



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

16 February, 1981

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your further letters of 27 January and 4 February.

I do most fully appreciate the strength of feeling in Northern Ireland about recent terrorist outrages. I too was deeply shocked and saddened at the murders of Sir Norman Stronge and James Stronge and also at that of Major Toombs. As you know, these murders have been condemned in the strongest terms by responsible opinion, both in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland. Our security forces are doing their utmost to bring the assassins to justice; and in this task they have the full co-operation of the security forces in the Republic. Both Governments are very much aware that terrorism represents a threat to law and order on both sides of the border, and are dedicated to its elimination. The border is a complication, as indeed is any international frontier in the control of terrorism. But solid progress has been made in cross-border security co-operation recently. It is of course not perfect, but both Governments are determined to consolidate and, where possible, improve it.

As regards your letter of 4 February about the joint studies being undertaken by officials of this country and the Republic in preparation for discussions later this year between the Taoiseach and myself, the inferences which you draw are not right. The studies take place within the existing constitutional framework in which the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom cannot be changed without the consent of the people of the Province and of Parliament at Westminster. Some in Northern Ireland have claimed

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that there is a conspiracy or a "sell out". I can only repeat, with all the emphasis at my command, that nothing of the sort exists.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Webster
