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FAX COVER SHEET

TAOISEACH'S PRIVATE OFFICE

DATE: 18/6/96 **TIME:** 9.40 p.m

TO: Tom Dalton

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FROM: DECLAN INGOLDSBY

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17/6/96

Briefing Note

The Government's review of its relationship with Sinn Fein, which will begin tomorrow, will focus mainly on the question of whether Sinn Fein intends to continue to give political support to the armed struggle being waged by the IRA. In the past Mr. Gerry Adams accused the British Government of embracing the rhetoric of peace making but avoiding the real challenges. The real challenge now for Mr. Adams himself is to answer two simple questions:-

- (1) Has he yet gone to the IRA to ask for a ceasefire, and if not, why?

- (2) Does his party continue to support the "armed struggle" of the IRA?

These are simple political questions, and the Government will be looking at what Sinn Fein and the IRA do and say over the immediate future, to see if a clear answer is given to these questions. Democratic politicians in other jurisdictions will also be watching how Sinn Fein answers the questions.

The Government wants Sinn Fein to answer these questions for themselves. It wants an answer to these questions that is simple, genuine and convincing, not tactical or semantical.

Sinn Fein must avoid the temptation to blame others for the dilemma they find themselves in because of the contradiction between their own talk of peace, and the IRA action in Adare and Manchester. This political dilemma can only be resolved if Sinn Fein answers these simple questions about their party policy.

Dalton Dept.

Contact with Sinn Fein - Possible Press line

Following the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire on 9th February, the Government decided that it should terminate all Ministerial contact but maintain limited official contact with Sinn Fein.

Official contact was maintained in the belief that it would be more likely to be of assistance to Sinn Fein in persuading the IRA to restore the August '94 ceasefire than would a policy of total refusal of Government contact.

The Government is seriously concerned that, so far, Sinn Fein has clearly not managed to persuade the IRA to restore the ceasefire. The death of Garda McCabe in Adare, the serious injuries inflicted on Garda O'Sullivan and the bombing outrage in Manchester in which hundreds of people were injured, provide no grounds for confidence that the IRA intends to allow Sinn Fein to follow the road of peace and democracy.

The Government having carefully reviewed the situation is not, however, convinced that it should, at this time, terminate all contacts, including existing limited official contacts, with Sinn Fein. It has decided to leave open the possibility that further contact will take place at official level but only for the purpose of obtaining an up-to-date assessment of Sinn Fein's actual prospects of persuading the IRA towards peace, against the background of that organisation's recent acts of violence.

Following that contact, the Government will again review the case for keeping open a line of communication with Sinn Fein.