

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.

/...

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 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 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.

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

- 3 -

and after our last meeting have created an 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.

*As drafted
by Taoiseach*

January, 1997

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President,
Sinn Féin.

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1997 11:20 FROM CAB SEC

TO

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X 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 to a further meeting, unless it first has reliable assurances from you that ^{on the basis outlined at the last meeting,} 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.

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seriously damaged - and may indeed be eliminated altogether -

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TEL: 353-1-789100
FROM CAB SEC

8. Jan. 97 11:51 No. 005 P.05
6789100 P.04/24

Embassy

20 ARKANS STREET
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
Tel: 06 173 3032

- 3 -

and after our last meeting have created an 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,

Joe Sheehan

6 January 1997

Geary Adams

Paddy Tephon

See the attached interview with
in the Courier Mail (Sydney)

Dyngus Mayer, Anglo-Irish Division

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.