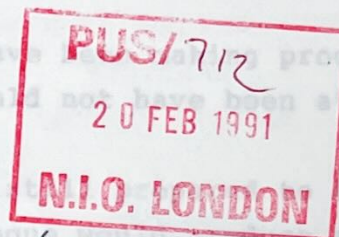


PAB/6520/DGMcN/RG

FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB
DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 1991NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Copy No [4] of 10

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) [1&2]
 PS/PUS (B&L) [3&4]
 Mr Pilling [5]
 Mr Deverell [6]
 Mr Ledlie [7]
 Mr Alston [8]
 Mr Marsh [9]
 File [10]

Handwritten notes:
 PUS
 15 Feb 91
 Mr [unclear]
 2
 PIRA Movement & Provos pfe
 23699 A

MAZE CHAPLAINS

1. I met the two Maze chaplains on 18/2/91 at their request.
2. They had asked to meet me to tell me that they had had a further meeting last week with their PAC contacts. The priests had asked for this meeting though unusually had been kept waiting for over two weeks by the PAC contacts. The PAC contacts said that they had regarded the "dialogue" process as finished when the priests had not been in touch since Christmas and were surprised to hear from the priests again.
3. The PAC contacts repeated to the priests that they considered that they had moved a considerable degree since the first dialogue with the priests. They said that in return for an end of violence they had first of all been seeking a declaration of British withdrawal, had modified this to soldiers "off the streets" plus an amnesty for prisoners and had again modified this to simply requesting "meaningful dialogue". However, they said that HMG had not shown any willingness to treat with them in a meaningful way.
4. In their conversation with the PAC contacts the priests referred to dialogue on another front though the priests are not aware of the identity of this other front. The PAC members expressed ignorance of this front. They said that they were tasked to deal with the priests. They would not be made aware of any other channels. They told the priests that only the PIRA Chief of Staff would know about all the channels. They then offered the

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opinion that the other channel must not have been making progress for if it had been then Downing Street would not have been attacked.

5. The PAC contacts said that they were still prepared to talk to the NIO and repeated that meaningful dialogue would produce an almost immediate cessation of violence.

6. The priests again urged me to pass this proposal to my bosses. I said I would, repeated the standard line on dealing with terrorists and reminded the priests of the negative impact of the Downing Street mortar attack and others (at the time we met we had not heard news of the Victoria Station bomb).

7. I also told the priests that the Secretary of State had written to the two Archbishops and advised the two priests to make sure that the Archbishops were fully briefed on their contacts before any meeting with Ministers.

8. The priests continue to believe that a meeting with the PAC would produce an end to violence and that despite the political risk we should take the gamble. I will maintain contact with the two chaplains if they so desire. However, without some movement by us which of course can only be addressed in a wider context I do not expect that anything much more productive can come from the two chaplains.

(SIGNED)

D G MCNEILL
Political Affairs Division
SH Ext 2238

A J D PAWSON

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