



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

30 January 1980

*Dear George.*

Thank you for your letter of 17 January about the case of Mr. C.R. Sparkes.

Peter Carrington has told me of the frank relationship you have established with the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, and of the assistance you have given in interceding for Mr. Sparkes' release at your meetings with the President. May I say how grateful we are to you for your help in trying to resolve this difficult case.

We for our part shall not relax our efforts until Mr. Sparkes is back in this country. If the Iraqi Foreign Minister visits this country this year, which seems likely, we plan to use the visit as an occasion for bringing pressure on the Iraqis to release Mr. Sparkes.

You refer in your letter to an exchange. Such a proposal, no matter how it is arranged or over what period, raises difficulties. I know that Douglas Hurd referred to the political arguments against an exchange at the meeting you had with him last October. There are also considerable administrative difficulties which the Government would face in attempting to obtain the release of a convicted assassin. The Home Secretary has no powers to act without the recommendation of the Parole Board, unless he is

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prepared to recommend the use of the Royal Prerogative which, in a case like this, is hardly a possibility.

Peter is concerned that you should feel his Department are dragging their heels and he thinks it would be useful if he could himself discuss with you the issues involved. I hope you will agree this seems a sensible idea. Could I suggest that you get in touch with him to arrange a meeting.

Y Warm personal regards.  
Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

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The Rt. Hon. Lord George-Brown