

Lambeth Palace London SE1 7JU

13 June 1990

My dear Prime Minister

Your visit to the Soviet Union was undoubtedly a great success. I was especially struck by your very warm reception at Leninakan, where the shots of the school were particularly impressive, and where there was no doubt of the gratitude of the whole region.

Clearly disaster prevention, relief and rehabilitation is a task at which we excel, and where there are also dividends. I hope you agree, therefore, that we could reasonably reinforce success, as the military say, with a view to developing this activity still further.

In particular, as Tom King has often pointed out, this seems to be a field in which the military can make a unique contribution. I am told on all sides that all three Services are eager to do it. They consider it the best sort of training they can get for defence, short of actual warfare.

I am glad to learn that a concerted effort is now being made to acquaint the ODA and our overseas embassies with what the Armed Forces can do, and also to look again at the long-standing question of MOD charges, which seem over-rigid when set against the returns in foreign policy.

May I hope, therefore, that in your consideration of the future of the country's Armed Forces, you will think of placing the mission of disaster relief on a footing which will make even better and more frequent use of the Services than is already being done? This seems to be a situation from which everbody would gain.

R15/6 (2)

Eric Hirst  
I have commissioned  
a draft reply.  
CAP  
15/6.  
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It seems to me that this subject might come under the heading of "more imagination", and "working on a wider canvas", which you urged on NATO last week. I shall in fact be chairing a conference, shortly after the London summit, on "NATO and Disaster Relief" which will be attended by some very sensible people.

I have myself paid a number of visits to America & seen much of their community life. They are people with a totally irresponsible religious tradition.

Yours Ever  
Robert Cantin

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