

circumstances of the chain of communication, it is impossible to demonstrate that all messages were received on either side exactly as conveyed.

7. Is the channel of communication still open?

If the Provisional leadership decides to send further messages we will deal with them as appropriate. The one message which everyone wants to hear from them is the one which they should give now: but their violence has finally been brought to an end.

HMG does not propose to divulge any subsequent message received or despatched through this channel.

8. You and the Secretary of State have lost the trust of the people of Northern Ireland?

These documents demonstrate that the Government has acted properly and has done its duty. The transcription and typographical corrections in no way affect that.

These exchanges have involved no betrayal, no appeasement, no rewarding of terrorists by negotiating with them, no bargaining for peace, no weakening of the fundamental guarantee of Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom while that is what a majority of its people desire.

9. Isn't this further proof that you have been playing with words?

The Government has consistently made clear that no-one has been authorised to have talks or negotiations before violence is demonstrably renounced. That is true and will remain true.

The difference between bargaining for peace and spelling out that violence must be renounced is not a matter of semantics.

10. [If further purported documents released by Sinn Fein?]

HMG has already provided the full authentic text of all the messages which it has authorised to be sent. It will not comment on other alleged reports, whether or not represented as being based on discussions between intermediaries.