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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL

7 January 1983

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 6 January. Of course, I should gladly discuss with you, on a Privy Counsellor basis, the arrangements for publishing and debating the Franks Report. It may be helpful if I set out my present ideas which we can then discuss if, after considering them, you wish to do so.

The advice I have received indicates that some amendments to the report are unavoidable, on grounds of national security, before publication. My intention is that such amendments should be kept to the absolute minimum necessary; and that they should not detract in any way from the sense and substance of the report. Lord Franks is, of course, being consulted, in accordance with the undertaking in my statement on 6 July.

When the text is ready for publication, it will be printed with the aim of publishing it early in the week of Parliament's return and debating it in the following week on a date which, I suggest, should be discussed through the usual channels. Since the debate will follow so soon after publication, I envisage that substantive comment will be deferred until the debate, when Members of Parliament will have had time to study the report.

I quite understand that you, as Leader of the Opposition, should want the opportunity to study the report before publication.

I hope to be able to make it available on Privy Counsellor terms to you and to the former Prime Ministers whose periods of Administration are covered by the review, rather more than twenty-four hours before publication. If you wished during that period or subsequently to have an explanation of the way in which the published version differs from the original and of the reasons for the amendments, I should be glad to arrange that.

Yours sincerely

Ray and Sheldrake

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