

S E C R E T

SUBJECT

File



191A W/O  
of master

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 December 1983

HARRODS BOMBING: POSSIBLE BANNING OF  
SINN FEIN

The Prime Minister held an informal meeting at 1230 today at which preliminary consideration was given to the question whether, in the wake of the Harrods bombing on 17 December, it would be right to proscribe Sinn Fein.

The meeting was attended by your Secretary of State, the Home Secretary, the Chief Whip, the Lord Privy Seal, Mr. Gummer and Sir Antony Acland.

The provisional and tentative view was reached that, if the Irish Cabinet decided at their meeting to proscribe Sinn Fein in the Republic, it would be necessary for the British Government to take corresponding action. A further Ministerial meeting to determine the Government's attitude will be held on 20 December (arrangements are being made separately). Meanwhile, it was decided that it would be wrong for us to try to influence in any way the decision of the Irish Cabinet - and I have asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to make plain to H.M. Ambassador in Dublin that that is the view of Ministers. Mr. Goodison is also being asked to report urgently on the likely timing of the Irish Cabinet meeting.

It was agreed that your Secretary of State would carry out such consultations as he wished today on this matter (Mr. Prior said that he might wish to have an informal word with Mr. Barry) and would report his further thinking to the Prime Minister by telephone later today. It would then be for consideration whether Mr. Prior should return to London to attend tomorrow morning's meeting of Ministers.

I am copying this letter to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Hugh Taylor (Home Office) David Heyhoe (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

John Lyon Esq  
Northern Ireland Office S E C R E T

AJC

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