

397/92.

MESSAGES PASSED BETWEEN HMG AND THE PROVISIONAL MOVEMENT, FEBRUARY AND NOVEMBER 1993

Notes

1. Dates of messages. The nature of the chain was such that transmission could take a variable length of time. The dates of transmission given are those on which the message was sent. The date attributed may not however be that on which the message was received.
2. Many messages were oral and these are marked with a star..

~~Mrs Kenny~~

Notes

Accompanied by texts of speeches given at Sinn Féin Ard Fheis by Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams.

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement,
22 February 1993

The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close. We wish to have an unannounced ceasefire in order to hold dialogue leading to peace. We cannot announce such a move as it will lead to confusion for the volunteers because the press will misinterpret it as a surrender. We cannot meet Secretary of State's public renunciation of violence, but it would be given privately as long as we were sure that we were not being tricked.

Note

Accompanied by texts of speeches given to Sinn Fein Ard Fheis by Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams.

British Message sent 26 February 1993

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.

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 5 March

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.

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.

19 March 1993
British message sent 11 March 1993

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.

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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. We note that what is being sought at this stage is advice, and that any dialogue would follow an unannounced halt to violent activity. We confirm that if violence had genuinely been brought to an end, whether or not that fact had been announced, then 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:

British 9-paragraph note, sent on 19 March 1993

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. We note that what is being sought at this stage is advice, and that any dialogue would follow an unannounced halt to violent activity. We confirm that if violence had genuinely been brought to an end, whether or not that fact had been announced, then dialogue could take place.

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5. The British Government has made clear that:

the British Government would bring forward legislation to implement the will of the people here. But unless the people of Northern Ireland

- 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 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 only 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 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 the way forward. We are ready to answer specific questions or to give further explanation.

You should also emphasise to your interlocutor the British Government's acknowledgement that all of those involved 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 be possible to continue to do so.

Note: (Not part of speaking note)

The version published in 'The Observer' on 28 November 1993 contained, in addition, peripheral instructions as to how this 'speaking note' and its accompanying written note were to be used, as it was prefaced with 'The following instruction should be delivered orally to ... when you hand over Annex C in written form. In handing over this written message - and you need make no bones

Speaking note accompanying the 9-paragraph British side sent on 19 March 1993

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 of those involved 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 be possible to continue to do so.

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about the fact that it is a written message that you are handing over - you should emphasise to ... the following points. You should emphasise that...", etc.

There was an additional paragraph added which said: "You should be aware that the above has been personally approved by SOSNI, in fact all but the first sentence of the first paragraph is his own wording, in other words it is not negotiable." ^{was what has} happened.

It is the fate of history that we find ourselves in this position, all we can think of at this time is an old Irish proverb: God's hand works in mysterious ways. Our hope is that this hand will lead to peace and friendship.

Note

The 'recent action' was the Warrington bombing on 28 March 1933.

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 22 March 1993

Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently held. It is with total sadness that we have to accept responsibility for the recent action.

The last thing we needed at this sensitive time was what has happened.

It is the fate of history that we find ourselves in this position, all we can think of at this time is an old Irish proverb: God's hand works in mysterious ways. Our hope is that this hand will lead to peace and friendship.

Note

The 'recent action' was the Warrington bombing on 20 March 1993.

British message sent on 5 May 1993 to an indirect

oral inquiry sent on 4 May 1993

Events on the ground are crucial, as we have consistently made clear. We cannot conceivably disregard them. We gave in good faith the advice which was sought, 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 in response to that request for 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.

British message prepared in response to an indirect oral inquiry, sent on 6 May 1993

"We confirm that we stand by the 9-paragraph document.
"Yes, the order of events was the main problem.
We will be back tomorrow with a more detailed explanation of exactly what we mean."

Note

The inquiry related to whether the British had difficulty with "the order of events", ie whether exploratory dialogue should follow, or precede, a halt to violent activity.

British message of 7 May 1993

"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."

These experiences have given rise to... We are responding directly to your request for advice regarding fully the sensitivity of any position from you or us which is required to paper at this stage. Our response has been couched accordingly. But it is clear that we are prepared to make a 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 received a commitment which will permit you to proceed so that we can both explore the potential for developing a real peace process. This depends on 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: it underlines the sincerity of those involved and their faith in us.

We wish to stress that we will not be party to any dealings which would 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 present its analysis should be

Message from the leadership of the
Provisional Movement, of 10 May 1993

We welcome face-to-face exchanges 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 the caution occasioned by the far from satisfactory experiences in 1972, 1975 and during the Hunger Strikes of 1980 and 1981. It will 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 a 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 received a commitment which will permit you to proceed so that we can both explore the potential for developing a real peace process. This depends on 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; it underlines the sincerity of those involved and their faith in us.

We wish to stress that we will not be party to any dealings which would 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 Fein's right to represent its electorate and to promote its analysis should be

accepted and acted upon. This is the basis on which we enter into dialogue.

We need to agree agenda and formats for meetings etc. We have appointed a small secretariat to assist in this task. We would like to nominate someone to liaise with Martin McGuinness on this. We also have a number of questions. They have to do with the mechanics of the sequence outlined by you and they are:

(a) Who will represent you?

(b) When will the British Government be politically represented in this process and by whom?

(c) We need clarification of the phrase "progressive entry into dialogue".

(d) When will this start?

(e) Where is the proposed venue?

It would be more practical and quicker if these details could be agreed directly with Mr McGuinness. If this is not possible we ask that you proceed through the usual channel as soon as possible.

Note

The "face to face exchanges with your representative" referred to in the first sentence was the unauthorised meeting between Mr McGuinness and a British official.

*Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement, 1 June 1993

The Provisional leadership is dismayed that it has not yet received a formal reply to its offer contained in the speaking note of 11 May 1993.

The leadership is particularly dismayed because it had placed on the table the offer of a total cessation which carried its hopes for the future of all the people in these islands.

The various incidents which have taken place are the inevitable result of this vacuum and without co-operation the future looks bleak for all concerned.

Note

The reference to the "offer of a total cessation" is to the message of 10 May. This was said to contain such an offer. Any such commitment would evidently have been equivocal and conditional.

Message from the leadership of the Provisional Movement 11 July 1993

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 situation 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.

we do not seek to impose preconditions nor should preconditions be imposed on us. This is not a position we could easily recover let alone successfully defend.

Dialogue and negotiations are necessary and inevitable if this conflict is to be resolved on a democratic basis. Preconditions 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 promote its analysis should be accepted and acted upon. This is the basis upon which we enter into dialogue.

Message from leadership of the Provisional Movement 22 July

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 long-standing position has been of willingness to enter into dialogue with a view to resolving the conflict. In all of this we do not seek to impose preconditions nor should preconditions be imposed on us. This is not a position we could easily recommend let alone successfully defend.

Dialogue and negotiations are necessary and inevitable if this conflict is to be resolved on a democratic basis. Preconditions 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 Fein'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.

Since its creation 72 years ago, the six-country statelet has been in constant crisis. Its survival has always been dependant on the

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 dependent 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 the 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 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 believe that there exists a basis for progress which can be developed into a genuine, realistic and democratic peace process. 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

This paper is the response to the British message of 19 March mentioned in the Provisionals' message of 14 August. It was belatedly passed to the intermediaries, but not formally 'tabled' - again, as the 14 August message points out.

Events on the ground shortly after the Northern Ireland Local Elections of 19 May, however, made it impossible to proceed 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 Bodestown 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.