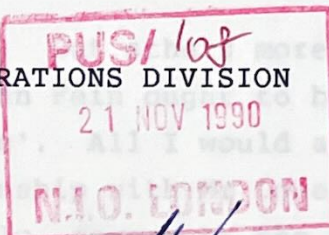


~~(S)~~ ~~(P)~~
 (3)

FROM: P N BELL
 SECURITY POLICY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION
 DATE: 20 NOVEMBER 1990

COPY NO [] OF 9



Mr Wilson - B [1]

PUS
 21/11
 PS/PUS (L&B) - B [2&3]
 PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B [4]
 Mr Ledlie - B [5]
 Mr Pilling - B [6]
 Mr Alston - B [7]
 Mr Deverell - B [8]

CEASEFIRE IN LONDONDERRY?

During my visit to Londonderry last week to chair a regular meeting of my Security and Housing Committee (minuted separately), Mr Joe Cowan, the DOE Development Officer for the City, told me in the margins of conversations he had had with the well known Derry operator, Mr Paddy Doherty.

2. Mr Doherty has, apparently, good contacts with the Provisionals. They have apparently told him, in the past, and for transmission, one assumes, to HMG that the Provisionals would be prepared to desist from 'operations' inside the Walled City, if the Army was removed (and presumably, only 'normal' policing continued). (This would not, as I recall, be at total variance with the kind of plans for 'deals' in the City widely touted some time ago and emanating from the Peace and Reconciliation Group.) Although this 'offer' had been made some weeks past, Mr Cowan had no reason to believe that it did not continue to represent Provisional thinking in the city.

3. I ought, perhaps, only to add that Mr Cowan had also mentioned this approach to Mr Needham who had asked him to investigate. However Mr Cowan had not, apart from speaking to me, reported back to his own Minister. This seems sensible, as the subject is far from Mr Needham's own direct responsibilities.

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SECRET & PERSONAL

4. It is also far from mine. But others more directly involved in formulating policy towards Sinn Fein ought to be aware, if they are not already, of this 'démarche'. All I would add is that Mr Cowan enjoys a good working relationship with Mr Doherty, and believes that he could, quite informally, revert to the issue in future conversations with him should anyone think this desirable.

5. Given the concerns over the possible siting of a new police station in Bishops Gate Within, to which the entire community in the City, Protestant as well as Catholic, seems opposed, one might incline, in principle, to sympathise with any proposal that would reduce the likelihood of the Walled City's being a target; for if PIRA attacks cease, the arguments for an enhanced police presence would probably evaporate also. But this is not likely to be a decisive consideration - even if the Provisionals were or still are really thinking on the reported lines.

(signed)

P N BELL

(Ext SH 2201)

J1/13769