

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB

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Mr Deverell [5]
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PS/Secretary of State (B&L) [1&2]

POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS: JOHN HUME

1. Since I spoke to the Secretary of State briefly on Friday 28 December 1990 I have had a further conversation with John Hume. He asked me to brief the Secretary of State on this conversation.

PIRA ceasefire and continuing violence

2. He has confirmed through intermediary contacts that the Christmas ceasefire was meant to be a significant signal from PIRA to the effect that the Republican movement was interested in seeking a way to end violence. He also said that he had indications that those in Sinn Fein with whom he had had direct contact earlier - Gerry Adams was the only one referred to by name - wanted to develop the idea of a longer term/permanent cessation and that they could deliver PIRA/Sinn Fein on this in appropriate circumstances. He said he wanted to reassure himself on his point before putting it forward as a firm assessment of his and he would try to do this very quickly - he later told me that he was to meet Gerry Adams today 4/1/91 and will contact me again over the weekend. He also informed me that in his view Martin McGuinness was at one with Adams.

3. His judgment - though this was before he had the "face to face" contacts - is that exploratory separate meetings between HMG and ROI Government (at civil service level) and the Republican movement would be enough to secure a scaling down (though those words were

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used loosely) of violence beforehand and for some time thereafter which could lead to a full scale cessation if those involved in the Republican movement were satisfied that both Governments were genuine in their willingness to consider alternative political structures and to involve Sinn Fein in those considerations - apart from the issue below no definition was put on this. He explained that in his view if such contacts were ever to be made the Republican movement would not make them public.

ROI Government

4. He has kept Charles Haughey briefed on all of these matters. He met him on 2/1/91. However so far as Hume knows only Haughey and one civil servant (whose name he told me on a personal basis) in the Republic of Ireland knows of his contacts though both know that he is keeping the Secretary of State briefed and the civil servant at least knows that he is in dialogue with me.

5. Hume said that at this stage he was merely briefing Haughey and had not suggested that he take any action. However he did say that if the time came to consider taking some action Haughey would prefer to do it on a joint basis with HMG. This was not fully defined other than to say that it could be a joint declaration of some sort or HMG agreement to some action which would be taken by the Republic of Ireland - such as an all Ireland Peace Convention/Political Forum. As you know something like this has been suggested by Sinn Fein and according to Hume endorsed by the PAC. I asked Hume about the terms of the document which was drawn up by Sinn Fein and gave my opinion that it was worded in a strongly Republican way eg several references to the 1916 Proclamation. He said that this was PIRA/Sinn Fein wording and in his view if the concept were to run the wording could be sorted out.

6. He said that both he and Haughey were anxious not to do anything which would be perceived as sinking the talks initiative, mainly because of the respect which both of them had for the Secretary of State; but Hume made it clear that he was not keen that the initiative should reach a conclusion if that were to jeopardise the potential for success in achieving an end to violence. He said

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that if it was a choice between ending violence or the SDLP sitting down with Unionists in Northern Ireland his very clear view would be that an end to violence would be preferable. This may make him and perhaps the Republic of Ireland Government reluctant to agree to anything substantive on the talks front this month. His final point was that he was confident that Haughey would not take any action on the Provisionals front without consulting him though he was aware that Haughey would like to see the Prime Minister some time.

Conclusion

7. This note is for the Secretary of State's information. The circulation of the note is deliberately curtailed. I will report again after John Hume contacts me over the weekend.

(SIGNED)

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