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FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB
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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc PS/Secretary of State(B&L)[1&2] - B
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Mr Deverell [5]- B
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POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS - JOHN HUME

1. PUS and I met John Hume on 11 January 1991. During our discussions he outlined his contacts with Sinn Fein over the last few years but focussed specifically on recent contacts. This note concentrates primarily on the recent contacts.

Gerry Adams

2. Hume had met Gerry Adams on 11 January 1991 just before he came to see us to discuss the Christmas ceasefire and future developments. He said that Adams had been very defensive about the major firebombing on Friday, 4 January 1991 and did not want to discuss that. Hume emphasised to us that Adams had come to trust him and from the general tone and openness of the conversations which Hume reported to us that was apparent. Both of them would continue to be in contact.

3. Hume considered that Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein were increasingly coming to question the purpose and utility of the "armed struggle"; this was in some way due to the success of the SDLP (Hume's words) in the political development process. In Hume's view the Republican movement was looking for a way to end violence. At this stage it was not clear if Adams could carry the Army Council. Adams himself had said that as yet he could not be sure he could do so; that would depend on whether he had something worthwhile to sell.

Republic of Ireland Contacts

4. Hume told us about the contacts he had had with the Taoiseach most of which have been reported before. He said that Haughey was keen to take action to enable PIRA to cease violence. The action proposed centred on the establishment of some type of "forum" of the Irish people North and South which would need to consider and develop proposals aimed at persuading the Unionists and the British Government to see the future of Northern Ireland in an Irish context. Although the unionists would be invited to such a "forum" if called Hume assumed that they would not come at least not initially.

5. While Haughey is keen to make some move Hume says he did not want to move without British Government agreement or acquiescence. Hume said that one option would be for both Governments to produce a Joint Declaration indicating that in the long term they both saw a better future for Northern Ireland in an Irish context within the European Community; though at the same time reaffirming that that could only come about with the consent of the Unionists. Hume said that for nationalists he had succeeded in changing the definition of unity to the unity of people not territory.

6. Hume had discussed the possibility of a forum with Adams on 11 January 1991 who had been interested and had gone away to consider. If Adams eventually considered that this was a possible mechanism to enable him to deliver a cessation of violence Hume said he would recommend that Haughey and Adams meet.

British Government Involvement

7. Hume considered that if Adams thought he could deliver a cessation of violence then it would be ideal if the British Government - at civil service level - should meet Adams. He fully recognised the difficulties that this would entail both in Northern Ireland and internationally. However, he was sure that the Republican movement would not embarrass the British Government in

making the contacts known publicly even if they came to nothing. Hume did tell us in this context that Adams believed that someone from the British Government had planted the six months ceasefire story in the Sunday Express to embarrass Adams. Hume also said that if he was sure that a date for such a meeting were set then PIRA would cease violence for some time beforehand and some time after. He said that the Republican movement would eventually want to discuss a detailed agenda including things like the prisons, security force movements, etc but would not expect that agenda to be addressed substantively until there had been a cessation of violence. They would however want an assurance that such matters could be discussed.

British Presence Speech

8. Hume said that while Adams and others in the Republican Movement had been impressed by the British Presence speech they had to some extent modified their view because Adams reported that four journalists - Duncan Campbell, Fionnuala O'Connor, Mark Brennock and one other - had told Adams separately that the Secretary of State had told them that he was not neutral on the British Presence in Northern Ireland. Hume had taken pains to assure Adams that Article 1 of the Agreement in fact meant that the Government was neutral, if there was consent, even if some members of the Government had the view that North of Ireland people would be better off by wishing to remain within the UK. Hume referred back to the Joint Declaration and said that he would like to see the British Government move further from the British Presence speech and say that unity was a desirable thing. He was sure that the Republican movement would accept the principle of consent in that event though they may not express it in the same terms as the SDLP or the British Government.

Unionist Reaction

9. Hume was asked for his views on the likely reaction of the Unionists if the Government were to talk to Sinn Fein. He said that they would go berserk for a week or so but if the violence had ceased then the Protestant business and church community would put pressure on them to be more ready to accept the situation.

Talks Initiative

10. Hume said he was concerned that the continuing development of the initiative on talks could clash with developments on the PIRA/Sinn Fein front and he hoped that that would not be the case or that the talks process could be developed if need be to accommodate any cessation of violence by PIRA.

Next Steps

11. Hume asked if there was anything he could say to Adams following the meeting with PUS and I which Adams knows about. PUS said there was nothing he could say at the moment but indicated that the NIO was still considering and may have something to say to Hume later - in subsequent conversation between Hume and I, I discovered that he thought that that may mean that the Secretary of State would make a further speech or statement this week or next. While not ruling that out in the sense that anything is possible I said that Hume should not read that into the PUS's final remarks.

(SIGNED)

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