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29

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister has considered your minute of 1 March proposing the creation of a new Cabinet Committee called the "Defence and Oversea Policy Committee: Sub-Committee on Ireland (OD(I))".

The Prime Minister agrees the setting up of this Committee with the terms of reference which you propose. As regards the membership, she wishes to add the Lord Privy Seal and the Chief Whip to the list in paragraph 5 of your minute.

The Prime Minister agrees that the meeting arranged for 8 March should be confined to the existing small group of the Ministers and officials but that subsequent discussions should be in OD(I).

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

(CHARLES POWELL)

CST

4 March 1985



Prime Minister 28

Ref. A085/652

PRIME MINISTER

Yes

Agree to set up new Committee?

If so, agree to add Lord Privy Seal & Chief Whip to those listed?

CDP

1/3

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

At the meeting which you have called for 8 March, at noon, Ministers will consider, under your chairmanship, the most recent developments in the secret exchanges at official level with the Irish about Northern Ireland and take decisions on the way forward.

2. Until now, as you know, detailed knowledge of these exchanges has been confined to yourself, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, although you have twice referred to the dialogue, in very general terms, in Cabinet.

3. My latest round of discussions with Mr Nally suggests that it may well be possible for the Government to reach agreement with the Irish Government on a joint Anglo-Irish document on the form and scope of a consultative role for the Irish Government in the affairs of Northern Ireland, together with accompanying "confidence-building measures" including a solemn affirmation by the Irish Government that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland could be changed only with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The discussions could well now have brought us to the point at which major political decisions will be required. In order to broaden the political base for these decisions, I believe that it would now be helpful to create a Cabinet Committee in order to provide a forum for Ministerial discussion between the existing small informal group and Cabinet itself. This is also the view of the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Northern Ireland.



4. I therefore suggest that you might direct me to establish a new Sub-Committee of the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee (OD) which might be called: "Defence and Oversea Policy Committee: Sub-Committee on Ireland (OD(I))", with the following terms of reference:

"To keep under review the United Kingdom's relations with the Republic of Ireland, particularly in the context of Her Majesty's Government's policies in Northern Ireland".

5. I suggest that the composition of OD(I) should be as follows:

- Prime Minister
- Lord President of the Council
- Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
- Secretary of State for Defence
- Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
- Chief Secretary, Treasury
- Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
- Attorney General.
- *Lord Privy Seal*

6. If you are content with these proposals, I will issue an appropriate notice immediately. I suggest that the meeting arranged for 8 March should be confined to the existing small group of Ministers and officials, and that it should reach conclusions which could subsequently be considered at the first meeting of OD(I).

7. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

*R*

Approved by  
ROBERT ARMSTRONG  
*and signed to his above*

1 March 1985