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Saturday 27 Apr

Dear Prime Minister.

I am sorry that I have been out of action for so long. The operation itself was straightforward, but various post operative events (which I will not describe!) meant that I had an exceedingly unpleasant and uncomfortable week, with the result that by last weekend I was hit by a nasty bout of post operative shock which knocked me right out. Recovery since has been steady but slow. The doctors say that all is well and that I must just be patient and let nature take its course. I would like to be at least

Thursday: Cabinet — that could be a boost to my
words; but in any event I plan to be back at
work on 6th May.

I am glad to say that all seems to be going
smoothly in the Department, and Wynn and Mark
have been copying well. Mark was up here
yesterday afternoon.

We have seen, and still are, particularly cut
off by a postal strike which — ~~perhaps~~
fortunately — will have delayed the letter
that I knew Ann has sent you. At a
moment when I was not at my strongest or
in the least inclined to argue she reacted
violently and with intense feeling about the
Widjan affair. At least I prevented her
sending a letter to The Times: how I
could not achieve!

My own views are rather different. I
don't think that the American action was

Well timed, well chosen or well executed! (3
I don't suppose that as a Government we would
have chosen to do it in that way; but I
have no scruples about meeting state terrorism with
force; and if that particular evil is to be
defeated we must be prepared to contemplate
the use of force against the actual source
and the instigation of terrorist activity. That
must involve the risk that innocent bystanders
will be killed or harmed, just as they are
by terrorism itself, though I don't believe it
to have been sensible or skilful to blast up
the embassy quarter of the city.

It seems to me that you were placed in
a horrendously difficult position. Unlike
Alan I understand all the problems of wider
consultation in such circumstances. I greatly
admire your explanation in the House (I
was able to listen to the debate). Whether
wider consultation would have led to a
different decision I do not know. Presumably

We could not have prevented the American (L) action; and what you secured in the immense prize of safeguarding the alliance and American contribution to NATO at a lower than 1948 level has been severely weakened; and, I hope, some influence over future American action as well as a more realistic job of lessons for our European partners.

The personal and political price that you have had to pay has been heavy — Africa's reaction was not untypical: T.V. photos, Kere Addie's reporting, and simple word and political incompetence all ensured that. BBC news reporting of Parliamentary exchanges at Queen's Time was greatly disturbed: I heard little. Interestingly, I sense a change in public opinion as events have developed, and greater understanding of the reasons for 1948 the American action and for your decision.

Unfortunately, the British public do not

have a high opinion of the President. 6
To many people, particularly the young such
as my daughter Sophia, he is a
daring and rather jolly old man. One
thing has proved to be revealed ~~is~~ is the
startling difference in attitudes in Europe
and America.

All this means that if further direct action
against Libya was contemplated using the
U.S. bases in Britain, full Cabinet involvement
would be essential: Without it, your position
and the Party, in Parliament and the
Country would be too much at risk.

There will be those who will say that
the policies of the latter debate that
no further action could be contemplated.
I do not believe that is a position
one should adopt. It would make
havoc of your original decision and
it would tie our hands behind our backs
in the future battle with state terrorism.

I hope that anything like a report of the
banding of lobes can be avoided - for
the kinds of reason, most of which are
obvious; but the decision can only be
taken in the circumstances of the time.
There also are violence must learn that
violence may be used against them.

These latter words (thoughts may or
may not make sense). The fact that
I have put them on paper is a sign
of recovery - I could not have done so
but here last week. I would not want
ever to go through my own experience
again; but the benefit of being confined
to bed is that one observes the world
and the media with a certain detachment.

That does not increase my confidence in
the way laws is reported; but it is
quite useful for a politician to be
able to observe the world from above.

the purchase of Webster and Mitchell. (7
However, it will be good to see back
and I look forward to seeing J-
very soon.

J- em

Nick →

P.S.

Sunday.

Again had better today: walked nearly
a mile this morning. Your P.M. interview
went well. N.