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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

File # Tunnel. AS
bc PB

From the Private Secretary

25 March 1997

Dear Gen,

MAZE TUNNEL

Thank you for your letter of 24 March, giving an account of the find of the tunnel originating in H7 block of the Maze prison.

It is obviously good news that the tunnel was discovered. However the Prime Minister was seriously concerned by the picture of the situation in the Maze which emerged from your letter. It cannot be regarded as satisfactory, for example, that tons of rubble were stored in empty cells without being detected for nearly two months (if indeed the tunnel was only started after 28 January, as your letter claims). More widely, while the long-standing political and security difficulties of dealing with paramilitary prisoners are well understood, there do appear to be genuine grounds for concern that the balance to be struck between security and equality of treatment for all prisoners on the one hand and a humane regime and wider security issues on the other may have shifted too far in the latter direction. You will have seen that much of today's press reflects a similar concern.

The Prime Minister is glad that Sir Patrick Mayhew has ordered an enquiry under John Steele's supervision. I assume that this will be looking not only at the immediate circumstances of the tunnel and its discovery but also at the wider points mentioned above.

I am copying this to Ken Sutton (Home Office) and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc
John

JOHN HOLMES

K. Lindsay, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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