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10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

11 April 1994

Dear Dickie,

LETTER TO THE TAOISEACH

With his letter of 8 April, Simon Rogers (NIO) enclosed a draft letter from the Prime Minister to the Taoiseach, mainly about security co-operation.

I now enclose the signed top copy, and would be grateful if you could organise rapid transmission through our Ambassador at Dublin.

The Prime Minister's letter anticipates a meeting in the second half of May, and the NIO tell us that the Taoiseach is thought to be planning a visit to London on Friday 27 May. It is likely that the Prime Minister will be out of London for most or possibly all of 27 May. However, he would probably be able to fit a meeting with the Taoiseach into the early evening of 26 May (although he has an engagement elsewhere at 9.00 p.m.). When delivering the letter, David Blatherwick might make some tentative* soundings on whether this time might be convenient for the Taoiseach. (On looking at the diary for late May, I fear that we will be more than usually constrained in our choice of options.)

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Simon Rogers (Northern Ireland Office), Joan MacNaughton (Home Office), John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

*yours ever,
Roderic*

RODERIC LYNE

C.R.V. Stagg, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

**David should stress that this is a reading of the personal diary, not a proposal on which we have consulted the Prime Minister yet.*

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SUBJECT
MASTER

Filed on:

THE PRIME MINISTER

11 April 1994

Dear Albert,

Thank you for your letter of 31 March replying to mine of the 24th.

The events of the past few days have demonstrated the value of the close working relationship that has developed between us and our Governments. There can be no doubt on the part of the Provisionals, or anyone else, about the firmness of our joint commitment to a permanent cessation of violence as the only route through which Sinn Fein can enter the political process. I was delighted that the forthright stands taken on your side and ours were so consistent and well-matched and indicated the firmness of our partnership in the search for peace. At the same time we shall continue to spell out in positive terms the opportunity afforded Sinn Fein by the Joint Declaration if the violence does stop for good. The letter issued by my office to Gerry Adams was drafted with this in mind.

In the overall scheme of things, it is important that the two Governments should hold the initiative and take the political process forward - whatever the Provisionals do. The sense of urgency being demonstrated by all involved in the work of the Liaison Group is, therefore, welcome. I look forward to seeing the outcome of their work after the next meeting of the IGC.

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We should of course continue to keep in close touch. Meetings between us are important in taking matters forward, on the security and political fronts, and in demonstrating unity of purpose. I agree that we should review the position after the next Conference and that we should aim for a meeting in the second half of May. There will be plenty to talk about, including not only the scope to give further impetus to the political process after the European elections, but also our joint security concerns (and it would also be helpful to talk in advance of the next European Council).

On security co-operation, I understand that the Chilcot/Dalton Group will not now be able to meet again before May. (As you note, the Inter-governmental Conference will meet before then and will as usual review the security situation; but I understand that there are no current plans for it to discuss the issues which have been remitted to the Chilcot/Dalton Group.) I value the capacity of this Group to facilitate practical work, and I know that they are currently taking matters forward in a number of areas. It may be worth setting out the three issues on which I particularly hope that the Group will be able to make early progress.

The first concerns police organisation to counter terrorism. Our overriding priority here is to seek to ensure that we have structures in the Border area which are mutually supportive and complementary, with the aim of enabling our police forces not only to acquire and use intelligence with maximum effectiveness but also to focus their operational activities as sharply as possible. I believe this is a fundamental area which merits the most careful consideration, and I look to the Group to examine the options in detail.

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Second, I believe there would be much to be gained by giving our police forces the reciprocal ability to question or assist in the questioning of suspects being held in the other force's jurisdiction, thus bringing us into line with the arrangements which exist between many friendly European countries. I am confident that there would be benefits to both our forces, and that such improved arrangements (which would of course apply to all types of crime) would be widely accepted as being in our mutual interest.

Third, an issue which is of considerable concern to me and has I know been the subject of much discussion is border flight safety zones. Here, in the interests of increasing the safety of security force helicopter operations (which have developed considerably in recent years), we are seeking limited flexibility to overfly in designated areas where the border constrains the use of the safest flight paths in variable weather conditions. In addition to the safety considerations, helicopters using the current, predictable, flight paths are particularly vulnerable to terrorist attack in their immediate approach to and departure from border security force bases. (Last month's attack in Crossmaglen clearly showed the terrorists' determination to attack helicopters.) I am concerned that it is only a matter of time before lives are lost. While I know that this proposal is not without difficulties for you, I do assure you that helicopter flight safety is a real, serious and growing problem for us. I hope the Group will be able to propose a sensible and practical arrangement to minimise the risk to helicopters in the border area.

I do of course agree with you on the need to avoid security co-operation measures which benefit the terrorists. In practice, I hope that our assessments of the balance of advantage from particular measures would be very close, but even where they do not entirely coincide I trust that our strong mutual

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determination to defeat terrorism will enable us to reach an accord on the way forward. If there are continuing difficulties with specific proposals, then that clearly strengthens further the case for us to review the position together on the basis of a report from the Chilcot/Dalton Group (which would reflect not only their own work but also any discussion of the issues in the Inter-governmental Conference).

I look forward to seeing you in May, diaries permitting, to discuss these issues.

*Yours Ever,
John*

Mr Albert Reynolds TD