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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 February 1984

Special Operations: Mr. Julian Amery, M.P.

Thank you for your letter of 20 February. Mr. Amery called on the Prime Minister in her room in the House of Commons this afternoon. Michael Alison and I were present.

Mr. Amery said that he believed that the SAS and SBS were first class. But our capacity for political subversion was weak. The United States, France and Israel were much more active than we were. What was needed was a small group of people who would identify countries where crises could emerge and who would then be in touch with British citizens who had skills to contribute. These could range from mining engineers to academics to businessmen. They could be used for collecting information or for actual sabotage activity. The basic organisation could be expanded as the need arose. It could be placed under "C" but should not be part of his organisation. It was essential to keep intelligence and operational activities separate. What he had in mind would not involve much expenditure.

The Prime Minister commented that this was a difficult subject. The political risks of operations of the kind described by Mr. Amery were far greater in peacetime than during war. Journalists were alert for signs of such activities. But she would reflect on the ideas put forward by Mr. Amery.

The Prime Minister told me afterwards that she did not consider any follow up action to be necessary - though she might take an opportunity at some point in the future to have a further talk with Mr. Amery.

A.L. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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