

P1. file on Laker  
file



From the Secretary of State

W.M.

12<sup>th</sup> February 1985.

Dear Margaret,

I was most concerned when Nick Ridley told us how he was trapped into seeing Laker. As I understood Nick's account he was unaware that he would be meeting Laker until he arrived at Winston Churchill's flat.

I happened to be talking to Winston recently and put it to him that he had behaved badly in trapping Nick into what might be a compromising position. He was not able to reply on the spot (others were present) but he wrote to me the next day to give his version of the matter. For your interest and out of fairness to Winston (even though on his own account he behaved recklessly) I enclose a copy of his letter.

Yours ever,

Norman



1. On 2 Feb FHL, our near neighbour, came to dine at Broadwater following his return from the U.S.

2. A couple of days later he asked if I would arrange a meeting between him and the P.M., as he felt that things, left in the hands of lawyers, were in danger of getting out of hand. He said he was anxious to be helpful to HMGC whom he felt were in danger of laying themselves open to subsequent public criticism in one or two aspects of the handling of this case) and to suggest how matters might best be resolved in such a way as to expedite the sale of BA and minimise the cost to the British taxpayer.

3. I arrange to see Ian G. in his room at the House at 3.50 p.m. on 6 Feb to seek his guidance. He (in my view wisely) advised that it would not be appropriate at this stage for Freddie to see the P.M. but suggested I arranged





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a meeting for him with Nick, holding the P.M.  
"in reserve as a Court of Appeal."

4. I subsequently made contact with Nick, speaking with him by phone at his Dept on the morning of 7 Feb. and he agreed to meet me and "my friend" at 6 pm that evening at his room.
5. I confirmed the arrangements with Freddie who, specifically to cause Nick no embarrassment, asked if we could not meet at my flat so as to obviate any question being asked.
6. While appreciating Nick's discretion in not enquiring on the Departmental telephone line the identity of my "friend", when I did not see him at P.M.'s Quarter Terms, I sought out his PPS, Angela Kumbold, and (a) told her who it was, (b) told her to tell Nick and (c) suggested she might care to be present as a witness.



7. At the start of the meeting which took place in my flat - Nick having been briefed by Angela who it was - I made very clear (and it was agreed by all concerned) that, so far as the record was concerned, this was a meeting that had never taken place.

8. Nick quite properly made clear that while he was willing to listen, he could make no comment whatever.

Whether anything has, or will, come of this meeting I do not know but I do believe that there comes a point in most litigation when it is helpful to side-track the lawyers - who have their own interests - and to have a meeting between principals. My sole interest and concern was to be helpful to the Govt & to a friend.