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AMBASAID NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

28 November 1996

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*Sec. Section*

Dear Secretary

***An Opposition view on the Prime Minister's statement***

Nigel Warner telephoned me this afternoon to offer some views on the document, "British Government Policy on the Northern Ireland Talks".

Warner finds the document better than expected. He drew attention to the proposed agreed indicative timeframe for talks as an important new element and to other aspects of the statement which tend to copperfasten existing British Government commitments.

Warner identified the four turrets on page 3 - the entry scenario - as the core of the document.

Warner focussed on the second turret, which uses the word "early" with reference to the proposed post-ceasefire meeting between the two Governments and Sinn Fein. Warner observed that Sinn Fein has asked on many occasions, including during the past week, whether the British Government would have direct dealings with them after a ceasefire.

The third turret calls for consultations involving "all the parties". Sinn Fein would therefore be involved. Insofar as there were meaningful politics going on at that time, as far as Warner is concerned "Sinn Fein would be in".

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Warner argued that these two turrets taken in combination mean that the essential political breakthrough for Sinn Fein could follow very quickly on a ceasefire announcement. How quickly would largely be a function of the terms of the announcement and the "exploratory dialogue" provided for in the first turret.

Finally, Warner placed emphasis on the use of the word "formally" in the last turret. He sees this as implying that by that stage Sinn Fein would have already entered the mainstream of Irish politics.

Warner feels that the British Government will have some success with its domestic audience in arguing that it is taking a "British Government view" and not a "Conservative Party" view based on the arithmetic of the House of Commons. The wider British public, by its very absence of reaction to recent media reports, endorses the search for an understanding with the Republican Movement. At the same time, the public expects a note of special caution from the Government in the wake of Manchester and Lisburn.

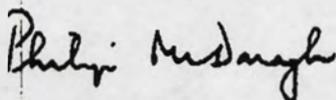
**Comment:** Warner's judgement in this last matter reminded me strongly of that of the Lib Dem Lord Holme a week or two ago when he suggested that for political reasons signals from the British Government to the IRA will necessarily be subtle, and over-arched, as it were, by arguments of a more conventional kind.

Warner sought my view as to a possible Labour Party reaction, emphasising that what Labour eventually says will of course be on its own responsibility.

I queried a suggested opening paragraph welcoming the British Government's "openness". I encouraged a strong reference to cooperation with the Irish Government. I urged a strong emphasis on the commitment that has been given to Sinn Fein that they will enter the political process on the basis of an unequivocal ceasefire and acceptance of the Mitchell principles.

The statement issued, as approved by Mowlam and Blair, is annexed below.

Yours sincerely



**Philip McDonagh**  
Counsellor

# news FROM Labour

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## COMMENT FROM MARJORIE MOWLAM SHADOW NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY

Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary Marjorie Mowlam today called upon the two governments to build upon the opportunity for inclusive dialogue contained in the Government statement on Northern Ireland today.

Speaking in Westminster, Ms Mowlam said:

"Labour call for a considered response from all parties to these proposals and look forward to the review of progress by the two Prime Ministers on December 9th."

"We hope the Government will continue to work closely with the Irish Government to build upon this opportunity for inclusive dialogue - which we want to see.

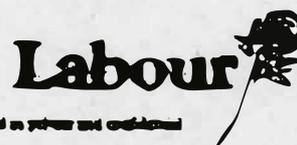
"On the basis of an unequivocal IRA ceasefire, the way is open for Sinn Fein to make an early declaration of their commitment to the Mitchell principles and to play their full part in the politics of Northern Ireland. As John Major has indicated, the talks themselves will break soon for Christmas and resume again in January.

"We welcome the Government's support for the approach on decommissioning outlined in the Mitchell report and their commitment to work constructively to implement all aspects of that report.

"We welcome their offer to bring forward proposals on an agreed indicative timeframe for the conduct of the negotiations. We would encourage the participants in the negotiations to adopt this approach."

\*\*\* ENDS \*\*\*

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