

9. May. 1997 15:34

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 5043 P. 2/4

CONFIDENTIAL and PERSONAL

FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS  
Political Director  
9 May 1997  
QT/MR/61

① *Sanctum*  
*to see*✓ PB  
AC  
JEH② *File* *John* *12/5.*

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE(L&amp;B)

cc

PS/Mr Murphy(L&amp;B)

PS/PUS(L&amp;B)

PS/Sir D Fell

Mr Steele

Mr Stephens

Mr Wood(L&amp;B)

Mr Ray

Mr Holmes No.10-Fax

Mr Budd CabOffice-Fax

*Prime Minister*

*To see that this initial  
signed has been sent. This  
should help to keep the lid  
on things, tho' there is no  
guarantee we will not get further violence.*

CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN

As agreed, I spoke to Ms Siobhan O Hanlon, Mr Gerry Adams' secretary.

2. After a brief exchange of pleasantries I said, speaking slowly enough for her to take it down, that:

- (i) Gerry Adams' letters to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister had been received, were being studied and taken seriously.
- (ii) It was helpful that they had not been publicised.
- (iii) The new Government was finding its feet: obviously it was primarily focussed on the Queen's Speech and other associated matters.
- (iv) We would be replying before too long. I hoped something positive could be said.

*John 9/5.*  
*P.S. Now  
see the  
attached  
telephone  
response from  
Sinn Fein.  
Despite the  
disclaimer  
about control  
of violence and  
the stuff at the  
end, it's not  
too bad.*

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- (v) I had seen Gerry Adams' remarks about the value of confidence building measures. But confidence was clearly a two-way street.
- (vi) It was essential that events on the grounds made this possible. Any terrorist activity, real or hoaxes, in Great Britain or Northern Ireland could ruin the prospects of moving forward.

I then asked her to confirm that she had got what I had said. She said that she had and asked when a reply could be expected. I repeated that we hoped to reply "before too long" but that people were genuinely finding their feet. I said they should hang on to their hats: there was no intention to string things out.

3. She thanked me and we said goodbye.

Press Line (Only if needed)

I suggest that if needed the press line might be as follows:

Are you in contact with Sinn Fein?

Any serious approach from Sinn Fein would be given careful consideration. But everyone knows that any real advance requires an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire.

Meetings with Sinn Fein?

There will be no meetings between Ministers and Sinn Fein until an unequivocal ceasefire is in place. Like the last Government, we do not rule out in principle the possibility of meetings between Officials and Sinn Fein to ensure there are no misunderstandings about our position. In practice agreement to such a meeting would of course depend on events on the ground. There have been no such meetings since February 1996.

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*(Signed)*

**QUENTIN THOMAS**  
**11 Millbank**  
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