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Simon

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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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24, 59

To Secretary *mn*  
13.11.96  
From Walter Kirwan, Assistant Secretary

## Taoiseach's Response to an Unequivocal Restoration of the August, 1994 IRA Ceasefire, particularly following a Meeting with Gerry Adams and John Hume

1. As discussed, having regard to the high likelihood that, following a restoration of the IRA ceasefire, accepted by the two Governments as being unequivocal, a meeting involving the Taoiseach, John Hume and Gerry Adams would take place within a few days, it is necessary that the Taoiseach's reaction in such a situation should be prepared in advance. It is probable - and certainly desirable, I think - that the Tánaiste and the Minister for Social Welfare would also be participants in such a meeting.
2. I have prepared draft material in regard to the Taoiseach's response, which I now submit for initial consideration. I am also copying it to Mr Donlon, Mr Kenny and the Attorney General for their reactions. When we have the internal reactions, within the Taoiseach's system, we can consider consulting the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Justice.
3. The material is in the form of
  - (1) Speaking Points for an opening statement by the Taoiseach at a press conference, whether on the steps or in the Press Room of Government Buildings and
  - (2) suggested responses to hypothetical but quite likely questions.
4. The opening statement is quite substantial. Initially, I thought it would be too long for a 'steps' appearance but the more I think about it the more I am compelled to the view that a substantial statement would be required in the circumstances postulated. A restoration of the ceasefire will be quite different from the initial declaration in August, 1994. The ending of that ceasefire last February and the various atrocities since then have raised a major question-mark over the credibility of any restored ceasefire. The Taoiseach himself has repeatedly spoken of the need for a restored ceasefire to be credible, to be for good, to hold in all circumstances. There is deep scepticism among unionists and loyalists (including loyalist paramilitaries) as to whether any restoration would be other than tactical.



In these circumstances, I feel strongly that, following any meeting with Gerry Adams after a new ceasefire, the Taoiseach would need to preempt all the doubts and queries that would certainly be put to him in questions by the media, which have, of course, been full of speculation for weeks past, about the credibility of a ceasefire and the related issue of the terms for Sinn Féin's entry into the multi-party talks. The points for the Opening Statement reflect this need, as I see it, for the Taoiseach to "get his retaliation in first". At the same time, I have sought to build in some positive elements, as well as primarily defensive and preemptive material.

6. If it were felt that, despite the arguments set out above, the Speaking Points are too lengthy for an Opening Statement on the steps, the points could be drawn on for other statements and interviews, including a statement in the Dáil. If a substantial opening statement were to be made, it is for consideration as to whether Sinn Féin and the SDLP would be alerted to the Taoiseach's intention or even shown the draft.
7. Given all the events of the past 9 months and the Taoiseach's previous statements, it would, I submit, be quite unrealistic to script for the Taoiseach an unqualified acceptance of the credibility of a restoration of the ceasefire. Accordingly, the line that is taken in the draft opening statement is one of giving the IRA the benefit of any doubts there may be, on the basis that there sufficient grounds for belief that the restoration is indeed unequivocal as to strongly tip the balance of risks towards accepting the credibility of the IRA announcement. It would be useful to have initial reactions at this stage to this approach.
8. As regards the draft answers to possible questions I would direct attention to numbers 4 and 6, about, respectively early IRA decommissioning and shaking hands with Gerry Adams. On the latter, this is essentially a reminder that this issue will arise, as clearly it would be necessary to have the choreography of the occasion fully settled in advance. While one can imagine layouts, such as 5 microphones spread well out, designed to avoid a Taoiseach - Adams handshake, my view is that this is unavoidable if we do not wish the media focus to be on the absence of such a handshake.
9. As regards the question on decommissioning, my suggested reply pushes the boat out a bit, as compared with our line to date. This reflects my view that once there is no precondition about prior or parallel decommissioning and once Sinn Féin entry to the talks is agreed, we should then step up pressure on them in the decommissioning area. This, I submit, will be necessary if we are to have any chance of getting a satisfactory agreement with the UUP. Hitherto, our line has, effectively, been that the Republican movement must be left, themselves, to decide if or when to do any



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decommissioning during the negotiations. This, in the end, is probably an inescapable reality but it need not mean that we do not press them to agree, even if not actually carry out, some decommissioning, where we judge political progress is being made and, very likely, requires some positive indications on decommissioning, if it is to be consolidated.

10. I am, of course, conscious that at a stage in the negotiations where we are stuck on the address to decommissioning in the opening plenary, we have to be very careful not to give to unionists ammunition which would make it harder to exit from that item and from the opening plenary generally, in order to move into substantive negotiations in the three strands. This is why I call particular attention to the draft reply to question no. 4.

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12 November, 1996

cc Mr Simon Hare  
Mr Séan Donlon  
Mr Shane Kenny  
Mr Dermot Gleeson, S.C., Attorney General



Date created:

05/11/96

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**Speaking Points for**

**Press Conference following hypothetical meeting  
between Taoiseach and Sinn Féin Leader**

**1. Introductory Comments**

The Government have already warmly welcomed the restoration by the IRA of its August 1994 ceasefire [and particularly the terms of the announcement].

I would like to begin by paying tribute to all those who have striven so long and so hard to bring about this restoration, particularly those who are with me today [Dick Spring, John Hume and Gerry Adams].

I also commend the many other people involved - in the leaderships of the SDLP and Sinn Féin; other Ministerial colleagues of mine; and officials of the relevant Departments here.

I also want to acknowledge the role played by Prime Minister Major, as exemplified by his [article published on xday last].

That article was the proximate occasion for the announcement of the ceasefire but, of course, it was also just the latest turn in his intensive involvement in the Northern Ireland issue. He and I have had an intensity of personal contact that must, I believe, be unprecedented among Heads of Government.

**2. General comments**

The restoration was the logical conclusion of an internal debate under way within the Republican movement for some time now.

There is, in my view, a solid acceptance now by the Republican movement that violence in pursuit of political aims is a self defeating and counterproductive way to proceed.

Equally, there is a firm recognition that the democratic and peaceful route is the only way forward that enjoys universal support throughout this island, North and South.

Inevitably and indeed understandably, some people are asking - particularly in the Unionist community: 'Why should we trust the Republican movement this time round? After all, the IRA broke its ceasefire in February last!'

The truth of the matter is that the answer boils down to a question of belief.



A belief that the Republicans want peace and agreement at least as much as Loyalists do. After all, it is those two communities that have suffered most from the violence in Northern Ireland.

A belief that Unionist and Loyalist agreement cannot be achieved through violence, just as Republican and Nationalist agreement cannot be secured in that way either.

As hard as it may be for some people to do so, we - in the interests of building peace and promoting reconciliation - must accept in trust the sincerity of the words in the IRA Statement. To do otherwise would be both morally wrong and profoundly undemocratic.

Constitutional politicians should never, and must never, rebuff those who, in our considered view, are genuinely abandoning violence in favour of exclusively peaceful and democratic means.

I believe that the Republican movement have now taken the proper and decisive step to travel that road. If I did not truly believe that to be the case, I would not be here with the Leader of Sinn Féin on the steps of Government Buildings today.

### **3. The Way Ahead**

In the Joint Communiqué of 28 February and in the Ground Rules Paper, the two Governments made clear that the unequivocal restoration of the IRA's August 1994 ceasefire was a fundamental requirement for the resumption of Ministerial dialogue with Sinn Féin and for that party's participation in negotiations on a settlement.

The language used in the IRA Statement convinces me and my Government colleagues that this time, the ceasefire is indeed unequivocal.

I believe that our judgement in that regard will be reinforced in the minds of others during the days and weeks ahead.

This meeting today is the first in a series that will lead directly to Sinn Féin's participation in the multi-party negotiations on xx xxxx.

I am glad that, at long last, the IRA has enabled a fully inclusive process of negotiation to be brought about. My Government have always believed that such a process of negotiation would be in the long term best interests of reaching an agreed settlement that would be capable of securing the allegiance and support of all shades of political opinion in Northern Ireland.



Sinn Féin, like all other parties, have now got the opportunity to represent their supporters and play their part in the shaping of a new agreed way forward.

As far as the Irish Government are concerned, our analysis of the situation remains as it always has been.

A durable peace strategy must be based on agreement, it must be based on consent, and it must be predicated on respect for the equal value and legitimacy of both the Nationalist and Unionist identities.

Again, the Irish Government's approach to realising the full potential of peace through the multi-party talks remains as it was prior to the IRA ceasefire restoration.

Our approach will continue to be informed and guided by the balanced set of principles and realities set out in the *Joint Declaration* which was agreed with the British Government on 15 December 1993.

We will use the proposals in the *Joint Framework Document*, again agreed with the British Government, as our signposts to give impetus, focus and direction to the multi-party talks.

And we will continue to use the *Report of the International Body* as means by which commitments to exclusively peaceful and democratic methods can be firmly established.

The *Report of the International Body* will also continue to inform our thinking on how the sensitive issue of decommissioning should be handled in negotiations.

It has been evident for some time now that substantive momentum needs to be injected into the multi-party talks while, at the same time, ensuring that no participant feels unduly pressurised. To that end, the Government will be pursuing the objective of a xx months timeframe for the talks [through agreement among the participants].

I believe that we are now on the steps of a whole new beginning for the peoples of these islands. The opportunity is now available to build a future of peaceful co-existence and agreement.

Despite the difficulties that undoubtedly will have to be faced and overcome, I am hopeful and confident that together - Unionists and Nationalists, Loyalists



and Republicans, with the input of the two Governments - we can begin to write a new chapter on how we share this island together for the benefit of this generation and generations not yet born.

### **Hypothetical Question 1**

**Taoiseach, why are you so convinced that, this time, the IRA ceasefire will last? After all, the IRA said in its August 1994 Statement that the ceasefire would 'hold in all circumstances' when clearly it did not!**

### **Reply**

I have always made clear that my Government would need to be convinced that a renewed ceasefire would not be a mere tactical device to secure Sinn Féin's entry into the multi-party negotiations.

I am on these steps with the Sinn Féin Leader today because I am convinced that the IRA ceasefire Statement is indeed unequivocal.

The IRA Statement goes further than the August 1994 Statement.

The Statement makes clear that '...' That demonstrates ...

It further states that '....' That amounts to ...

The IRA express '....' This a ...

These commitments convince me that the Republican movement as a whole are definitively abandoning violence in favour of exclusively peaceful and democratic means.

Furthermore, Sinn Féin, on entering the multi-party talks, will be required to sign up to the six Mitchell Principles on democracy and non violence.

Commitment and adherence to these fundamental principles, in the words of the International Body, are essential 'to reach an agreed political settlement and to take the gun out of Irish politics'.

### **Hypothetical Question 2**

**Taoiseach, if the IRA continues to engage in targeting, punishment beatings and operations planning, would the Government in such a situation seek the immediate expulsion of Sinn Féin from the multi-party talks?**

### **Reply**

That is a matter that would be for ultimate determination by the independent



Chair of the multi-party talks.

Having said that, however, actions such as targeting, punishment beatings and operations planning are profoundly wrong and would make it increasingly difficult for some other parties to be convinced that the Republican movement are indeed truly committed to the peaceful and democratic process.

Such actions would in effect undermine confidence in both communities with regard to the sincerity of the sentiments expressed in the IRA Statement.

I am sure, however, that the Republican movement themselves would be conscious of the political dangers involved in such actions.

Having said that, I believe that we should use the opportunity presented by the IRA ceasefire statement to look positively to the future - to work constructively to widen the space where hope can grow and reconciliation can be promoted through agreement.

### **Hypothetical Question 3**

**Taoiseach, if and when Sinn Féin enter the multi-party talks, it is likely that the Unionist parties will walk out. Is it really worth exchanging a multi-party talks process, comprising Nationalist and Unionist representatives, for a suspect IRA ceasefire?**

### **Reply**

First of all, I believe that the Unionist leaderships have the necessary courage and conviction in the validity of their own political positions to argue their points with anyone.

I believe also that the communities which they represent would not think it prudent or wise to abandon this hard won opportunity of fully inclusive negotiations on a settlement.

The multi-party talks will be continued irrespective of anyone walking out - if indeed anyone does. It has been made clear repeatedly that nobody can exert an unreasonable veto on progress.

The multi-party talks will move shortly into a proximity or bilateral mode.

I therefore can see no convincing reason why the Unionist parties should leave the negotiations. I do not believe that the people whom they represent would want them to do that.



It has been very clear for a long time now that the overwhelming majority of people on both sides of the divide in Northern Ireland want a future for themselves and their families where violence will have no place. We must never lose sight of that human dimension of peace.

The opportunity to build a new future is here and it is here now. I would urge everyone to grasp it and to hold firmly to it until an eventual agreed settlement is reached.

#### **Hypothetical Question 4**

**Taoiseach, would you agree that the best way for the IRA to convince the Unionist community of their bona fides would be to commence now the decommissioning of their massive arsenals of weaponry?**

#### **Reply**

The Mitchell Report offers the most realistic way to proceed with regard to the decommissioning of illegally arms and other weaponry. It is on the basis of that magnificent Report that the Government have based our approach to this issue in the multi-party talks and we will continue to do so.

In paragraph 34 of their Report, the International Body said: 'The parties should *consider* an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge. Such an approach represents a compromise'.

In paragraph 35, the Body said: 'As progress is made on political issues, even modest *mutual* steps on decommissioning could help create the atmosphere needed for further steps in a progressive pattern of mounting trust and confidence'. Therefore, all illegally held weapons - and not just those held by the IRA - are involved.

In any event, all these matters have been under active consideration for some time now by the participants in the multi-party talks and under the confidentiality rule, it would not be appropriate for me to elaborate too much on this issue.

I would add, however, that in paragraph 15, the International Body also said: 'A resolution of the decommissioning issue - or any other issue - will not be found if the parties resort to their vast inventories of historical recrimination. Or, as was put to [the Body] several times, what is really needed is the decommissioning of mind-sets in Northern Ireland'. I agree wholeheartedly with that view.



What we need to decommission as well are the notions:

- of victory or defeat on either side;
- that a gain on one side automatically implies something lost on the other side;
- that violence can ever be a meaningful substitute for the exclusively democratic pursuit of political aims;
- that compromise is an indicator of weakness rather than political maturity;

### **Hypothetical Question 5**

**Taoiseach, here you are on the steps of Government Buildings flanked by Gerry Adams just days after the IRA ceasefire restoration. Do you not accept that this sends a powerful signal to Unionists that the Irish Government are once again leading a pan nationalist front which at worst is hostile to the Unionist and Loyalist position?**

### **Reply**

Tags like 'pan nationalist front' or 'pan unionist front' are unhelpful to the cause of promoting trust and reconciliation between the two main identities on this island.

The truth of the matter is that this Government have worked very, very hard to outreach to the Unionist and Loyalist communities and to understand their concerns and fears.

It is also a truth - and a most important truth - that what unites the parties in this State is of no threat whatsoever to Unionists.

We subscribe to totally democratic and peaceful methods; we believe that agreement must be founded on the principle of consent; and we sincerely seek a settlement to which Nationalists and Unionists, Loyalists and Republicans could give their support and allegiance.

I am on the steps on Government Buildings with Gerry Adams today because my Government colleagues and I are convinced that, this time, the IRA ceasefire is indeed unequivocal.

I am here with Gerry Adams because the Irish and British Governments have always maintained (including in the 28 February Joint Communiqué) that the resumption of Ministerial dialogue with Sinn Féin and that party's participation in negotiations on a settlement would be fundamentally contingent on an



unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire.

In the carefully considered view of my Government, that requirement has now been met.

#### 2. The future

I would like to begin by paying tribute to all those who have suffered so long and so much in being asked to live with the IRA, particularly those who are with me today (Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Keane, Mr. Justice MacNeill and Mr. Justice Adams).