



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Office of the Leader of
the Opposition

30 July 1984

Dear Prime Minister,

I am sure that you will agree that the current controversies resulting from various allegations of breaches - past and present - in Britain's security services must be demoralising to the general public and to the people involved in the security services themselves. In particular, the 'McCarthyite' manner in which some people have been 'named' as probable suspects leads to the assumption that information must still be emanating from the security organisations.

Although there have been a number of stories appearing in the newspapers about your apparent attitude to these events I am sure you will agree that some formal, public statement on your part is now necessary. While I naturally understand the need for the maintenance of maximum secrecy in these matters, it is now becoming clear that the House of Commons must have some way in which it is able to ensure that the Vote for the Security Services is brought under more thorough scrutiny. A select committee of Privy Councillors could be the way of dealing with this.

Parliamentary accountability is now almost non-existent and the result of this can be seen in the growth of unsubstantiated allegation and rumour, which can do the most serious damage to individuals who get caught up in what can only be described as 'vendettas' as well as undermine public confidence in our security organisations. I have to say that the situation has deteriorated so sharply in recent weeks that urgent action is now needed before further damage is done. I am not at this stage releasing this letter to the press since I believe that in the very nature of the matter you should have an opportunity to respond before public consideration is taken that stage further.

Margaret Thatcher
Margaret Thatcher

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP

JCC VC

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from the Leader of the Opposition about the current spate of newspaper stories about the security service. I am sure that the Prime Minister will want to send an early reply, in particular dealing firmly with the suggestion of a Select Committee of Privy Counsellors to scrutinise the secret Vote. Could you please provide a draft.

I doubt whether the Prime Minister will wish to reply before her Questions and the debate tomorrow, but I expect that she will want to reply shortly after that.

ARLB

30 July 1984