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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
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BY FAX NO: 01232-622112

Martin McGuinness
SINN FEIN

13 April 1995.

Dear Mr McGuinness,

Thank you for sending us on 11 April a further draft of the possible exchange of letters between us. In the light of this and of our previous contacts, each now has a better understanding of the other's position.

Accordingly it may be helpful if I set out the position I believe we have reached as a result of our recent correspondence, our exchanges of illustrative drafts and our informal discussions. I hope you can now agree to move ahead, without any further delay, on the basis below.

First, as I understand it, Sinn Fein want to engage in serious, constructive, detailed and substantive discussions on all relevant issues with British Ministers. We both take the view that all issues of importance should be included.

Second, Sinn Fein accepts that once our Minister of State joins the exploratory dialogue, there will first be a discussion, as a separate issue, on the decommissioning of arms. Sinn Fein has given a commitment to engage in serious and constructive discussions on all aspects of this subject. You know and accept that this discussion will include an exploration of the ways by which decommissioning can best be achieved; and accordingly that we shall need to explore, among other things, methods, verification, including the scope for independent supervision, legal and practical considerations, and timing. We, on our side, understand that you will approach this and all issues on the basis of your mandate and analysis, with a view to seeking the resolution of this and all relevant issues.



Third, Sinn Fein has made clear its wish to raise what you term "demilitarisation". As we have always said, no subject is excluded. We know from what you have said that you have your own opinions on this subject, which you will no doubt express. For our part, we will be glad to explain the Government's policy and approach.

A simple confirmation, in writing, that this letter correctly records the position will open the way to Ministerial meetings with your party in exploratory dialogue. We shall then be in touch through the usual channels to arrange the next meeting of exploratory dialogue, at which our Minister of State will lead the Government team, on a mutually convenient date.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Stephens

PP:QUENTIN THOMAS