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Ref. A04689

PRIME MINISTER

MS

Prime Minister.

Not a happy answer; but - show
of using the veto (which Minister has been
asked not to do) - there is little more we
can do.

17/2

Panorama Programme on Security and Intelligence Services

The latest information I have on the preparations for this programme is that it is likely to be shown next Monday evening, 23rd February.

2. I think that we are down to one programme rather than two; but some of the material which has been taken out is likely to reappear in a later programme on privacy: that could deal with questions of interception and some of the likely material in the original script which dealt with techniques of eavesdropping and on access to computer data.

3. The indications are that by no means all of the material indicated by the Director General for excision will in fact be excised. The testimony of a number of people who claim to have worked in or for one or other of the intelligence and security services is likely to remain in.

4. I gather that a script of the programme is to be sent to the Secretary of the D Notices Committee. That will give the Secretary of the Committee an opportunity for proposing the omission of material which would be in clear conflict with D Notices. The protection of D Notices does not extend, however, to material which has been published elsewhere, as a good deal of the material in the proposed Panorama programme has been at one time or another.

5. In short, it looks as if Sir Ian Trethowan has not managed to clean the programme up to the extent we might have hoped. As Press reports have made clear, he has been exposed to considerable criticism and pressure within the BBC.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17th February, 1981

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