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Prime Minister.

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To note.

There is not much more we can do about this.

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PRIME MINISTER

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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