

*As drafted
by Taoiseach*

SECRET

Draft Letter to Adams

Paddy,

1. I can certainly understand the need for caution and hence the case for sending a letter, in the first instance, to Adams. For what its worth, I'm suggesting a few amendments (see manuscript suggestions herewith).
2. My only reservation about sending a letter is that time is clearly of the essence; if there is any prospect at all of stopping IRA violence before it gains real momentum, we should, I think, pursue that prospect sooner rather than later. I hope that an exchange of correspondence - the case for which, as I say, is fully understandable - would not have the effect of delaying a ceasefire decision.
3. I accept, of course, that the core problem is that we do not know whether any "ceasefire decision" is in prospect, that current activity on the ground points to the contrary and that written confirmation from Sinn Fein that a ceasefire is imminent would provide a more solid basis for meeting them. But, if Adams' reply is on the lines that an immediate ceasefire is his intent/aim (as he has been saying all along) that he wants to put the "genie" back "in the bottle" before it does major damage and that he needs to meet us for that purpose, will the Government refuse a meeting? Is there something to be said, I wonder, for going ahead with a meeting and handing to SF, at that meeting, a document which would outline clearly the basis on which a further meeting (or meetings) might be favourably considered or ruled out as the case may be?

*Tim D.
8/1*

On 20 January, the IRA undertook an attack in the Royal Victoria Children's Hospital while a pre-arranged meeting with Irish Government officials was actually taking place. In light of the failure of previous meetings with Sinn Fein to result in an IRA ceasefire, this type of event placed the officials, and the Government they represent, in an impossible position.

As drafted
by Taoiseach

January, 1997

Mr. Gerry Adams,
President,
Sinn Féin.

Dear Mr. Adams,

I am responding to your request for a meeting between officials and Sinn Féin.

As you know, Ministerial contact with Sinn Féin was suspended once the IRA resumed its military campaign. Official level contact was, however, maintained "with a view to an early and permanent IRA ceasefire".

These meetings with officials have continued for almost a year now. They have not resulted in an IRA ceasefire, notwithstanding the fact that in the meantime the Irish Government obtained all-party talks, on a fixed date, in which Sinn Féin could have taken part, if there had been a ceasefire. The Irish Government also secured ground rules for these talks which protected the nationalist position, and the Irish Government has worked ceaselessly to overcome all remaining obstacles to agreement within these talks.

On 20 December, the IRA undertook an attack in the Royal Victoria Children's Hospital while a pre-arranged meeting with Irish Government officials was actually taking place. In light of the failure of previous meetings with Sinn Féin to result in an IRA ceasefire, this type of event placed the officials, and the Government they represent, in an impossible position.

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TO

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The Irish Government is willing to go to great lengths to secure peace and an IRA ceasefire, but it is not prepared to negotiate under threat of violence, especially violence ^{which} ~~[apparently timed to]~~ coincide with meetings with its representatives.

Your request for a further meeting, came on the same day as an IRA attack on the High Court in Belfast.

In light of this pattern, the Government is unable to agree ^{on the basis outlined at the last meeting,} to a further meeting, unless it first has reliable assurances from you that a ceasefire is actually imminent, and that identifiable and attainable things need to be discussed and done, that will achieve that end.

At the last meeting with officials, the possibility was raised of an approach to all of the parties in Britain, in relation to the admission of Sinn Féin to all party talks after a British General Election, on the basis of an early, unequivocal, and irrevocable IRA ceasefire.

This proposal has inherent difficulties, notably that it requires the agreement of a large number of potential participants. A Government in one country cannot, of course, negotiate with opposition parties in another. This would be contrary to the practice of international relations.

seriously
damaged - and
may indeed
be eliminated
altogether -

It is, on the other hand, open to parties in Westminster, and to Mr. John Hume, to pursue the possibility of such an agreement. But the prospects of such an agreement are ~~[not helped]~~ by continuing IRA violence, as you must fully understand. Nonetheless at an appropriate time, and in accordance with the normal conventions, the Irish Government would be happy to discuss the matter with the British Government.

But we can only pursue this possibility with conviction, if we are satisfied that Sinn Féin is in a position to offer assurances that the necessary early, unequivocal and irrevocable ceasefire is genuinely in prospect. Events during

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and after our last meeting have created an ^{enormous} obvious difficulty for us in this regard. We invite you to reflect on this matter and respond to us in writing. Your response will enable the Government to consider the utility and appropriateness of a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Paddy Teahon.

must

without delay. Time is clearly of the essence. Given the unmistakable drift towards all-out violence by the IRA which - indeed may be designed to - greatly increase the risk of violent retaliation.

JB

Teahon

8 January 1997