

BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON

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Dear Gerry,

SINN FEIN'S INCLUSION IN THE PEACE TALKS: PUBLIC LINE

1. The issue on which Michael Ancram was under most pressure in Washington was: "If the IRA announce a cease-fire over the next few weeks will you undertake to let Sinn Fein into the talks when these resume on 3 June?". This was the challenge in Kennedy's 14 March speech in New York.
2. The answer is no. The Minister made clear to Berger et al that the reasons for this were:
 - (a) If we gave this commitment, but intelligence suggested that the cease-fire was tactical and that the IRA continued to conduct surveillance, targetting and weapons testing, we would have to deny Sinn Fein entry to the talks despite our commitment. The Government would then be accused of bad faith, especially as US critics would not be privy to the intelligence (much of it Irish) on which we based our judgement.
 - (b) If, on the other hand, Sinn Fein were allowed in despite doubts about the quality of the cease-fire and or the IRA's real intentions, (which would in any case mean bending the terms of the statute), the Unionists would not have confidence in the process. If they refused to sit at the table we would have got nowhere.
3. We should try to duck the question of 3 June (as the Minister succeeded in doing most of the time). If it cannot be evaded then we should follow the line taken by the Minister which was that:
 - The British Government is emphatically not trying to create obstacles to Sinn Fein entry (as some seem to think, and as Senator Kennedy said in terms about the "wasted" 17 months of the last cease-fire). On the contrary HMG's energies throughout the peace process have been directed at securing inclusive talks. No-one is more impatient than the British Government to achieve this.

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- Once the IRA have established an unequivocal cease-fire, and words have been matched by deeds, the Secretary of State has a statutory obligation to invite Sinn Fein in. This is a legal requirement, not a political choice.
- We cannot, however, set out a time-table in advance. All will depend on the quality of the cease-fire. If there is a genuine cease-fire Sinn Fein will be invited in without delay, (nor would we exclude 3 June).

Yours truly

Anthony

Anthony Caryl

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