

10-JUN-1997 19:39

PRIV OFF STORMONT

01232 760481 P.02

## SECRET AND PERSONAL

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON AND THE TAOISEACH

<sup>have</sup>  
As we discussed ~~when we met~~, I am determined to make progress in Northern Ireland this summer.

I want this to include Sinn Féin. I am in no doubt it would be better to have them in than out. That is what officials have told Sinn Féin.

[ In their two meetings with Sinn Fein, officials have also addressed the four issues of concern raised by Sinn Féin for clarification. On three of the four issues we have set out clear positions as good as, if not better than the position agreed between Hume and Adams on 10 October last year, on which Sinn Féin still take their stand in public.

*These 2  
points  
not  
needed.*

On the fourth issue - the date of Sinn Féin's entry to negotiations following a ceasefire, on which 10 October was ambiguous - we have made it clear that, unlike the last Government, we are prepared to indicate a date for Sinn Féin's entry following a ceasefire which is satisfactorily reflected in word and deed.]

Equally, however, the process cannot wait on Sinn Féin. I want to make progress with Sinn Féin, but if necessary we must go forward without them. Unless we make some progress this summer, I doubt the talks process will survive long into the autumn. So I believe we must soon lay out a clear and public choice.

My officials have set out for Sinn Féin <sup>in two meetings</sup> a reasonable position that meets genuine concerns. In order to ensure that there are no misunderstandings I have authorised officials to send Sinn Fein the attached note confirming the positions they took in the meetings. I should be grateful if you would treat it in confidence (for the Taoiseach - though you may wish to show it to Bertie Ahern). I intend that the note should be sent by the end of this week. <sup>depending on events on the ground,</sup> Officials ~~will then~~ be authorised to have one final meeting with Sinn Fein (early next week) to ensure that the note is properly understood. There will be no negotiation.

I <sup>intend to</sup> ~~shall~~ then ~~myself~~ <sup>myself</sup> make a public statement <sup>myself</sup> ~~about our position~~, probably later next week. I shall make it clear that, in current circumstances, we have in mind a period of no more than 6 weeks to assess a ceasefire. So a ceasefire in mid June would lead, providing it is reflected in word and deed so that the statutory requirements are met, to Sinn Féin's entry into talks before the end of July.

But I envisage the three strands of political negotiations starting in September. That is when the settlement train must leave whether Sinn Féin are on it or not. (For the Taoiseach only: If the talks are to make progress it is, of course, essential that we find an early resolution to the problem of decommissioning. ~~In that~~ <sup>So</sup> ~~connection~~, I hope that our two Governments will very quickly reach agreement on a joint approach.)



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*my present approach*  
This is not a ~~step~~ without risks for me. Unionists would want a much longer timescale. I am ready to take these risks and I hope I shall be able to count on your support - not only for the position I shall be taking but also for moving forward decisively in September without Sinn Féin if they spurn this reasonable offer.

The resumption of terrorism by the IRA bodes ill for their choice. They have made serious political miscalculations before. I do not see how it will be possible to create such an opportunity again after September. Indeed, the marching season - where both Sinn Féin and loyalist extremists seem intent on undermining efforts to achieve local agreement - could badly knock back the process as a whole.

For the immediate future, if there are any attacks by the IRA this would make a further meeting with officials more difficult. We have left Sinn Féin in no doubt that meetings will only be authorised if the IRA's activities on the ground allow it. I hope you will be prepared to bring your own influence to bear to reinforce the message that violence does nothing for Sinn Féin's cause, either now or at any time, but especially now.

*and  
could  
jeopardise  
as whole  
approach.*

*As we discussed,*

SOFS/30702/LB

access to an office in Castle Buildings for Sinn Féin to prepare for the resumed negotiations.

CONFIDENTIAL

TOTAL P.03