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The Rt Hon Mo Mowlem MP
Northern Ireland Office
11 Millbank
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17 March 1998

Dear Mo,

PRISONERS AND THE SETTLEMENT

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 9 March to Jack Straw about proposals for new arrangements to offer early release to prisoners convicted of terrorist offences.

As you say, we have no such prisoners in Scotland at the moment and the prisoners in Northern Ireland on restricted transfer from Scotland were not convicted of terrorist offences as such. My interest is therefore much less than yours or Jack's and I am content with the principle of early release for such prisoners in the context of what you are trying to achieve in Northern Ireland.

The only difficulty I see might be in defining which prisoners will be eligible. It seems to me that we might find certain prisoners with loyalist links claiming that their offences were related to the conflict in Northern Ireland even though they were not convicted under the Prevention of Terrorist legislation. We need to consider how we might deal with such prisoners and it would be helpful if our respective officials could keep in close touch to ensure that we are all quite clear as to who would be affected.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Jack Straw and Richard Wilson.

Yours sincerely,
Donald Dewar
DONALD DEWAR

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