

*This is on Security Commission file*

*original filed on:-  
Security: Security  
Commission: April 57*

Ref. A06191

MR. WHITMORE

I understand that the Prime Minister is likely to receive during the course of this month a report from the Security Commission on the reference which she announced in her statement in the House of Commons on 26th March on the Hollis affair.

2. On security procedures the main recommendation seems likely to be a review of classification procedures designed to ensure that Departments do not over-classify documents, and thus to reduce the number of posts whose occupants need to be positively vetted. The need for the positive vetting and normal vetting procedures will be confirmed, and the procedures adopted in the security and intelligence services broadly approved, with some minor changes proposed.

3. As an example of over-classification, the Security Commission will, I understand, suggest that it is not necessary to classify a document as Confidential merely because it contains a reference to the existence of a Cabinet Committee.

4. Perhaps the most difficult recommendation is likely to be that the Government should discontinue the policy of non-avowal of the SIS (and of the SIGINT activities of GCHQ).

5. The report will be classified Secret, and the first thing we shall have to do will be to decide whether it is to be published, unexpurgated or expurgated, or whether the Government should publish simply a list of its findings and recommendations. The previous report of this kind - the Radcliffe Report in 1961 - was published in <sup>an</sup> expurgated version. I understand that the Security Commission are critical of that procedure, and would not be likely willingly to agree to go along with the publication of an expurgated version. Normal procedures would require the Prime Minister to inform the Leader of the Opposition as well as the Chairman of the Security Commission of any expurgations the Government proposed to make. Publication may cause some

embarrassment; but nonetheless I am sure that the aim should be if at all possible to publish in full.

6. I am making arrangements for the preparation of considered advice to Ministers on the question of publication and on the responses to the Commission's recommendations. I think that the aim should be to make a statement on the Government's decisions at the time when the report (or a summary of its findings if that is the way things go) is published.

7.

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS  
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 33  
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3rd December, 1981