OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
Eland House Stag Place London SW1E 5DH

Telephone 01-213: 4507
or Switchboard 01-213:3000

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Your reference

Our reference

Date 29 October 1985

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

POLICY RESPECT BY CIVIL SERVANTS?

On 12 February 1982 I sent a brief letter to you about the way in which objectives of your Administration have, or have not, been implemented by the Civil Service. I hope that this also may be of interest.

2. At that time you then arranged a generous meeting at 10 Downing Street, when we discussed issues of policy, and practical implementation inter alia in the Overseas Development Administration (often known as the ODA). Although the world has changed in various ways since then, I would like personally to write to you on certain issues now. In part this is because I am being discharged from the Civil Service, and in part because attending a public school in Dulwich (known as Dulwich College), I am glad to learn of your decision to purchase housing in Dulwich!

3. What makes the present institution interesting is that, despite what you were informed, there has been little change about the implementation of your preferred policies. In the ODA some decisions about operations remain as they were when we spoke. All that can be said about some of the marginal changes that have taken place is that they probably would have happened anyway, and that certain of your wishes have not been respected, despite their practical feasibility etc.

4. In what follows there is an attempt to give a comment and explanation on some cases. However, I should state that they are not inspired by my own political values: I can genuinely say that I have none. I do not vote for the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, or the Alliance. As a matter of principle all I believe is that the Administration of the day should be srupulously followed by Civil Servants, who should only do what the Administration wishes and expresses. That I should write in this way is not based on any political point of view: it is mainly based on personal and other experience.

5. In my letter of 12 February 1982 it was clear that the then four Civil Service institutes of Research and Development (R and D) of the ODA tended to have little contact with either proper needs of ultimate customers - governments, firms, universities, individual citizens etc in the developing countries - or with British industry, or British commercial or political interests. They were extremely expensive; they shared great scope for privatisation.

6. Later, two of the principal institutions became TDRI and the last was attached to Ordnance Survey etc work. However, in the context of even 1982 it was clear that your political issue of privatisation (also attached to "geographicalisation" - meaning such bodies wouldbe independent, and would function in response to specific demands), was not exactly treated with respect. As long ago as late 1981, when I was

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ponsible for general ODA issues of R and D, I had written notes expressing your Administration's policy priorities and desires for privatisation. Early in 1982, after the time we met, a "Review of Functional Technical Cooperation" in ODA started. A few months later it was complete. To my utter astonishment it then devoted a whole Annex to "Research and Development - (R and D) - the Gerard proposals."

7. Although much of the above-named paper was clear and sensible enough, this was not so about the so-called "Gerard proposals". In the first case, ideas about privatisation are not, and were not, mine but yours. All I was ever trying to do was bring the attention of the ODA management to what you wanted. Since coverage of issues like geographicalisation, and use of aid in the trade and total environment, was yours, not mine, to reject that was also interesting. In late May 1982 the then Deputy Secretary of the ODA, and Chief Economist, minuted to the Permanent Secretary various suggestions about evaluation of ODA's R and D, but actually even wrote: "14. [The report author] draws attention to certain fallacies in this approach [ie the so-called "Gerard proposals"], which I fully endorse and would indeed go further than he does." Much that followed was about the need for no such privatisation, and the evaluation of the ODA's R and D - but nowhere did it deal with the issue of what your Administration wanted, whether it was feasible or not, and what if anything could be done about it in terms of presentation to Ministers. Subsequently I was to be put in the strange political position of evaluating the ODA's R and D. What all this meant was that ODA senior management was, quite apart from the "Gerard position", quietly opposing your views about privatisation at all levels...

8. Much of what the ODA has done in a minor way about eg privatisation of a canteen or travel service has been at rather low level. That which could have been done about R and D would have been profitable, and feasible, for all concerned. However, ODA management decisions also in 1982 about a Management Information System (MIS) seemed to be in conflict with your ideas. Certainly the proposal was uniquely costing more public funds, and was never probably in 1982 ever assessed even financially, let alone economically, by the ODA Chief Economist. It was then agreed by the Permanent Secretary: already it is of great interest to the National Audit Office. Even now it is far from settled.

9. In 1982/3 my further references to your political ideas (not mine - I have none) were extremely controversial. The management of the ODA frequently indicated that it hated them. Furthermore, I was even accused by various senior officials of having "leaked" things! Since "The Economist" of 15 January 1983 had a "Memo to Alan Walters" about aspects of privatisation in ODA, involving privatisation of certain parts of ODA, I was (nearly) prosecuted with a leakage of information about ODA policy. Not true of course, since if I had ever leaked anything I would at least get the details right! However, to blame something which fitted in with your policy was very strange indeed.

10. While it is not for me to judge in any way the decision by Mr Raison for the transfer of the TDRI - the ODA R and D institution - to Chatham, in premises which in the past have been part of the Ministry of Defence (there was a suitable Parliamentary announcement etc), it is of interest that this decision should have taken place. There were other alternatives which were cheaper than that: indeed, on simple financial grounds it would have been much cheaper to rent or obtain certain premises in Stockwell in the London Borough of Lambeth, which would not only have been cheaper, would have given an excellent basis should it be decided that the TDRI were to be privatised, would have been close to the ODA centre, would have marginal sociological advantages, etc. It is understood that those alternatives presented by ODA officials to Mr Raison did not cover this, or other, points. Mr Raison therefore perhaps had to make a different choice.

11. Apart from the many cases of privatisation etc - there are dozens more - it ought also to be understood that Civil Servants do quietly hide their opinions about other policies of the current Administration in at least the ODA: other points about

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the GCHQ etc have occasionally been used in terms of representation, but they do not have the same power. Recently after returning to work in ODA following sick leave, I became aware that military issues can, in one way or another, affect aid and development too. Suddenly realising that, while the Diplomatic Wing of the FCO was not equalled, or linked, by the ODA, I pointed out that some kind of ODA guidance on defence issues that related to aid was rather necessary. The reaction amongst my colleagues can best be described as fierce. Since important decisions about certain sales of armaments in various parts of the Third World, in which you have a part, are important and very substantial, what certain ODA colleagues meant was that no ODA support even indirectly should ever take place. No ODA involvement even on political grounds should happen.

12. It is true that at various times Sir Robert Armstrong has provided circulars about the relationships between Civil Servants and Ministers. However, even on the basis of those excellent circulars, it seems to me that once again there may be a case for ensuring that there are political "mini-Cabinets" for Ministers. Such institutions would enable Ministers to know more of what is going on, whether or not Civil Servants are truly doing what they say they promise in relation to the Administration, etc. Political presence or appointees would make it harder for high Civil Servants to get away with what they want, and to crush the policy desire of the Administration of the day. The argument whether members of such "mini-Cabinets" would include Civil Servants chosen on a political basis is one that has never been fully settled. All I would say, based on my own personal experience, would be that without even such an experiment, at least ODA senior Civil Servants manage to get away quite well with avoiding your politices and political choice...And this is even if other institutional changes do take place....

13. Finally, I apologise for writing at length. That I do so is because of my own experience: I have been much disliked by certain colleagues in terms of my attempts to be loyal to your Administration. I have received strange, and nearly lethal, physical attack which indeed caused me to end up in hospital for months in 1984. The reports on me have, not surprisingly, been rather heavy. Off and on it was made clear to me years ago that unless I stopped talking so much about the need to do what the Administration wants to do about privatisation, I would be expelled from the Civil Service. More recently I was sent away to the Civil Service Medical Advisory Board etc so that I could be removed. Following the political case was only one of the reasons - it is also true that I happened to discover some interesting unorthodox financial management by certain ODA personnel - but I am not surprised that I be put outside on medical grounds, with slashed etc pension and other points too (also a range of interesting "mistakes" of various natures).

14. Despite all the above points, I would once more stress that I hope in future all your political wishes are respected by Civil Servants...

Yours sincerely

Chris. Gerard.

C T Gerard

CIVIL SERVICE: ODA scrutiny/Gerard: Feb. 1982.

GA

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 December 1985

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 29 October, the contents of which have been noted.

I very much hope that you have a happy retirement.

(Mark Addison)

C. T. Gerard, Esq.

BM

CF File

1. Mr Wieles - to see
2. GR to type for my sig.

Ref. A085/3098

MR ADDISON

Letter to the Prime Minister from Mr Christopher Gerard

Your minute of 19 November to Michael Stark sought advice and, if appropriate, a draft reply to the letter to the Prime Minister from Mr Christopher Gerard dated 29 October.

2. I attach a draft reply for your signature and a copy of the ODA's advice to Michael Stark which gives further background information.

Ros Mulligan

ROSALIND MULLIGAN

2 December 1985

DRAFT LETTER FROM MR WICKS TO MR C T GERARD,
18 SCOTTS LANE, SHORTLANDS, BROMLEY, KENT BR2 0LH

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 29 October, the contents of which have been noted.

I ~~take this opportunity of sending you~~ my ~~best wishes on your retirement from the Public Service~~.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
ELAND HOUSE
STAG PLACE LONDON SW1E 5DH
Telephone 01-213 4819

Sir Crispin Tickell KCVO
Permanent Secretary

27 November 1985

Mr M Stark
PS/Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1

Dear Michael

MR CHRISTOPHER GERARD

In your manuscript note of 22 November you asked for advice and a draft reply to the letter the Prime Minister received on 29 October from Mr Christopher Gerard. As you know this case has a long history.

The main point of Mr Gerard's letter to the Prime Minister was to make a number of allegations about the way in which ODA management had handled the affairs of the ODA Scientific Units, notably the Tropical Development and Research Institute. Mr Gerard wrote a similar letter to the Prime Minister, covering much the same ground, on 12 February 1982. The Prime Minister had a meeting with Mr Gerard on 4 March 1982, and subsequently discussed the points of issue with the then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the then Permanent Secretary of the ODA. In his letter of 19 April 1982 Mr Whitmore said that the Prime Minister regarded the matter as closed, but asked to be kept informed of the results of the further review of the Unit's then proposed. Mr Neil Marten, then Minister for Overseas Development, wrote to Sir Derek Rayner on 18 August 1982 to explain that a number of important changes were proposed in the relationship between the ODA and the Units, including a more formal customer/contractor relationship. A copy of Mr Marten's letter went to the Prime Minister. The proposed changes have now been put into effect.

Mr Gerard's latest letter adds nothing of significance to the earlier one. He has not been officially involved with the Scientific Units for several years, and appears not to be aware of the changes which have taken place. There is nothing in the point he makes about a possible alternative site for relocation of the Scientific Units at Stockwell. The recent

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decision to relocate the Tropical Development and Research Institute and the Land Resources Development Centre at the former naval dockyard site in Chatham was taken following a detailed investigation of a number of possible options and full inter-departmental consultation. Mr Gerard has made vague allegations in the past about financial mismanagement in the ODA, but when pressed to provide evidence has always failed to do so.

I suggest a brief Private Secretary reply on the lines of the attached draft.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Lingham
PS/Sir Crispin Tickell

1. Mr. Wicks
2. Michael Stark

Draft letter pl
NLW
19.11

CHRISTOPHER GERARD

The Prime Minister has received a letter from Christopher Gerard, dated 29 October, which we have acknowledged. I am sorry for the delay in forwarding this to you for advice but it took us a little while to track down the earlier correspondence on our files.

You will see, from your own papers, that this story goes back a long way, to 1982, when Mr Gerard first wrote to the Prime Minister. The last report from Sir William Ryrie in a letter to Robin Butler of 10 May 1984, copied to Sir Robert Armstrong, indicated that Mr Gerard was unwell and that consideration might be given to retiring him on medical grounds.

I should be grateful for your advice on Mr Gerard's most recent letter, and if you think it appropriate, a draft Private Secretary reply.

BF

MEA

19 November, 1985.

10 DOWNING STREET

CONFIDENTIAL FILING ✓ att.

Please could you have another look on the PM's 1982 diary to see if you can find out anything about this meeting.

Thanks.

Garden Rooms
18 November 1985

MEA — pp's attached.
Sorry for delay.
JB 18/11

FILE

DA

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 November 1985

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to acknowledge your letter of 29 October.

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

(Mark Addison)

CONFIDENTIAL

C.T. Gerard, Esq.

SM

10 DOWNING STREET

GR/CF.
Can we ack now pl.
Then can we look at the
meeting ppts at X if we
can. If not, pl spk. MEA 11/11

MEA

The author of this letter has clearly had some unhappy experiences, as a result of being identified with policies unpopular with colleagues. I don't imagine he is alone.

Did you want advice from us on its content, or handling?

M.O.
14/11