

PUS/3/1/91/1

FROM: PUS
DATE: 4 JANUARY 1991

SECRETARY OF STATE (L)

Copy no of 10
cc Mr Ledlie
Mr Pilling
Mr Deverell
Mr Alston
Mr Thomas
Mr McNeill
Mr Petch
Mr Marsh

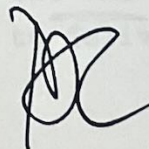
POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS

I attach a background memorandum (largely the work of Mr Marsh, and the result of pre-Christmas discussions which included and Messrs Ledlie, Pilling, Alston, Thomas and McNeill) which reviews the general state of play on PIRA and political movement. It does not take in Mr Hume's conversations with you (now taken forward with Mr McNeill at Mr Hume's initiative).

2. As events are moving forward fairly quickly (the ceasefire, your statement on it, Mr Hume's messages via McNeill over Christmas) I have not attempted a complete or comprehensive submission. But on your return (depending on developments in the interim) I should welcome a private word on where we want to go, and how.

3. In particular, do we wish to encourage an indirect approach by PIRA (via Dublin and the SDLP), which eases the problem of talking to PIRA before they have renounced violence; or do we wish to open up covert channels with them directly, and if so whether via the NIO itself or, as I should prefer at least initially, via a deniable method ?

4. Circumstances permitting, we might address this at Hillsborough Castle on 7 January in the evening.



JOHN CHILCOT