

Dalton Anfr.

Contact with Sinn Fein - Possible Press line

Following the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire on 9th February, the Government decided that it should terminate all Ministerial contact but maintain limited official contact with Sinn Fein.

Official contact was maintained in the belief that it would be more likely to be of assistance to Sinn Fein in persuading the IRA to restore the August '94 ceasefire than would a policy of total refusal of Government contact.

The Government is seriously concerned that, so far, Sinn Fein has clearly not managed to persuade the IRA to restore the ceasefire. The death of Garda McCabe in Adare, the serious injuries inflicted on Garda O'Sullivan and the bombing outrage in Manchester in which hundreds of people were injured, provide no grounds for confidence that the IRA intends to allow Sinn Fein to follow the road of peace and democracy.

The Government having carefully reviewed the situation is not, however, convinced that it should, at this time, terminate all contacts, including existing limited official contacts, with Sinn Fein. It has decided to leave open the possibility that further contact will take place at official level but only for the purpose of obtaining an up-to-date assessment of Sinn Fein's actual prospects of persuading the IRA towards peace, against the background of that organisation's recent acts of violence.

Following that contact, the Government will again review the case for keeping open a line of communication with Sinn Fein.