Written message from Sinn Fein to the British government

This related to the developing Irish peace initiative. It is being withheld because of its sensitivity.

January 26, 1992: Oral message from the British government

This drew Sinn Féin's attention to comments made by Peter Brooke in the course of an interview on RTE on 20 January, 1992.

It indicated that Brooke and Major were working on a speech. Sinn Féin was subsequently given a preview of the speech - a speech by John Major to Scottish Conservative candidates delivered on 22 February, 1992, in Glasgow.

January 29, 1992: Sinn Fein received a written message from the British government on the Irish Peace Initiative.

This is being withheld at this time because of its sensitivity.

May 19, 1992: Oral message from the British government

This urged Sinn Féin to be more proactive in using the line of communication.

Undated: Message from the British government to Sinn Fein

It is unclear from our files whether this document was received in Autumn 91 or Autumn 92.

Conclusion

6. As things stand, I do not recommend that we should positively encourage the Provisionals to declare a Christmas ceasefire. But we should be prepared to move very quickly if they decide to do so unilaterally, conceivably in the day or so before and after Christmas. I propose to review the situation again some time in the week beginning 10 December (given that the Taoiseach may say something on the subject to the Prime Minister at the next month's Summit).

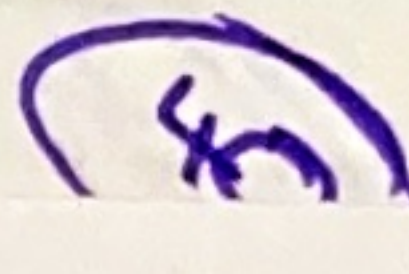
7. I recommend the Secretary of State agree that:

- (i) we should prepare to respond very quickly to a ceasefire at Christmas, but not seek to initiate one;
- (ii) we should take forward detailed staff work on prison's issues suitable for the medium term;
- (iii) I should keep the Chief Constable and GOC abreast of our thinking; and
- (iv) we should keep the situation under close review and report again after the Summit.

8. The Secretary of State may also wish at this stage to note that, as last year, it may be necessary to make quick - and potentially far-reaching - political decision in the immediate run-in to Christmas and we may need to set up machinery and a short-term contingency plan for this. I say this because we cannot rule out a sequence which goes something like: - PIRA calls a Christmas ceasefire; we respond with some security de-escalatory measures; and Sinn Féin asks for a dialogue with Government on political issues - this dialogue to be linked to a continuing absence of hostilities. Alternatively, some third party or parties may elicit a response from the Provisionals, with similar implications.

October 26, 1992: This document was sent to Sinn Féin by the British government.

1. Intensive shuttle diplomacy on the part of Sir N Stephen. Atmosphere improves.
2. On 16 October SOSNI had a short meeting with the Irish. Both Governments agreed that the best chance of progress lay in the proposal that Sir Ninian Stephen should invite all the talks participants to submit to him privately their individual suggestions for Heads of Agreement across all three Strands. It was a high risk strategy, but Sir Ninian appeared well aware of the extreme delicacy of the task and the importance of getting his synthesis right first time. There was a slight danger that Sir Ninian's report would be based on the lowest common denominator of the parties' submissions and thus not form the basis of a workable blueprint; this was a risk which would have to be taken.
3. On the afternoon of 16 October there was a short session of the Strand 2 committee. Sir Ninian formally asked the parties to submit to him, either orally or in writing, their ideas for Heads of Agreement, their concept of the areas where their proposals agreed with those of other delegations, and their views on any areas where they perceived disagreements to exist. Sir Ninian would then correlate the submissions with his own impressions and formulate his report. He had no preconceptions about the form the report would take, and indeed he realised that there was disagreement between the participants as to the scope of the exercise; he saw the process as being a dynamic one which would assume a more coherent form during the course of the following week's consultations.
4. On timetable, Sir Ninian suggested that 19 and 20 October be taken up with bilateral consultations with the NI political parties and that he should talk to the two Governments separately on 21 and 22 October. On 23 October he would report progress to the entire sub-committee either orally or on paper. This, however, he stressed, was only an outline, and changes could be made if people felt it desirable. In addition, he encouraged the delegations to talk to each other as much as possible.



5. These proposals were accepted, albeit with some reservation by the SDLP.
Outlook

6. The talks have thus entered an entirely new stage. Sir Ninian is now effectively in control of all three Strands and the nature of his proposed shuttle diplomacy over the next week (and possibly for longer) means that events could begin to develop very quickly. Information about who is saying what to whom will be at a premium.

7. In preparation for its meeting with Sir Ninian on 21 October the HMG team is drawing up model Heads of Agreement which it believes stand the widest chance of being accepted by all concerned. These will be submitted for his use on a non-attributable basis, in an attempt to guide his consultations. The idea is to "ghost-write" Sir Ninian's report. The main elements are as follows:

Strand 1. Based closely on the Strand 1 sub-committee report of earlier in the year, with the chairmen of Assembly committees becoming heads of department, and with the Assembly being the sole legislative authority but having to submit draft legislation to the separate "Panel" for ratification.

Strand 2. This envisages co-operation between respective departments in the North and the South, the establishment of cross-border executive agencies by the respective legislatures North and South and remaining answerable to them, and the delivery of some all-Ireland executive functions by the body itself, subject to democratic approval and accountability.

Strand 3. An IGC and Secretariat to deal with non-transferred matters affecting NI, with Panel members and committee chairmen from NI formally part of the IGC structure. On the constitutional status of the Province, a statement that NI is currently part of the UK is proposed together with a recognition that a substantial minority wish for a united Ireland, and have the right to pursue that by peaceful and democratic means and without impediment. Replacement of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution by an aspiration to a united Ireland is also sought.

The paper, it is stressed, represents HMG's judgement of what it is possible to achieve, rather than its own sense of priorities in individual areas.

8. If an outline agreement something along these lines is possible there may be a chance of the parties reconvening to put flesh on the bones at some point in the future after the 16 November IGC. Events in the next couple of weeks could move rapidly and unpredictably.

Note: Reports up to this point on the Stormont talks had been pessimistic in outlook. When the unfounded optimism contained in the 'Ninian Stephen' document subsided, Sinn Féin was informed that given the lack of progress in the Stormont talks that the British and Irish governments were considering imposing a situation over the heads of the political parties.

October 26, 1992: This preview of points for a speech to be made by Patrick Mayhew in Coleraine was sent to Sinn Féin. We also received a message.

- 1. Sinn Fein is not denied current involvement in democratic institutions, but is subject to constraints of law and political reality arising from its relationship with the campaign of violence.
- 2. As the previous Secretary of State envisaged in his speech of 9 November 1990: "An Irish republicanism seen to have finally renounced violence would be able, like other parties, to seek a role in the peaceful political life of the community."

to the Talks process, the agreed groundrules of 26 March 1991 for the present and previous rounds of Talks sought to bring together the main constitutional political parties of the day. The present round of Talks is scheduled to last until 16 November 1992. The underlying analysis that political development should focus on three main relationships - within Northern Ireland, within Ireland, and between the two Governments - is likely to remain valid for the foreseeable future.

4. The British Government could not impose on the participants groundrules for any future phases of a continuing Talks process. But its objectives would continue to include the involvement of all the main political parties of the day which did not condone violence. The British Government has no desire to inhibit legitimate constitutional expression of political opinion or input to the political process.

5. The Talks process is based on the participation of each delegation as a free agent. It seeks to produce an agreed accommodation, not an imposed solution. The British Government does not work to any preconceived master plan.

6. Successive Governments have stressed that any new structures for the government of Northern Ireland must be acceptable to both major traditions. A return to the old Stormont political system would not meet this and other publicly stated criteria. The British Government also recognises the need for any new North/South arrangement adequately to cater for and express both traditions.

7. In the event of a genuine and established cessation of violence, the whole range of policies and activities undertaken in response to that violence would inevitably have to be looked at afresh.

October 26, 1992: Report of meeting with British government representative.

He pointed to earlier reports on the progress of the Stormont talks. These consistently put the British government view that they were not going to succeed. While that opinion had not changed he pointed out that Ninian Stephen had improved the general climate. He provided the 'Ninian Stephen' document as evidence of that.

He strongly advocated that we should be sending Sinn Féin addresses and keynote speeches through the line of communication as they had been doing to us.

He said that he understood the dissatisfaction with the means of communicating and that he had been working on this. He intimated the possibility of meetings but stressed that conditions would have to be created to allow this. Such matters move very slowly.

October 26, 1992: Message from the British government

The message shows that the British government was aware of developments in the Irish peace initiative.

Sinn Féin is withholding this message from this record because of its sensitivity.

December 4, 1992: Sinn Féin response to receipt of the 1-7 point document received on October 26 1992.

Thanks for your recent document (the 1 - 7 paragraphs) received on October 26, 1992.

The document is interesting but the present method of communications is totally unsatisfactory. A more satisfactory means of discussion must be found if there is to be any hope of forward movement

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

December 14, 1992: Report of a meeting with British government representative.

This returned to the subject of the method of communicating. Sinn Féin would have to be patient. The British government were not the only ones being cautious. Meetings were possible but only if suitable and acceptable conditions were created.

They had been working at these possibilities for two years now.

He inquired about the possibility of a unilateral cease-fire by the IRA. He was advised that this was highly improbable.

He inquired about the possibilities of the IRA easing off in the context of a talks situation and was informed that advice on this would be sought. He supplied Sinn Féin with an advance copy of Patrick Mayhew's Coleraine speech which was to be delivered on 16 December, 1992.

January 12, 1993: Report of a meeting with British government representative.

This began with an outline of the political risks being taken by the British government.

Republicans should be in no doubt that this indicates their seriousness in the whole thing. The conflict had been going on for too long. He said the British government were not serious in 1974/75 but they were now.

There was a conviction by senior civil servants that talks had to start. The politicians were slower but they were moving to this position.

It could not be done without a major gesture from republicans. They realised an IRA cease-fire was a non-starter. He voiced his view that a suspension - an easing off - would start the ball rolling in a significant way. That republicans would be convinced in that time that armed struggle was not necessary any longer.

He was informed that advice would be sought on all of this.

February 20, 1993: Speech by Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle member Martin McGuinness to Sinn Féin Ard Fheis.

The British government representative later claimed that it was this speech by Martin McGuinness which 'triggered' British government action. This speech and the presidential address by Gerry Adams were forwarded to the British government.

"When British Secretary of State Peter Brooke began the inter party talks process little did he realise that three years later this long running and boring saga would collapse in confusion and recrimination as each of the participants blamed everyone else for the failure.

Mr Brooke must surely have expected that a partitionist agreement on the future government of what the British call Northern Ireland would have emerged.

Well, last year, after three years of discussion which proved lucrative for the participants and worthless to everyone else, the inter-party talks ground to a predictable halt. Furthermore, even though it was to become a grave embarrassment to the British, Sinn Féin was undemocratically excluded from those discussions.

Democracy, British style, dictated that the Alliance Party, with less support than Sinn Féin, were there, the Democratic Unionists, who publicly advocate the killing of republicans, were also there, as were the Official Unionists whose track record includes the exclusion and repression of the Nationalist community since partition. The British government was represented by Sir Patrick Mayhew. He has recently taken to describing his government's role as a facilitator. How right he is. The British government has indeed facilitated the persecution of the nationalist people of the six counties since partition.

Meanwhile, scores of thousands of our supporters were excluded, chastised and penalised because they voted for the party of their choice. This fact conveniently guaranteed the absence of any criticisms of the British government's role in a conflict which they created and have dismally failed to resolve in the decades since they partitioned Ireland and divided the Irish people.

Instead the endless discussions yielded no imaginative solutions which would end the injustice of partition and bridge the divisions between our people.

The rocks on which the talks foundered were of course unionist suspicion that they were being gently inched towards on all-Ireland settlement and SDLP reservations about agreeing a partitionist settlement. Through it all Peter Brooke and Patrick Mayhew behaved as though they were dithering Wimbeldon umpires watching the ball fly over the net but unable to decide who should win the point. The British of course are not referees in this dispute and we repudiate any attempts to portray them as neutral.

The British government's policy is crucial if there is to be a just settlement on this island. The other parties to the debate can have but a limited influence on the situation and it is essential if there is to be any hope of peace that the British government lead the way by outlining its plan for a final resolution of the problem. Britain cannot be allowed to abdicate its responsibility by standing by like Pontius Pilate washing its hands off a problem it created.

If they continue with their present policies there will be no settlement, no peace. Britain must also publicly accept, as I believe they now privately do, that an essential ingredient in the search for a solution is the acceptance of the need for inclusive dialogue as a vehicle towards a final settlement.

Following Peter Brooke's earlier example Patrick Mayhew has recently addressed us on this issue. Contradicting himself he says that Sinn Féin will not be involved in talks until the IRA calls a ceasefire yet implicit in everything else he says is an acceptance that Republicans must be part of the solution.

In the wake of the suspension of the Stormont talks there is increasing acceptance that the British government must now speak to Sinn Féin. Numerous editorials and one of the architects of the London/Dublin agreement have added their voices to those who now accept we must be involved. The concept of inclusive dialogue as the way forward is gathering momentum.

With the election of a new government in Dublin there is to be a further attempt to resume the talks process. We are told these will initially take the form of bi-lateral meetings rather than round table discussions. This actually provides both the British and Dublin governments with an opportunity to bring Sinn Féin into a talks process. If both governments have the courage of their private convictions they should now finally meet with Sinn Féin. For our part we recognise that such a scenario would place a great responsibility on us.

We would approach any serious talks accepting that we haven't got all the answers but we most certainly believe we have some of them.

The British government and others demand dramatic initiatives from us before we can be involved in talks. Whilst rejecting any pre-conditions on our participation we are quite prepared to be open and flexible to serious proposals which can lead to a realistic agreement.

Years of struggle have not diminished the determination of the republican people to end British interference in Ireland. We are as determined as ever. No one can argue that a democratic resolution would be a simple matter. All involved in the conflict, all those who are affected by it, would have to be prepared for a dramatic and imaginative initiative. Republicans are willing to engage in the search for a democratic settlement with courage and flexibility.

We must all allow each other room to manoeuvre if there is to be any hope that the misery, injustice and death of the past twenty five years are to be finally ended.

We have, all of us, Irish and British, been hurt by this conflict. We have all suffered and if we all share responsibility for that, then surely, only when we are all included in a healing process which honestly and seriously seeks to remove the root causes of our troubles, will there be the slimmest chance of peace.

In recent weeks Patrick Mayhew agreed with Dick Spring that the demand of unionists for constitutional change would require an examination of the root causes of the conflict. This coming as it does from Mr Mayhew was an interesting and important admission.

Since the ending of the talks a new Government had been formed in Dublin. Its stated policy is that change in the constitution can take place in the context of an overall agreement. Dublin should be under no illusion about this issue. The nationalist community in the six counties and I believe the overwhelming majority of Irish people in this island are bitterly opposed to any change which would dilute the sovereign rights of the people of Ireland to nationhood.

Sinn Féin recognises the dismay and confusion which exists within the unionist community. Many fear that the British Government are looking for a way out and they believe its only a matter of time before this happens. This places a considerable onus on everyone including ourselves as Irish republicans to apply a new and radical thinking to the predicament unionists find themselves in. The plight of unionists is requiring particular consideration to guarantee and protect their interests in any new arrangements which will be needed to resolve the conflict.

The British portray Republicans as the cause of the conflict. The British are dishonest. We are not the cause of this conflict we are the victims of it. We are the product of decades of British tyranny and misrule.

In his Coleraine speech Mr Mayhew in the understatement of the year said, "You will not find me seeking to argue that Britain's role in this island has only ever been associated with what has been uplifting. On the contrary, there is much in the long and often tragic history of Ireland for deep regret and the British Government for its part shares in that regret to the full".

Regret alone will not solve our problems. What is needed is a plan to establish agreed democratic institutions to redress the damage done to Ireland and its people by successive British governments. Both Dublin and the SDLP should join with us in placing this reality before the British Government.

Until this happens the struggle will continue until justice is done and freedom is ours.

NOTE: The British government version opens with a message which it claims was sent by Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle member Martin McGuinness.

The message begins: "The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close"

No such message was sent. This was written by the British government. It is bogus.

February 24, 1993: Report of a meeting with British government representative.

He was very upbeat about the possibility of delegation meetings. He said that he and his colleagues had been working on this for two years. Major and Mayhew had discussed the republican struggle and the Christmas cessation on 14 February. The Tory whips had regarded Mayhew's Coleraine speech as a bridge too far. The politicians were moving. They were serious. The republicans will have to grasp the opportunity while it exists. Events on the ground will bring an enormous influence to bear. The IRA needs to provide the space to turn the possibility of meetings into a reality. A suspension is all that is being required of them.

The British believed that two or three weeks was a sufficient period to convince republicans. There would be an intensive round of talks. Once started people remain until decisions were arrived at. Reciprocation would be immediate; troops withdrawn to barracks, checkpoints removed, security levels determined by loyalist threat.

Their side would probably be led, in such an event, by Quentin Thomas (Deputy Secretary to Chilcott). The republican side could include whoever they wanted. Possibly three plus advisors.

Thomas might at the beginning say "Thanks for the ceasefire" but do not be concerned with that. He ventured the opinion that Willie Ross the Unionist MP would be the next leader of the UUP.

February 26, 1993 British government message to Sinn Féin

We understand and appreciate the seriousness of what has been said. We wish to take it seriously and at face value. That will of course be influenced by events on the ground over the coming days and weeks. In view of the importance of the message it is not possible to give a substantive reply immediately. It is however necessary that this acknowledgement is given promptly. We are working to reply further as swiftly as possible. We understand the need for this.

February 26, 1993: Report of meeting with British government representative.

The main points covered were;

1. The British government has agreed to talks with Sinn Féin.
2. They need a 'no violence' understanding over 2/3 weeks of private talks. No public declaration of this.
3. They believe they can convince Irish republicans in 2/3 weeks of talks that armed struggle is no longer necessary.
4. If the talks are going well they could quickly move from a private to a public situation.
5. Suggested venues: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Scotland, Isle of Man.

March 1, 1993: Oral message from the British government

Proposed meeting and venue for 23 March to discuss logistics for delegation talks.

March 5, 1993: Oral message from Sinn Féin to the British government

We were pleased to receive this message and welcome the possibility of a meeting. We would like two representatives, Martin McGuinness and Gerry Kelly, to have an exploratory meeting with you as soon as possible.

March 11 1993: Message from the British government to Sinn Féin

Wishing to take seriously what has developed, we have been preparing a considered and substantive response.

But in the light of the continued violence of recent days since the first response we are not yet able to send a substantive response.

There must be some evidence of consistency between word and deed.

Given that background our ability to send a substantive response will depend on events on the ground.

March 19 1993: Nine paragraph document sent by the British government to Sinn Féin

1. The importance of what has been said, the wish to take it seriously, and the influence of events on the ground, have been acknowledged. All of those involved share a responsibility to work to end the conflict. No one has a monopoly of suffering. There is a need for a healing process.
2. It is essential that there should be no deception on either side, and also that no deception should, through any misunderstanding, be seen where it is not intended. It is also essential that both sides have a clear and realistic understanding of what it is possible to achieve, so that neither side can in the future claim that it has been tricked.
3. The position of the British Government on dealing with those who espouse violence is clearly understood. This is why the envisaged sequence of events is important. What is being sought at this stage is advice. The position of the British Government is that any dialogue could only follow a halt to violent activity. It is understood that in the first instance this would have to be unannounced. If violence had genuinely been brought to an end, whether or not that fact had been announced, then progressive entry into dialogue could take place.
4. It must be understood, though, that once a halt to activity became public, the British government would have to acknowledge and defend its entry into dialogue. It would do so by pointing out that its agreement to exploratory dialogue about the possibility of an inclusive process had been given because - and only because - it had received a private assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end.
5. The British government has made clear that:
 - no political objective which is advocated by constitutional means alone could properly be excluded from discussion in the talks process;
 - the commitment to return as much responsibility as possible to local politicians should be seen within a wider framework of stable relationships to be worked out with all concerned;
 - new political arrangements would be designed to ensure that no legitimate group was excluded from eligibility to share in the exercise of this responsibility;

- in the event of a genuine and established ending of violence, the whole range of responses to it would inevitably be looked at afresh.

6. The British Government has no desire to inhibit or impede legitimate constitutional expression of any political opinion, or any such input to the political process, and wants to see included in this process all main parties which have sufficiently shown they genuinely do not espouse violence. It has no blueprint. It wants an agreed accommodation, not an imposed settlement, arrived at through an inclusive process in which the parties are free agents.

7. The British Government does not have, and will not adopt, any prior objective of "ending of partition". The British Government cannot enter a talks process, or expect others to do so, with the purpose of achieving a predetermined outcome, whether the "ending of partition" or anything else. It has accepted that the eventual outcome of such a process could be a united Ireland, but this can only be on the basis of the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. Should this be the eventual outcome of a peaceful democratic process, the British Government would bring forward legislation to implement the democratic process, the British Government would bring forward legislation to implement the will of the people here. But unless the people of Northern Ireland come to express such a view, the British Government will continue to uphold the union, seeking to ensure the good governance of Northern Ireland, in the interests of all its people, within the totality of relationships in these islands.

8. Evidence on the ground that any group had ceased violent activity would induce resulting reduction of security force activity. Were violence to end, the British Government's overall response in terms of security force activity on the ground would still have to take account of the overall threat. The threat posed by Republican and Loyalist groups which remained active would have to continue to be countered.

9. It is important to establish whether this provides a basis for a way forward. The British Government would answer specific questions or give further explanation.

NOTE: The British government version issued on Mon 29 November 1993 by Patrick Mayhew was altered in paragraph three to give the appearance that the British government was responding to a request for advice from Sinn Féin. The document was altered in a number of other places also.

The British government sought to rectify this on Wed 1 December 1993 after Sinn Féin had pointed in a general way to amendments on the evening of Monday 29 Nov.

Subsequent inquiries by journalists provoked an admission of this from the British government two days later.

March 19, 1993: Oral message from the British government received with above.

This process is fraught with difficulties for the British government, as must be obvious. They are nevertheless prepared to tackle these and accept the risks they entail.

But it must be recognised that all acts of violence hereafter could only enhance those difficulties and risks, quite conceivably to the point when the process would be destroyed.

If that were to occur the British would consider that a potentially historic opportunity had been squandered.

The paper gives our substantive advice in response to the initial message. As it makes clear, we wish to establish whether this provides a basis for a way forward. We on our side are ready to answer specific questions or give further explanation.

You should also emphasise to your interlocutor the British government's acknowledgement that all those involved in the conflict share a responsibility to work to end the conflict. We agree on the need for a healing process. We wish to take a positive view of these developments and hope that it will continue to be possible to do so.

March 23, 1993: Report of meeting with British government representative

The British government representative said Martin McGuinness' address to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 1993 had been read and triggered government action. Mayhew had tried marginalisation, defeating the IRA etc. That's gone. Coleraine speech was a significant move. Mayhew is now determined. He wants Sinn Féin to play a part not because he likes Sinn Féin but because it cannot work without them. Any settlement not involving all of the people North and South won't work. A North/South settlement that won't frighten unionists. The final solution is union. It is going to happen anyway. The historical train - Europe - determines that. We are committed to Europe. Unionists will have to change. This island will be as one.

He outlined the situation of talks at the level of delegations. The politicians, he said, were moving. This opportunity must be grasped. Next week if possible. British government is sincere. No cheating involved. He mentioned the Rees letter to Wilson: "We set out to con them and we did." The two weeks for talks proposed was repeated. He alleged that John Chilcott had instructed him to inform Sinn Féin that if this was agreed at six o'clock that clearance for meetings at the level of delegations would be forthcoming by one minute past six.

Confidentiality was of the utmost importance. Only Major, Mayhew, Hurd and secretary to the cabinet knew of all this. The British side would probably be led by Quentin Thomas with John Chilcott down the line. This issue of location for meetings was raised again.

Statement from Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams in relation to Warrington bomb

The British government version contained a 22 March, 1993 message relating to the Warrington bomb. Sinn Féin did not send this message. It is bogus.

However, after the Warrington bomb the British government were referred to a statement from Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams. The statement said:

"Republicans, not least because we have also buried our children, know the agony of the families of Jonathan Ball and Tim Parry. Children are always innocent. None of the rest of us stand guiltless.

"Those who are now exploiting the understandable emotion and human reaction to the Warrington explosions know this. Yet they are manipulating the genuine grief and deep sadness of people throughout Ireland to channel public opinion in one direction - against republicans.

"Republicans have nothing to fear from a genuine peace movement. Sinn Féin has been engaged in developing a peace process for some time now. I welcome any positive approach to building peace but I appeal to those who really wish to end the conflict to beware against letting themselves be cynically used."

April 3, 1993: Message from Sinn Féin to the British government

We welcome the recent discussion and hope that it will lead to a process which will secure a lasting peace. We are committed to this objective. We record our disappointment that only one of your representatives was in attendance. Despite this, the discussion was most useful and a report of it is currently under consideration. A response will be prepared without delay.

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

April 24, 1993: Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams and SDLP Party Leader John Hume, issued the first of three joint statements by the two party leaders in the course of 1993.

The statement said:

A meeting between us held on Saturday, 10 April, in our capacities as party leaders of the SDLP and Sinn Féin has given rise to media coverage, some of which was ill-informed or purely speculative.

We are not acting as intermediaries. As leaders of our respective parties, we accept that the most pressing issue facing the people of Ireland and Britain today is the question of lasting peace and how it can best be achieved.

Everyone has a solemn duty to change the political climate away from conflict and towards a process of national reconciliation which sees the peaceful accommodation of the differences between the people of Britain and Ireland and the Irish people themselves.

In striving for that end, we accept that an internal settlement is not a solution because it obviously does not deal with all the relationships at the heart of the problem.

We accept that the Irish people as a whole have a right to national self-determination. This is a view shared by a majority of the people of this island though not by all its people.

The exercise of self-determination is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland. It is the search for that agreement and the means of achieving it on which we will be concentrating.

We are mindful that not all the people of Ireland share that view or agree on how to give meaningful expression to it. Indeed, we can not disguise the different views held by our own parties.

As leaders of our respective parties, we have told each other that we see the task of reaching agreement on a peaceful and democratic accord for all on this island as our primary challenge.

We both recognise that such a new agreement is only achievable and viable if it can earn and enjoy the allegiance of the different traditions on this island, by accommodating diversity and providing for national reconciliation.

We are reporting our discussion of these matters back to our respective parties. They have fully endorsed the continuation of this process of dialogue.

We will be picking up on where the talks between our parties ended in 1988 and reviewing the current political situation.

At that time we engaged in a political dialogue aimed at investigating the possibility of developing an overall political strategy to establish justice and peace in Ireland."

A copy of this statement was forwarded to the British government.

April 24, 1993: Message from the British government to Sinn Féin in response to Sinn Féin message of April 3, 1993

Please speak of the basis of the following:

We are pleased at this positive response. Our leading board member is away till Monday 26 April, but in his absence we request to see Mr Brown on Monday in London so that Mr Ferguson can convey the "Yes" position to our Board on Tuesday 27 April. We need to be assured that our nine paragrapher has been accepted as our position (for any future discussion) and most important that Mr Campbell/Campbell confirms (privately or otherwise as they wish) that the "not a single share position" will be in operation. Ideas on timings would be appreciated.

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

April 26, 1993: Report of meeting with British government representative

Two British government representatives attended. They confirmed their commitment to the delegation meetings, notwithstanding events on the ground at that time.

They were told that Sinn Féin would be providing a policy outline which would be the basis for its entering into dialogue at that level. The British government was asked to come forward with the logistics for the meetings as soon as possible.

May 4, 1993: Oral message from Sinn Féin to the British government

Some time has passed since we both agreed to proceed to delegation meetings. Why the delay in your response on how we are to proceed to the next stage? Are you still serious about this? Are there problems?

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

May 5 1993: Message sent by the British government to Sinn Féin

Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently made clear. We cannot conceivably disregard them. We gave advice in good faith taking what we were told at face value. It is difficult to reconcile that with recent events.

2. Nonetheless we confirm that we stand by the 9-paragraph document which we prepared as that advice.
3. We have not received the necessary private assurance that organised violence has been brought to an end. We hope that we do so soon and that violence is genuinely brought to an end as, without that, further progress cannot be made.

NOTE: The version of this published by the British government contains two important alterations.

In the first paragraph; "We gave advice in good faith...." is amended to "We gave in good faith the advice which was sought."

In the second paragraph; "..... which we prepared as that advice." is amended to "..... which we prepared in response to that request for advice."

h alterations seek to support the alterations made by the British government to its own March 19 nine paragraph document. It was subsequently forced to rectify this. However the British governments December 1, 1993 statement does not address the above amendments.

May 6, 1993: British government message in response to Sinn Féin's May 4

Yes, the order of events was the main problem. We will be back tomorrow with a more detailed explanation of exactly what we mean.

May 7, 1993: British government message in response to Sinn Féin's May 4

We confirm that we stand by the 9-paragraph document.

The Secretary of State will, as you know, be away until next week. This gives the opportunity for you to consider any other questions which you may wish to put to us or to seek further explanation.

We confirm that the ordering of events is important. The 9-paragraph note made clear in paragraphs 3 and 4 that any dialogue could only follow a halt to violent activity and receipt of a private assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end.

May 10 1993: Message from Sinn Féin to the British government

The following message was given to the British government representative. He was also briefed that the IRA had agreed to a two week suspension, that Sinn Féin had prepared a response to the British government 9 paragraph outline of policy and that the Sinn Féin document was the party's basis for entry into dialogue. This would be presented to the British at the first meeting of the proposed joint secretariat.

We welcome the face to face exchange with your representative. Given the seriousness of this project we trust that this represents only the beginning of such meetings. We are concerned that the movement to further meetings has been delayed by your side.

It is important that we are frank with each other. Our seriousness in addressing this project should not be in any doubt. But it is greatly tempered by caution, occasioned by the far from satisfactory experiences in 1972, 1975 and during the hunger strikes 1980/81. It would be wrong to minimise or underestimate the problems which these experiences have given rise to.

Having said that, we are responding directly to your request for advice, recognising fully the sensitivity of any position, from you or us, which is committed to paper at this stage. Our response has been couched accordingly but it is clear that we are prepared to make the crucial move if a genuine peace process is set in place.

You say you require a private assurance in order to defend publicly your entry into dialogue with us. We have proceeded to this stage, without assurance.

We wish now to proceed without delay to the 'delegation meetings'. In order to facilitate this step we sought and recieved a commitment which will permit you to proceed so that we can both

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more the potential for developing a real peace process. This depends upon agreement between us about the next stage and particularly about the seniority of your representatives. It is important that you understand how important a gesture this is and how, even though it will be of a short duration, it underlines the sincerity of those involved and their faith in us. We wish to stress that we will be not be party to any dealings which could undermine this faith. To do so will serve only to damage our peace project and the overall quest for peace.

Democratic reasons clearly determine that Sinn Féin's right to represent its electorate and to promote its analysis should be accepted and acted upon. This is the basis upon which we enter into dialogue.

We need to agree agendas and formats for meetings etc. We have appointed a small secretariat to assist in this task. We would like you to nominate someone to liase with M. McG' on this.

We also have a number of questions. They are to do with the mechanics of the sequence outlined by you. They are;

Who will represent you? We need to know when the BG will be politically represented in this process and by whom?

We need clarification of phrase 'progressive entry into dialogue'?

When will this start?

Where is the proposed venue?

It would be more practical and quicker, if these details could be agreed directly with M. McG'. If this is not possible we ask that you proceed through usual channel as soon as possible."

Sinn Féin's basis for entering into dialogue

This document is the basis on which Sinn Féin was entering into dialogue. The British government had its position. Sinn Féin had its position.

Sinn Féin lodged this document with the contact to be put on the agenda of the first meeting of the joint Sinn Féin/British government secretariat as proposed by Sinn Féin in its May 10 message.

APRIL 1993

1. We welcome this contact and hope it can help create a healing process which removes both the causes and the consequences of conflict. Everyone shares the responsibility to work to bring about a real and lasting peace in Ireland. Republicans are not reluctant to face up to our responsibility in this but the British Government clearly has the power and the major responsibility to initiate the necessary process.

2. Our longstanding position has been one of willingness to enter into dialogue with a view to resolving the conflict. In all of this we do not seek to impose pre-conditions nor should pre-conditions be imposed on us. This is not a position which we could easily recommend let alone sucessfully defend.

Dialogue and negotiations are necessary and inevitable if this conflict is to be resolved on a democratic basis. Pre-conditions represent obstacles to peace.

Moreover, after more than two decades of conflict and political impasse, we hold as self-evident the view that democratic, political and practical imperatives clearly require the open involvement and inclusion of all political views if a democratic resolution is to be sought and achieved. Democratic reasons clearly determine that Sinn Féin's right to represent its electorate and to

pr Note its analysis should be accepted and acted upon. This is the basis upon which we enter into dialogue.

3. The route to peace in Ireland is to be found in the restoration to the Irish people of our right to national self-determination - in the free exercise of this right without impediment of any kind.

4. British sovereignty over the six-counties, as with all of Ireland before partition, is the inherent cause of political instability and conflict. This must be addressed within the democratic context of the exercise of the right to national self-determination if the cause of instability and conflict is to be removed.

5. We seek to assist the establishment of, and to support, a process which, with due regard for the real difficulties involved, culminates in the exercise of that right and the end of your jurisdiction.

6. We believe that the wish of the majority of the Irish people is for Irish unity. We believe that an adherence to democratic principles makes Irish unity inevitable. The emerging political and economic imperatives both within Ireland and within the broader context of greater European political union support the logic of Irish unity. It is our view therefore that the British Government should play a crucial and constructive role in persuading the unionist community to reach an accommodation with the rest of the Irish people.

7. Your disavowal of any prior objective is contradicted by your commitment to uphold the unionist veto. The consequence of upholding the veto is, in effect, to set as your objective the maintenance of partition and the six-county statelet. And, consequently, the maintenance of the primary source of the conflict.

Since its creation 72 years ago, the six-county statelet has been in constant crisis. Its survival has always been dependant on the existence and exercise of repressive legislation, coercion and discrimination. Its existence lies at the heart of the present conflict and divisions, both in Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland.

8. We recognise that the concerns and perceived concerns of the unionist population about their position in an Irish national democracy must be addressed and resolved in the form of the greatest reassurance possible, including legislation for all measures agreed in the course of a process of negotiations. This process of national reconciliation must secure the political, religious and democratic rights of the northern unionist population.

That is not only the democratic norm but a practical necessity if we are to advance the cause of peace in Ireland and find a way out of the present impasse.

9. The most urgent issue facing the people of Ireland and Britain is the need for a genuine peace process which sets equality, justice and political stability as its objectives and, has as its means, dialogue and all-embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles. In attempting to progress towards that position we are prepared to be as reasonable and flexible as possible.

In this context, we are willing to seriously consider any proposal which genuinely aims to set such a process in train and to take the accompanying political risks involved.

10. We accept, of course, that it is essential that both sides have a clear and realistic understanding of what it is possible to achieve. But we are sure you will agree that what is realistic is dependent upon the existing conditions at any given point and the political will to move the situation on. If the essential political will exists then the construction, at this time, of a peace process is clearly feasible.

11. We found our preliminary meeting with your representative valuable. We believe that there exists a basis for progress which can be developed into a genuine realistic and democratic peace

press. The potentially historic opportunity which this represents for the cause of peace in Ireland should not be lost. We have outlined our position. You have outlined yours. It is now time to move on. You should arrange for us to do so as speedily as possible.

NOTE: In the British government version the first line of paragraph 11. is deleted, i.e. "We found our preliminary meeting with your representative valuable."

May 11, 1993: Oral message from Sinn Féin to the British government.

We are reliably informed that an English reporter in USA has picked up a story about talks between you and us. May be working for Sunday Times. We are told he was briefed by your people in Washington??

Note: This message is omitted from the British government version.

May 13 1993: Message from the British government to Sinn Féin responding to a complaint about leaks to the media

I was very concerned to hear about the alarming press story you told me. I've checked on this with the Bank's press department who said, "Oh that old story from Washington? It's all gibberish. We'd heard it was going to be in last Sunday's papers, but we think that the editors must have realised that it didn't make sense". Please reassure your friends that this is the last thing that we would do or want. We believe that somebody visiting Washington from Stormont who was not privy to the loan business was shooting his mouth off and a journalist embellished it out of all proportion. If asked, our press people will deny it.

Note: This message is omitted from the British government version.

May 15, 1993: Report of a meeting with British government representatives

They said that it had been a hell of a battle with Mayhew who wanted to revert to his more comfortable position, i.e. These bad boys must obey our rules and then we would consider what action we'll take.

The Number 10 people said that historically they couldn't defend it if the May 10 position is not fully explored.

In the end the May 10 position was accepted and a new draft British paper had been formulated. This was to be put to Major at a special meeting on Tuesday 18 May in Downing Street. They were not prepared to hand over the draft.

May 25, 1993: Report of a meeting with British government representative

There were no developments from 4:30 pm 18th May 1993. (British government representative) returned from his walking holiday and contacted (the contact) at 11:00 am Monday 24th May to say that he was absolutely disgusted at what had happened and would it be possible to speak to (the contact) on Wednesday at (location deleted). (The contact) was anxious to avoid the constant

strengthening of the position by (British government representative) and (the contact) said she was going to travel to (location deleted) immediately, which she did and met (British government representative) at the usual hotel.

(The contact) felt very detached and (British government representative) gave his explanation as follows. 1 That the initiative of 11th May had been very well received by Chilcott and plans were immediately put in place to get approval from John Major. Mr. Mayhew had reservations pointing out that he couldn't risk any announcements in the run up to the local government elections. He stated that he was worried about an upsurge in support for the DUP at the expense of the UUP. It was pointed out to him that in reality it was unlikely that there would be enough time anyway for any formal discussions. The timetable agenda was agreed by Chilcott and Mayhew. That is cessation followed within 1-7 days by logistics followed by delegates meeting. It was the intention to put this to Major on Monday 17th May. Present at the meeting were Major, Hurd, Mayhew, Chilcott, Braithwaite and two other names which appeared to be secretaries or similar. The meeting was rushed and indecisive with Major asking questions on which he should have been more fully briefed. e.g. 1 What guarantees we have that this cessation can be held or will hold? 2 We need more evidence that what they say, they mean. Douglas Hurd had to leave for a meeting of Foreign Secretaries on the Bosnian peace plan. On the whole the meeting was most unsatisfactory from an Irish point of view. John Major adjourned the meeting to the following day Tuesday 18th and called in Kenneth Clarke who was in bouyant, bombastic mood and advised John Major that the proposition was much too risky at the present time with the government under siege and if the Republicans were sincere about their intentions then the Prime Minister should hasten slowly to adopt such a radical departure from their previous publicly successful anti-terrorist line. Mayhew was wobbling between pushing for acceptance and wanting a safer longer period of cessation. John Major compromised by instructing his secretaries to draw up a programme which he would be able to announce in Parliament having previously i.e. 24 hours before, informed Dr. Eames, Cahal Daly and the heads of the main political parties that he was instructing the Northern Ireland Office to enter into dialogue with the Republican Movement. Major's plan involved a longer cessation, followed by private logistics, (The two British government representatives), followed by his agreed statement at Westminster followed by dialogue. (The contact) spent approximately 1 1/2 hours in London listening to (British government representative) and (the British government representative) last remark was that he would like it known that everything that he had said to (Sinn Féin representatives) was the truth exactly as he had been instructed by Chilcott with specific reference to his famous one minute past six offer (see page 28).

June 3 1993: Message from the British government to Sinn Féin in response to May 10

The Government was working out a response which, because it was radical, needed careful crafting. This meant deliberate (but not artificially slow) work at the highest levels. One of the reasons why it was necessary to proceed so carefully was the recognition that any response must remove existing doubts, misconceptions and suspicions.

Before that process could be completed renewed violence on a serious scale took place - with the inevitable consequence that that process itself had to be halted. Since then there have of course been changes in the Government. It would be possible for further considerations of this to be resumed after the Whitsun recess. The outcome will, as always, be affected by events on the ground. This is not a threat, merely a statement of reality."

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

2. Sinn Féin received two messages simultaneously in the first week of June.

(a) June 3 message from the British government to Sinn Féin.

(b) a letter from the British government representative.

3. The British government version contained a June 1 message. It purports to come from the 'Provisional Leadership' and talks of "the offer of a total cessation". It is bogus.

June 3 1993: letter from the British government representative to Sinn Féin received in the first week of June

Grateful if you would convey the following to (Sinn Féin representatives) which is personal from me:

"There is depression and anger here at our failure to respond to your brave and straightforward offer. None feel it more than I do for obvious reasons. I appreciate - as do all those most closely involved - the position this puts you in. It also contrasts with all that you have heard earlier. You have my word that all that was conveyed was done so honestly and accurately at the time. There would have been no quotation from 1975 if the intention was to copy that bad example and I for one would not be party to it.

The present position is that the local Chairman had accepted your offer, but such a vital economic issue had to go to the Board. We had miscalculated in assuming that the National Chairman would simply give it the nod of approval. Recent economic events have made him nervous of bold steps and your unfortunate headline events of April have made acceptance of your offer much more risky for him. You and I may think this should not matter, but the fact is that it does and it is that which is holding things up - if you like, human characteristics rather than anything more sinister.

We all hope that you and your colleagues can bear with the situation - you are certainly being asked for a lot, but there is will on both sides to complete the loan and we must succeed. We have our struggles and pressures from individuals as perhaps you do.

There is a proposal worked out (the National Chairman's own and new idea of 18 May) which delayed us and was then in turn put on one side after the events of 19 May. I know that you feel for our Bank "the time is never right", but this time it will be. I cannot tell you when - our wheels turn far too slowly, but that is the way of the Bank, not any notion of stringing the other side along. If delay were a ploy it is certainly taking up our attention just as much as yours!

I can only ask for patience for all our sakes. You will carry out your own financial policy and it would be impertinent for me to suggest anything otherwise (as well as being counter-productive); but in economic terms headline stuff knocks us back because the National Chairman is then wary of proceeding and it gives support to those who are against such a step.

I hope you will not mind me ending with a new meaning to *Tíochfaidh ár lá*."

(This document was initialed by the author. The initials have been deleted by Sinn Féin.)

June 10, 1993: Oral message from Sinn Féin to the British government.

We are concerned at the protracted delay by your side. It is now a month since you received our May 10 position. You will also be aware of progress in peace initiatives here. We wish to reiterate

port for this and to confirm our positive attitude to recent developments. We would welcome an indication of your attitude to this.

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

June 14, 1993: The British government representative forwarded a text designated "SECRET" to Sinn Féin.

The "SECRET" text shows conclusively that the British government was fully aware of the detail of the Irish peace initiative at this point.

This "SECRET" text is withheld because of its sensitivity.

July 4, 1993: Sinn Féin message to the British government

We can only presume from the failure by your side to follow up on your proposal and our May 10 response, that you do not wish to proceed or that you underestimate the importance, seriousness and significance of May 10.

We also note the lack of any response by your side to the Irish peace initiative.

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version

July 11, 1993: Sinn Féin message to the British government complaining about leaks to the media

We are most displeased at what we read in the popular press. It seems obvious to ourselves that some of [your] colleagues are leaking what we had come to regard as a confidence between ourselves and [you]. The [RUC] are clearly well informed of whatever the situations was and even more clearly are briefing people like [a journalist is named]. As usual we have kept our word and there hasn't been any deviation from our established position of saying nothing. We view the latest breach with extreme disquiet and furthermore we seek an explanation as to what is happening and why [your side] are encouraging the position to develop

July 17 1993: British government message sent to Sinn Féin

The importance, seriousness and significance of your message of 10 May was fully understood.

As you know, consideration was being given to a far-reaching response. It would have replied to the questions posed and was intended to remove remaining doubts, misconceptions and suspicions. There was no ulterior motive in any delay, and you would have had the response as soon as it was cleared. But this response needed to be carefully and deliberately written to avoid misunderstanding or suspicion about bad faith. You should understand this, as it took you some time to respond to the nine paragraph note, presumably for the same reasons.

Events on the ground shortly after the Elections of 19 May, however, made it impossible to

with this response. Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently made clear. We cannot conceivably disregard them. Although it was absolutely clear from the attacks which took place in March that events on the ground could halt progress, these attacks following the May elections went ahead. This has happened several times now with an inevitable result.

This said, the position of the nine paragraph note stands and progress is still possible. Does the ending of conflict remain your objective, and is there a way forward?

There is one very important point which needs to be answered to remove possible misunderstandings. Recent pronouncements, including the Bodcnstown speech, seem to imply that unless your analysis of the way forward is accepted within a set time, the halt in violence will only be temporary. This is not acceptable.

The reasons for not talking about a permanent cessation are understood, but the peace process cannot be conditional on the acceptance of any particular or single analysis. The views of others involved must also be recognised as valid, though you will of course want to promote you own views. Paragraph 7 of the 9 paragraph note sets out our position.

Can you confirm that you envisage a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward?

If you can, we remind you that this process of dialogue leading to an inclusive political process can only start after we have received the necessary assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end. In the meantime progress has to be subject to events on the ground.

August 14 1993: Sinn Féin message to the British Government in response to its message of July 17

We are concerned at the inflexibility of your most recent communication. It does not reflect, in tone or content, the pre 10th May position. This coupled with recent political statements must raise a serious question over your commitment to a real peace process.

Sinn Féin is committed to securing peace and an end to conflict. In our view this requires a genuine peace process which sets equality, justice and political stability as its objectives and has as its means dialogue and all embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles.

In attempting to progress towards that situation we are prepared to be as reasonable and flexible as possible.

There is a way forward for all who have the political will to grasp it. Our will to do so should not be in any doubt.

We are perplexed by your latest communication. In this you require a private unilateral assurance, that organised violence has been brought to an end. The purpose of a dialogue about peace is to bring all organised violence by all parties to the conflict to an end. This is implicitly recognised in the contacts which have been made in the past several years. Without any such assurance we were prepared to proceed to the point of a face to face meeting. We welcomed this development.

In the course of that exchange you asserted the belief that a two week suspension to accomodate talks would result in republicans being persuaded that there is no further need for armed struggle.

Because of our commitment to a lasting settlement and despite all of the difficulties involved we sought and received a commitment to facilitate that step so that we could both explore the

potential for a real peace process. We acknowledge this positive response to our request as a sign of the seriousness of those involved.

The commitment was conveyed to you by the intermediaries. You failed to grasp that opportunity. This failure has frustrated any further developments.

Your latest written communication states that the "importance, seriousness and significance" of this message "was fully understood". The logic of that should have been to move forward on the outlined basis. Regrettably that did not happen. Instead you did not respond to this development.

We believe that this may be for expedient, internal and domestic party political reasons. If we are to move forward such narrow considerations must be set to one side. We are not interested in playing games.

In addition, much time prior to this was devoted by us to the drafting of an 11 paragraph response to your 9 paragraph document. This has been lodged with the intermediaries for some time now. It was our intention to put this on the agenda when the joint secretariat, proposed by us, met to agree procedures. Because of your failure to respond this did not happen.

The manner in which we have handled this project is a clear demonstration of our seriousness and commitment to bringing about a peace process. The way in which you have handled it has damaged the project and may have increased the difficulties.

Your failure to respond, coupled with recent statements by your Prime Minister and other senior ministers shows no flexibility or imagination.

As for events on the ground. The greatest number of fatalities for some time now in the conflict have resulted from the actions of loyalist groups acting both on their own agenda and as surrogates for British intelligence. South African guns supplied by British agent Brian Nelson with the full knowledge of the British authorities are being used for attacks on the nationalist population, members of Sinn Féin and their families.

This is the reality of events on the ground which we seek to change, so let us be serious. There is a conflict. The issue is its resolution.

The absence of such a peace process condemns us all to ongoing conflict and tragedy.

Note: In the British government version the following sentence was omitted from paragraph 5, line three after "end." "The purpose of a dialogue about peace is to bring all organised violence by all parties to the conflict to an end."

This was subsequently corrected by the British government on Wednesday December 1, 1993.

August 30, 1993: Message from Sinn Féin to the British Government.

We reiterate our concern at the continuing leaks from your side. The Sunday Times story of 22nd August 1993 was but the latest in a recent series which include a previous Sunday Times article and several informed references in public statements by a number of Unionist spokesmen. We are also convinced and concerned that the recent Cook Report is connected to the above revelations.

September 1 1993: British government message in response to Sinn Féin message of August 14 1993

MESSAGE IN RESPONSE TO NOTE OF 14 AUGUST 1993

1. The importance of clear mutual understanding has already been recognised. Minds do not seem to be meeting at the moment. This needs to be overcome.
2. The note you sent on 14 August did not deal with a crucial point. It did not confirm that you envisage a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward.
3. On a further point in it, the Government side has not asserted a belief that a two weeks suspension would have the result described in paragraph 6. On the contrary, it has been their consistent position that violence must be brought to an end before any process could begin.
4. Equally it is accepted that your side genuinely and reasonably believed it had made a serious and significant offer. If it is the case that your side believes it has been met with indifference, or worse, then it shows that both sides must strive to be more clear with each other.
5. The important thing, without raking over every point of detail, is to establish whether there is a clearly understood way forward which could be agreed and adopted, without sacrifice of essential principles on either side, in pursuit of the objectives of securing peace, stability and reconciliation.
6. Two points are of importance:
 - i. since it is not possible to hold discussions under the threat of violence, there must be an end to violent activity before the process could begin;
 - ii. the objectives of an inclusive process would be the pursuit of peace, stability and reconciliation on the widest possible basis. Beyond that, there would be no attempt to impose prior restrictions on the agenda. On the contrary it is assumed that each participant would enter such a process on the basis of their separately stated political analysis and objectives. The Government's position is well understood publicly. The 9-paragraph note was entirely consistent with that position.
7. Against that background, can you confirm that you want a peace process which is aimed at an inclusive political process and that a lasting end to violence does not depend on your analysis being endorsed as the only way forward?
8. If you can confirm this, then we remind you that this process of dialogue leading to an inclusive political process can only start after the receipt of the necessary assurance that organised violence had been brought to an end. In the meantime progress has to be subject to events on the ground.

September 3, 1993: British government message sent to Sinn Féin in response to a complaint of August 30 1993 concerning leaks to the media

MESSAGE IN RESPONSE TO NOTE OF YOUR NOTE OF 30 AUGUST

Recent media reports and speculation do not result from authorised briefing. Nor do they serve the interests of anybody seeking to bring these exchanges to a successful conclusion. As both sides recognise, that depends on maintaining maximum confidentiality. Recent reports are certainly not

inspired, let alone orchestrated, by the Government side to which they are most unwelcome. Accordingly, the Government side will continue to respect the confidentiality of these exchanges. It remains committed as before to the 9 paragraph note.

September 6, 1993: Oral message from the British government.

This stated that Major was now a force for progress. It stressed that the May 10 situation has got to be got back on the rails and suggested that Sinn Féin should comment in as major a way as possible on the PLO/Rabin deal; that Sinn Féin should be saying 'If they can come to an agreement in Israel, why not here? We are standing at the altar why won't you come and join us'. It also said that a full frontal publicity offensive from Sinn Féin is expected, pointing out that various contingencies and defensive positions are already in place.

NOTE: This is omitted from the British government version.

September 10, 1993: Sinn Féin response to British government message of September 1, 1993

RESPONSE TO 1 SEPTEMBER COMMUNICATION

In our communication of August 14 we outlined our doubts about your commitment to the development of a real peace process. Your message of 1 September 1993 does little to remove these doubts.

From the beginning of this process we had assured you of our preparedness to be as reasonable and flexible as possible. Our commitment to the search for a genuine peace process was evidenced by the fact that we positively conveyed the very specific request from your representative for a two week suspension of military activity on the part of the IRA to the IRA leadership. You informed us that the discussions which would follow on from such a suspension would result in republicans being convinced that armed struggle was no longer necessary.

The positive response to this request by the leadership of the Irish Republican Army underlined the willingness on the republican side to facilitate movement towards a real peace process.

The rejection of this substantial gesture by you has not only prevented further movement, but has damaged the project and increased the difficulties involved. This, and your present attempts to deny this aspect of the contact between us, can only be regarded with the utmost scepticism and must raise serious questions about your motives in all of this.

As we have already pointed out we found our preliminary meeting valuable. Despite our reservations, and the difficulties since, we still believe that there exists a basis for progress which can be developed into a genuine, realistic and democratic peace process. This, however, requires a degree of political will to move forward which has, up to now, been singularly lacking on your part.

Sinn Féin is engaged in a serious attempt through our contact with you and with others to develop such a process. Our party president Gerry Adams is currently discussing with SDLP leader John Hume this possibility. We have publicly called for a new and imaginative initiative by the Dublin and London Governments, based on democratic principles, to break the present deadlock.

Our commitment to any genuine peace process which sets equality, justice and political stability as its objective is a matter of public record. Sinn Féin has, like every other party to this conflict, its own particular political analysis. But the future shape of Irish society is a matter for the Irish people to decide democratically, without impediment of any kind, through dialogue and all embracing negotiations. Sinn Féin remains committed to such a real peace process

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

September 25, 1993: Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams and SDLP Party Leader John Hume issued the second of three joint statements by the two party leaders in the course of 1993.

The statement said:

"Our discussions, aimed at the creation of a peace process which would involve all parties, have made considerable progress.

We agreed to forward a report on the position reached to date to Dublin for consideration.

We recognise that the broad principles involved will be for wider consideration between the two governments.

Accordingly, we have suspended detailed discussions for the time being in order to facilitate this.

We are convinced from our discussions that a process can be designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, which will provide a solid basis for peace.

Such a process would obviously also be designed to ensure that any new agreement that might emerge respects the diversity of our different traditions and earns their allegiance and agreement."

A copy of this statement was forwarded to the British government.

September 28, 1993: Sinn Féin message to British Government seeking response to Sinn Féin's message of September 10 1993

We are still awaiting your response to our communication of September 10.

Developments since then particularly the Hume/Adams statement have moved the situation forward. It deserves a more positive response than that given by Patrick Mayhew yesterday

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version.

November 5 1993: British government message to Sinn Féin

The British government claimed it had sent this message as a response to a written message sent by Sinn Fein on November 2, 1993. The November 2 message is contained in the British government version of these exchanges.

Sinn Féin did not send this message. It is bogus. It was written by the British government.

Sinn Féin received this message and the bogus November 2 message purporting to come from Sinn Fein simultaneously on the evening of November 5, 1993.

Sinn Féin believes that this 'Substantive Response' is the "new draft British paper" referred to on May 15 1993 (see page 34) and which was discussed by the British ministers on May 17 and May 18 (see page 35) and referred to in their message of July 17 (see page 37).

SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE

1. Your message of 2 November is taken as being of the greatest importance and significance. The answer to the specific question you raise is given in paragraph 4 below.
2. We hold to what was said jointly and in public by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in Brussels on 29 October. A copy of the Statement is annexed. There can be no departure from what is said there and in particular its statement that there could be no secret agreements or understandings between Governments and organisations supporting violence as a price for is cessation and its call on them to renounce for good the use of, or support for, violence. There can also be no departure from the constitutional guarantee that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of a majority of its people.
3. It is the public and consistent position of the British Government that any dialogue could only follow a permanent end to violent activity.
4. You ask about the sequence of events in the event of a total end to hostilities. If, as you have offered, you were to give us an unequivocal assurance that violence has indeed been brought to a permanent end, and that accordingly Sinn Féin is now committed to political progress by peaceful and democratic means alone, we will make clear publicly our commitment to enter exploratory dialogue with you. Our public statement will make clear that, provided your private assurance is promptly confirmed publicly after our public statement and that events on the ground are fully consistent with this, a first meeting for exploratory dialogue will take place within a week of Parliament's return in January.
5. Exploratory dialogue will have the following purposes:
 - (i) to explore the basis upon which Sinn Fein would come to be admitted to an inclusive political talks process to which the British Government is committed but without anticipating the negotiations within that process;
 - (ii) to exchange views on how Sinn Fein would be able over a period to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland;
 - (iii) to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.
6. The attached Annex summarises the sequence of events and provides answers to the procedural questions concerning exploratory dialogue which have been raised.
7. If, in advance of our public statement, any public statement is made on your behalf which appears to us inconsistent with this basis for proceeding it would not be possible for us then to proceed.
8. If we received the necessary assurance, which you have offered, that violence has been brought to an end, we shall assume that you are assenting to the basis for proceeding explained in this note and its attachment.

PROCEDURAL ANNEX

1. This Annex covers procedural questions concerning the exploratory dialogue which may be initiated on the basis, and only on the basis, that violence has been brought to a permanent end, and that a private assurance to that effect has been given, and confirmed publicly, and which has been demonstrated to have been put into effect.
2. The sequence of events would be as follows:
 - (i) there is an unequivocal private assurance that violence has been brought to a permanent end, and accordingly that Sinn Féin has affirmed that it is henceforth committed to political progress by peaceful and democratic means alone;
 - (ii) soon after receiving the necessary satisfactory assurance, and on the assumption that events on the ground are consistent with this assurance, we will make a public statement, indicating our agreement in principle to enter exploratory dialogue in January provided the private assurance is promptly confirmed publicly and continues to be demonstrated on the ground;
 - (iii) if a genuine end to violence is brought about within the next few days, a first meeting for exploratory dialogue would take place within a week of Parliament's return in January. This interval is to demonstrate the genuineness of the ending of violence, and the meeting will only take place if events on the ground have remained consistent with the assurance that violence had genuinely been brought to an end. Logistical arrangements (e.g. venue, transport, security and other administration matters) will need to have been settled shortly beforehand.
3. At the first meeting of exploratory dialogue each party could field up to three delegates to be seated at the table. The possible need for the additional presence of advisers on each side is something which could be addressed at the logistical meeting.
4. It is for each party to decide who should represent it at this and at subsequent meetings. (The composition of each party's team may of course be changed from time to time, as each party wishes.) It is assumed that each party will wish its representatives to have the seniority appropriate to its authorised representatives. The British side will be represented by senior officials acting under political authority and direction.
5. At first, and any subsequent, exploratory meeting the delegation size or other logistical arrangements can be modified with the agreement of both parties.

JOINT STATEMENT OF 29 OCTOBER 1993

1. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach discussed a range of matters of common interest, with particular focus on Northern Ireland.
2. They condemned the recent terrorist outrages as murderous and premeditated acts which could serve no end other than to deepen the bloodshed in Northern Ireland. They expressed their deep sympathy to the innocent victims, children, women and men who had been injured or bereaved.
3. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach called for restraint from all members of the community in

Northern Ireland; expressed support for the security forces in their fight against all forms of terrorism; and noted the recent successes of cross-border security co-operation.

4. They utterly repudiated the use of violence for political ends. Their two Governments were resolute in their determination to ensure that those who adopted or supported such methods should never succeed.

5. The Taoiseach gave the Prime Minister an account of the outcome of the Hume/Adams dialogue, in the light of the Irish Government's own assessment of these and other related matters. They acknowledged John Hume's courageous and imaginative efforts. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach agreed that any initiative can only be taken by the two Governments, and that there could be no question of their adopting or endorsing the report of the dialogue which was recently given to the Taoiseach and which had not been passed on to the British Government. They agreed that the two Governments must continue to work together in their own terms on a framework for peace, stability and reconciliation, consistent with their international obligations and their wider responsibilities to both communities.

6. Against this background the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reaffirmed that

— The situation in Northern Ireland should never be changed by violence or the threat of violence;

— Any political settlement must depend on consent freely given in the absence of force or intimidation;

— Negotiations on a political settlement could only take place between democratic governments and parties committed exclusively to constitutional methods and consequently there can be no talks or negotiations between their Governments and those who use, threaten or support violence for political ends;

— There could be no secret agreements or understandings between Governments and organisations supporting violence as a price for its cessation;

— 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;

— If and when such a renunciation of violence had been made and sufficiently demonstrated, new doors could open, and both Governments would wish to respond imaginatively to the new situation which would arise.

7 The Prime Minister and Taoiseach renewed their support for the objectives of the Talks process involving political dialogue between the two Governments and the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. They regard that process as vital and its objectives as valid and achievable. They urged the Northern Ireland parties to intensify their efforts to find a basis for new talks. The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister agreed that the two Governments will continue their discussions to provide a framework to carry the process forward.

Examination of the bogus November 2, 1993 which the British government claimed Sinn Fein sent

The written November 2 message produced in the British version of the contact between Sinn Féin and the British government is entirely bogus. Sinn Féin did not send this, or any other message to the British government on November 2.

We were given this bogus message, along with the 'Substantive Response', on Friday November 5. This was the first time we had seen either document.

We repudiated the November 2 message in a written communication to the British government on Monday November 8, 1993. The British received this message on Wednesday, November 10 1993. Despite this the bogus November 2 message, along with the so-called response to it, was included in the British government record. Our written message of repudiation was not included.

The publication of their 'Substantive Response' on November 29 was a deliberately constructed act of particular bad faith and a flagrant abuse of the line of communication.

Sinn Féin's repudiation of the November 2 message was responding in good faith to the British claim that they had received a message from us on November 2. Martin McGuinness, who had met the contact, was concerned that some message had been sent. (See note below from Martin McGuinness to Gerry Adams) Our repudiation thus made it clear that such a message did not come from us.

We have since clarified this situation. The contact has assured us that no such message was sent and that the November 2 message was fabricated by the British government. A copy of the fax containing the written message shows that the fax went from London to Ireland not the other way around. This fax was sent to the contact not from him. This fax was sent on Wednesday November 3, at 18.18.

The contact had not been in Ireland for over one week and had not, during this period been in contact with Sinn Féin. He did have a conversation with the British government representative which appears to be the pretext used by the British government for the message.

The contact has explained to us that he did not convey this message in any form, written or verbal, and that the first he knew of it was when it was sent to him, not from him, on Wednesday November 3. The British government have also abused his good offices in their attempts to rewrite the record.

The procedure for all written messages is that they are given to the contact in written form by us and then passed on to the British. The British representative knows this. No breach in this protocol had ever happened before in the long history of communication through this contact.

This message is from Martin McGuinness to Gerry Adams.

Gerry,

What follows below is the result of a discussion between (the contact) and (the British government representative) in London last Tuesday.

At the time (the contact) was en route home from (deleted). He claims he was in very bad mood and gave (deleted) hard time over B G's failure to move constructively in the past. He says the message below to BG was the result of the heated discussion and his bad form over the desperate situation in the North whilst he was in (deleted).

I was first informed about this late last night Fri when I was handed this along with a response

(deleted) from BG. (The contact) asked for my opinion on BG document. I told him I was not prepared to make any comment on BG document but added that he had no right to pass this message to BG without consulting us. I was very hard on him and took this opportunity (my first) to express dissatisfaction about (deleted) (deleted) threw the hands up (deleted) was wrong added his intentions were good. I told him and (deleted) that their behaviour was disgraceful and unacceptable. I indicated that I intended to propose to the people I represent that a message be sent to BG explaining that (deleted) message of last Tuesday was not authorised by us. They claimed that this would result in both (deleted) getting the sack. (deleted) was unhappy at my attitude and asked for a meeting with us.

Need your opinion on whether or not I should send the following to BG. Any other ideas welcome.

"We were informed on Friday 5th Nov of a communication received by you last Tuesday 2nd Nov. This communication was issued without the knowledge of (deleted) and accordingly has no authority."

NOTE: A copy of the original is contained in the Appendix.

November 8, 1993: Sinn Féin message to British government repudiating the November 2, 1993 message. This was despatched by Sinn Féin on November 8 1993

After a discussion between Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness the following message was sent. 11am Wednesday 10th November 1993.

I have been instructed to send this message.

We were informed on Friday November 5th of a communication received by you on November 2. This communication was issued without our authority or knowledge and solely on the initiative of Mr. Brown.

As you are aware it is our belief that the Hume/Adams process provides the basis for peace. The IRA has also publicly indicated a positive attitude.

This provides a unique opportunity which should be grasped.

8th November 1993.

NOTE: This message is omitted from the British government version. It was sent in the belief (as described above) that the British government had received a message and before the contact had satisfied Sinn Féin that no message whatsoever had been sent by the contact.

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