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2 February 1998

No of pages including this sheet: 3

To: HQ
For: Secretary Gallagher

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

*Ms. McLaughlin
Ran on to the
Tapeark
4.2.98*

Subj: UDP meeting with British officials

1. We have obtained the following read-out on the meeting between the UDP and British Government officials last Friday.
2. The meeting has been characterised as "good-tempered". The UDP were represented by David Adams, John White, Frank McCoubrey and Philip Dean. The British Government officials were Quentin Thomas, Jonathan Stephens, Chris McCabe and Maura Quinn.
3. The UDP emphasised at some length the efforts they had made to bring about an end to the recent Loyalist violence. They had expended "every ounce of influence" with the UFF. They felt rewarded by the statement announcing a restoration of the UFF ceasefire but considered it unfortunate that they had not been consulted on the terms of this statement.
4. They expressed concern that, if they were to be excluded for, say, six weeks (on the Sinn Fein model), the talks process could be virtually at an end by the time they rejoined it. They pressed, accordingly, for re-entry in advance of the Dublin session.
 The British response was to repeat the terms set out in the joint determination of 26 January.
5. Adams raised the question of access to the UDP's Castle Buildings offices in the interim. Thomas doubted whether this would be possible in current circumstances (He agreed, however, that they should be allowed in briefly to clear the offices: this, we understand, happened later on Friday). Thomas speculated that, if it became

- clear that the conditions set by the Governments were being fulfilled and re-entry on a given date was certain, the UDP could be given access to their offices a week or so in advance of that date
6. As to the broad timeframe for a decision to readmit the party, Thomas suggested on a personal basis that, even in the most benign circumstances (e.g. an unqualified statement from the UFF, with helpful supporting statements from the UDP, and the UFF ceasefire holding firmly on the ground), readmission would not be a feasible prospect in anything less than four to six weeks. He made clear, moreover, that he was saying this without commitment and that the Governments would make a decision based on their assessment of the overall situation.
 7. The possibility of access to British Ministers during the interim was not ruled out by the British side. However, Thomas made clear that this would be conditional on progress being made towards the creation of circumstances which would facilitate the UDP's readmission.
 8. The UDP seemed broadly content with the substance of the Strand Two paper tabled by the two Governments last Tuesday, though they had problems relating to its language and presentation. They were unhappy with the references to the Framework Document, which they took to imply a "rowing-back" from the propositions document. They will be offering comments on the paper to the two Governments and will probably circulate these to the other delegations as well.
 9. They sought access to official talks papers during the period of their exclusion. The British side noted this request but said that they would have to seek instructions on it.
 10. The basic British message to the UDP was that the two Governments would like to see the party back in the process but only on the proper terms. The lines of the attached press statement were agreed between the two sides.



NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

30th January 1998

MEETING WITH UDP

Officials met representatives of the UDP at their request.

The UDP asked about the prospects for the Party being re-admitted to the Talks process.

Officials explained that, as the determination issued by the two Governments on 26 January made clear, if over a period of weeks a complete, unequivocal and unqualified UFF ceasefire were demonstrated, and established through word and deed to have been fully and continuously observed, the Governments would consider the possibility of the UDP re-joining the negotiations. The Governments would welcome that prospect in such circumstances.

Officials explained that the situation would be kept under most careful review.

It would be important to establish, by consistency of word and deed, a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.

A further meeting might be arranged in due course.