

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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**Title:** Memorandum to the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, TD, by Dermot Nally, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach, reporting on visit by John Bourn, Northern Ireland Office, to inform of British intentions and of progress in relation to the cessation of violence by the Provisional IRA [Irish Republican Army]

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Taoiseach

The main purpose of the visit by Mr. John Bourn yesterday (who came in place of Mr. Frank Cooper, Secretary of the Northern Ireland Office) was to keep us informed of British intentions and of progress in relation to the current cessation of violence. A full note of the meeting will be submitted later. This is a preliminary summary of what happened.

Mr. Bourn said that

- (1) Mr. Rees would be giving the British Government's attitude to the cease-fire, early next week;
- (2) the Gardiner Report on Detention was expected to be published sometime in the following week;
- (3) the discussion document on power-sharing would be published soon after that.

The attitude of the British Government could be summarised in two catch phrases. The first of these was "no negotiations". The second was that there would be a "positive and measured response" to the cessation of violence, and the continuance of that cessation.

Mr. Bourn said that Mr. Rees's statement next week, so far as they could now anticipate it, would reiterate, more or less, what he had said at Christmas and at the new year. He would indicate the actions the British Government intended to take in relation to security, detention and policing if the cessation of violence continued.

On security he would indicate the disposition of the security forces. There would be less patrolling by the Army. Armoured cars and patrols would tend to be less in evidence. There would be less screening of individuals and less searching of houses. If the ceasefire continued they could well expect to reduce considerably the amount of foot patrols in the streets and these might well, eventually, patrol with reversed arms. They would not patrol in battle dress. The searching and guarding in segment areas in Belfast would not be at the 100% standard maintained at present. The obstructions in roads - such as ramps etc. would be less "obstreperous".

The timetable for this scaling down of security activity would depend on performance in relation to the cessation of violence. The British were particularly wary of lowering their guard prematurely. The intention would be to reduce ~~the~~ the Army to its normal size, as a permanent garrison. Police would be the main force for maintaining law and order.

Mr. Bourn indicated that on the question of detainees they would look for releases on a continuing scale, <sup>the cessation</sup> if violence continued, in addition to the 20 who had been released in December.

On powers of arrest, Mr. Bourn said that since the cessation of violence the emergency powers had not been used in the North to detain people. Arrests on ordinary criminal charges would, of course, continue.

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This was more or less what Mr. Rees would be saying in the early part of the week.

Mr. Board~~ard~~ and the British party were asked what they thought the reasons were for the cessation of violence. Mr. Board~~ard~~ gave three reasons -

- (1) the success of the security forces in making life difficult for subversives;
- (2) reflection by the provisionals on the effects of the UWC strike and the strength shown by the majority community on that occasion. If the feelings of the majority were as strong as then indicated, there was obviously just no hope of attaining what the provisionals regarded as their aim, by present methods; and
- (3) the revulsion in public opinion particularly after the Birmingham bombings. This was strengthened by the fear that barriers could be imposed by the British on movement between the two countries which would make this next to impossible.

Mr. Board~~ard~~ said that they were reasonably hopeful of the continuance of the ceasefire. The British Ambassador, Sir Arthur Galsworthy, was somewhat less hopeful. He said that the cessation of violence could well be used by the provisionals as an opportunity for regrouping. This was a possibility which should never be far from our minds. A further reason for the cessation of violence, mentioned during the discussions, was that the recent spate of sectarian assassinations had shown beyond all doubt that the provisionals could not protect the minority population. Nothing in the past activities of the organisation had shown that they were in any way subject to pressure from public opinion and to say that they were now starting to turn to democratic methods could well be to misread the situation completely.

On the question of continuing policy, as between the two Governments, the British side stressed, in particular, the continuing importance of the arrangements established at the Baldonnel meeting on security between the Secretary of State, Mr. Rees and the Minister for Justice, Mr. Cooney. They said that there were some minor difficulties in relation particularly to the appearance of Army personnel, in ~~c~~ivilian clothes, at some of the meetings of the technical groups. They would like if this could be looked into, and if possible, the difficulties, removed. The meeting did not go, in detail, into these questions.

It was emphasised to the British side that in their actions they should not give grounds for the belief among the community that, for example, the release of detainees was due to the provisionals. There was an extremely effective propaganda machine operating to try to spread this message among the people in the North. The British would need to be particularly on their guard against it.

The British side gave details of their proposals for the reform of the police. There was no indication as to the methods to be used to get identification by the minority in the North (other than purely administrative arrangements), with the police forces there. The importance of ~~the~~ this type of identification - and the identification of the people with the instruments of Government - by power-sharing and other methods - was stressed.