



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

ce T20
Am A
SUBJECT
MASTER

Filed on:

THE PRIME MINISTER

11 June 1997

CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

Dear John,

It was good to talk to you on the phone earlier this week, and to share our concerns about renewed IRA violence. The attack on an Army patrol yesterday, and today's killing of a Loyalist terrorist, only increase my fears, although the responsibility for the latest incident is not yet clear.

As you know, I want to get Sinn Fein into the talks if I can. We have had two meetings with them at official level to clarify our position on various issues of concern to them, and to set out our own. I now want officials to send them a short piece of paper by the end of this week, so that they can be in no doubt of where we stand. I attach a copy of what we propose to send. I would be grateful if you could treat this in strict confidence for the moment. We may want to arrange a further meeting of officials with Sinn Fein early next week, but that itself is seriously threatened by continuing IRA violence.

In any case I plan to make a statement about our position, probably next week. This would explain again our position on confidence-building, decommissioning, and the time-frame for the negotiations. It would also set out that we have in mind a period of some 6 weeks to assess a ceasefire. In other

- 2 -

words a ceasefire in mid-June would lead, if it were satisfactory in word and deed, to Sinn Fein's formal entry into the talks by the end of July.

I should add that I propose to ensure that the substantive political talks get under way in September, whether Sinn Fein are in the talks or not. I am not prepared to allow further delay. So Sinn Fein need to make up their minds whether they want to be part of the political process or not.

I hope you will be ready to support fully this approach and that we can also reach agreement rapidly on decommissioning, to enable the talks to move forward. I am prepared to make a reasonable offer to Sinn Fein, despite the risks this entails. I hope they will not misunderstand the position or my determination. I will not tolerate an approach from them which claims to be political but remains underpinned by violence or the threat of it. Their current twin-track strategy leaves me genuinely alarmed about their sincerity.

I want to make rapid progress this summer and will do everything I can to achieve this. I know I can count on your influence to help me do so. If the two Governments are together, we are best placed to move others.

I assume you will also want to show this to Bertie Ahern.

yours ever
Tony

Mr John Bruton TD

h