

subject

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cc: HIO BK
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10 DOWNING STREET

a Master Ireland

From the Private Secretary

31 October 1980

Dear Roy,

Northern Ireland

The Prime Minister held a meeting this afternoon with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Home Secretary to discuss the Government's policy towards Northern Ireland. The meeting had in front of it the note by officials on Political Development in Northern Ireland dated 21 October.

It was agreed at the conclusion of the discussion that further work should be done by officials on the options at 10 (i) of the officials' paper ie "Ulsterisation"; 10 (iv) - an elected advisory body; 10 (v) - the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic. The Prime Minister noted that it was essential that knowledge of work under this final heading should be restricted to an extremely limited number of Ministers and officials. The consequences of a premature leak would, in the words of the officials' paper, be explosive. The Prime Minister also expressed interest in seeing maps related to the question of whether one could create viable local government areas - both in Belfast and Northern Ireland as a whole - in which there would be Catholic majorities. It might be helpful if these maps were accompanied by background material describing the difficulties in creating a new local government structure.

There was a brief discussion of possible forms of words on Northern Ireland for use in The Queen's Speech. Mr. Atkins undertook to let the Prime Minister have one or two new formulations on Monday.

Finally, there was a brief discussion about the Prime Minister's forthcoming meeting with Mr. Haughey. She said that if developments at the Maze made a meeting* at the beginning of December with Mr. Haughey inadvisable, she would be content to meet him in the margins of the European Council Meeting in Luxembourg.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Halliday (Home Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

* in Dublin

Roy Harrington, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office

Yours sincerely

SECRET Michael Alexander