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AA
C: JP
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Rights & European Division

From Tony Beeton
15th May 1997

file
John 16/5.

IMMEDIATE

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

cc PS/Mr Murphy
PS/PUS
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Steele
Mr Ray
Mr Stephens
Mr Wood
Mr Holmes, N^o 10
Mr Budd, Cabinet Office

FURTHER CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN

At 1.30pm today I took a call from Siobhan O'Hanlon. She told me that she had a message for Quentin Thomas from Martin McGuinness which she wanted me to take down verbatim. I did so and read back the text to confirm that I had got down correctly.

The message reads:

'There are some matters which I wish to bring to your attention. Some of these are issues of concern to us, others are for your information.

Gerry Adams and I intend to travel to Westminster early next week. Our intention is to pick up our passes and to spend a short time in the House of Commons. Notwithstanding the Speaker's speech yesterday we hope there will be no obstacles placed in our way.

I am told that the British Embassy in Dublin has told some people that you have been in touch with us.

We note in a recent statement by Secretary of State Mo Mowlam that the Tory party's interpretation of the Mitchell Report's position on decommissioning has been reiterated. You are aware of our party's position on this. The issue of decommissioning has been used as an obstacle to negotiations and in the some-party talks at Stormont which have made no progress whatsoever.

It is crucial that we work to resolve problematic issues and avoid taking up public positions which add to the difficulties even in this settling in period.

We wish to make the same point about the speech which we understand the Prime Minister Tony Blair will be making in the near future.'

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Comment

It may be worth noting that Ms O'Hanlon's mood and tone during the conversation was relaxed and friendly (lighter than our telephone calls last week which had been the first for some months). She readily told me that she would be available on her usual numbers except during this afternoon when she would be visiting 'the prison'. I did not get the impression that she expected to be called back quickly, and she did not press me about a response to either of Gerry Adam's letters.

I would interpret the message as an attempt to show that while Sinn Fein want to remain engaged, they do worry about having their room for manoeuvre limited by events and that they hope to nudge us towards conciliatory or neutral positions if they can. It appears also to be designed to impress us with the breadth of their information (and the depth of their political acumen?)

[Signed]

Tony Beeton

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