

29-JAN-1998 10:42 FROM SOS PRIVATE OFFICE TO

From the Prime Minister's Secretary

P.02

TOP: JEH
CC: SS17
PB
AC

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Dear John

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This is to provide briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with a DUP delegation on 29 January.

It is unlikely that this meeting will produce anything new and the Prime Minister can expect a repeat of his last meeting with the DUP on 24 November 1997 when Dr Paisley and the Rev McCrea focused on security issues and Peter Robinson was prevented by his colleagues from engaging on the substantial political issues related to the Talks. Since that meeting Mr Robinson has written to the Prime Minister (his letter of 12 January refers) alleging that there are parties in the Talks, principally Sinn Fein, which have breached the Mitchell Principles on non-violence. He bases this allegation on information from "reliable" sources and press articles but has produced no firm evidence. Officials are currently preparing a draft reply.

The DUP are therefore likely to renew their attack on the integrity of the Talks process and the Prime Minister should respond by pointing to the decisive action taken by both Governments to remove the UDP from the Talks based on the firm evidence of a breach of the Mitchell Principles by the UFF. He should assert that further decisive action will be taken if firm evidence is produced indicating that other groups, associated with Talks' parties, have breached the Principles. This reply is unlikely to satisfy the DUP because their purpose in raising this issue is not to uphold the integrity of the Talks but rather to undermine them. The DUP might also attack the participation of Sinn Fein in the Talks by raising the recent comments of the RUC Chief Constable in which he considered that the IRA, under cover of Direct Action Against Drugs (which they have used previously for many assaults), were involved in the attempted murder of a man in Belfast. However, we have no firm evidence to confirm this.

Dr Mowlam's visit to the loyalist prisoners in the Maze may well be a further target for the DUP to aim at as another illustration of a lack of integrity in the process.

Continuing in their vein of undermining the Talks, the Prime Minister can expect an attack on the Propositions on Heads of Agreement and an allegation that the Government is wedded to full implementation of the Framework Documents. In particular the DUP are likely to seize on their perception that papers tabled this week by the Governments lead the way

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to an imposed settlement based on Frameworks. In making this point the ~~to~~ be attempting to provoke a confession from the Prime Minister that Frameworks are on the table. They will try to milk the political mileage from a such a statement in order to disadvantage the UUP. The Prime Minister *might* reply that Frameworks are a reasonable statement of both Governments' best assessment of where a settlement might be found but that it is up to the parties to negotiate a deal which will find support across both communities in Northern Ireland. Propositions reflects the positions of most Talks' parties as to where that deal might be struck and the parties are now moving forward to discuss the detail. If the DUP wish to be a part of the negotiations then they should return to the Talks.

In pursuing their conspiracy theory the DUP are likely to allege that the UUP has been duped into engaging in a process that will lead to a United Ireland. They may try to elicit from the Prime Minister an assertion that the UUP should engage directly with Sinn Fein as the next stage in the process. The Prime Minister will understand that such a statement would be unhelpful for Mr Trimble in the same way that Liz O'Donnell's (the Irish Minister of State) press statement at Lancaster House that Reg Empey had been helpful towards Sinn Fein, in the Talks, is likely to make life difficult for him.

Tactically the Prime Minister should expect another negative performance from the DUP and the best he can hope for is to perhaps alarm them that the Talks are moving forward and a settlement might be achieved without them. I have attached in the Annex some points to make which reflect the above issues and also cover the general security situation and the recent events in the Maze Prison which are also likely to be raised by the DUP.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'J. D. G.'.

for W K LINDSAU

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