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FROM: JACKIE SEAR  
SIL  
1 DECEMBER 1994

UNDER  
SEG 80  
01 DEC 1994  
CENT SEC

PS/Secretary of State (B) - B  
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B  
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B  
PS/Mr Moss (L&B) - B  
PS/Baroness Denton (L&B) - B  
PS/PUS (L&B) - B  
PS/Mr Fell - B  
Mr Legge - B  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Blackwell - B  
Mr Daniell - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Williams - B  
Mr Wood (L&B) - B  
Mr Shannon - B  
Mr Brooker - B  
Mrs Collins - B  
Mr Dodds - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mr Marsh - B  
Mr Maxwell - B  
Miss Jude - B  
Mr Brearley - B  
HMA, Dublin - B  
Mr Lamont, RID - B

*Mr Cookson*

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L) - B

OPENING OF EXPLORATORY DIALOGUE WITH SINN FEIN

No 10 will announce at 11.00 am today that the Government will propose an opening meeting with Sinn Fein on Wednesday 7 December.

I attach some lines to take which have been agreed with the Secretary of State.

SIGNED

MRS J O SEAR  
SIL DIVISION  
1 December 1994

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## OPENING OF EXPLORATORY DIALOGUE

### Exploratory dialogue to start

On 21 October, the Prime Minister announced that exploratory dialogue would start before Christmas, providing the IRA ceasefire was maintained. Ministers have now asked officials to contact Sinn Fein by letter to propose an opening meeting on Wednesday 7 December in Belfast. The details have yet to be agreed.

At this first meeting the Government will be represented by senior NIO officials acting under political authority and direction.

### Purposes of dialogue

The dialogue will be for the purposes set out over a year ago:

- (i) to explore the basis upon which Sinn Fein would come to be admitted to an inclusive political talks process to which the British Government is committed but without anticipating the negotiations within that process;
- (ii) to exchange views on how Sinn Fein would be able over a period to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland;
- (iii) to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

### So is the IRA ceasefire permanent?

As the Prime Minister said on 21 October, the IRA's actions have been more compelling than their words. He announced then a working assumption that it is intended to be permanent. That continues to be reasonable.

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Practical details (date, place etc?)

These have yet to be agreed with Sinn Fein. We have proposed an opening meeting on 7 December in Belfast. We hope further details can be announced once agreed.

Participants in dialogue?

It is for each side to select its own representatives. At the opening meeting the Government will be represented by senior NIO officials acting under political authority and direction.

Will Ministers join dialogue?

Officials will report closely to the Secretary of State. Ministers may join the dialogue at a suitable point if sufficient progress is made.

Further meetings, how often etc?

A matter for agreement between the two sides.

What will the first meeting discuss?

For agreement between both sides, but we envisage opening statements by each side, discussion of those statements and consideration of the future agenda.

What about dialogue with loyalists?

Prime Minister has said that will also begin before Christmas. There are no firm proposals for dates yet.



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Have secret contacts been reactivated?

Have nothing to add to the written answer on 9 December 1993. (We do not propose to divulge any further information about messages sent or received or to comment further save to give the assurance that any communications from Her Majesty's Government will be consistent with their publicly stated policies.)

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INVESTMENT FORUM

Councillors from all parties to be invited

Invitations to the investment Forum are to be issued to those elected councillors from all parties who are members of the relevant economic development committees on Belfast City Council and Derry City Council.

Why invite Sinn Fein when you never have before?

Ministers have responded to questions on local matters from Sinn Fein councillors during council matters. Officials have dealings on local matters.

Sinn Fein councillors have been included in the invitation now because:

- they are elected representatives;
- they have been chosen by their Council to serve on the relevant Committee;
- economic regeneration is a local issue of direct concern to councils.

(Why not Adams?)

We have invited elected people involved in economic development on local councils (Adams is not).

A U-turn?

We have been re-assessing our position on contacts with Sinn Fein constantly since the ceasefire was announced on 31 August. We have

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now judged it right in all the circumstances to invite elected councillors involved in economic development in Belfast and Londonderry City Councils to the Investment Forum.

Always recognised we had to deal with Sinn Fein as elected representatives on local issues. This development builds on that policy, in the light of the current situation.

Will you treat them as a normal political party?

Part of exploratory dialogue is how Sinn Fein can come to play a full part in normal political talks. These invitations are a sensible development of existing policy, building on Sinn Feins desire to contribute the economic regeneration.

But a long way to go yet before sceptical minds are convinced they can be treated as a normal political party. President Clinton not yet ready to let Adams fundraise like a normal political party.

(A re-entry to political life?)

No. It is a development of our existing policy - re-entry to political life is one of the items for exploratory dialogue.

Does this mean they can enter the talks process?

Part of the exploratory dialogue is how they can come to enter an inclusive talks process. Much to be discussed first - other parties not yet ready to sit down with Sinn Fein. Will want to know that Sinn Fein have established a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and the democratic process.

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Result of US pressure?

Prime Minister wants the Forum to be a success in attracting investment for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland. Clearly important local elected representatives are involved. Don't want anything to distract attention from building up the economic of Northern Ireland.

Will Ministers now allow Council delegations to include Sinn Fein?

Existing policy remains but will be reviewed as exploratory dialogue progressed.

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