

It should be clearly understood that the Secretary of State is, subject to the authority of the Cabinet, in day to day and full charge of the situation. He is fully responsible for policy affecting Northern Ireland, and his every action and statement carries the full backing of the Prime Minister, with whom he is in constant contact.

2. The British Government's position as set out before Parliament on Tuesday 14 January, and in the Secretary of State's subsequent public statements, is that a genuine and sustained cessation of violence will create a new situation.

3. This means exactly what it says. The Provisional Republican movement which subsequently claimed that their temporary suspension of hostilities from 22 December to 16 January was 'genuine and sustained' appear to have misunderstood what constitutes a cessation of violence.

4. The Government's concern is for the safety, welfare and future of all the people in both communities of Northern Ireland¹. The Government will not and cannot risk taking any action which could put lives at risk if all that is to be gained is a respite.

5. The Government took real but cautious steps to respond to the temporary cessation of violence from 22 December to 16 January. As stated in Parliament the Army reduced the size and frequency of patrols particularly in urban areas and largely avoided the questioning of people and the searching of their homes. This was generally recognised to be so. No Interim Custody Orders have been signed since 22 December 1974.

6. Since 16 January ^{25? (emo).} the actions of the Security Forces have continued to be related to the level of activity which has occurred. Pol 35/65(2)

7. The Government recognises that even given a sincere wish of all sides to end violence misunderstandings can arise. Incidents can lead to renewed violence which will inevitably mean stronger actions by the Security Forces. This is why the Secretary of State said that if the ceasefire continued he would wish to see effective arrangements made to ensure that it did not break down. Such arrangements can and will be made once the Government is satisfied, as everyone involved will wish to be satisfied, that the intention to end violence is sincere and will be sustained. Such arrangements would meet some of the concern expressed by the Provisional Republican movement. Other matters of current concern to them will cease to be so in a situation of a continuing and sustained cessation of violence.

8. The Government's concern is to work for the good of both communities in Northern Ireland and the Government will not be lacking in the sincerity of its response if violence ends and is seen to end. The Government sincerely wishes to see a situation come about where discussions and political action can take place peacefully. To facilitate this process the Secretary of State will as soon as he is satisfied that there is a genuine and sustained cessation of violence begin immediately to implement the policy set

out in his statement to Parliament on 14 January. That
is to say

PO 35/65(3)

a. to begin an orderly and progressive reduction of the present commitments of the Army which would lead to its reduction to peace-time levels and withdrawal to barracks;

b. progressively to release detainees with a view to releasing all detainees;

c. to continue the holding of discussions between his officials and various groups in the communities.

Rees beginning to
back out of
ceasefire position
in 74/75.

POV 35/65(4)