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FROM: P N BELL, AUS(L)
14 NOVEMBER 1994

cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Ministers (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Legge - B
All Grade 3's - B
All Grade 5's - B
Chief Executive,
Compensation Agency
Mr Bramley - B
Mr Hassall - B
Mr Dunn - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
HMA, Dublin* - B
Mr Powell, HMA Brussels*
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MR BROOKER - B

ms Henry

IRISH INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, UNIVERSITY OF LEUVEN
SEMINAR: "NORTHERN IRELAND THE WAY FORWARD" 8 NOVEMBER (AKA
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT - A CHILD'S GUIDE)

We held a successful seminar on this theme in the Irish Centre in Leuven last week. Doubtless the Embassy will be providing a short report in due course. It was reasonably well attended: participants, whether the journalists, officials or otherwise made for an intelligent and interested audience and the standard of discussion in the open sessions was high. The platform speakers were, for the Irish side, Mr David Donoghue (DFA), supported by Professor Paul Arthur of the University of Ulster while for the UK, David Watkins, Professor Paul Bew (QUB) and myself made up the team. (We were later joined by the European Parliament "staffers" etc who were part of M. Trojan's 'Task Force'.) I have, by the way, a complete collection of the papers of those who provided them (all our side and Mr Donoghue) and am circulating them to those with a particular interest. (Mr Watkins' is of particular interest.)

2. The purpose of this note, however, is first to thank you personally for your very helpful comments on my own paper; to the International Branch of SIL for looking after the logistics; and to

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our Brussels Embassy in collaboration with whom I had planned and they had implemented the exercise.

3. My own paper (which I tabled - as opposed to reading to the audience) was, however, written as much with a view to internal NIO purposes as for the Seminar. It was meant to be a straight-forward account, capable of quotation on the record, setting out the Government's policies in regard to political development, fairly narrowly defined from first principles. It contains, therefore, only material which should be second nature to all members of the Political Group and may, therefore, be useful as a Background Paper for our imminent Seminar. But it may also serve to remind colleagues more widely within the Office as to what it is we on the political side think we are about. Also those Ministers who have no day-to-day involvement in the political development process may also find it a useful "aide memoire". Hence the circulation and also, in part, the style. (Professor Bew compared it to a statement ex cathedra of the Orthodox Faith. Odd, I had never thought of myself before as papabile)

(signed)

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NORTHERN IRELAND - THE WAY FORWARD

1. Introduction

1.1 On 31 August, the Provisional IRA announced 'a complete cessation of military operations'. On 13 October, the Combined Loyalist Military Command declared in response that they would 'universally cease all operational hostilities'. Following more than 7 weeks without IRA violence, the United Kingdom Prime Minister, Mr John Major, announced in Belfast on 21 October that the time was now right to make a "working assumption" that the Provisionals' ceasefire was intended to be permanent. He added that, if Sinn Féin continued to establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and the IRA showed that it has brought terrorism to an end, an exploratory dialogue between representatives of the Government and Sinn Fein would be convened before the end of this year.

1.2 Northern Ireland may now stand therefore, on the threshold of a lasting peace, and the prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the most intractable political problem in western Europe could be higher than at any time this century.

1.3 Against this background, this paper tries to stand back from the frenetic activity, whether in both parts of Ireland, the rest of the UK, Washington - or Brussels - which these events have sparked in order to set out one British official's ¹ view of:

- what the UK Government is trying to do in Northern Ireland (section 2);

¹ Although this paper seeks faithfully to reflect UK Government policy, the views expressed - and any mistakes - are my own.

- what are the problems that they continue to face (sections 3-4);
- how they have come, so far, as successfully as they have (sections 5-7);
- how they see the task ahead (sections 8-9); and,
- the Promised Land? (section 10).

1.4 If some of what follows seems familiar, this is as it should be. Successive UK Governments have been flexible about tactics and have learnt from experience. But the historic opportunity that now faces us is in large measure owing to the determination and consistency with which they have sought to make progress towards a comprehensive, final accommodation based on fundamental democratic principles and a refusal to capitulate before terrorist violence in ways that have changed remarkably little over the years.

2. What is the UK Government trying to do?

2.1 Since Direct Rule began in 1972, with the resumption by Westminster of responsibility for the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, successive UK administrations, both Labour and Conservative, have sought peace, stability, reconciliation and prosperity for the people of Northern Ireland within a framework of harmonious relations with the rest of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and within the context of our membership of the European Union.

2.2 The present Government has been trying to achieve these goals by:

- promoting agreement among all the people who live in the island of Ireland and working together with the Irish Government to that end;

- a co-ordinated and coherent approach to all aspects of government policy in Northern Ireland which recognises that the fundamental political, security and economic and social problems of Northern Ireland are closely interrelated; and,
- policies informed by the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem irrespective of political, cultural or religious affiliation or gender.

2.3 Amongst the most important of the principles informing the Government's policy is their commitment to the democratic principle that Northern Ireland will not cease to be a part of the United Kingdom without the consent of a majority of the people who live there. The British Government, as the 1993 Downing Street Declaration (see Section 7) puts it, have 'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland'. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom because that is what most of its inhabitants choose. It will remain so unless that situation changes. Such a majority desire for a change in status, as shown in successive free and democratic elections, clearly does not now exist. There is no reason to expect it to in the foreseeable future. However, if (and only if) a majority of people come clearly to wish for and formally to consent to the establishment of a United Ireland, the UK and Irish Governments are committed to introduce and support in their respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish. It is in terms of that 'constitutional guarantee' that one should understand the British Prime Minister's commitment, in Belfast on 16 September, that when the Political Talks to decide Northern Ireland's future are over, the UK Government will seek the approval of the people of Northern Ireland for the outcome in a referendum.

2.4 Nor is any future Labour Government likely to be any less committed to these democratic principles. As the new Labour Shadow NI Secretary, Dr Marjorie Mowlam, told the House of Commons on Northern Ireland:

"I should like also to reaffirm Labour's historical commitment to the unification of Ireland by consent - always the crucial word. I reaffirm our support for the principles contained in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which states that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of its people. Labour also welcomes the Government's recognition in the Downing Street Declaration that it is right for the people of Ireland alone to exercise their right of self-determination; and the Irish Government's recognition that this right must be exercised with, and subject to, the agreement and consent of a majority of people in Northern Ireland ... No-one will have anything to gain from provocation or procrastination in the hope of a change of government. Labour, in opposition and in government, will seek to facilitate and encourage a balanced constitutional settlement leading to an agreement that will have the support of both traditions." (Hansard 27 October, col. 1028).

3. The problems facing the UK Government

3.1 One must neither overstate nor regard the problems of Northern Ireland as wholly exceptional. They are, in large measure, those of many other peripheral regions of the European Union and of the rest of the UK. Equally, in the understandable euphoria following the terrorist ceasefires, one should not conclude that the fundamental problems of Northern Ireland had been definitively overcome. For there is one special problem which casts only the palest shadow in modern times in the rest of the United Kingdom: a community divided, roughly speaking, on sectarian lines.

4. The big problem - a divided community

4.1 Northern Ireland's political, social and economic difficulties have, at their root, deep, often bitter and - until September - even murderous divisions of allegiance within the community. There is a corresponding lack of common identity. Although the recent absence of sectarian violence has already perceptibly softened attitudes, and may have increased the willingness of some even of those until recently regarded as 'hard liners' to make political compromises, they will nevertheless dominate the political landscape for the foreseeable future. It will take long to heal even the wounds inflicted over the last quarter of a century. And they go back long before that. Back, in fact, to the "plantation" of Scottish and English settlers in the North East of Ireland in the early 17th century. One example may serve for all. As the Scottish philosopher, David Hume put it, exploiting the sectarian conflicts of the mid 18th century in Ireland as the best contemporary illustration of the vicious civil strife that infested many classical Greek city states:

"The country in Europe wherein I have observed the factions to be the most violent, and party hatred the strongest, is Ireland. This goes so far as to cut off even the most common

intercourse of civilities betwixt the Protestants and Catholics..." 1

4.2 These divisions are reinforced and reflected in economic and social disparities, real or - as is increasingly the case - imagined, and by the fact that both sections of the community see themselves as potentially threatened minorities: Unionists/Protestants within the island of Ireland; Nationalists/Catholics within the North. 2

4.3 Although it is the Catholics who are traditionally regarded, and have tended to regard themselves as "alienated" from a Northern Ireland which remains part of the UK, there is growing evidence of Protestant "alienation" based on a belief that "history" and the thrust of British policy is against them. In a society where perceptions are, if not everything, a large part of the game, any UK Government which is directly responsible for the administration of the Province must take account of the fears and anxieties, of both sides of the community.

4.4 The nature of the sectarian division, with many in the minority (Catholic) community arguing that their interests can only be protected in a United Ireland, or by giving the Irish Government a formal role in relation to Northern Ireland, raises acute issues of constitutional status, giving the problem an international as well as a domestic character. It can also call into question the legitimacy of the state and its agencies, including of the security forces and the system of criminal justice as a whole.

1. 'On the Populousness of Ancient Nations' 1741

2. The bracketing of religious and political affiliation is, of course, only a working simplification. One should also not regard the two main groupings as more homogenous in their political outlook and aspirations than is in fact the case.

4.5 The communal divisions have also, in the past, and in accordance with the long tradition of functional political violence, found expression in, and been exacerbated by terrorism from both sides of the community. They may yet do again. And this terrorism itself exploited and exacerbated community tensions - further weakening the economy. But in intensifying unemployment, it provided a recruiting ground for terrorists and made it more difficult to achieve a durable political settlement, leading to instability which in turn... Conversely the ceasefires have already, apparently, lead to a 6% upturn in the retail trade in one month, and enabled the Northern Ireland Economic Council announced, to announce in mid October 'an economic scenario in Northern Ireland that has never been better in the past 25 years'.

4.6 In short, Northern Ireland's political, economic and social, and terrorist problems are all intimately and inseparably interconnected. The UK Government have a corresponding need to tackle all these deep seated problems and the legacy of a long and often unhappy history together.

4.7 In some ways, the apparent ending of terrorist violence has changed, rather than removed all the Government's difficulties. Certainly there is the chance to end terrorist violence for good - in itself an indescribable blessing. On the other hand, it presents the Government with the difficult problem of maintaining Unionist confidence that there has not, nor will be, any "sell-out" while equally not undermining the Republican Movement's apparently new found commitment to peaceful methods by putting them in a position where they may conclude that their cessation of violence was a mistake, and that their own objectives can only be achieved by a return to violence. Facilitating a just and lasting political settlement of the problems of Northern Ireland, through the Talks Process, may be the Government's most important medium and long term objective. In the short run, their greatest priority must be to "embed" the peace in ways which the Northern Ireland people would support so that any justification for a resumption of political violence on the part of Republican (or indeed Loyalist) terrorists is removed.

5. Political Development

5.1 Given the intimate interrelationships that exist between the various aspects of life in Northern Ireland and the areas of government policy, a paper could equally well come at the Government's approach to Northern Ireland from the standpoint of their economic, social or law and order policies. It could certainly be written in terms of their efforts to enhance their relationship with the Irish Government. It might even, perhaps, start from the contribution, actual or potential, the European Union might make. This paper, however, concentrates on the contribution political development can make both to a lasting political settlement in Northern Ireland, as well as, in parallel, to embedding peace. Such an approach recognises that, even if the ceasefires hold, a final solution to the problems of Northern Ireland will only come if we collectively establish institutions which are widely accepted across the whole community as legitimate, and remove any incentives once again to seek political change by violence. Such institutions can only be achieved by means of political dialogue. This effectively means through the 'Talks Process'.

5.2 Since 1972, successive administrations have made determined efforts to deliver fair and effective governance across the whole community. There is evidence that this is widely recognised in the community at large. It has certainly succeeded in removing many of the old perceived injustices. (Memories, however, in Ireland are long: as Oscar Wilde once wrote, "All Englishmen should remember Irish history; all Irishmen should forget it". And the community divisions are often deep and keenly felt, in some areas of Northern Ireland more than others.)

5.3 But although public opinion surveys suggest that Direct Rule is most people's second choice, it is virtually no one's first choice. Nor does it seem, in principle, an ideal long term political solution. It does not, for example:

- provide enough responsibility for local people and their locally elected representatives; nor,
- generate political institutions that command the allegiance of the whole community.

5.4 Successive administrations have, therefore, sought to establish new, viable institutions of government, widely acceptable across the whole community, so that powers currently exercised by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (and his Ministerial team) can be returned to locally elected, and locally accountable politicians.

5.5 This is not the place for too much history. But efforts to build such institutions so far have included:

- the 1974 Power Sharing Executive;
- the 1979/80 Political Talks chaired by the then Secretary of State, Mr Humphrey Atkins (now Lord Colnbrook); and,
- the Northern Ireland Assembly constructed by another Secretary of State, Mr James Prior, in 1982. Although the SDLP and Sinn Féin declined to take their seats, this nevertheless survived doing useful work until the tumults unleashed by the Anglo-Irish Agreement led to its dissolution in 1986.

5.6 However, Governments have profited from experience as to how best to achieve their goals. One of their most potent learning experiences was the IRA Hunger Strike of 1981 and the fears of intense community polarisation and nationalist alienation that this generated. In particular, they have learnt that while widespread acceptance of new institutions in Northern Ireland will remain a necessary condition, it is not in itself a sufficient condition for a lasting settlement. This must also take account of wider relationships within the British Isles, including the need to give appropriate recognition to, and permit expression of a nationalist identity within Northern Ireland. In other words, there can be no purely 'internal solution' to the problems of Northern Ireland.

5.7 Such thinking was part of the genesis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 - a formal Treaty, deposited with the United Nations - which sought to:

- reaffirm that the status of Northern Ireland would not change without the support of a majority there;
- enhance security co-operation between the British and Irish Governments against their common enemy of terrorism;
- promote a return to devolved government in Northern Ireland on a widely acceptable basis; and
- allow the 'nationalist voice' to be heard more effectively in Northern Ireland in the absence of devolved institutions (through the proxy of the Irish Government in the Intergovernmental Conference established by the Agreement).

5.8 The Agreement improved security co-operation and, to a degree, reassured nationalists. The British Government remains committed to it. But it drove unionists, with remarkable unanimity, into strident protests and internal exile. This was partly owing to how the Agreement was negotiated - without the Unionist leadership's being consulted; partly because unionists were not reassured by those elements of the Agreement intended to reassure them. It has taken long, patient negotiation to bring the Unionists back into the political process in the North. (One of the lessons learnt which the UK - and the Irish - Governments applied in the drafting of the Joint Declaration was the importance of consulting, and taking full account of the views of the unionist community.)

6. The Talks Process

6.1 This patient diplomacy made it possible to relaunch, in 1991, political talks in Northern Ireland. In brief, what the Government are trying to do through the Talks Process is to build on their understanding that a stable, durable and widely accepted settlement will require the consent of all the key players: of the Northern Ireland parties, and of the Irish Government as well as the UK Government.

6.2 The two Governments are, therefore, to quote the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Peter Brooke (Hansard 26 March 1991 Cols 765-6): "Setting out to achieve a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands".

6.3 The 'ground rules' explained then to the House of Commons by Mr Brooke remain the agreed basis for the political talks. In fact, his successor, Sir Patrick Mayhew, when introducing the Joint Declaration to the people of Northern Ireland in December 1993, explained that it 'complements and underpins the Talks Process and

the search for a comprehensive political settlement'. Even though there could well be modifications in the format of future multi-lateral talks, if that is what all the participants wanted, (and the inclusion which the Government seeks of Sinn Féin in the democratic talks process could itself also give rise to a range of new problems), the principles remain so far unchallenged. It has also been accepted that: "discussions must focus on three main relationships: those within Northern Ireland, including the relationship between any new institutions there and the Westminster Parliament; among the people of the island of Ireland; and between the two Governments. It is common ground between all the parties that hope of achieving a new and more broadly based agreement rests on finding a way to give adequate expression to the totality of these relationships" (Hansard op cit.).

6.4 Building these relationships requires the utmost patience and sensitivity. After a long preparatory period, it is what Mr Brooke was engaged on in the Talks held at Parliament Buildings in Stormont, in Belfast, during the Spring and Summer of 1991. Sir Patrick Mayhew did the same during Spring and Autumn of 1992. Agreement, in principle, had not however been reached by the end of the period set aside for Talks in November 1992, even though virtually all the key issues had been touched on in greater or less detail. By then a large amount of common ground had also been identified, especially in regard to possible future arrangements for new political institutions within Northern Ireland. And, although it has so far not proved possible to relaunch the kind of formal, multi-lateral talks that all the parties then agreed were 'necessary and desirable', the Talks Process has continued, behind the scenes, ever since. In particular, Michael Ancram, the Minister with responsibility for Political Affairs within the Northern Ireland Office, has had intensive rounds of discussions with three of the main NI parties to explore the basis for agreement. These continue, as do meetings between the party leaders and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

6.5 Of equal and parallel importance to the continuing political dialogue in Northern Ireland has been the continuing work by the two Governments in drafting a 'Joint Framework Document' designed to embody their shared understanding of the kind of overall accommodation, particularly in those areas of special and equal concern to both governments - which might have the best chance of winning the wide acceptance right across the community that it will need if it is going to stick. Patient and constructive work to this end has been going on, behind the scenes, since the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference put work in hand in September 1993. Final agreement has not yet been reached, and therefore no document yet exists. However as the Secretary of State, Sir Patrick Mayhew, told the House of Commons on 27 October: "We have made some good progress. We want to achieve agreement, and we want to do so quickly. Not in order to present the result as some kind of blueprint with which the political parties in Northern Ireland must conform ... but as a means of helping them realise that it would be worth their while sitting down again, because there would be a prospect of carrying the process through to success." (Hansard 27 October Cols 1018-1027). (Or, as the Irish Foreign Minister put it ... this document, which we will commend to the other parties, but cannot of course impose on them, will give fresh impetus to the process of comprehensive negotiation" (Speech to UN General Assembly', 28 September 1996). At the time of drafting this paper, work on the Joint Framework Document was coming to a head.

7. The Downing Street Declaration

7.1 During 1993, however, the Talks Process was overshadowed by the emphasis on 'peace'. By this was meant inducing the IRA and its political wing, Sinn Féin (and all other organisations that use violence for political ends) to renounce violence for good. This was originally fuelled by the speculation surrounding the talks between Mr John Hume, the leader of the Northern Ireland constitutional nationalist political party, the SDLP, and Mr Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin. Finally, the two Prime Ministers, Mr John Major and Mr Albert Reynolds, put the quest for peace in Northern Ireland at the top of the political agenda in both the

United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. After weeks of intense diplomacy, the result was the 'Downing Street (or 'Joint') Declaration' by both Heads of Government in London on 15 December 1993. It was commended to the UK House of Commons by the Prime Minister (Hansard 15 December Col 1071) as showing: "The joint commitment of the two Governments: for peace and democracy, and against violence. Its objective is to set a framework for peace. A framework which reflects our responsibilities to both communities, in a way that is fully compatible with the undertakings we have both given and with the objectives of the 'Talks Process' which both Governments had begun in January 1991." It is essential to note that, although much talk then and since has been about 'peace', in the eyes of the British Government the 'Talks' and 'Peace Processes' are complementary. The same vision of a just and lasting settlement of the Northern Irish problem based on democratic principles and a renunciation of political violence have determined both the Government's strategy and its tactics over the last three years.

7.2 The Declaration received immediately a warm reception in London, Dublin and more widely - from as far away, as India and Japan. It was wholeheartedly endorsed by President Clinton, the Catholic Primate of All-Ireland, Cardinal Daly, and the leader of the SDLP, Mr John Hume. Even Mr Adams, the President of Sinn Féin, felt able to give the text equivocal commendation, recognising that what was ultimately sought was 'an agreed accommodation'.

7.3 Since the principles set out in the Declaration remain fundamental to the approach of the two Governments, more needs to be said about it. It is a lengthy and carefully drafted document of which almost every word carries a cargo of resonances which make paraphrase and summary perilous. But the key messages are clear: the Declaration sets out permanent constitutional principles and political realities which safeguard the vital interests of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. (It is an indication of the fairness and balance of the document to all sides that

Mr Reynolds could say to the Irish Parliament (17 December 1993) that he did not know "of any fairer statement that has been or could be made by the British Government with regard to nationalist ideals than what is set out in para 4 of the Joint Declaration" while including, he might have added, full and fair recognition by the Irish Government of the consent principle and of wider unionist concerns.) It reflects the belief of both Governments, but compromises the principles of neither. It is probably therefore safe to summarise - what is and what is not in it.

7.4 The Declaration contains:

- a renewed commitment by the British Government to Northern Ireland's constitutional guarantee that the British Government will "uphold the democratic wish of all greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign United Ireland";
- agreement by the British Government that "it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self determination on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a United Ireland, if that is their wish.";
- a declaration by the British Government that they have 'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland';
- a commitment by the British Government to 'encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement' of a lasting agreement among 'all the people who inhabit the island'

'through a process of dialogue and c-operation' based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland';

- an acknowledgement by the Irish Prime Minister that a United Ireland could only be brought about with the consent of a majority of the people in Northern Ireland;
- a willingness by the Irish Prime Minister to make changes in the Irish constitution if an overall settlement can be reached; and,
- a confirmation that if Sinn Fein renounced violence, they would be able to participate in future democratic discussions.

7.5 The Declaration does not contain:

- any suggestion that the British Government should join the ranks of the persuaders of the 'value' or 'legitimacy' of a United Ireland;
- any suggestion that the future status of Northern Ireland should be decided by a single act of self determination by the people of Ireland as a whole;
- any timetable for constitutional change;
- any arrangements for joint authority over Northern Ireland.

7.6 In sum, the Declaration provides that it is - and must be fore the people of Northern Ireland to determine their own future.

7.7 The Declaration also reiterated that the achievement of peace must involve a permanent end to the use of, or support for

paramilitary violence: "They (sc. both Governments) confirm that in these circumstances, democratically mandated parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they abide by the democratic process, are free to participate fully in democratic politics and to join in dialogue in due course between the Governments and the political parties on the way ahead". Mr Major subsequently made it plain, to the House of Commons, what that undertaking means: "If there is a permanent end to violence and if Sinn Féin commit themselves to democratic process, then we will be ready to enter into preliminary exploratory dialogue with them within three months. But first they must end violence for good" (Hansard 15 Dec col 1071).

8. The way forward

8.1 This brings us back, by a circuitous route, to the dawn of peace described in paragraph 1.1.

8.2 It is not, perhaps, for a British civil servant to try and give a complete account of the reasoning which lead the IRA and Sinn Féin to announce a 'complete cessation of violence'. But their thinking is likely to have included at least the following elements:

- a realisation that, after nearly a quarter of a century, there was no prospect of achieving their political objectives by violence or intimidation in the face of the professional competence of the Police and Armed Forces and the unshakeable determination of successive British Governments not to make concessions to violence, and to sustain the security effort as long as was necessary;
- in the Joint Declaration, the British and Irish Governments were at one on general political and constitutional principles as never before (so that as Sir Patrick Mayhew put it in the House of Commons on 27 October: "Once the world came to realise that the Irish

and British Governments took a common position in the Downing Street Declaration, surely it was hopeless for anyone to go on using violence to advance his political purpose. The reason is that the Governments declared then that it was democracy that would shape the future for Northern Ireland, and that violence never worked. They declared that, where as anyone with a democratic mandate could join in the debate and try to shape the future, no one could do so who still seemed willing to fortify his negotiating position with a bomb"; and,

- the exasperation of those sympathetic to the Irish nationalist cause, whether in Washington, Dublin or elsewhere, faced with the failure of Sinn Féin to respond imaginatively the months following the Declaration to the opportunity to make progress, peacefully, in Northern Ireland which it affords.
- the growing detestation of violence in the wider Northern Ireland community.

8.3 What was not in Sinn Féin's mind was any secret deal struck with the UK Government: in his same speech, Sir Patrick Mayhew reminded the House of Commons that the Prime Minister had already made it quite clear that "no price had been paid, that there had been no secret deals, no secret assurances, no nods, no winks and no tricks with mirrors and that we had not lowered our guard ...". This is equally true of the ceasefire announced on 13 October by the Loyalists.

8.4 At all events, the cessation of terrorist violence on both sides has created a wholly different atmosphere in which government must work. In particular, they now have the task of converting 'tranquillity' into 'peace'. (I am here drawing on a distinction between 'tranquillity', describing a situation in which a truce prevails, for whatever reason, but in which fear of intercommunal

violence persists and the antagonistic relationship between the communities remains essentially unchanged by the absence of actual violence. By contrast, I am defining 'peace' as a situation in which the cycle of violence between communities has broken, so that the acts of violence can be treated as the actions of individuals and punished as such by judicial authority.)¹

8.5 To achieve this, in general terms, the Government is determined to:

- maintain the momentum of the political development process, and bend all its efforts to developing an inclusive political dialogue in Northern Ireland which also embraces a Republican Movement that has permanently given up violence;
- ensure that both its policies and their implementation are balanced, offering benefits to all sections of the community; but,
- not prematurely or irreversibly dropping its guard, whether in the security or political domain; and,
- not moving faster than the market (the community as a whole) will bear.

8.6 The clearest indication of what this means in practical terms is found in the UK Prime Minister's speech in Belfast on 21 October already referred. Recognising how all NI's fundamental problems and therefore all aspects of Government policy are linked, that speech ranged over not simply 'peace' but politics, law enforcement generally, and the strengthening of the Province's economy.

¹. For more on this distinction see: Frank Wright Commemorative Lecture: "Promoting Peace in Deeply Divided Societies", Professor Adrian Guelke, QUB 1994, citing "Northern Ireland in comparative perspective" Wright 1988.

8.7 The main elements of that declared strategy (he had already, as confidence that the ceasefire would hold grew, announced in Belfast on 16 September the lifting of the ban on direct TV and radio quoting of terrorist spokesmen's remarks) include the following:

- making the 'working assumption' that the IRA ceasefire is intended to be permanent. This moves the Government a significant step forward on the long march to lasting peace for Northern Ireland which has been the consistent aim of British Governments throughout Direct Rule'
- announcing an intention to hold an early exploratory dialogue with Sinn Féin. This is further evidence of the Government's commitment that, providing Republicans abide by exclusively peaceful and democratic methods, they can be fully involved in democratic politics and the Talks process to decide Northern Ireland's future;
- when the talks to decide Northern Ireland's future are over, the Government will seek the approval of the people of Northern Ireland for the outcome in a referendum;
- the British and Irish Governments will publish the Joint Framework Document not as a blueprint to be imposed by the two Governments, but as a set of proposals to serve as a basis for further discussion. This will in turn enable the people of Northern Ireland to see for themselves that it is faithful to the principles of the Downing Street Declaration and to the constitutional guarantee that the future of Northern Ireland lies with its people;
- because the Joint Framework Document will deal with relations between the two Governments and their views on the possible development of relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, the Government is also pursuing arrangements for government within Northern

Ireland. They will publish, at the same time as the Joint Framework Document, the Government's own proposals on the latter for public discussion and as a guide to negotiation. These will include proposals for an assembly to reinstate local accountability and local democracy in Northern Ireland.

8.8 So far as security and law enforcement is concerned, the Prime Minister made clear that:

- neither the Government nor the security forces will lower their guard prematurely. However, since the IRA ceasefire was announced, both the security forces and the Secretary of State have already responded to the diminished threat. (For example: all cross-border roads between Northern Ireland and the Republic have been re-opened; the Chief constable has been able to reduce quite markedly the numbers of soldiers accompanying police patrols, and, there has been a general lightening in the forward deployment of the military in particular. There have been numerous changes in the armament and equipment of police and soldiers on the ground. This list is not, however exhaustive, and the process of 'demilitarisation', will continue so long as it is justified in the light of the professional and independent judgement of the Chief Constable and General Officer Commanding);
- since, as a matter of principle, the Government wishes to see free movement within the United Kingdom, the Exclusion Orders have been lifted banning Sinn Fein leaders, Mr Gerry Adams and Mr Martin McGuinness, from Great Britain;
- the Government is consulting the Irish Government on a considered approach to the depositing and decommissioning of guns and explosives currently held by terrorists;

- the Government's firm objective is to return to exclusively civilian policing. The need for soldiers to patrol the streets will be reviewed as circumstances permit, although there will remain a peace time role for some members of the Armed Forces in Northern Ireland as in other parts of the United Kingdom;
- recognition of the role - and the extraordinary courage and steadfastness - of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as well as the fact that a permanent end to the threat of violence will require changes in policing. However, the Government will not allow any individual or organisation to take the law into their own hands; all sections of the community must enjoy equal protection from crime and so called 'law enforcement' by members of former paramilitary organisations.

8.9 The Prime Minister's speech had also much to say about how, with additional support from the Government (and the EU and USA), peace will boost Northern Ireland's economy, and how, in turn, the prospect of economic development will consolidate peace. This is the subject of a separate paper.

9. Where does the Government go from here?

9.1 In its long and patient search for a peaceful and inclusive settlement, the immediate tasks are the finalising the 'Joint Framework Document', and the preparation for the publication in parallel of their own proposals for arrangements for government with Northern Ireland. There will be, as the Prime Minister puts it, no higher priority on the Government's agenda than consolidating the ceasefire and moving policy forward, as rapidly as possible, on several fronts simultaneously.

9.2 At the same time, and if the ceasefires hold, before the end of the year, the exploratory dialogue with Sinn Féin will have begun. The purpose of that dialogue is threefold. It will be to:

- explore the basis on which Sinn Féin would come to be admitted to the political talks process without anticipating the negotiations within that process;
- exchange views on how Sinn Féin would be able, over a period, to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland; and,
- examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

9.3 Some have suggested that the IRA must surrender their arms before this dialogue begins. The Government have, however, set no further preconditions for the beginning of exploratory dialogue although it is self-evident that no one should hold illegal weapons and their safe disposal would provide some of the most convincing evidence of good intentions from allegedly former terrorist organisations. It is relevant that one purpose of the exploratory dialogue is to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

9.4 One cannot say either how long the exploratory dialogue will last. The Government intends, however, that the talks should be constructive and serious and should accordingly last so long as they are useful.

9.5 While public attention has perhaps concentrated more on the IRA ceasefire, the British Government has never underestimated the seriousness of Loyalist terrorism: indeed, over the last three years, they have claimed more victims than the IRA and other Republican groups. The Loyalist ceasefire is accordingly no less welcome than that of the IRA. The Prime Minister made clear,

therefore, in his 21 September speech that the route to democratic politics was open to anyone who renounces violence. As he had written in a letter to the Democratic Unionist, Mr Peter Robinson MP, on 30 June 1994: "Once there is a genuinely established permanent end to their (sc. Loyalist) violence, there might well be issues which it would be appropriate to discuss at the right level, including how (sc. they) might come to play a part in normal political life - perhaps by submitting themselves to the ballot box - and the practical consequences of an ending of violence".

10. A possible outcome

10.1 If the Government succeeds in bringing together the Northern Ireland parties, including they hope eventually Sinn Féin also, for further multilateral talks, and in helping them reach a successful conclusion, the rewards of our collective efforts could well include, by agreement:-

- new democratic arrangements, including a new Assembly with legislative and executive powers, for the internal government of Northern Ireland, within the United Kingdom, which were workable, fair and commanded the support of the whole community;
- new institutional arrangements for consultation and executive co-operation between new institutions in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which were, again, workable fair and commanded the support of the whole community;
- a revised Anglo-Irish Agreement, this time acceptable to the whole community in Northern Ireland; and,
- a resolution of the vexed constitutional questions, based once again on the principles of democratic consent.

10.2 Crucially, however, and to quote Mr Brooke on 26 January 1991 again, "the outcome (sc. of the Talks) will need to be acceptable to the people". As noted above, the Prime Minister has given substance to that guarantee by committing the Government to seeking the approval of the people of Northern Ireland in a referendum.

11. Conclusions

11.1 As this paper has tried throughout to demonstrate, the UK Government is committed to an approach which seeks permanent peace, political stability and, though little has been said in this paper, economic prosperity for Northern Ireland. In particular, they seek to ensure the return to violence by both Republican and Loyalist terrorists becomes increasingly unthinkable, and that a comprehensive political settlement in terms of the principles enunciated on 26 March 1991 becomes progressively more likely. The 'game plan' for achieving this in the political and security areas has been summarised above.

11.2 One crucial consideration for the Government is that while they must take care not to lose Unionist (and Loyalist) confidence, it is no less essential not to undermine the Republican movement's apparently new found commitment to peaceful methods by putting them in a position where they believe that the cessation of violence was a mistake and that their own political objectives can only be achieved by further recourse to violence. This reinforces the need for a continuing, imaginative response to the Republican and Nationalist agenda with the firm intention of reinforcing the commitment to the democratic process. This does not mean responding, nor giving the impression of responding exclusively to the demands of Republican leaders; nor rewarding terrorism; nor giving the impression that the Government has ceased to take moderate nationalists seriously. Nor must the Government forget their commitment, until such time as new, fair and effective

devolved institutions emerge, to govern Northern Ireland even handedly and effectively in the interests of all its people (including the majority, unionist community). But it does mean showing that progress can be made for all sections of the community through democratic means.

12.3 This process of 'embedding the peace' will also involve, at a political level, emphasising the Government's commitment to the fundamental principles in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Joint Declaration (which we share with the Irish Government) and to their implementation in ways which recognise how political, security and economic and social factors are inseparably intertwined. It will also involve continuing to respond imaginatively in those areas of security policy and operations which impinge directly on those sections of the population most likely to come into contact with the security forces, while maintaining their total opposition to political violence and crime in all their forms. It will further require developing existing policies in the economic and social field which have a particular bearing on reducing economic and social disadvantage (wherever they occur) and promoting parity of esteem, equity of treatment and equality of opportunity, and pursuing innovative policies elsewhere.

12.4 Finally, the United Kingdom Government are also going to continue to need understanding, sympathetic and helpful friends outside the United Kingdom and from, above all, the Republic of Ireland. But also from more widely abroad, whether from the United States or, in ever increasing measure, from our other partners within the European Union. Only the already excessive length of this paper has stopped more being said on a subject of growing importance.

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