



# 'We want peace too,' Provos claim

IT WAS the resilience of republican struggle which had forced Britain to focus on "the realities of their futile war in Ireland", the IRA said in its first statement since the Joint Declaration of Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and British Prime Minister John Major last night.

The statement saluted "the successes of Sinn Féin." The party's efforts since the mid-1980s, it said, had brought about a situation where "all sides had been forced to face in a meaningful way the underlying causes of the conflict and more importantly, how we can move away from continuing conflict and towards a just and lasting peace."

The statement went on: "In the early part of 1993, the efforts of the Sinn Féin leadership brought about a situation where a viable framework for a peace process was placed for consideration before the London and Dublin governments. The IRA welcomed this development and indicated that the Irish

## Statement insists IRA has forced Britain's hand

peace initiative could provide the basis for peace. Events since then have occurred in light of this initiative and must be seen in this context."

As it faced 1994, the statement said, the IRA and its supporters would continue to focus on "the need for keeping the question for a resolution of the conflict firmly centre stage.

"Our struggle has endured and outlasted one British offensive after another. It remains solid and instant. The right of the Irish people to national self-determination and the question of lasting peace are inextricably linked."

The IRA said that the British government held "the key to peace. The IRA wants peace. If the political will exists or can be created then there is real hope that a basis for peace can be established. It is our desire that it should be.

"The IRA reiterates its determination and the determination of our activists and supporters to see a just and lasting peace established in Ireland. No one should doubt our determination."

# Government remains silent

By TIM RYAN, Political Reporter

THERE was no official Government response to the IRA statement last night which emphasised that the right to national self-determination and peace were inextricably linked.

## Murder attempt on RUC

THE IRA tried to murder RUC officers in downtown Belfast last night, just hours after the Provo Army Council said the Joint Reynolds/Major Declaration was not enough to bring peace.

A blast bomb was thrown at a police landrover patrol in the city's Upper Library Street, close to the Belfast Telegraph offices.

There were no police casualties. But it is believed one civilian may have been injured in the ambush. An ambulance was called to the scene. The injuries were not thought to be serious.

The bomb attack was the first in Belfast since the IRA ended their three-day Christmas truce.

Also in the city last night, the British army bomb disposal squad was called to deal with a suspect device found at Whiterock, in the nationalist west of the city.

Later, a soldier was injured in the hand when a mortar bomb was fired at Unity Walk. In a separate incident, a land mine exploded around midnight in the Poleglass area as a joint RUC/British army patrol passed.

However, informed sources said the Taoiseach and the Government did not expect any results on their joint Declaration before the end of January.

The sources said the Government was aware of the long process of consultation which the IRA would have to undertake before a full response could be agreed.

The sources pointed out that the joint Declaration contained the same "concepts and themes" as the Hume/Adams statement of April 10 last.

However, despite Government hopes there is increasing pessimism that the IRA is clinging to its previous demands on the right to self-determination by all the people of Ireland, rather than by the people of the North and South individually, as stated in the joint Government Declaration.

Last night, Fine Gael leader John Bruton said the IRA's New Year message begged the question: "How much have we to show for all the months of work exclusively devoted to finding a formula to satisfy this pathologically violent organisation?"

Mr. Bruton said he believed that since he took office the Taoiseach had consistently underestimated and undervalued the potential of an agreement between the SDLP, the Alliance Party and the Official Unionists. Such an agreement would, he said, make the IRA and its loyalist copycats increasingly irrelevant.

Progressive Democrats spokesman Michael McDowell said the statement from the IRA underlined the failure of the Provisionals to understand political realities. He said



Dr Joe Hendron, who is hopeful of the IRA backing the peace plan

the two Governments must now convey to the Provos that the Downing Street declaration is not negotiable.

He said in the very near future the Provos must be told they don't have the luxury of choosing between acceptance of the declaration or continuing the "armed struggle."

And he said if the Government felt the declaration is the basis for a political solution, it must "act decisively on that belief."

# Ball still in IRA court, say SDLP

THE SDLP last night still held out hope that the Republican movement would move towards peace after the Joint Declaration.

Meanwhile Ian Paisley's DUP said "we told you so" after yesterday's IRA statement and the meeting of paroled prisoners and other activists in Co. Tyrone.

SDLP MP for West Belfast Dr Joe Hendron said the ball was not in the British court, but with the IRA, despite the IRA and Sinn Féin's apparent rejection of the peace deal.

"The ball is in the Provo court," he insisted.

"They are making a further bargaining position. They are trying to get more concessions."

Dr Hendron said: "The question of national self-determination is addressed in the Downing Street Declaration as well as the Hume/Adams initiative.

"It is now entirely up to the IRA to stop the violence, which is what everyone wants.

By JIM McDOWELL  
in Belfast

"Whilst they have not accepted the Joint Declaration, I feel they have not dismissed it out of hand."

Dr Hendron added his voice to calls for a review of sentences for terrorists if there was a cessation of violence on all sides.

"In that situation, there has to be an urgent reappraisal of the situation regarding paramilitaries in prison, both loyalists and republicans," he added.

The DUP, on the other hand, engaged in an exercise of *deja vu*.

Press officer Sammy Wilson, a Belfast city councillor and former Lord Mayor, said the IRA were using the peace process being pursued by both governments to extract more concessions from the British.

He said: "This is what we predicted. The whole process, and the Joint Declaration in particular, has put the IRA and Sinn Féin in the driving seat.

"That's what it was designed to do; to appease the IRA. And we warned that it would give them an appetite which is now proving to be insatiable.

"They are engaged in a drip-feed reaction to the Declaration in which they will make more and more demands of the British government.

"And they will unleash a fresh terrorist campaign to show that they are capable of more destruction if the demands are not met," Councillor Wilson said.

# Ted Kennedy to discuss Declaration

By TIM RYAN,  
Political Reporter

US Senator Ted Kennedy will discuss the Joint Declaration on the North during a private visit to Ireland which began yesterday.

Senator Kennedy and his wife Vicky are staying with his sister, Ambassador Jean Kennedy-Smith at her residence in the Phoenix Park.

While the visit is private, the senator, who is a close friend of President Clinton, is due to meet a number of senior Cabinet members

during his stay, including Tanaiste Dick Spring. Tonight he meets the Taoiseach Mr Reynolds in Dublin.

While here he is also due to meet the SDLP leader, John Hume who is an old friend. It's understood Senator Kennedy will travel to Derry where he is also expected to make contact with other community leaders to gauge the level of support for the Joint Declaration.

On Saturday, Senator Kennedy will pay a visit to President Robinson in Aras An Uachtaráin where he will extend New Year's greetings.

The couple are expected to return to the United States early next week.

Senator Kennedy's niece, Courtney Kennedy is already in Ireland having spent Christmas in Co. Clare with her husband, Paul Hill, one of the wrongly convicted Guilford Four.

Meanwhile, Cabinet details surrounding the visit of President John F. Kennedy to Ireland in June, 1963, are expected to be released in new papers which will be made available to the public for the first time on January 1 under the 30-year rule.