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*Dear John,*

**MEETING WITH SINN FEIN: MONDAY 19 JANUARY**

The Prime Minister is to see Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness at 4.00pm this afternoon. The Secretary of State will attend, accompanied by Mr Thomas.

**Context**

The backdrop is:

- rising drumbeat of sectarian murder, following on the assassination of Billy Wright. Four Catholics have been murdered, including a relative of Mr Adams. A loyalist was this morning murdered in Dunmurry. The murders of the Catholics have been claimed by the LVF, but there are strong grounds for suspecting the involvement at least of elements of more mainstream loyalist paramilitaries. Five known UFF men (allied to Gary McMichael's UDP) were arrested in connection with one of the murders. The murders put real pressure on the IRA, whose most traditional role has always been as defender of the Catholic community. There are taunts of "IRA - I Ran Away";
- the process of negotiating "Propositions". Sinn Fein see David Trimble as having an inside track, backed up by loyalist violence outside the process. They think he has been rewarded for his failure to engage in the negotiations at Castle Buildings by being given direct access to the Prime Minister and direct involvement in negotiating "Propositions", denied to other parties;





- the substance of "Propositions". Sinn Fein claim they are a significant retreat from "Frameworks". They focus in particular on the role of the Intergovernmental Council, its relationship with the North/South Council, whether the North/South Council will have Executive powers and its relationship with the Assembly;
- the presentation of "Propositions" which, aided by the mischievous Daily Telegraph leak, has tended to conclude that they are more Unionist than nationalist. (Although the Economist, for example, described "Propositions" as a one page summary of Frameworks.)

### Analysis

The evidence remains good that Adams and McGuinness want a peaceful negotiating settlement and could live with an outcome along the lines of "Frameworks". But, as we always recognised, this requires more compromise from Sinn Fein than any other party and requires them to deliver most of their movement. Crucial to that is the process of negotiations, as much as the substance; also vital is the equality agenda and "on the ground" measures - security de-escalation, prisoners etc.

The best pitch, reflected in the attached points to make, is to emphasise that we want a deal which includes Sinn Fein. We are not, whatever suspicions they harbour about Unionists, working for a deal which excludes them. But a genuine deal requires compromise on all sides - that means Sinn Fein need to focus on what a real outcome might be.

*Yours ever*  
*John McKervill*  
 JOHN McKERVILL