

(18)

FROM: PUS
6 FEBRUARY 1991

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L) [1]

MEETING WITH THE TWO ARCHBISHOPS

1. 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.

J A CHILCOT

6 FEBRUARY 1991