

SECRET

Prime Minister.

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You need only take note of this minute.

The letter to Lord Diplock is attached for your signature.

AKH
2/xii

Ref. A06983

MR. WHITMORE

Amended

Security Commission Report

Thank you for your minute of 16th December, in which you seek advice on the handling of the Security Commission report. I hope that, as a first step, the Prime Minister will agree to send Lord Diplock and his colleagues a short letter of thanks, along the lines of the attached draft.

2. I see no need for the Prime Minister to make an immediate announcement. Following the terms of her statement on 26th March, she will wish in due course to make as full a statement as possible on the Government's reactions; this will not be possible before the Recess but I think we should aim at a statement as soon as possible after the House resumes.

3. A preliminary reading suggests that the majority of the recommendations which the Commission make are sound and uncontentious, and that there should therefore be no difficulty in accepting them. I have set up an interdepartmental Working Group of officials to examine the issues closely and urgently, with a view to the Official Committee on Security submitting recommendations to her and the other Ministers concerned.

4. There are, however, two points of obvious and greater difficulty. The first is the question of publication. Precedents, especially that of Radcliffe in 1962, would point to the publication of an edited version of the report, but I understand that Lord Diplock, who would normally need to be consulted, might well refuse to agree to the substantial deletions that we would probably wish to make. We should also have to consult the Leader of the Opposition about the deletions. The alternatives would be to publish in full (without the annexes) or for the Prime Minister to explain in her statement that publication is not possible on grounds of national security. This issue will also need to be discussed by the Official Committee on Security and by the Ministers concerned.

5. The second difficulty is the recommendation that the Secret Intelligence Service and the intelligence-gathering activities of GCHQ should be publicly avowed in the broadest of terms. The Security Co-ordinator, Sir Antony Duff,

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is chairing a group which will advise on the full implications of accepting this recommendation, and I shall put a submission to the Prime Minister on this separately.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

21st December, 1981

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DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER
TO THE RT HON THE LORD DIPLOCK

The Security Commission

I am writing to thank you and your colleagues Lord Bridge and Lord Allen most sincerely for the report which you have now sent me.

When I asked you to undertake this task, I recognised that it would be a considerable extra burden for you, and I very much appreciate your willingness to tackle it and the speed and thoroughness with which you have completed the work.

I am having your recommendations urgently considered, and when the Government are ready to make an announcement I will let you know.

I am sending copies of this letter to Lord Bridge and Lord Allen.



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Lord Diplock,

The Security Commission

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When I asked you to undertake this task, I recognised that it would be a considerable extra burden for you, and I very much appreciate your willingness to tackle it and the speed and thoroughness with which you have completed the work.

I am having your recommendations urgently considered, and when the Government are ready to make an announcement I will let you know.

~~I am sending copies of this letter to Lord Bridge and Lord Allen.~~

Send a letter properly
signed to each of
them

Yours sincerely

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Diplock

Security
Cab 2

Security

file

JR



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

RESTRICTED

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

SECURITY COMMISSION REPORT

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute A06983 of 21 December 1981 about the Security Commission report. She has taken note of it and looks forward to receiving further advice from you on the report.

In the meantime she has written to Lord Diplock, Lord Bridge and Lord Allen on the lines of the draft attached to your minute, and I enclose copies of her letters to them.

JW

23 December 1981

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