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Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 July 1981

Dear Sir Ronald,

Thank you for your very interesting letter of 1 July about Lord Mountbatten's ideas for the future development of defence organisation. I know that nobody is better qualified than yourself to reflect his thinking on these matters.

The Defence Secretary and I will be considering whether any further changes in higher defence organisation might be called for following the Ministerial restructuring you mention, with the aim both of improving the decision making process and reducing overheads. If we are satisfied that changes, however radical, are needed to achieve those objectives, we shall certainly see that they are made.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Vice-Admiral Sir Ronald Brockman KCB CSI CIE CVO CBE DL

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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister.

The reply letter for you
to send to Admiral Boreham
has been approved by MV NSH.

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Defence



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~3307822~~ 218 2111/3

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13th July 1981

Dear Clive,

Willie Rickett sent Jonathan Dawson on 2nd July a copy of a letter from Vice Admiral Sir Ronald Brockman to the Prime Minister about Lord Mountbatten's ideas for defence organisation. I attach the draft of the reply my Secretary of State suggests should be sent.

By way of background, Admiral Brockman served as Secretary to Lord Mountbatten in all appointments from 1943 until his retirement in 1965. He may therefore be expected to be well acquainted with Lord Mountbatten's thinking, and it is fairly well known that Lord Mountbatten's ultimate objective was something like that set out in Sir Ronald's letter, although in so far as he may have envisaged "Inspectors General" it was not always clear whether they would entirely replace the Chiefs of Staff or co-exist alongside an attenuated version of them.

As the Admiral says, the changes actually implemented in 1964 did not go as far as Lord Mountbatten envisaged. The 1963 White Paper 'Central Organisation for Defence' (Cmd 2097), which heralded the changes made in the following year, retained the Chiefs of Staff Committee without giving the Chief of Defence Staff the power to take initiatives (as distinct from tendering advice in the event of disagreement) in his own right rather than as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. There have, however, been a number of developments since then designed to enhance his formal authority to act in his own right.

My Secretary of State has been giving some thought to changes in higher defence organisation to improve efficiency and reduce

C A Whitmore Esq



overheads. He is inclined at present to take the view that the CDS already has all the powers he needs in relation to the Chiefs of Staff if he chooses to exercise them; that, so long as the three Services are retained, they will each have to have a professional head who will speak for his Service in much the same way, whatever he is called; that changing the names would not change the reality and would risk giving rise to public opposition for no worthwhile return; and that the abolition of the single Service Chiefs of Staff or the Chiefs of Staff Committee is therefore neither necessary nor desirable. But he will be returning to the subject after the Recess. If he concludes that more radical changes are essential, he will not hesitate to put them forward.

I attach a draft reply from the Prime Minister to Vice Admiral Brockman.

*Your own
Bour*

(B M NORBURY)

DRAFT

From: The Prime Minister
To: Vice-Admiral Sir R Brockman

Thank you for your very interesting letter of 1st July about Lord Mountbatten's ideas for the future development of defence organisation. I know that nobody is better qualified than yourself to reflect his thinking on these matters.

The Defence Secretary and I will be considering whether any further changes in higher defence organisation might be called for following the Ministerial restructuring you mention, with the aim both of improving the decision making process and reducing overheads. If we are satisfied that changes, however radical, are needed to achieve those objectives, we shall certainly see that they are made.

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16/7

V-Admiral Sir Ronald BROCKMAN

2 July 1981

I enclose a letter to the Prime Minister from Vice-Admiral Sir Ronald Brockman. He suggests that the Government should now consider moving to having only one Chief of Staff, as apparently envisaged by Lord Mountbatten.

I think that the Prime Minister will want to reply to this letter herself and I should be grateful if you could provide a suitable draft by Thursday 16 July. I should draw your attention to Sir Ronald's wish that his letter should not be given wide circulation.

WR

Jonathan Dawson, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

JD

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BK

2 July 1981

I am writing on behalf of the
Prime Minister to thank you for your
letter of 1 July.

This is receiving attention and
a reply will be sent to you as soon
as possible.

W F S RICKETT



Vice-Admiral Sir Ronald Brockman, K.C.B.,
C.S.I., C.I.E., C.V.O., C.B.E., D.L.

From: Vice-Admiral Sir Ronald Brockman, KCB, CSI, CIE, CVO, CBE, DL,

GLENHOLME,
WEST HILL,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON,
DEVON EX9 6BS
Tel: 03954 2687

1 July, 1981.

My dear Prime Minister, *20/7*

I was very interested in the political changes you have made recently in the Ministry of Defence. Perhaps I should say my interest stems from my service with Lord Louis from 1943-1965. For many years he discussed with me the re-organization of the Ministry of Defence for which he hoped, and indeed the first draft of what became the Thorneycroft/Mountbatten Paper was prepared by me.

I write because I know that Lord Louis always visualized in the future - particularly as the three Services decreased in size - that the CDS should be the sole Chief of Staff and that the three Service Chiefs should become Inspectors General of their own Services - the First Sea Lord retaining his title for historical reasons but dropping the CNS title. In the event the changes did not go as far as this, as it was thought that the major amalgamation in the Ministry of Defence was sufficient for the time being. I expect Peter Thorneycroft will well remember these talks.

May I suggest that the time has now come when you ought to be considering this final move of having the CDS alone? With it, I am sure, goes Lord Louis's view that Vice Admirals and

/Admirals

Admirals, together with their equivalents in the other two Services, should be on a common list, and that the CDS should be selected from this list - there is no need to perpetuate "buggins's turn".

I hope you will consider this letter as personal to you, as I would not wish my own Service to consider me as a traitor to the cause!

Yours sincerely,

Ronald Brockman