



Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

FAX COVER SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH

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FOR: Mr David Trimble
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FROM: Mr Walter Kirwan, Assistant Secretary

MESSAGE: _____

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Take Number: U
Next Take Number: V

DÁIL ÉIREANN

14:40

11 December 1996

^ Ceisteanna - Questions. ^**^^ Taoiseach's Meeting with British Prime Minister. ^^**

3. Mr. Sargent asked the Taoiseach the outcome of his meeting with the British Prime Minister; whether it is his view that the position of the British Government has altered since the Joint Communiqué of February 1996.

4. Mr. Sargent asked the Taoiseach whether he intends to have any personal contact, by telephone or otherwise, with the President of the United States in regard to the conditions upon which Sinn Féin will be allowed to join the all-party talks.

5. Mr. Sargent asked the Taoiseach whether he intends to have any personal contact, by telephone or otherwise, with the British Prime Minister in regard to the conditions upon which Sinn Féin will be allowed to join the all-party talks.

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6. Mr. Sargent asked the Taoiseach whether the Government's position regarding the requirements for the entry of Sinn Féin to the all-party negotiations as outlined on 5 March 1996 remains unchanged; and if so, whether this represents a policy difference with the British Government in view of recent statements emanating from London.

7. Mr. B. Ahern asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on his meeting with the British Prime Minister.

8. Miss Harney asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his meeting with the British Prime Minister in London on Monday, 9 December 1996.

9. Mr. B. Ahern asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on the British response to date on the peace initiative put forward by Mr. John Hume.

10. Mr. B. Ahern asked the Taoiseach if he sees any prospects of a breakthrough in the talks or the establishment of certainty with regard to what would follow the establishment of an unequivocal IRA ceasefire before Christmas.

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions 3 to 10 together.

Many of the issues raised by Deputies in these Questions were covered in my statement to this House on Wednesday last to which I would refer Deputies.

Regarding Monday's summit meeting in London, the British Prime Minister and I

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had useful discussions on Northern Ireland and European issues - the latter being covered in my reply to Questions Nos. 12 and 13 today.

The Prime Minister and I reviewed progress on the multi-party talks and both our Governments remain determined to secure further progress. The two Governments believe the talks provide a unique opportunity for a balanced political accommodation to be reached. We would therefore urge all the participants to do everything necessary to bring about movement into substantive three-strand negotiations.

The Prime Minister and I also reviewed the prospects for an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire and, on that basis, for bringing about our shared aim of fully inclusive negotiations. In that regard, it is important that there is a definitive and clear understanding on Sinn Féin's admittance to negotiations in the wake of an unequivocal restoration of the August 1994 ceasefire. With the aim of securing that, the Government will continue to work with the British Government, John Hume and others.

My Government's position is that if the IRA clearly calls an unequivocal ceasefire in words that are believable, and provided nothing is done that is inconsistent with this ceasefire or with the Mitchell principles, then Sinn Féin should be admitted to participation in the talks, in accordance with the ground rules we have agreed.

It is most important that the two Governments should build on the substantive areas of agreement between us. For our part, I can assure the House that the Government will do everything it can to achieve progress on that basis. In saying all that, I want to make absolutely clear yet again that there is no justification whatsoever for paramilitary violence from any quarter. The IRA should restore its

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ceasefire now. Apart from being morally wrong, totally without any legitimate mandate and directly inimical to the interests of all the people of Ireland, further violence would also undermine efforts to secure Sinn Féin's participation in the talks at the earliest moment on the basis of an unequivocal IRA ceasefire. Any further violence will only delay the day when we have fully inclusive negotiations.

Mr. B. Ahern: Will the Taoiseach clarify that he sought British agreement to the setting of a date before the end of January for Sinn Féin's participation in all party talks, providing that the basic condition of a new unequivocal and irreversible ceasefire date was met?

It serves no useful purpose to pretend that both Governments are at one when clearly they are not. Does the Taoiseach accept as a fair assessment what John Hume said - that his meeting with the British Prime Minister generated nothing?

The Taoiseach: It is clear that what emerged from Monday's meeting was a strong reaffirmation that the basis on which all parties, including Sinn Féin, can enter the talks is set out in the ground rules for those talks agreed by the Irish and British Governments and in the 28 February communiqué which was also agreed by both Governments. It is not open to either side to reinterpret, add to or extend those agreements which are firm and clear. As far as the ground rules are concerned, paragraphs 8 and 9 set out the basis upon which Sinn Féin can qualify for entry to the talks. It is important of us to recognise that the ceasefire was called in August 1994 without any date, rules or an independent chairman for talks. We now have a talks process in place with a chairman in the person of

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Senator George Mitchell from the United States. We have procedures for those talks which protect minorities by ensuring that majorities will not be able to impose their will on them. We also have a clear commitment in statements from both Governments that Sinn Féin will be admitted to those talks once they comply with the terms set out in the ground rules.

I suggest the challenge now for the republican movement, given that we have a natural break in the process arising from the normal Christmas recess, is to see that this is a great opportunity for them to call a ceasefire to allow the ground rules requirements to be complied with so that they can be admitted to the talks early in the new year. They have an opportunity now and it is for them to seize it and take their own responsibilities rather than seek to project them onto others.

Mr. B. Ahern: Does the Taoiseach accept that the unusual absence of a communiqué after Monday's Anglo-Irish summit is being interpreted as a diplomatic failure with serious disagreements between both Governments? It would be better for the Taoiseach to publicly acknowledge his inability to persuade the British Prime Minister that he was unable to get him to settle on a date. Is the Taoiseach telling the House that his interpretation of the summit is that if there was a ceasefire a date has clearly been agreed that the British Government would stand over?

The difficulty from the republican side is that they heard Prime Minister Major state, on 4 January 1994, that if they renounced violence for good and showed they meant it, Sinn Féin would have a clear prospect of entering the talks process with the other constitutional parties. Unfortunately, during a 17-month ceasefire

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the British Prime Minister did not listen to what they said. We all agree it was wrong for the ceasefire to break down but will the Taoiseach accept there is a serious question mark as to whether that offer of talks on 4 January 1994 was genuine or phoney? Would he agreed that there was nothing at all phoney about the lives that were saved during those 17 months, and that people deeply resent the British Prime Minister rubbishing the success of the August 1994 ceasefire?

● **The Taoiseach:** Obviously, the lives that were saved were ones that would otherwise have been taken by the IRA. It is important to bear in mind that if the IRA took those lives they would have been responsible for so doing.

As far as the issue of a communiqué is concerned, in the last two weeks I have had a series of meetings preparing for the summit with the British Minister, the French President, the German Chancellor and others. No agreed communiqués were issued after any of them and, in fact, it would have been exceptional to have done so. The Deputy is mistaken in trying to attach any significance whatever to that.

● Section to follow:

Section V follows.

Last Modified by:
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Dave ODonoghue at 11/12/96 04.29.57 p.m.
Dave ODonoghue, Scan 10

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V1

This is the 'UNEDITED' version of the transcript (also known as the 'Blacks').

Take Number:

V

Next Take Number:

W

DÁIL ÉIREANN

14:50

11 December 1996

^ Ceisteanna - Questions. ^

Mr. B. Ahern: The British press did so on Sunday last.

The Taoiseach: I am glad to discover the Deputy pays attention to the British press. I try to avoid reading the British press and I believe the Deputy and members of his party would be better advised to do likewise.

Mr. B. Ahern: It is useful to read the British press to discover what will happen. For example, it highlighted the signal from the British Government that there would be no communiqué.

An Ceann Comhairle: Has the Taoiseach concluded?

The Taoiseach: No, I have not. The Deputy interrupted my earlier contribution. The British Prime Minister made it clear to me that his intention is to achieve a situation in which there will be inclusive talks. Sinn Féin must be present because

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V2

the talks would otherwise not be inclusive. The objective of the British and Irish Governments is to work toward inclusive talks. To facilitate this, the first step which must be taken involves a new IRA ceasefire. The IRA called a ceasefire in August 1994 without any talks, procedures or independent chairman in place. There is now an independent chairman, an agreed procedure and a talks process and the IRA is aware that it can enter those talks when it complies with the ground rules. That will happen quickly because the conditions sought by the IRA in the past have been put in place. I hope Deputy Ahern agrees that the primary onus at this stage of Irish history is on the republican movement to call a ceasefire.

Miss Harney: I agree with the Taoiseach's statement and, bearing it in mind, is he optimistic that there will be a renewed IRA ceasefire?

The Taoiseach: I have forborne from using that word in replying to the various questions put to me and I will not depart from that rule. However, as I stated on previous occasions, the inescapable logic of the peace process points the republican movement in the direction of an IRA ceasefire. That movement cannot fulfil the peace process upon which it set itself without a ceasefire. The republican movement is aware that it cannot fulfil its political objectives without a ceasefire. Furthermore, as I stated in Downing Street, the political leadership of Sinn Féin includes many talented people who have no need to continue to use the crutch of violence, or the threat of violence, to make their case effectively through political methods. They have the ability and distinctive talents which enable them to advance their case with persistence and determination through the medium of politics alone. The republican movement should pass the most effective vote of confidence of all in

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its leadership by calling a ceasefire. As a result, that leadership would be able to take full part in the political process.

Miss Harney: Will the Taoiseach inform the House whether the difference between the two Governments regarding Sinn Féin's participation in all-party talks is significant? What is the nature of that difference?

The Taoiseach: The agreement between the two Governments takes the form of a ground rules paper and the communiqué issued on 28 February. There is nothing in the ground rules paper about quarantine periods, dates or time limits. The paper simply lists the conditions which must be fulfilled. I stand on the agreements we have made.

Mr. B. Ahern: In reply to the rather cynical question put to me by the Taoiseach, he should read the speech I made last Wednesday to discover what I said. Every Member urges the establishment of a new ceasefire before Christmas. Is the Taoiseach satisfied that such a ceasefire would lead to the involvement of Sinn Féin at inclusive, all-party talks at the commencement of the new session at the end of January? Is that the Government's position? If it is, it would be useful were it placed unambiguously on the record. What is the Taoiseach's assessment of the British Government's statement that it will only take advice from British, not Irish, security services in respect of a ceasefire? I seek answers to these important questions.

The Taoiseach: There is nothing cynical about the question I put to the Deputy. In situations such as this, people who are unable to make up their minds about

V4

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whether there should be a ceasefire or whether they should take particular steps have a facility to transfer the responsibility and create a situation in which it seems someone else is responsible for their not making a particular decision. The IRA should call a ceasefire now because it has a golden opportunity to allow Sinn Féin to take part in talks. This opportunity is far better than the one which existed in August 1994 because there is a talks process, an independent chairman, agreed procedures and the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, which can be immediately reconstituted following a ceasefire to bring them into constructive communication with all other parties on this island.

From the experience of the previous ceasefire, the IRA is aware that the Irish Government is willing to respond on the issue of prisoners. It is also aware that the British Prime Minister and the Irish Government are committed to bringing it into the talks. The IRA should seriously consider this matter and make a decision rather than seeking to placing the responsibility for that decision elsewhere. In politics a situation is never achieved when a decision is taken where the conditions are absolutely perfect. By definition, politicians always make decisions in imperfect conditions. From his own experience, Deputy Ahern will agree that one never takes a political decision in perfect conditions where all the answers are available and one knows what will happen as a result. The business of politics is about making decisions in conditions of uncertainty.

When Sinn Féin and the republican movement reflect on the certainties now in place - the talks process, Senator Mitchell's presence as chairman of those talks, the ground rules and procedures and the reconstitution of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation - they will receive adequate reassurances to call a ceasefire rather than ask for another certainty to be added to those already provided.

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I believe this represents a reasonable answer to the Deputy's question. I took note of the speech he made last week which provides a balanced statement of his party's position. I am convinced that his party, like all parties in the House, is working for peace and has no sympathy for those who use violence. I agree, without qualification, that that is the case.

Mr. B. Ahern: I must persist in raising questions. It has been the position for many months, not merely in recent days following the Anglo Irish summit, that the request of Sinn Féin and its political leaders is to find certainty with regard to entry into all-party talks. It has been the Government's position, and that of every Member of the House, to witness the establishment of a ceasefire and the end of targeting, punishment beatings and the training of IRA recruits. To achieve this, whether we like it or not, those in the IRA are seeking certainty that what happened following the ceasefire in August 1994 - this is not imagination or innuendo, it is fact - regarding the establishment of a talks process will not happen again. As the Taoiseach stated, it was never placed on record but there was a belief that talks would begin at some future time.

Section to follow:

Section W follows.

Last Modified by:
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Edward Mooney at 11/12/96 16:16:25
Edward Mooney

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This is the 'UNEDITED' version of the transcript (also known as the 'Blacks').

Take Number: W
Next Take Number: X

DÁIL ÉIREANN

15:00 (3 o'clock)

11 December 1996

^ Ceisteanna - Questions. ^

It was believed that talks would begin in three or four months but nobody believed it would take 17 months. I will not ask the British Government's position as it seems to be concerned about other matters, for example, the general election etc. Is it the Government's position that Sinn Féin, with its support, should take its place at the talks before the end of January 1997 if there is an unequivocal and irreversible ceasefire and an indication that training and punishment beatings will stop? Is this what the Government said to Mr. Major last Monday?

The Taoiseach: The best thing I can do is quote what I said in Downing Street as it clearly sets out my position:

My Government's position is that if the IRA calls an unequivocal ceasefire in words that are believable and provided there is nothing done that is inconsistent with this ceasefire or with the Mitchell principles then Sinn Féin should be admitted to participation in the talks in accordance with the ground rules we have agreed. The

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first step, however, is a credible ceasefire. The onus is on the republican movement to restore the ceasefire credibly at the earliest moment. I want to see Sinn Féin's participation in the talks at the earliest moment too on that basis. In practical terms, given the imminence of the Christmas recess, I hope that this will be possible early in the New Year.

By early in the "New Year" I mean towards the end of January.

Mr. M. McDowell: Whatever about not reading the English newspapers, I presume the Taoiseach has had a cursory look at today's Irish newspapers which indicate that the IRA is in the business of preparing a campaign of atrocities between now and Christmas. Will the Taoiseach agree that all the discussion in the House will be set completely at nought if a rash of atrocities are committed by the IRA between now and Christmas?

The Taoiseach: Yes.

Dr. McDaid: I wish to take up a very important point raised by my party leader which is not given the importance it deserves. During the past 25 years between 80 and 100 people lost their lives each year in the North. We all support the assurances sought by the British Government that the ceasefire will be unequivocal. However, has consideration ever been given to the fact that between 80 and 100 lives were saved during the period of the ceasefire? Does the British Prime Minister place any emphasis on this point and what value does

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he place on the lives of Irish and British citizens?

The Taoiseach: It is fair to say that the British Prime Minister puts a very high value on the lives of people. For example, he put a particularly high value on the lives of Inan Bashir and John Jefferies who were murdered by the IRA at Canary Wharf. The British Prime Minister, as a person representing his people, is very concerned, as I am, to protect the lives of his people and of Irish people. The reason we have devoted so much time to finding a structure which would enable Sinn Féin to participate in inclusive talks is that we want an IRA ceasefire. It is worth pointing out that the British Prime Minister continued to work for inclusive all-party talks even after the IRA murdered Inan Bashir and John Jefferies at Canary Wharf. Even after that incident, he agreed a fixed date for the talks and the ground rules for the talks which do not allow minorities to be oppressed because they provide a detailed formula for sufficient consensus which requires to be agreed by both communities. This took a lot of time to negotiate but it represents a major asset in terms of healing minority-majority relations both within Northern Ireland and on the island as a whole. To use the community term, we have all of this.

It is very important to point out that although the August 1994 ceasefire was a marvellous achievement it has been built upon by the creation of a talks process which has all of the elements to which I have referred. Despite the Canary Wharf bombing and the deliberate provocation represented by it to try to drive him away from peace - this is the only calculation I can assume was made by those who allowed this bomb to go off in the middle of London - the

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British Prime Minister continued to agree the various measures I have outlined. The talks have started and we will continue to work to find the best possible basis so that Sinn Féin can come into them and to give the maximum reassurance that they are serious and its place in them will be a very real and dynamic one.

It is time for those in the republican movement to put trust in their political leaders' ability to argue their case on the basis of argument and persuasion without any recourse, need for recourse or threat of recourse to violence at any time in the future. They should have sufficient confidence in themselves to have a ceasefire.

Mr. D. Ahern: There has been a severe breakdown in trust between the British Government and Sinn Féin-IRA because of the renewal by the IRA of its campaign. Will the Taoiseach agree there has also been a breakdown of trust among those on the other side of the equation - that is, among Sinn Féin-IRA and the broad mass of Nationalist Ireland - who perceived no major movement during the 17 or 18 months of the ceasefire? Given this two-way breakdown of trust, the Government has a pivotal role to play in pushing forward the agenda and restoring trust between those two groupings. I appreciate that the Government may be pushing that agenda as best it can behind closed doors, but would it not be more preferable to push it publicly and to involve outside agencies such as the US Government which played a pivotal role in convincing Sinn Féin in the run-up to the 1994 ceasefire?

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The Taoiseach: I agree with the points made by the Deputy. The reason the Government has allowed talks with Sinn Féin to continue at official level, despite the murder of Garda Gerry McCabe by the IRA, is that we believe there is distrust on both sides and that we have the capacity to reduce the level of distrust experienced by Sinn Féin *vis-à-vis* the British Government and to reduce as far as possible, despite Canary Wharf, the level of distrust in British Government circles of the long-term intentions of the republican movement.

It is fair to say that there are limits to what one can do in this regard. If actions belie sentiments people tend to take the actions more seriously than the sentiments expressed. The difficulty with Canary Wharf and Adare and with the preparation and priming of bombs is that they belie sentiments expressed about peace. The responsible adults in the republican movement who carry out these actions know they are likely to be interpreted as provocation, yet they carry them out. They have a responsibility to answer that question for themselves and for the Irish public and not seek, as is constantly the case, particularly in regard to Northern Ireland, to shift the responsibility on to someone else's shoulders.

Section to follow:

Section X follows.

Last Modified by:
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Mary Murray at 11/12/96 16:30:02
Majella Riordan, Mary Murray

X.1

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Text not yet available to Deputies - 'Blacks' not yet fully typed.

Take Number: X
Next Take Number: Y

DÁIL ÉIREANN

15:10

11 December 1996

^ Ceisteanna - Questions. ^

It is not confined to the Republican movement. People on the other side of the political divide say they would do different things if decommissioning happened tomorrow. However, they know it will not happen tomorrow and that they must take the first step. The process of transferring the responsibility to somebody else is endemic in this political situation. It seems the first reflex of anybody faced with the requirement to make a decision themselves is to try to find some way of transferring the responsibility for that decision on to someone else's shoulders. It is time the protagonists took responsibility themselves. In particular, it is time the IRA and the Republican leadership took responsibility for the peace process - it is not just Mr. John Major who is responsible for it - and called a ceasefire.

This Government has maintained contact at official level with Sinn Féin so that we can convey that message to it but also to convey indirectly to the British Government its fears and concerns, which we have done repeatedly. The various reassurances

X.2

that have been given here about the way in which the talks would be open to all the ground rules and so forth are the direct result of our efforts to ensure the talks will be genuinely inclusive. There was a call for a fixed date, which we set for 10 June. Sinn Féin knows that if the IRA calls a ceasefire, Sinn Féin will be in the talks quickly. The Deputy knows Sinn Féin is aware of that.

Mr. B. Ahern: The British Government has stated it will monitor any ceasefire and that it will make a decision on the basis of reports from its security intelligence. Is the Taoiseach confident that it will not be used, as it was in the past, to delay Sinn Féin's entry to the talks? The Taoiseach is more aware than I that it is not only the Republican movement which has received arms and been involved in training in recent months. The British Government does not seem overly concerned that some people, who may be close to those in the political process, are engaged in such activities. Does the Taoiseach think it could be used as a delaying tactic?

The Taoiseach: If that was used as a tactic to delay the talks, it would be a case of bad faith. Every security service must be prudent. If people are saying one thing and doing another, then one must ask why. There is an inconsistency if they are preparing bombs and at the same time saying their ceasefire will hold in all circumstances. It is inconsistent to say there is a ceasefire which will hold in all circumstances while knowing that at that moment a lorry is being bought somewhere to be used as a bomb.

How do we resolve that inconsistency? The first thing we need to see is the terms of an IRA ceasefire. We need language in the IRA ceasefire which is convincing not just to those who want to be convinced but also to those who do not want to be

X.3

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convinced. A genuine effort must be made in the language used to call a ceasefire to ensure it is believable and, as far as possible, believed by those who feel threatened by the IRA. That requires an effort by the Republican movement to understand the fears of others and to see how they can be allayed by what is said.

There is also the need for a clear and unequivocal statement on the Mitchell principles. I am aware that Sinn Féin said it accepted the Mitchell principles, but it did not say it in the clear language one hoped it would have said it. There was some static around the way in which it was said. It is important that its dedication to the Mitchell principles is clear this time. There should be acceptance of the Mitchell principles in any statement by the IRA. It is not enough for the political side of the movement to accept the Mitchell principles; the whole movement must accept them.

I am not laying down conditions; I am trying to be as helpful as I can to people who want to fulfil paragraphs 8 and 9 of the ground rules so that Sinn Féin will come into the talks. I am making suggestions as to how they might do that in a way that will give reassurances while allowing Sinn Féin straight into the talks as I hope it will be. It requires a decision to call a ceasefire, which must be framed in a way that is convincing, and conduct in the immediate aftermath of that decision which does not belie the decision itself.

An Ceann Comhairle: We come to Questions nominated for priority. Question No. 16.

^^ Stormont Talks. ^^