

FROM: PUS
8 FEBRUARY 1991

Copy no of [5]

cc. Sir K Bloomfield [2]
Mr Pilling [3]
Mr Deverell [4]

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE [1]

POLITICAL MOVEMENT: MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, 13 FEBRUARY

You asked for some short lines to take for this meeting. We shall have an opportunity to update them on 12 February, and may need to do so especially on the assessment of the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, which the Liaison Staff have in active preparation, and any initial conclusions about the attack on No.10.

THE OBJECTIVE - LINES TO TAKE

2. I suggest the key objective for the meeting, is to retain the Secretary of State's present degree of freedom of manoeuvre on handling political movement and the Provisionals. To do this, he will want to enhance the Prime Minister's understanding of the nature of the Republican movement, and to explain that PIRA/Sinn Fein is not a single monolithic organisation; specifically the attack clearly (and admittedly) planned some months ago by an ASU does not mean there are not key figures within the Republican movement looking to move from the armed struggle into political activity. He may wish to reassure the Prime Minister on some key points:

- (i) "no contact" - there is no question of entering into talks or negotiations with PIRA if we were ever to do that without full consultation with the Prime Minister (and other Ministers most closely concerned);
- (ii) "imaginative response" - there is a good deal of room for wholly or largely risk-free responses to any tangible demonstration by the Provisionals of a serious move away from violence (eg prisoner release schemes at holiday time);
- (iii) the policies are working - present policies on security, economic and social development, and political development, are clearly having their effect

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on the Provisionals. It is worthwhile keeping the pressure up on all fronts for that reason - including direct political pressure on the peace aspect where circumstances permit.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S REACTION - SPEAKING NOTES

3. The Prime Minister is "deeply sceptical about whether PIRA want a ceasefire". The fact is that PIRA's leadership do not know whether they want a ceasefire (or a more permanent move away from violence in pursuing the Republican agenda); but they have clearly been addressing the possibility seriously and in a quite public way. The pressure is on them. It is in our interest to maintain and indeed intensify it if we can, to move them progressively towards that decision.

4. As to deliverability, it is for them to convince us if they can. That was, we know, one purpose of their Christmas ceasefire (which did a little, but not much, to demonstrate PIRA's organisational ability to deliver). Realistically, the current answer must be one that Adams himself reportedly recently gave in private on the lines - "I don't know - it all depends".

5. At best, there would be separate, and probably breakaway, Republican groups who would continue violent terrorist activity together with loyalist provocation and reaction. Very likely (as in the past) there would also be internecine Republic violence. But that in itself would not be fatal to the main objective.

6. Would we be justified in paying any price at all for peace? Yes, provided our fundamental responsibilities and principles are not compromised. A purely military solution is not available; our present combination of policies is moving things in the right direction; but we should not expect a unilateral abandonment of violence. It will need some rapprochement; what may have high value, real or symbolic, for the Provisionals may not always be too costly for us (eg lifting broadcasting restrictions on Sinn Fein if it disassociates itself from PIRA violence).

7. What "imaginative response" is conceivable and acceptable? Examples are many. They include: political items such as recognition for Sinn Fein politicians once violence is given up, and (after some time) their inclusion in normal political life, lifting broadcasting restrictions on Sinn Fein (on the same condition); a number of prisons-related possibilities such as regime relaxations, home leave, and possibly later on accelerated life-sentence review; and security policy options such as a weapons amnesty (if likely to be productive, desirable in itself).

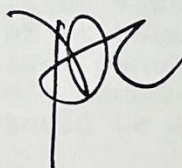
8. More fundamental steps such as deproscription of PIRA could only follow a prolonged period of peace (but would be discussable). At the end of the road towards permanent peace lie key issues such as PIRA (and loyalist paramilitary) prisoners - the 'boys behind the wire' - and the surrender or control of arms.

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9. John Hume's proposition for a public declaration by both Governments that "long-term stability in Ireland would be enhanced if the peoples there could be persuaded to unite within the European Community" is a highly compressed summary of his ideas - which I myself am far from persuaded could be made acceptable, or produce the desired result. But it is important to understand some key points - including some things he is not saying.

10. He is not talking about a straightforward political unification of states, in terms of uniting Northern Ireland with the Republic, but rather of peoples; nor is he describing as an immediate aim that eventual outcome, within a European Community in which national (as against national or regional) distinctions have less significance. He talks of a process which over two or more generations could, not necessarily would lead to that result by general agreement.

11. Provided we, the Irish Government and the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland continue to uphold the consent principle (no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of people there), there is always room to hold out - as we have, especially since the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 - the possibility of such consent being won, and if won being given effect. The task for those who wish to win it is one of persuasion. If the Republican Movement can be induced to turn to that persuasive approach, and renounce violence, our principal aim would be achieved. No one should suppose the prospect of that is particularly bright - but it should not be dismissed as non-existent.



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FROM: PUS

Mr Thomas [5] 1991

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L) [1]

MEETING WITH THE TWO ARCHBISHOPS

I entirely agree with the conclusion of Mr McNeill's Secret and Personal minute of 4 February, that the Secretary of State should invite the two Archbishops to meet him in the first instance (without the two Chaplains) leaving open the possibility of a meeting with the Prime Minister and himself after that.

2. My purpose in intervening is simply to say that I have considered whether it would be possible to arrange for the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to meet the two Archbishops in the course of the former's visit to the Province on 22 February. While in principle it might be possible to secure their attendance at one of the elements of the programme on the basis of its cover story, it would be difficult to engineer, and it would of course become known afterwards that they had seen him. I think this would attract a great deal of unwanted attention, as well as overlaying the Prime Minister's first visit with a highly diversionary cast. Nor do I think it would be helpful in relation to political leaders in the Province generally and especially so in this context with Mr Hume. So I recommend against it, but thought the Secretary of State should be aware of our consideration of it.

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