

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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Alex Allan Esq  
Principal Private Secretary  
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3 December 1993

Dear Mr Allan,

**DOCUMENTS RELEASED BY SINN FEIN - THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER**

Copies of the documents which Sinn Fein released to the press yesterday after its press conference, are attached.

I am afraid they are of very poor quality, but I will try and send you better copies on Monday.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

SIMON ROGERS

Private Secretary to the Secretary of State (L)



*Sinn Féin briefing document 2 December 1993*

Since the launch of the Irish peace initiative, the British government have adopted a hostile attitude towards a peace process. They disguised this by using the rhetoric of peace while creating diversions, denying knowledge of elements of the peace process and by publicly re-iterating that they have no intention of changing policy. John Major's refusal to join the persuaders is reflected in his attitude to every strand of the Irish peace initiative from his government's attitude to the Hume/Adams initiative, its attitude to Albert Reynolds' approaches and its attitude to Sinn Féin. In all of this there is one central motivation. This is to thwart the Irish peace effort. In an effort to do this the British have resorted to lies, distractions and diversions.

British duplicity

SEPTEMBER 26th, the day after the issuing of the 2nd joint statement by John Hume and Gerry Adams.

Mayhew said:

*"We have made it clear that we do not negotiate with people who support the use of violence for political ends."*

John Major would make no comment on the development, while Sir Patrick Mayhew said he had noted the joint statement *"with interest"* and would consider carefully any matters put to him by the Irish government.

Peter Temple Morris, chair of the British-Irish interparliamentary body, said:

*"Now is not the time for the government to talk to Sinn Fein, but it is a very good thing for John Hume to be doing it, provided we can keep Sinn Fein alongside the legitimate process."*

(Irish Times, 27.9.93)

SEPTEMBER 27th Irish Press: Sir Patrick Mayhew has insisted that no talks could be held with the IRA until the campaign of terrorism had been halted on a permanent basis.

*"We will not talk to anybody or any organisation that perpetrates, uses or justifies violence for political ends,"* he declared.

*"It rests with the Provisional IRA to remove that disqualification,"* he declared.

British deny knowing substance of Adams/Hume initiative

SEPTEMBER 27th Mayhew held a press conference in Belfast city.

Questioned by reporters about whether he had seen the contents of the Adams/Hume report the *Irish Times* commented:

Sir Patrick said he knew nothing of the contents of the joint Hume-Adams report to be forwarded to Dublin and would await and see what the Government might disclose about it.

Asked whether British government considerations of the report might not be seen as a form of negotiations with Sinn Fein by proxy, which would in turn anger Unionists, Sir Patrick replied it would be "childish not to view the report offered by Dublin."

(Exact quote from Mayhew)

*If someone in Dublin said: 'here is the text of what has been shown to us', it would be very silly if I were to say, 'well I am not even going to look at it'. Whether I am impressed by it is a very different matter,"* he said.

He also said he refused to speculate about the content of a document which may or may not exist.

Mayhew went on to accuse Sinn Fein and in particular Gerry Adams of "hypocrisy" for talking about peace while "his friends in the IRA are planting bombs."

*I tell them (IRA) this: you will get nowhere by your bombs and bullets except to prison. I repeat yet again: the British government will not talk or negotiate with anyone who perpetrates or justifies acts of violence. Without a total cessation of violence, there will be no peace - and the Provisional IRA will go on experiencing unrelenting attrition, such as they met near Crossmaglen last week."*  
Irish Times 28.9.93

A British distraction - round table talks

SEPTEMBER 30th Maynew said:

"They're (inter-party talks) not into substantive discussion, let alone negotiation. If that comes about it could only be done on a bilateral and confidential basis," Irish Times 29 9 93

Interviewed that night on BBC TV Maynew said that "the only message" he was interested in hearing from the IRA was that the violence was over.

The Irish Times commented. Sir Patrick expressed what he described as "rational hope" that the stalled political talks on the future of the North would restart. He also restated British government policy that the constitutional status of the North would only change with the consent of the majority there.

OCTOBER 5th Blackpool, Tory party conference. Lord Mayor said:

"No government which I lead will negotiate with those who perpetrate, or those who support, the use of violence. There is only one message for them to send: 'We have finished with violence - for good'."

Northern Ireland is part of our democracy. We are not going to bargain away the people's democratic rights, or any part of them, in order to appease those who seek to rule by bullet or by bomb."

He said to do so "would betray the people - and in particular, those of every party, many of them brave, who take the lead in constitutional politics."

Unlike the British Labour Party, said Mr Mayor, the Conservatives were "not in the business of breaking up the United Kingdom." He was "and will remain the Conservative and Unionist party... at the heart of our philosophy is an abiding belief in the right of the people of Northern Ireland to determine their own future... I give this assurance to the brave and resilient people of Northern Ireland - for our part, we will always back your democratic wishes."

MAYHEW stated on RTE radio that the Adams/Hume talks had diverted attention away from the inter-party negotiations which he was trying to resurrect.

"It's very regrettable that events of the last few weeks have led attention away from the talks process that all the political parties are engaged in, which has by no means ended and in which both governments participated. That represents in my view, the best way forward for the political progress that most sensible people want.

Mr Hume was not acting on behalf of the British government.

He has not been invited to report to the British government and that's the position. A lot of things have got to be allowed to unfold. We don't know the nature of what has been said by John Hume to Adams and Adams to John Hume. If the Hume-Adams talks are seen as an obstacle to that extent it would be better if they didn't continue.

OCTOBER 9th Speaking at an emergency press conference in Warrington, Mayhew said that his government was determined not to speak to terrorists.

He said: "We are not talking about the Gaza Strip or some other occupied area" but that they were dealing with democratically elected politicians. Sunday Press 10.10.93.

OCTOBER 18th Speaking on BBC Radio Ulster, former British premier Margaret Thatcher said of the Adams/Hume dialogue "I do not like it. I would not do it myself. I think it has raised alarm in the hearts and minds of many people in Northern Ireland."

OCTOBER 19th Replying to questions in the British House of Commons, John Major again denied knowledge of the contents of the Adams/Hume initiative saying:

"I have regular discussions with the Taoiseach across a whole range of issues. If the Taoiseach wishes to raise with me matters that he believes will bring violence to an end in Northern Ireland then I am compelled to listen... we do not negotiate with terrorists, we do not negotiate with people who deal with bullet and bomb and we do not surrender to their violence"

NOVEMBER 1st In the British House of Commons, John Major said:

"I can only say that that would turn my stomach, and those of most honourable members. We will not do it." He was responding to a question as to whether he would talk to Gerry Adams.

He also claimed he had first heard the contents of the Adams-Hume initiative from Mr Reynolds at the EC summit in Brussels.

"I listened very carefully to what the Taoiseach had to say...but I did have to make a judgement as to whether I thought the proposals reached by (Mr Hume) at this time, in the fashion he proposed them, would actually lead to progress and to a settlement.

I reached the conclusion, after having been informed of them by the Taoiseach... that it was not the right way to proceed."

NOVEMBER 8th Irish Press Sir Patrick indicated to reporters yesterday that the talks process must come first.

He said: "I have always believed that the political talks process, though it cannot be guaranteed to end in peace, will, if it is carried through to completion, have a very beneficial effect."

Mayhew said "I don't negotiate a cessation of violence, nor does the Irish Government. Each Government said at Brussels nine days ago at the summit between the two Prime Ministers, each Government said there can be no talking with those who use violence in a democracy to seek a political end. That is the point" Irish Times.

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On BBC TV Breakfast ... [faded text] ...



"There has been no negotiating with Sinn Fein; no official, as I see, is alleged to have been talking to Sinn Fein on behalf of the British Government." 15.11.93

MAYHEW again reiterated to reporters: "There have been no negotiations with Sinn Fein. There's going to be no negotiating with anybody who supports violence. That is our private and public position and we have stuck to it."

NOVEMBER 13th Speaking in Jersey

Sir Patrick said there would be no immediate negotiation with paramilitaries even if there was a cessation of hostilities.

"A sufficient period of time would have to elapse to satisfy the sceptical people that they meant it - that it's for real not just a temporary ceasefire."

Sir Patrick reiterated his denial that members of the government or Northern Ireland Office had held talks with leading republican Martin McGuinness.

"Nobody has been authorised to negotiate or talk with Sinn Fein or any other paramilitary organisation," he said.

"I think the question which should be asked of Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness is: 'When are you going to call it off?'" Irish News, 20.11.93.

NOVEMBER 22nd At an impromptu press conference at Malone House to launch a 'Three Week' scheme Mayhew was tested by reports about reports circulating the previous week about government talks with Sinn Fein or the IRA.

The response was immediate and forthright.

"Nobody has been authorised to talk or negotiate on behalf of the British government with Sinn Fein or any other terrorist organisation," he said.

The reporter continued: "It is evidence source 007 that proves contrary to that?"

Mayhew: "I'd be very interested to see it."

NOVEMBER 23rd Speaking in the House of Commons, John Major said:

"We need a clear and unqualified answer from the IRA which respects the vital principle that there can be no change in Northern Ireland's status without the freely expressed will of its people."

Irish Press coverage said: "Now facing direct criticism over his Northern Ireland peace initiative from Tory right wingers, Mr Major has again positively asserted that he will not talk to Sinn Fein until it totally renounces violence and that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without majority consent."

NOVEMBER 29th Government sources, in advance of today's statement to the Commons were strongly emphasising the point that, irrespective of what is claimed by Martin McGuinness, there had never been any negotiations. "the distinction between contacts and an exchange of information, as opposed to talks, is crucial" an official declared: "we have not compromised, we do not negotiate under duress" Irish Press 29.11.92

NOVEMBER 29th In a statement to the House of Commons MAYHEW said

"If I receive a message through a well-established chain of communication from the leadership of the IRA that the conflict is over and they need advice as to how to bring it to an end, I am not going to pass that up," he said.

"The government had a duty to respond

"It was a necessity to decide whether we should reply to that or say we don't talk to people like this. I have a certain responsibility first and foremost for every single life in Northern Ireland

"Had I made no response I do not believe I would have been forgiven by the people of Northern Ireland. There are responsibilities which Government Ministers have to which others are immune."

Mayhew also stated: "We have at no stage offered to negotiate in advance of a permanent ending of violence, and that must be right. Our main objective has been to reinforce and spell out in private our publicly stated positions, consistent with our declared policy, namely that if such people wanted to enter into talks or negotiations with the Government, they first had genuinely to end violence. Not just temporarily, but for good."

He also insisted that the Government had never shifted from its position of refusing to enter talks with the predetermined outcome of an end to partition.

He denied the Government initiated the contacts. He claimed his previous statements that he had not authorized anyone to enter into talks with the IRA were perfectly justified by the facts. "Of course I was not going to volunteer that there was a means, a channel of communication." The Guardian 30.11.93

MAYHEW "It is for the IRA and their supporters to explain why they failed to deliver the promised ending of violence."

Sir Patrick promised no diversion from the search for peace, but it could not be peace at any price. "It has to be peace properly attained."

MAYHEW "We have no doubt that it was our duty to respond in the way that we did, remembering always that it would be actions and not words that would be the ultimate test. We have at no stage offered to negotiate in advance of a permanent ending of violence, and that must be right." Irish Times 20.11.93

NOVEMBER 30th Regarding the Cosgrave statement in relation to communications with Sinn Fein:

The secret exchanges between the government and the leadership of the Provisional republican movement in Northern Ireland began, according to the Government, with a message from the Provisionals dated 22 February of this year.

"The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close," said the IRA according to the record published yesterday by Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary. The Guardian, 20.11.93.

Perogram said the Irish News challenges the government's claim that it did not know what was in the Hume-Adams agreement.

It says that permanent secretary in the Northern Ireland Office John Chilcott was briefed by Mr Hume on a regular basis as the talks were underway.

Spies from the British intelligence service also secretary monitored the talks, it is claimed. 30.11.93

STATEMENT FROM  
SINN FEIN PRESIDENT GERRY ADAMS  
2 December 1993

*Statement from Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams*

2 December 1993

As we informed you some days ago Sinn Fein is scrutinising the British version of the protracted dialogue and contact between our party and the British Government, and the documents provided by Patrick Mayhew on Monday to the British Parliament. We are providing you today with an interim report of our scrutiny. There are matters we will have to return to. For example, last night's admissions from Mayhew have not been properly scrutinised by us. May I also once again demand an end to London and Dublin government censorship. It remains our intention to place these our account of these matters on the public record and to thus set the record straight.

It is important that this is done because if this line of communication is to have any value in the future its integrity must be restored. The British government has acted, and is acting in bad faith and has actively abused our contact with it in order to sow dissension and confusion and to distract attention from the real issues. This can only devalue the peace process which has been severely damaged by Major and Mayhew's actions.

Martin McGuinness will give you an outline account of the history of this phase of the protracted dialogue and of the line of communication between Sinn Fein and the British government. Richard McAuley will also provide you with a preliminary report of our scrutiny and an information document on British Bogus, Omitted and Altered documents - BOA...snake in the grass!

We will also be releasing a number of documents, some from Sinn Fein and some from the British government. In due course, and when we have completed our scrutiny and compiled a full account on all these matters, we will be placing this on the public record in the Linenhall Library, Belfast, and in the National Library, Dublin.

I now want to make a number of important points regarding this affair. The behaviour of the British Government, the lies, omissions, falsification, forgeries, diversions and distractions are all proof of the British government's opposition to peace in our country which arises from its dogged refusal to concede to the people of Ireland, all of us, our right to determine our own future and our right to govern ourselves free of division and conflict.

This has to be seen also against the failure of British rule in our country. But there are positive aspects to this situation, for example, no government on these islands can ever again claim that there is any popular support for a policy of excluding Sinn Fein. The pompous, self-righteous rhetoric of British government officials and of John Major, he will not talk to us, has been totally exposed as cheap political manoeuvring. People support inclusive dialogue. Even the British House of Commons supports dialogue with us despite all the posturings of the past by all of the parties in that establishment.

This recent phase of our history is one of the most shameful in 25 years of conflict, or perhaps since the partition of this country. The British government's attitude to nationalist Ireland, whether represented by Albert Reynolds or John Hume or Sinn Fein has been despicable, devious and damnable. The British government knows, and has known for some long time now that the Irish peace initiative presents a real opportunity for peace. John Hume has told them this privately and publicly. We have told them this privately and publicly. Public opinion, in both Ireland and Britain, with the exception of the Unionists has told them it also.

I want to appeal to the Unionists. Republicans are not outraged by the conduct of British government ministers. We expect nothing less. But we do expect more from you. You and we, and the rest of the Irish people can build a common future together. The main cause of the division between us is the British connection. You can have little confidence in British governments. Major and Mayhew have lied to your leaders. They see Ian Paisley and Molyneaux and John Hume and I and Albert Reynolds and Dublin politicians as leaders of Irish opinion. You and us are seen by the London government for what we are, as people of Ireland. They will use you today and abuse you tomorrow and dump you the day after that. You know that. It is time we stopped being used by liars and cheats who have no right to rule us.

Why are the British telling all these lies? What is the purpose? Let us forget for a minute the convoluted and confusing detail of documents. Let us deal with the main point. Irish nationalist Ireland wants peace. The British government does not. The British government cannot admit this and it wishes to distract attention from it and to confuse and to divide us. They say that Irish republicans are ready to surrender. This is a lie. Our commitment to struggle is firm and undaunted.

We do want to move towards a negotiated settlement. We want peace. We are prepared to take risks and have taken risks to achieve this and we will continue to take risks because the objective of peace is so important to us.

Following protracted dialogue and contact between us and the British over a considerable period at the beginning of this year, the British government proposed delegation meetings between Sinn Fein and its representatives. We will deal with the detail of this later. Suffice to say now that we negotiated the preliminary procedures for these discussions. In order to assist this process the IRA responded positively to a British request for a temporary suspension of operations. The British then moved away from this position. Fair enough. Such to-ing and fro-ing is not unusual. But to then try to use the generosity of the IRA in order to cover its own failure to engage meaningfully in a dialogue for peace as it moved away from its own proposal is totally unacceptable. It damages the prospects for peace.

It has always been clear to this generation of Irish republicans that the British government seeks to defeat us. It seeks not to bring about peace, not to end conflict, but merely to end the IRA's campaign as a means of subverting all Irish nationalist opinion.

When rumours about the dialogue between Sinn Fein and the British government started again recently, the British government moved to defend its position in a selfish and narrow way. When it became likely that some of these matters might become public they then moved to counteract this. That is what the Guildhall speech was about. That is what the bogus messages of February 22, June 1 and November 2nd is about. That is what the forgeries are about. The British government dare not admit that it made a proposal which met with a principled, flexible but positive response from both Sinn Fein and the IRA. And John Major threw this back in our faces as he did with John Hume, as he has done with the Dublin government. How this is dealt with is a matter for those concerned. How we deal with our affairs is a matter for us. I am now demanding that John Major explains why he and his cabinet walked away from their own proposal and condemned all of us to the violence which has occurred since.



So, in conclusion, and I will return to this in my closing remarks, there is a need for Irish nationalist Ireland and for progressive public opinion in Britain to see beyond the lies. It is time for the unionists to likewise. But more importantly, we all need to move beyond the lies and to consolidate the peace process. What we have seen so far have been skirmishes on the side lines, but the high ground - that is, the opportunity for peace presented by the Irish peace initiative - remains intact. Let us avoid diversions about whether or not Sinn Fein will be involved in talks. We have been and we will be again. This is not the main issue at this time.

The main issue, to paraphrase the words of John Hume, is that the British government "hold the key" to peace in our country, and between the people of Britain and Ireland. Major has refused to turn this key. When we have cleared away all of these distractions, then all of us, Dublin and London, republicans and nationalists, must strive - and must seek the support of the unionist section of our people - to build upon the peace process.

ENDS

STATEMENT FROM  
SINN FEIN ARD COMHAIRLE MEMBER  
MARTIN McQUINNESS  
2 December 1993

Statement from Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle member, Martin McGuinness

2 December 1993

Let me begin by saying that I never thought there would be a need for us to set the record straight as we are doing today. Let me stress that we are doing so reluctantly and because of the blatant abuse by the British government of the line of communication between us and it.

The Sinn Fein leadership has always accepted that each side in this process will seek to gain advantage over the other. This is part of the battle in which we are engaged. However, what has occurred this last year and which is now partially in the public domain goes far beyond legitimate manoeuvring. At no time, even under Thatcher, has any government attempted to use and abuse communication by fabrication and forgery in the way which the Major government has.

The history of my involvement with this line of communication between Sinn Fein and the British government must be seen against the background of our initiatives on peace and against the background of the evolution and the development of party policy on this issue. Most of you will be aware that for the last five years, at least, Sinn Fein has been involved in trying to build consensus in Ireland around the need for a negotiated settlement of the conflict here. This was publicly outlined in a series of discussion documents from "Scenario for Peace" through to "Towards a Lasting Peace". It has dominated party Ard Fheisanna and it has been the central focus for us.

As part of our strategy, senior party members were given responsibility for engaging in private and public debate with different elements of opinion here and abroad. I was given major responsibility for engaging in public debate with the British government. I was accountable to a small committee, chaired by party President, Gerry Adams.

As many of you will recall the development of our policy and the public articulation of it informed public debate during this time. Sinn Fein has always had a policy based on the need for dialogue and for as long as I can recall, we have been in regular contact with many elements of Irish and British opinion. As Sinn Fein engaged more and more confidently in the peace debate these contacts became more intense. It was in this climate that the British Government re-activated the line of communication and its current phase of protracted contact and dialogue with us. This line of contact was not an alternative to other dialogue that we were engaged in. Nor indeed was it the most productive. At all times our objective was aimed at building a process towards a lasting peace. The most significant progress in this regard has been made in the discussions between John Hume and Gerry

Adams. Throughout these discussions, and especially when significant progress was made we pointed the British government at this initiative and advised them that it presented the best opportunity for peace.

The line of communication goes back over two decades. I had no dealing with it before the hunger strikes although I was aware of its existence. The line of communication was dormant from the breakdown of 74 - 76 truce until the hunger strike. The two hunger strikes were a period of frenzied contact between us and them. The contacts between us and the British government at this time is not disputed. Incidentally, we were assured during this period that Margaret Thatcher had authorised the line of communication with us and with the political prisoners in the H Blocks and Armagh prisons. The British government representative was appointed by London not Stormont.

After the hunger strikes the line of communication was dormant until mid 1990. Even though the line of communication was dormant the contact remained in touch with the British government representative and occasionally with me. In mid 1990 the British government representative intimated that he wished to open up the line of communication once again. We thought that this was only an opening approach aimed at picking up on the bad situation between us since the hunger strikes and we received some general and occasional oral briefings on the British government position during this time. During this period also the British government representative informed the contact that he would like to meet me. Towards the end of 1990 he passed word to Sinn Fein that he was due for retirement and he would like to meet me before he left and to prepare the way for a new British government representative. Garry Adams and I discussed this invitation with others in the Sinn Fein officer board and decided to go ahead with the meeting. I was instructed to proceed on a listening brief.

This meeting took place in October 1990. The contact was also in attendance. It was a low key meeting lasting for 3 hours and discussed the general political and the current state of British policy and Anglo/Irish relations. In keeping with my brief, I said very little and was non committal on all aspects of republican policy. The British government representative intimated to me that after his retirement a new representative would be appointed and that there would be an effort to re-activate the line of communication. I was non-committal on this. I reported all this back to my colleagues. While we felt a moral imperative to explore any overtures from the British, because of previous experiences during the hunger strikes and the 72 and 74 bi-lateral truces, and given that there was no public evidence that the British government position had changed, we were sceptical about their intentions. This strongly influenced our attitude. However,

we agreed if the British desired to activate the line of communication that we were morally and tactically obliged not to reject their offer. We did not communicate this to the British. In January 1991 the British government representative I met retired.

April 91: Contact informed us that the British government, through the now retired British government representative, had passed to him information that the loyalist death squads were about to announce a ceasefire for the inter-party talks.

We were informed of this orally through the line of communication and after this there was no contact until June 1991. Then we were informed that a new named representative had been appointed. He had 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 kept by the British government representative. His status was also verified by the previous British government representative. We were informed that he was appointed by London.

June to Christmas 91: During this period the new British government representative initiated a series of periodical meetings and occasional telephone conversations with the contact. We were given detailed briefings on British government policy. The meetings took place both in the six counties and in London. The representative declared that it was his objective to ensure that republicans knew the thinking of his government. We presumed that he was also engaged in building up a relationship with us and with the contact. We were assured that John Major had authorised the line of communication. Our private position was that in all of this that the British government's strategy remained one aimed at defeating the republican struggle. During this period we did not initiate any contact and our response to all information was to note it.

January to April 1992: Throughout 1992 the British government representative became very active in briefing us. The major part of these briefings was taken up by reports of the progress, or lack of it which was being made in the inter-party talks. Peter Brooke made a number of keynote speeches at this time and we were advised of these in advance.

April to Christmas 1992: During this time, after the Westminster election Peter Brooks was replaced by Patrick Mayhew. We were informed that the line of communication would continue as before and that Patrick Mayhew was "fully on board".

We were being given consistent reports from the British government representative that the Brooke/Mayhew talks were

going nowhere and that the government's prediction was that they would end in failure.

We were also being told that there was friction between the senior civil servants (in London and Stormont) and Mayhew. In October, we were provided with a two page document on the progress of the talks under Sir Ninian Stevens. (see attached document)

Jan-Mar 1993: The British government representative was in frequent contact, on occasion on a daily basis. He was suggesting that there was a possibility of meetings taking place between British government representatives and Sinn Féin representatives. We began to take his proposal more seriously when he got into discussions about the logistics of carrying out such a meeting.

At all times we stressed that there could be no preconditions to such a meeting and that Sinn Féin's electoral mandate was the basis for our engagement. The British government representative said there would be a need for the British Prime Minister to defend talks with us if these became public and this would be most difficult if the IRA campaign was continuing at a high level. He told us that the British government accepted that the IRA activity would only be halted as a result of negotiations. He said that the British government believed that intensive meetings with Sinn Féin would persuade republicans that armed struggle was no longer necessary. He proposed that if we got agreement of these meetings that the IRA should reduce its campaign or suspend it in order to enhance this process.

In February Sinn Féin held its Ard Fheis. There were key note speeches from Gerry Adams and myself outlining party policy on the need for a peace process.

This triggered further intense responses from the British government. We were advised that we would shortly be in a situation in which a definite arrangement would be made for such a meeting. Suggestions were made that meetings could take place in various venues. They offered to arrange an airplane to fly us to Scotland, Norway or Denmark.

I asked for information about the make-up of the meetings eg numbers of delegates. I was informed that the British were prepared to be flexible about this. They suggested that three delegates, accompanied by three advisors, would be sufficient.

They would also be similarly represented. I asked for an indication of the seniority of the British representatives. I was then given the names of those who would represent the British side. The British government representative stressed that the British government believed that the end result of

these talks would be that Republicans would feel that there would be no need to go back to armed struggle.

He also stated that he believed two weeks intensive daily meetings would suffice. I reported this to Gerry Adams. After a discussion with senior colleagues, the British request was passed to the IRA.

By this time, the British government had appointed two representatives. By the end of March we had reached agreement in principle about the meetings. The Sinn Fein side applied itself to terms of reference and an outline of policy position. It was during this period that we received the British 9 paragraph document. We prepared an 11 paragraph response to it. We also appointed a small secretariat under my tutelage.

At this time Sinn Fein sought and was given a commitment by the IRA that it would create the conditions necessary to facilitate this round of talks and to enable us to explore the potential of the British government's assertion. This would have involved a 14 day suspension of operations.

This was conveyed to the British government on May 10th.

Although we were informed that the positive response by republicans to the British proposal was the subject of a series of high level meetings by British ministers and officials, including John Major there was no positive response by them. I was informed that this was discussed on Monday, 17 May 1993, at a meeting which included Major, Hurd, Mayhew, Chilcott, Braithwaite. The meeting was indecisive and was reconvened on Tuesday, 18 May, and Kenneth Clarke was involved in this. Clarke's advice was that the opening of public negotiations with us was "too risky with the government under seige". Mayhew was wobbling between "pushing for acceptance and wanting a safer longer period of cessation". John Major compromised by instructing his secretary to draw up a programme which he would be able to announce in Parliament. "that he was instructing the NIO to enter into dialogue with the Republican Movement". Later we received a written communication which you have before you. This deals directly with the 10 May situation. From this point, although the line was in regular use in this period it was not used in any positive way. In fact, the British moved away from their proposal and refused to follow it through.

We believe that this was due to John Major's difficulties within his party and in the British parliament, and his need to secure an alliance with the DUP.

During this time there were a number of leaks to the media which hinted at contact between us and the British. We made a

number of formal complaints as we had done on previous occasions and expressed concern at the risk to the process.

In fact we believe these leaks to have been inspired from within the British military and political establishment and that this led to the British government being forced to give the UUP a limited briefing on its contacts with Sinn Féin.

July 1993. The Sinn Féin response to the British government's 9 paragraph document, which had been prepared in April for presentation by our secretariat in advance of the proposed delegation meetings was lodged with the contact to be passed to the British. This outlined the basis on which we were entering negotiations.

After this the exchanges we received became less and less. They continued to avoid the main issue raised on May 10th. Their content was increasingly disingenuous and it became clear that the British were quite blatantly abusing the line of communication for their own narrow short term interests.

The communications were quite clearly being written with a view to disguise the British government's rejection of the substantial and courageous response by the IRA to the British request. Simultaneously the volume of leaks and rumours increased quite noticeably. During this period the Hume/Adams discussions were making considerable progress and we conveyed this to the British both verbally and in written messages. November 1993. In early November we received a British government document which purported to be in response to a request from us. We immediately despatched a repudiation of any request from us. You know the rest.

I have outlined this chronology to you because the line of communication with the British government has been abused by Major and Mayhew. Today we are setting the record straight. It is important that this is done because if this line of communication is to have any value in the future its integrity must be restored. The British government are acting in bad faith and are now actively abusing our contact with them in order to sow dissension and confusion and to distract attention from the real issues. This can only devalue the peace process.

Sinn Féin acted at all times in good faith. We sought to move towards peace both through this private contact with the British government and through our involvement in the Irish peace initiative. Republicans have demonstrated flexibility and integrity throughout. The British government have demonstrated intransigence and duplicity. They have rejected very real and tangible opportunities for peace. It is up to John Major to explain why his government walked away from its



own proposal and rejected the positive republican response to this.



Martin Mc Guinness - Ard Fheis '93

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 partitionists 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 Fein was undemocratically excluded from those discussions.

Democracy, British style, dictated that the Alliance Party with less support than Sinn Fein 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 that of a facilitator. How right he is. The British Government has indeed facilitated the persecution of the Nationalist people of the 6 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 an 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 Wimbledon 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 Fein will not be involved in talks until the I.R.A. 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 Fein. 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 Fein into a talks process. If both Governments have the courage of their private convictions they should now finally meet with Sinn Fein. 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 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 6 counties and I believe the overwhelming majority of Irish people in this island are bitterly opposed to any change which dilutes the sovereign rights of the people of Ireland to nationalhood.

Sinn Fein recognises the dismay and confusion which exists within the unionists 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 requires particular consideration to guarantee and protect their interest 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 SDUP 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.