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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

7 August 1980

Dear Sir,

In 1978 we corresponded about the publication of an Official History of Intelligence during the Second World War. I am enclosing with this letter copies of that correspondence, and of the answer which you subsequently gave in the House.

The first three volumes, under the editorship of Professor Hinsley, have been going ahead: one volume has already been published and two are shortly to come.

That leaves Volumes 4 and 5, on the history of counter-intelligence activities (basically the wartime history of the Security Service) and the history of strategic deception. We now have texts for both of these, the first prepared by a former Deputy Director General of MI5 and the second by Professor Michael Howard.

More work needs to be done on both before they could be ready for publication, but my colleagues and I have been considering whether, subject to further revision and to checking by the appropriate authorities, they should go forward for publication.

We have concluded that the time for publication has not yet come. The publication of these volumes now, at a time when there is active and not always well-disposed interest in the intelligence and security agencies, would provide material which would be used as a basis for investigations of, and pressures

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for disclosure about, current tasks and techniques and the way in which the agencies approach their task. This could damage their capability and effectiveness. We have therefore decided not to publish these volumes for the time being, but to put them in cold storage until it is thought appropriate to review the possibility of publishing them.

Yours sincerely
Rogers Thelma

The Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, M.P.

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