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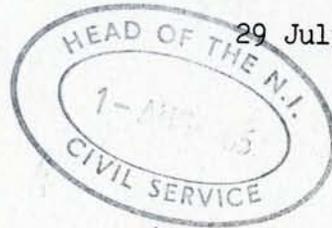
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RECEIVED BY
2 30 JUL 1985
PRIVATE OFFICE

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

29 July 1985



Dear Mark,

PROPOSED BBC PROGRAMME "REAL LIVES"

... I attach a letter which the Home Secretary has this evening sent to the Chairman of the BBC about the proposed Real Lives programme involving Martin McGuinness and Gregory Campbell. The BBC have been told that the Home Secretary does not intend to publish this letter at present but will reconsider this in the light of the BBC's final decision about whether the programme should go out. I am sending a copy of this letter to Jim Daniell (Northern Ireland Office).

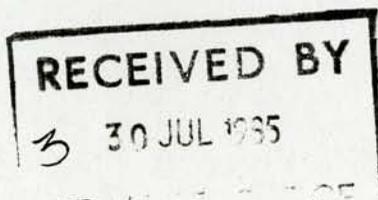
Yours (NWS),

H H Taylor

H H TAYLOR

- ① Mr Duke-Evans
- ② cc PS/SJS (B)
PS/Mr Scott (L & B)
PS/PJS (L & B) 2/8
~~PS/Mr Bloomfield~~ ✓
Mr Brennan
Mr Stephens
Mr Meifield
Mr Buxton
Mr Chesterton
Mr Coulson
Miss Elliott
Mr Lyon
Mr Wood
Mr Bickham
③ SJS to see

Mark Addison, Esq



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

29 July 1985

Dear Stuart,

I was very glad to learn that you and your colleagues are considering whether or not to proceed with the broadcast of the proposed "Real Lives" programme involving Martin McGuinness and Gregory Campbell. This letter confirms the views which I asked Wilfred Hyde to convey on my behalf to the Corporation this morning.

May I first make it quite clear that I ~~unhesitatingly~~ ^{unhesitatingly} accept that the decision to broadcast or refrain from broadcasting this programme must rest exclusively with the Corporation. It is no part of my task as the Minister with responsibility for broadcasting policy generally to attempt to impose an act of censorship on what should be broadcast in particular programmes. To do so would rightly be inconsistent with the constitutional independence of the BBC, which is a crucial part of our broadcasting arrangements.

I do, on the other hand, ^{also} have a Ministerial responsibility for the fight against the ever present threat of terrorism, and I would be failing in my duty if I did not let you and your colleagues have my considered views on the impact of this programme in that context.

It is clear that the "Real Lives" programme and the Radio Times article associated with it will enable McGuinness to advocate or justify the use of violence for political ends, and thus the murder and maiming of innocent people, before a huge public audience. He will, moreover, be doing so not in the course of a theoretical debate about terrorism, but as a prominent apologist of an organisation that is proud to have carried out such murders and such maimings and expresses its readiness and intention to carry out more. The BBC would be giving an immensely valuable platform to those who have evinced an ability, readiness and intention to murder indiscriminately its own viewers.

Quite apart from the deep offence that this would give to the overwhelming majority of the population and the profound distress that it would cause to families of the victims of terrorism, it would also in my considered judgment materially assist the terrorist cause. Recent events elsewhere in the world have confirmed only too clearly what has long been understood in this country: that terrorism thrives on the oxygen of publicity. That publicity derives either from the successful carrying out of terrorist acts or, as a second best, from the intimidation of the innocent public and the bolstering of faltering supporters by the well publicised espousal of violence as a justifiable means of securing political ends.

What is at issue is not the overall balance of the programme, or whether its impact on reasonable people is to make such people more hostile to terrorism than they are already. Even if the programme and any surrounding material were, as a whole, to present terrorist organisations in a wholly unfavourable light, I would still ask you not to permit it to be broadcast. For the gain that the terrorists would

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Stuart Young, Esq

secure by the broadcast would not be the conversion of large numbers of people to their cause, but the opportunity to boost the morale of their supporters and to alarm the innocent majority who have every reason to fear their intentions.

It must be damaging to security and therefore wholly contrary to the public interest to provide a boost to the morale of the terrorists and their apologists in this way. I cannot believe that the BBC would wish to give succour to terrorist organisations; and it is for this reason that I hope that you and your colleagues will agree on reflection that the "Real Lives" programme should not be broadcast.

Law,
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