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SECURE FAX

For: Secretary Teahon
From: Eugene Downes
Date: 8 January, 1997.
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Mr. Wally Dineen
hr
9-1-97

Please see attached, for information, an IRA New Year statement which we have just received from the Ireland International Wire Service, embargoed until 10 pm tonight and due for publication in tomorrow's An Phoblacht.

The IRA praised those still working to secure the Northern peace process.

"We commend those who, despite British and Irish, government violence to the challenge of attempting to put an end to a century of violence, had been gradually struggling to bring about a peaceful settlement."

It said: "In the 18 months prior to February 1996, the IRA refused to do this. Events since then have demonstrated a lack of political will, on their part, to do so. They remain firmly opposed to the development of the political process and committed to undermining the Unionist state. In the past, they have been active in the streets, nowhere better exemplified than in the case of the Belfast Road and in Derry in the August months of last year."

The IRA said it was approaching 1997 "unified, confident and steadfast in our commitment to succeed".

"No amount of British obduracy will deflect us from the task we have set ourselves."

The IRA opened its New year message with an extension of greetings to its friends and supporters "at home and abroad" and to republican prisoners. It also said its thoughts were with the families of IRA Volunteers Edward O'Brien and Diarmuid O'Neill "who tragically lost their lives in the last year."

It said: "As we move into the New Year we feel it appropriate to again reaffirm our steadfast commitment to our republican objectives."

"Our primary objective remains the reunification of our country. We reiterate also our commitment to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in Ireland."

"Time and again in the past we have demonstrated clearly that we will face up to our responsibilities either in the direct pursuit of our objectives or in assisting in the development of the conditions necessary for the establishment of a meaningful process with the potential for securing a lasting settlement to the conflict in

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Ireland."

In the statement the IRA said it had "with reluctance" announced on February 9th last year an end to its complete cessation of military operations.

"Whilst we take full responsibility for that decision, we remind John Major and his government that the opportunity for lasting peace, created by our initiative of 31st August 1994, 18 months earlier, had been gradually strangled to the point of extinction by himself and his Cabinet long before our decision to resume military operations."

The IRA praised those still working to rescue the troubled Northern peace process.

"We commend those who, despite British bad faith, continue to rise to the challenge of attempting to put together a meaningful process aimed at initiating inclusive negotiations with the goal of attaining a lasting peace settlement."

It said: "In the 18 months prior to February 9th, the British refused to do this. Events since then have demonstrated a continuing lack of political will, on their part, to do so. They remain both firmly opposed to the development of the required process and also committed to underpinning the Unionist agenda in whatever process takes root in its place, nowhere better exemplified than at Drumcree, on the Ormeau Road and in Derry in the summer months of last year."

ends
MMMM

cc PSI, PS5, Sec Sec
Councillors AI
Press Officers
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