

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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cc - JP
✓ PM Fadden
Ac
Bup.

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File
JH 12/5.

12 May 1997

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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Dear John,

NORTHERN IRELAND: MEETINGS WITH PARTY LEADERS

You requested briefing for meetings which the Prime Minister hopes to have early next week with the leaders of the main Northern Ireland political parties. The Secretary of State or Mr Murphy hope to be present.

I set out below some general points for the Prime Minister to make and attach at Annex A particular points, directed at individual parties; Annex B contains background notes on those parties (we could provide personality notes when we know who is coming); and Annex C is an analytical paper on the search for a political settlement, which would usefully focus the Prime Minister's thoughts, if he had an opportunity to read it.

Objectives

These are introductory encounters and unlikely to be the occasion for detailed discussion. (The Secretary of



State has so far had only brief meetings with the parties). The main objectives would be to:

communicate the Government's and the Prime Minister's personal commitment to the search for a fair political accommodation and lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

reassure the parties about the key bases of policy, summarised below;

establish a basis of confidence and trust for future dealings.

General Points to Make

1. Determined to do all I can to bring about lasting peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. Full confidence in Mo Mowlam but will maintain a personal interest. Always ready to engage directly where that would be helpful.
2. Want to emphasise that our approach is based on firm principles and will therefore be consistent:
 - completely committed to the principle of consent. Welcome near universal acceptance of it.
 - equally committed to making Northern Ireland a place nationalists can feel comfortable to live in. Parity of esteem. Equality of opportunity.



Appropriate expression of their Irish national identity (without prejudice to the constitutional guarantee).

3. Believe the Talks process offers the best chance of securing a comprehensive political settlement which could address and resolve the fundamental political concerns of all participants. No risk to anyone's fundamental interests. Any outcome must be agreed and widely supported before it can be implemented.
4. Determined to promote real progress in the Talks. Looking for ways to resolve the decommissioning issue on satisfactory terms and set an early date for substantive political negotiations.
5. Believe it is right to leave the door open for Sinn Fein to join the Talks, but ONLY if there is an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire. If they refuse the opportunity, quite ready to press on without them.

Yours ever,

Ken

W K LINSDAY