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Confidential Filing

Panorama Programme on  
the KGB

SECURITY

APRIL 1981



Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
<del>14.4.81</del>							
<del>27.4.81</del>							
<del>15.9.81</del>							
20.10.81							
PREM 19/592							

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KGB. Panorama  
Security

Ref. A05762

MR. WHITMORE

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Panorama Programme on the KGB

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are supplying you with material on this programme for Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon. There was, however, one specific aspect of the programme which concerned the Cabinet Office on which I have agreed with the FCO to let you have a note.

2. During the programme, the Cabinet Office was at one point described as "the discreet power-house of British Government" and responsible "for the co-ordination of all Britain's secret intelligence services". A British defence journalist, Richard Cox, described as a former member of the Foreign Office, explained in an interview how he had been cultivated by a member of the Soviet Embassy in London, Mr. Prokopy Gamov, who was one of the Soviet diplomats expelled in 1971. Cox said that he had never been questioned about defence issues in his conversations with Gamov, but that the Soviet official had been most interested in the making of policy and the running of the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet Office. In particular, Cox believed that the Russians wished to ask questions of him in such a way as to give the impression that there might be a spy in the Cabinet Office. The Russians would have expected Cox to relay his conversations back to Government officials and in so doing he would spread doubts and suspicion about security in the Cabinet Office. There was nothing, Cox thought, more demoralising to the Government and its intelligence activities than the suspicion that a spy might exist and ignorance as to his identity. Such suspicions might help to feed on any other doubts which there might be in the Cabinet Office about security.

Paragraph 3 deleted and retained under Section 3(4).

Wayland  
9 August 2011

*Security*

4. If the Prime Minister is asked about this part of the Panorama programme at Questions today, I suggest that she should deal with the matter as follows:

Q. Does the Cabinet Office act as the co-ordinating organisation for intelligence?

A. It is the long-standing practice of the House that Ministers do not answer questions or comment on allegations about intelligence or security matters. I do not propose to answer questions about the role of particular Departments or agencies in these matters. [It is of course a matter of public record that the Secretary of the Cabinet is the Accounting Officer for the Secret Vote.]

Q. Are you satisfied with security in the Cabinet Office? Do you have any reason to believe that it has been penetrated by the KGB?

A. The Cabinet Office is subject to strict rules and procedures on security. I am assured that these are scrupulously observed. I have no reason to believe or suspect that it has been penetrated by the KGB.

Q. Were you aware that the Cabinet Office was a target for Soviet intelligence?

A. Departments which are concerned with major domestic and international issues are liable to be the object of attention from Soviet intelligence. That is why it is important to be vigilant and to ensure that security procedures are in good order and are strictly observed. The inquiry presently being conducted by the Security Commission will help to reassure us that they continue to be so.

*J/Wright*

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

*(approved by Sir R Armstrong and signed on his behalf)*20th October, 1981

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

Sir Robert Armstrong

Panorama Programme on the KGB

The Prime Minister has seen and taken note of your minute A05522 of 15 September reporting where we now stand on the Panorama Programme on the KGB.

**W. A. WHITMORE**

17 September, 1981.

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Prime Minister.

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To note.

There is not much more we can do about this.

*ms*

PRIME MINISTER

*ms*

Panorama Programme on the KGB

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In my minute of 14th April, I explained the line which was being taken by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in response to a request from the editor of Panorama for assistance in producing a programme on the KGB. You endorsed the proposal that the intelligence agencies should not become involved in the briefing of this programme but that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office should offer certain limited assistance to the Panorama team. This did not go down well with the editor of Panorama who repeated their earlier request for more, and more specific, assistance. The BBC found it difficult to understand why we should be so inhibited about helping them with a programme on the KGB. Sir Ian Trethowan himself raised the issue with me in August. I explained to him that limited help was being given on a wholly unattributable (and sometimes indirect) basis, in order ~~to~~ to avoid the adverse consequences for Anglo-Soviet relations which might follow from a direct indication of official involvement (particularly after the Lazin affair, which had just broken). I said that there was also some feeling that it would be inconsistent with our refusal to co-operate with the Panorama programme on our own intelligence services to be too co-operative on the KGB programme. He accepted this.

2. There has been one further approach about the programme from the Assistant Director of News and Current Affairs at the BBC. He expressed unease about the programme in a letter to the Secretary of the D Notice Committee. The Secretary replied offering to discuss the programme but this offer has not been taken up.

3. I have now heard that the first of the two programmes is to be broadcast on Monday, 28th September. Tom Mangold, who is producing it, has tried to secure the assistance of senior ex-public servants who have links with the intelligence agencies. He has approached, for instance, Lord Brimelow, Sir Dick White and Sir Howard Smith, as well as perhaps others. They have



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all apparently declined. This has not prevented Mangold from doing research overseas, and we understand that the New Zealand Prime Minister and an ex-Director of the New Zealand SIS may have given him interviews. In the United States, Mangold is reported to have seen the ex-Director of the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner and also a former head of the FBI station in London. He has researched the career of at least one of those expelled from the Soviet Embassy in London in 1971, Gamov, who is now a member of a Russian delegation in Vienna. Mangold asked our Embassy there for briefing on Gamov and the KGB presence in Vienna, but they declined this request. No request for background information on the Lazin affair has been received from Panorama.

4. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have considered whether the BBC should be asked for more information about the programme but they have concluded, in my view rightly, that such an approach could be counter-productive.

Robert Armstrong

15th September 1981

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10 DOWNING STREET

*Security*

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PANORAMA PROGRAMME ON THE KGB

The Prime Minister has seen, on her return from overseas, your minute AO4726 of 14 April 1981 about a possible Panorama programme on the KGB.

She is content that we should proceed in the way you describe in your minute.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr Halliday (Home Office) and Mr Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

*JAW.*

27 April 1981

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Prime Minister.

No date has been set for this programme yet but it is unlikely to be broadcast for some months. Content to proceed as proposed?

Ref. A04726

PRIME MINISTER

Panorama Programme on the KGB

AMH  
15W.

The Editor of Panorama has told the Head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office News Department that Panorama is considering the possibility of producing a programme on the KGB and would welcome any help that Government Departments may be able to offer.

2. This has been discussed among the Departments and Agencies concerned. It is arguable that, having refused to provide Panorama with any assistance on our own intelligence services, we should refuse to provide help on the KGB. On balance, however, officials have concluded that it would be better to offer the Panorama team limited assistance rather than flatly refuse to help in any way.

3. The proposal is that the Agencies should not be directly involved at all. The Head of the News Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will give the BBC the names of certain academics and outside authors to whom Panorama might turn; they will also offer to let the Panorama team have some Press cuttings of KGB activities in recent years.

Paragraph 4 deleted and retained under Section 3(4).

AWayland  
9 August 2011

5. Whether or not any official help is given to the programme the Russians will conclude that Her Majesty's Government are behind it. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are prepared to live with that risk.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

14 April 1981

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