

PRIME MINISTER

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- Chief Whip, Hon M Jopling MP
- PS/Prime Minister
- PS/SofS (B)
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- Mr Marshall
- Mr Belloch
- Mr Moriarty
- Mr Wyatt
- Mr Chesterton
- Mr Burns
- Mr Gee

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March 1981

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Dear Nicholas,

Thank you for your letter of 16 March. You can hardly be surprised that I - or any other member of the Government - should take exception to your accusing the Government in a speech in a House of Commons Committee room of lying through its teeth and governing by deceit.

There is a great deal else to which I could take objection in that speech, but, like the points upon which you interrogate me in your letter, these matters have been very fully explained time and again by me and other members of the Government. No purpose would be served by my giving you another lengthy answer now.

You must be well aware that it has never been the practice, for the best of reasons, for the Government to give details of security operations. That is as true of the response to the attack on Tynan Abbey as of any other such matter. As for Anglo-Irish relations, we have asserted time and again that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland is not at issue in our talks with the Irish. Whatever you may hear to the contrary from other quarters, you would do well, it seems to me, to believe what you are told by the Government of the United Kingdom. As you rightly point out, we are both Conservatives, and all of us, from the Prime Minister downwards, are committed to the maintenance of Northern Ireland's position in the Union so long as that is the wish of the people of Northern Ireland and of Parliament.

Yours