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THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Margaret,

I meant to write before to congratulate you on your lecture last Friday. It was a superb speech, both in restating the Conservative philosophy we both believe in and in spelling out so clearly the sham presented by 'new' Labour. I am also grateful for your kind words of support.

Perhaps I can take this opportunity to bring you up to date on the continuing tortuous discussions on Northern Ireland. We have heard lots of tantalising suggestions of new IRA ceasefires. Frankly, I have been - and remain - very sceptical. But we have been asked to explain our existing policy towards the arrangements for Sinn Fein entering the political talks if a lasting and credible cessation of violence were put in place. We have been careful - for example in discussions with John Hume - to say in private only what we would be willing to say in public. We have resisted pressure to make concessions in an attempt to secure what may be a dubious ceasefire, and it now seems essential that we publish exactly what we have said so that there can be no distortion of our position. I expect to do that shortly, probably later today. If you would like any further information, do get in touch.

I have had very good reports of your visit to China. I would be most interested to hear more about your impressions and I hope we can meet soon. Meanwhile I hope you have got the Budget briefing material you need. If not, we can quickly supply whatever you would like.

Yours Ever, 



I expect when we publish our position that we will not receive support from the Irish Govt. - or the United States. Nonetheless I believe we are right. -

The Right Honourable The Baroness Thatcher LG OM FRS