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Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

19 December, 1995.

Mr. Gerry Adams
President
Sinn Féin.

Dear Gerry,

Thank you for your letter. I have taken careful note of the points you have made. I am surprised that you raise again at this stage a series of points I believed we had disposed of in the many useful discussions we had since I became Taoiseach.

For the record I will reiterate that

- on a decommissioning 'gesture' the clear Irish Government position which I enunciated specifically at the Press Conference to launch the Joint Communiqué of 28 November - is that there will not be actual decommissioning as a pre condition for all party negotiations. It is for this reason that the Irish Government put forward the proposal earlier this year of an International Body as a means of removing the decommissioning issue as an obstacle to progress to the political settlement based on consent which we all desire.
- the Irish Government have in no sense "moved substantially towards the British position". The Irish Government have at all

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times adhered to a position of removing decommissioning as an obstacle to progress, to be achieved through all party round table negotiations, to a political settlement based on consent.

- on joint meetings between SDLP and Sinn Fein with the Irish Government, I have made clear that the Irish Government are happy to have such meetings as often as necessary for particular purposes and that we will inform other parties of their taking place to avoid any misunderstandings. On the specific point of suggesting a date my understanding is that Sinn Fein agreed to contact SDLP and come back with possible dates.
- on consultation about the Joint Communiqué, we had two long meetings to understand each others positions. You made clear that you recognised the Irish Government had to make a decision on completion in the context of inter-Governmental negotiations.
- only one - that in relation to the date - of the six points you make on the British position prevailing in finalising the Joint Communiqué is correct.

I will be happy to meet with you, as I have done up to now, to be helpful in the Peace Process. I have been readily available for this purpose as you know.

The truth is that if there is to be a political settlement, to which all can give their consent, there must be movement from all the relevant parties, including the British Government and the Unionists, but also from Sinn Féin and the IRA.

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The entire purpose of the twin track approach is to remove preconditions and move us to all party negotiations. To this end we must work to create the political conditions (a phrase you use in your submission to the International Body) in which that movement takes place. This will require an effort on Sinn Féin's part to remove the fears generated among many ordinary citizens by the existence of IRA arms. The international body gives Sinn Féin a unique opportunity to put forward its own creative proposals to remove these fears.

You have a clear responsibility to do this, and I hope that you will give this the most serious consideration.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and New Year.
Yours sincerely,

John B. Stewart
Taoiseach.



GERRY ADAMS

President of Sinn Féin

51/55 Bóthar na bhFál, Béal Feirste BT12 4PD

15 December 1995

An Taoiseach John Bruton, TD
Oifig an Taoisigh

A Chara, *John*,

I am writing to you to express my deep concern at recent developments and to re-emphasise the urgent need to move into the negotiations phase of the peace process.

As you are aware, I have publicly expressed the willingness of Sinn Féin to approach the twin track process positively and with the intention of enhancing the peace process. I am convinced, however, that this desire is not shared by the British government or by the unionists, given their persistent reiteration of the precondition of a actual surrender of IRA weapons. There is consequently deep and widespread cynicism within the republican community at the value or effect of any such engagement in the twin track process.

The growing scepticism, I must say, has been added to by the perception which coincides with the media assessment that the Irish government conceded heavily to the British position in the immediate run in to President Clinton's visit and that this manifested itself in the Joint Communique which failed even to meet the standard set by your own government. The Joint Communique which emerged is, in ways, a less attractive document than the draft Joint Communique for the postponed summit in September.

The central difficulty is that the demand for an IRA surrender and the debate which has developed around it was no part of the political package which persuaded the IRA to call its cessation last August. The precondition of a surrender of IRA weapons was not raised by the British government, at any time prior to the cessation. This demand as a precondition to all-party dialogue is a new one introduced in February of this year, a full five months after the IRA cessation. This type of bad faith engagement is no surprise to Irish republicans and nationalists. The difficulties are however compounded by the fact that, in the face of outright British intransigence, the Irish government has moved substantially towards the British position. This began with your public appeal to the IRA to make a gesture on the arms issue in March of this year. The downward slide began at that point, when in effect you altered the basis on which the IRA had declared their cessation, breaching the consensus position and allowing the British to procrastinate and stall the peace process. You will recall that I spoke to you about this in Washington and subsequently when we both returned to Ireland.

The demand for a surrender of weapons is quite clearly a bogus obstacle and a bogus debate. Sinn Féin has an electoral mandate which should be recognised and acted upon by the British

government and defended by the Irish government in line with the commitments given prior to the IRA cessation. This is not and should not be dependent on the actions of the IRA, an entirely separate organisation. Sinn Fein should not be excluded from negotiations, and other parties should not be prevented from engaging in negotiation because of a British government precondition which no party can deliver, a demand from an organisation over which no party, including Sinn Fein, has control.

The reality is that the precondition is simply a pretext designed to camouflage the British government's fundamentally anti-democratic position and bad-faith approach to the peace process.

Concessions to the British position, including the entire concept of a twin track approach are in fact concessions to this anti-democratic position and are in clear breach of the democratic consensus which was agreed prior to the IRA cessation.

In public terms the breach in this consensus most clearly manifested itself in your rejection on October 13, of a request from myself and John Hume for a joint meeting to discuss the stale-mate in the peace process and our joint proposals to move forward. Despite your subsequent assurances that you would meet John Hume and myself, two months later you have still to suggest a date for this meeting.

Despite all of this and our reservations about the twin track approach Sinn Fein agreed to explore this option on the basis that it would take the British of a hook which, it was argued, they had got themselves on in relation to their demands for a surrender of IRA weapons as a precondition to all-party talks. Sinn Fein did not share the assessment that this was the British government's actual position. However, we subsequently made clear our views on what was required to move us into all-party talks to both the British and Irish governments. In the wake of the postponed summit, you sent a communication to the British government outlining your views on the twin track. I expressed detailed, written reservations to you about this position, in which you outlined six outstanding issues of disagreement. In the joint communique which was signed on 28th November the British position prevailed on 5 of the 6 points while the sixth did not arise explicitly in the joint communique.

That is, in the joint communique;

1. The date for all-party talks was set 12 weeks after the launch of the initiative in contrast for the Irish government preference for a six week period.
2. The procedure for the holding of preparatory talks is much less energetic than that sought by the Irish government. The commitment to joint meetings is greatly diluted and the ability of the unionists parties to veto all-party talks is greatly enhanced.
3. The basis for political parties engaging with the International Body did not arise explicitly in the joint communique.
4. The description of arms the International Body would deal with, as per the British position, was "arms silenced by virtue of the welcome decisions taken last Summer and Autumn by those organisations that has previously supported the use of arms for political purposes".
5. Despite the Irish government's concern that it should take "the entire weapons issue within its purview, not just Washington 1 and 2" the extent of the International Body's remit was defined, as the British had suggested;

" - to identify and advise on a suitable and acceptable method for full and verifiable decommissioning; and
- report whether there is a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve that."

6. The Irish government's view was that "If any elected body is to be flagged, then any joint text must adequately reflect the consistent view of Northern nationalists on this issue." Despite this the joint communique did flag an elected body with no reflection of northern nationalist opposition to this position.

Given the preponderance of the British positions in the joint communique signed on 28th November, you will understand the concern within the republican and northern nationalist constituencies that the crisis in the peace process has been postponed rather than averted. I would have welcomed consultation with you on the text prior to the publication of the joint communique, a consultation to which your government had previously committed itself. However we received no such opportunity despite persistent efforts to contact you and your department on the day the communique was agreed. In fact on the 28th November I made repeated calls to your office beginning at 9.45 am and continuing right through the day. In the event, we received the text of the joint communique subsequent to its public release. In fact our first copy came from a journalist rather than your office.

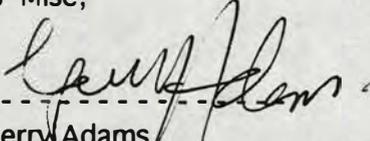
All of the above leads to a growing sense of despair within nationalist Ireland that British negativity and begrudgery is being allowed to dictate the agenda and, therefore, to undermine the peace process. What is required is an assertive Irish defence of the democratic position. It was agreed between the two governments before the cessation that the next stage in the peace process would be all-party negotiations to find a lasting political settlement on the island. This now needs to happen.

As you pointed out prior to the signing of the Joint Communique, the twin track process is a waste of time if it does not remove preconditions and move us all into full negotiations. Without peace talks we cannot have a peace settlement, without equality of treatment the injustices of the past will be sustained.

Sinn Fein is participating in this twin track approach in a serious and sincere effort to move the peace process forward. This requires that all democratically mandated parties be accorded equality, that negotiations without precondition be initiated as a matter of the utmost urgency and that the British precondition be removed, not simply postponed or diluted.

I trust that you will give these matters the most serious consideration.

Is Mise,



Gerry Adams

*Best wishes for
Christmas and
the New Year*
