

Background Note

At the Sinn Fein annual conference on 3 February, Mr Gerry Adams outlined a "peace process" and referred to the "inevitability of talks" between the Government and Sinn Fein. Unionist MPs in particular are vociferously opposed to any suggestion that the Government might talk to Sinn Fein (some suspect 'behind the scenes' negotiations involving a ceasefire). The Government has consistently made it clear that there can be no contact with Sinn Fein while it supports the use of violence.

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13

Sinn Fein 4/DEMOCR/RS

FROM: D G McNEILL, PM  
DATE: 4 FEBRUARY 1991

PLS/46  
4 FEB 1991  
N.I.S. LONDON

The Government's view, frequently expressed, is that while Sinn Fein endorses violence we cannot engage with them as if they were a normal democratic party. If they want to be treated like one they will have to behave like one. They cannot have it both ways.

Mr G. McNeill  
Mr. L. Kelly  
Mr. J. P. Kelly

Mr J. Pilling

I attach a draft reply to the Secretary of State on the request from the two Associations to meet the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. I would be grateful for any views you have on this. As you can see I have not received any submissions for No.10 until the time proposed for the meeting. The date has been agreed by the Secretary of State. I would be grateful to know in which case I can arrange for a draft reply to be sent to the relevant office deadline for advice to the Secretary of State on 4 February.

(SIGNED)

D G McNeill  
Political Affairs Division  
HQ Oct 2726

CPLHILL/3925/MD