

From: MRS J O SEAR
SIL/TPU
19 December 1994

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L)
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) -
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)
PS/Mr Moss (DOE, DHSS&L)
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Fell -
Mr Legge -
Mr Thomas (B&L)
Mr Bell, o/r
Mr Blackwell
Mr Brooke -
Mr Daniell
Mr Leach -
Mr Shannon
Mr Steele -
Mr Watkins -
Mr Williams -
Mr Wood (B&L)
Mr Brooker
Mrs Collins
Mrs Brown *20/12*
Mr Dodds -
Mr Maccabe -
Mr Perry -
Mr Marsh -
Mr Stephens
Mr Maxwell
Miss Jude -
Mr Bramley
Mr Beeton
Mr Margetts
Mr Brearley
Mr Caine -
Mr R Lyne, No 10
Mr P Lever, Cabinet Office
HMA, Dublin -
HMA, Washington
Mr Lamont, RID -

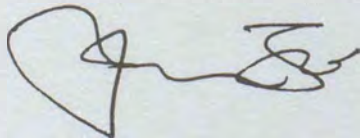
03/342/94

- 1. cc Mr [redacted]*
- 2. return to me*

PS/Secretary of State (B) *MB*

EXPLORATORY DIALOGUE WITH SINN FEIN - SECOND MEETING

I attach a copy of Sinn Fein's response - handed over at today's meeting - to the Government's opening statement of 9 December.



MRS J O SEAR
SIL Division

PS The meeting broke up at 1.20 - 1.25pm for a 15 minute recess

TOWARDS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT 2

Sinn Féin considers the first meeting between us to have been a useful beginning in the bilateral dialogue which is a prelude to inclusive negotiations, the essential next stage of the developing peace process.

Your introductory submission outlines the areas which you regard as pertinent to this stage of the dialogue. The document which we presented to you at the meeting will similarly have informed you of the issues which we regard as pertinent.

Sinn Féin is concerned to ensure that the matters for discussion between us in these bilateral talks are resolved and do not therefore cause any further, unnecessary delay in the commencement of negotiation.

In this document (and in greater detail at this meeting) we would hope to deal with these issues and, in this way, to clear the way for the opening of inclusive negotiations.

I am sure that you, as much as we, recognise the enormity of the initiative taken by the Irish Republican Army on 31 August this year and of the unprecedented opportunity this offers for the resolution of the age old conflict between Ireland and Britain.

This initiative and the potential it has opened up has been universally recognised and welcomed. The Dublin and US governments have already responded by opening substantive dialogue, at the level of political representation, with Sinn Féin. Your government still refuses to engage on this basis. It is clear however that your government has the central responsibility in turning the potential for a lasting settlement into a reality and we would urge you again to seize this opportunity and to move to the next stage of the peace process.

Each and every voter must have the right to equality of treatment. This is the democratic norm. In your document you say you wish to accord our party and our electorate equality of treatment. This statement is, however, totally at odds with the reality of your present position. It is entirely within your power to resolve this issue immediately. Present British government strategy is the only obstacle in this regard and we would urge you to immediately take the necessary measures to end the discrimination which we and our supporters experience. This in itself would contribute significantly to the building of trust and therefore to the peace process itself. Continued discrimination is unacceptable and can only call into question the sincerity of your approach to this process.

In the context of the ending of discrimination against those who vote for Sinn Féin and our representatives, we consider that the commencement of all party talks led by the two governments is a matter of practical arrangements and we believe that as these negotiations constitute the next and most urgent stage of the evolving peace process that we should move to this stage as soon as possible.

The British government should not attempt to use the unionist parties as an excuse for excluding Sinn Féin from inclusive negotiations. The issue of the participation of other political parties in the negotiation process is one which is clearly beyond our control. We believe that your government should endeavour to persuade all parties to participate on the basis of equality. No party can, however, be given a veto over the involvement of Sinn Féin or of any other democratically mandated party.

British sovereignty over the six-counties, as with all of Ireland before partition, is self-evidently the inherent cause of political instability and conflict. The ending of British jurisdiction must, therefore, be addressed within the democratic context of the exercise of the right to national self-determination if the cause of instability and conflict is to be removed.

Since the core political issues are properly the subject of inclusive negotiations over which government officials have no mandate or authority we feel that it would, therefore, be diversionary to engage you in debate on these issues. The acknowledgement in your document that these issues need to be addressed and resolved in inclusive negotiations, with no issue excluded and no outcome predetermined, needs now to be matched by positive action to put these negotiations in place.

The issues which you regard as obstacles to Sinn Féin's participation in inclusive dialogue are matters over which Sinn Féin have no control. However, to assist your understanding and help move us forward, we are prepared to outline the Sinn Féin position on these matters.

In your opening statement you seek clarification on Sinn Féin's attitude to the use of violence.

Sinn Féin is not involved in violence, nor do we advocate the use of violence. In fact Sinn Féin as a political party, our members, including democratically elected representatives and their families have consistently been the victims of violence inflicted by loyalist and by British forces.

Sinn Féin recognises that there is a conflict which has arisen from the failure to reach an acceptable political settlement based on democratic principles and that in the absence of such a political settlement that conflict will inevitably result. Rather than supporting violence as you would suggest we do, Sinn Féin wishes to both remove the causes and to tackle the consequences of conflict so that the conditions for a lasting peace can be

created.

Our commitment to this position was underlined publicly by the Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams in a joint statement, issued with the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds and the SDLP leader John Hume on 6th September 1994, which stated:

"We are at the beginning of a new era in which we are totally committed to democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems. We reiterate that our objective is an equitable and lasting agreement that can command the allegiance of all".

Your government's refusal to accept that this is the case is without foundation and is regarded by many as a tactical barrier to forward movement.

You seek to convince international opinion that you recognise and accept the democratic mandate of Sinn Féin and the democratic right of our electorate while, contradictorily, you assert that the continuation of this bilateral dialogue is dependant on the disposal of weapons. Sinn Féin does not have any weapons to dispose of. In fact, it is our often stated objective to see the removal of all guns, Irish and British, from Irish politics. The effective application, for the first time, of democratic principles and the achievement of a political settlement on this basis, is the only way to permanently remove conflict.

The peace process to be effective, therefore, needs to confront the reality that there are a large number of armed groups, British, loyalist and republican, involved in this conflict. The existence of all of these groups needs to be resolved by an effective demilitarisation process and as part of a overall political settlement. The RUC needs to be disbanded and replaced by a police service which is acceptable and accountable to all our people. The British Army needs to be withdrawn and the consequences of the arming of the loyalist death squads by British military intelligence and of collusion with these death squads need to be dealt with.

You seek clarification also on the relationship of Sinn Féin to the IRA.

Sinn Féin is not the IRA. Sinn Féin does not speak for nor, in any way, determine the actions of the IRA. Sinn Féin is a separate and entirely different organisation, a reality recognised and publicly acknowledged by your government most directly following the banning of the UDA on August 10th 1992 when both Sir Patrick Mayhew and Michael Mates drew a clear distinction between Sinn Féin and the IRA.

Sinn Féin is an open and democratic political party with electoral support in both partitioned states in Ireland. We have elected officer boards at all levels of our party with the ultimate authority resting with our Ard Fheis (annual conference). Sinn Féin's objective is the establishment of an

agreed, democratic, pluralist and non-sexist Ireland.

We are totally opposed to sectarianism and we have a range of policies on social and economic issues. Sinn Féin upholds the right to civil and religious liberty and we have argued for a new national constitution which would incorporate a Charter of Rights. For the last number of years, Sinn Féin's engagement in the Irish peace process has been our primary political function and it has been and remains a personal priority for Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams.

In this context Sinn Féin welcomed the recent complete cessation of all military operations by the IRA as a significant and substantial contribution to the achievement of peace. It is a matter of historical record that we played a major role in the development of the Irish peace process. The loyalist death squads subsequently responded with a cessation of their activities. Up to now the British government and the forces under its command have failed to respond meaningfully to this new situation. British forces are now the only armed groups still engaged in military activity within the six county state. British Army and RUC activity has continued virtually unaltered. The RUC, the RIR and the British Army, continue to saturate nationalist areas where their presence is provocative, unnecessary and unacceptable.

The ending of conflict by all parties is clearly required if we are to set the stage for the achievement of peace through a negotiated settlement. In attempting to achieve this and in the interests of honest and constructive dialogue for this purpose there should, therefore, be no attempt to draw spurious distinctions between 'lawful' and 'unlawful' political violence.

It is clear that peace is not simply the absence of conflict. Rather it is the existence of conditions in which the causes of conflict have been eradicated and where justice, equality and democracy prevail; where agreed political structures and institutions are a substitute for political conflict; where diversity is recognised and democratically accommodated. This is the task which faces us all and the sooner we begin this work the sooner we can leave the divisions and mistrust of the past behind us.

In your opening statement you say that the fundamental issues *"can be most satisfactorily addressed and resolved through inclusive political negotiations addressing a broad agenda across all the relevant relationships with no issue excluded and no outcome predetermined"*.

We would urge you to act on this statement and initiate these essential peace talks without further, unnecessary delay. As a democratically mandated political party exclusively committed to peaceful methods Sinn Féin must, of course, be fully involved in these negotiations.

When do you intend to initiate, with the Dublin government, all party talks?

What format will these talks follow?

How will the various parties to the negotiations, including the British government, be represented?

Where will these talks take place?

What time-scale do you envisage for these talks?

19 DECEMBER 1994