



SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1

Dear Jack,

THE CENOTAPH

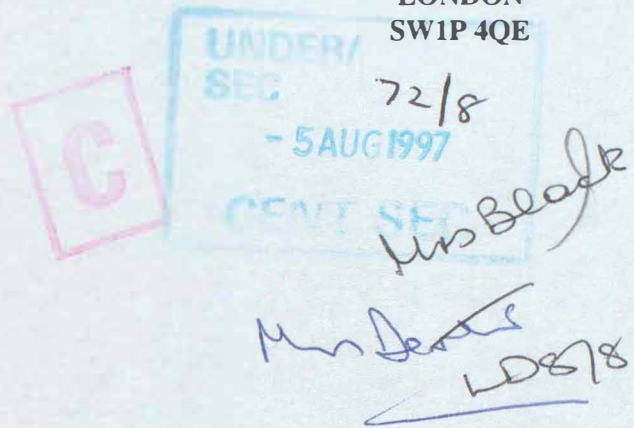
Thank you for copying to me your minute of 26 July to the Prime Minister regarding the position of Sinn Féin in relation to invitations to attend the Cenotaph ceremony. By the end of August I may be in a position to judge that the IRA ceasefire has been unequivocally restored and that Sinn Féin meet the criteria which would require me to invite them to join the multi-party negotiations in Northern Ireland. Thereafter, probably on 9 September, Sinn Féin would be required to affirm its total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body; and from that point onwards I and my Ministerial colleagues will treat Sinn Féin like any other political party.

Given the principles of democracy, I see no basis for proceeding in any other way. The question of whether they take up their seats or take the Oath of Allegiance seems to me to be irrelevant: that is a matter for the House authorities; so far as Government is concerned, Sinn Féin elected representatives have a democratic mandate which should - once they have renounced terrorism - be fully respected. Against that background you might want to defer a decision on the question of whether or not to invite the two Sinn Féin MP s to the Cenotaph, and review the situation in the second week of September.

CJ/Straw/DLs

Contacts with Sinn Féin

801/97 NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
11 MILLBANK
LONDON
SW1P 4QE



31 July 1997

801197

C



UN SEC 31 JUL 1997 CENT SEC

RECEIVED BY 105/26197 29 JUL 1997 PRIVATE OFFICE

Prime Minister

THE CENOTAPH

As you know, invitations to the Cenotaph ceremony in Whitehall are sent out by my office early in September.

2. Since 1984 wreaths have been laid at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday by the leader of those parties which have six seats or more in the Commons. The leaders of parties which have more than one seat, but less than six, are invited to attend the ceremony but not to lay a wreath. These arrangements were agreed after consultation with the party leaders of the day and the then Speaker, and were approved by The Queen.

3. If we follow this precedent in 1997, it might be held that Sinn Fein should, for the first time, be invited to attend the ceremony. I do not think we can do this if we are to preserve the solemnity and dignity which the occasion deserves; and I suggest that the fact that neither Gerry Adams nor Martin McGuinness has taken the Oath of Allegiance and taken his seat in the House provides full justification for excluding the party from the ceremony.

4. I do not think that, in practice, a challenge is very likely. Sinn Fein were not party to the 1984 agreement so they are probably unaware of past practice; and although the Scottish Nationalists and Plaid Cymru have been invited in previous years - a practice which I think should continue - they have not accepted the invitation because they prefer to take part in local ceremonies.

5. I would therefore welcome your agreement to the proposal that Sinn Fein should not be invited to this year's Cenotaph ceremony.

6. I am sending a copy of this minute to Mo Mowlam, Donald Dewar and to Ron Davies.

Jim Black
M. Jones
LD 31/7

- ① S & S to see
- ② cc PS/SiPS/L+B
PS/Mr Murphy/L+B
PS/PUS(L+B)
PS/Sir D Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr ~~Thomas~~
Mr Stephens
Mr Hill
Mr Mawdsley
Mr Bracher

J.S.

26th July 1997

29/7



In practice I would not expect either of them to respond to an invitation. Republicans traditionally boycott such ceremonies and even mainstream nationalist politicians in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland have only begun to attend in recent years.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Prime Minister, Donald Dewar and Ron Davies.

M

MARJORIE MOWLAM

*P.S. Sack, this is a difficult one -
let's hold back to mid-September &
review the situation.*