

10 DOWNING STREET LONDON SWIA 2AA

From the Private Secretary

18 March 1996

26/ tt/ tb

lee drake,

CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN

The Prime Minister has seen Robert Crawford's letter of 15 March about the revised guidelines on contacts with Sinn Fein. The Prime Minister is content with these. He has suggested that they be circulated to all members of Northern Ireland Committee.

Dosk unmediate

JOHN HOLMES

le Pilselis (CIE)

Prisor virior wheeler (let ni)

PSTALLET RICKELL (L+6)

t's (Bewelle) Pecilion (L. DAKEL, DED)

Pilei Lice (Dei : Dali)

PriPul (Ltb)

Filler Deniel leer

U. Therete

LA Kickis

Wi Permisect

Lui Beculi to Buil

Will Recher le bluckulle

hus Krejen her well keen

Lu cecconde NII NICILLI

les steile Wi Werker ber Luneini

NTIAL

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Martin Howard Esq

Northern Ireland Office

ber sikerenen



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SWIA 2AZ

John Holmes Esq Private Secretary 10 Downing Street LONDON SW1A 2AA

15 March 1996

Dear John.

CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN

In the absence of a PIRA ceasefire and a lack of condemnation from Sinn Fein of the breaking of the ceasefire, Ministers have considered the pre-ceasefire guidance on Ministerial and official contact with Sinn Fein with a view to revising it to fit the new circumstances.

I attach a set of revised guidelines which has been drawn up and agreed by my Secretary of State and his Ministerial colleagues in Northern Ireland. We believe that they are consistent with public statements on such contact made by the Prime Minister and other Ministers in the wake of the breakdown of the ceasefire.

The withdrawal of Ministerial contact with Sinn Fein as a party is in line with the approach of the Irish Government. We would intend that our policy should remain on all fours with that of the Irish to the extent that we would not wish to adopt an approach which appeared to be more liberal than theirs.

CONFIDENTIAL

I would be grateful for confirmation that the Prime Minister is content with these guidelines.

Your sinceely, Robert Gorph.

ROBERT CRAWFORD

GUIDELINES FOR CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN

In the absence of the unequivocal restoration of the PIRA ceasefire of August 1994, contact between Sinn Fein and NIO Ministers and officials will be circumscribed as follows:

- a. Ministers will not meet with an exclusively Sinn Fein delegation in any circumstances nor will they meet, on Government property, a delegation or group which includes Sinn Fein representatives;
- b. Ministers will continue their outside visits in Northern Ireland on the understanding that any contacts with Sinn Fein will be incidental to the primary purpose of the visit, eg, during a visit to a District Council to discuss Council business;
- c. meetings between Sinn Fein and senior officials may take place with the explicit approval of the appropriate Departmental Minister;
- d. contact between Sinn Fein and junior officials on local constituency matters will continue uninterrupted;
- e. Sinn Fein should continue to receive Press Notices and other material sent to all political parties.