

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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FROM: S A MARSH, PAB
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PS/PUS (B&L) - B [1&2]

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N.L.O. BELFAST

- f
- cc Mr Ledlie - B [3]
 - Mr Pilling - B [4]
 - Mr Deverell - B [5]
 - Mr Alston - B [6]
 - Mr Thomas - B [7]
 - Mr McNeill - B [8]
 - Mr Petch - B [9]

POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS

At the meeting which PUS chaired on 4 January I was asked to give thought to elements of a statement which HMG would make if it became known that a Government representative had talked to the Provisionals in the absence of a permanent renunciation of violence on the part of PIRA. An assessment of whether any such discussion would be likely to leak has been provided separately.

2. Clearly there are a number of scenarios, depending on the precise outcome of any such discussions. For example, much would depend on whether Sinn Fein would be prepared to renounce publicly the entire concept of armed struggle as a means of securing political objectives, or whether the result was simply a calling off of the current campaign. To this extent, therefore, it is impossible to draft a detailed statement in advance of the event.

3. But it is nonetheless possible, and useful, to establish the outlines of what we might say to justify our participation in talks without a cessation of violence. The attached draft attempts to do this. It covers two scenarios: participation in abortive discussions, and the opening of a process which did ultimately lead to a cessation of violence. I have also had a go at playing Adams at his own game by providing wording which emphasises the distinction between Sinn Fein and PIRA; but this is not, I think, essential to the main thrust of what we would have to say.

[Signed]

S A MARSH
Political Affairs Division
Ext 2232 SH
RN/6328

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