

Ref. A084/2600

PRIME MINISTER

I have marked
some parts of the
drafting - I think
it could be shorter and
clearer

Letter attached to
Sir Anthony Kershaw for
your signature if you are
content to proceed as recommended by
Sir Robert Armstrong.

Security Service: Mr Peter Wright's Allegations

FERB

By Mr Butler's minute of 10 September you authorised me 28.9.
to write to Sir Anthony Kershaw, and subsequently to see him,
about the allegations in Mr Peter Wright's dossier.

2. I saw Sir Anthony Kershaw on Monday 24 September. I was
accompanied by the Director General and Deputy Director General
of the Security Service.

3. I think that we were able to convince Sir Anthony Kershaw
that Peter Wright's dossier had been scrupulously and
dispassionately examined. He seemed to accept that it was a
long time since Mr Wright had been directly involved in these
matters, and that in the eight years since he had retired he
had been brooding on the subject to the point where he had not
only changed his position but had become obsessive; and he
accepted that the dossier contained many factual inaccuracies
and false inferences.

4. Sir Anthony Kershaw repeated that there would be no point
in reopening the investigation of Sir Roger Hollis; but he
reverted to the suggestion in his letter of 10 August to me that
there should be some monitoring organisation against the
possibility of penetration in the Security Service. The
Director General made it clear that there had for many years been
a small group of specialists which kept under continuous review
all available information concerning threats of penetration
in the security and intelligence field; and that the work of
this group was under the regular oversight of someone from
outside the agencies (actually Lord Trend), to whom those
responsible for the review also had the right of direct access at
any time if they required it, without needing to seek the
permission of or consult the Director General. This information

was of course new to Sir Anthony Kershaw, and he thought that, if it were possible to indicate that there was a review system of this kind, even if no detail could be given about it, it would reassure him and moderate people who thought like him.

5. As to the next step, I said that I thought that, as he had acceded to your request to make the Peter Wright dossier available to us, you would probably want to write to him yourself about the outcome of the examination of it. He asked whether it would be helpful if he were to make a speech in the Debate on the Address (he said that he would be prepared to show us a draft of the speech). In that speech he could suggest the need for a monitoring system, on the lines indicated in his letter of 10 August to me; and the Minister replying to the Debate could in his response refer to the fact that such a system already existed. He said that he would be perfectly happy to be "blown out of the water", provided that a lot of other people were blown out of the water with him.

6. This suggestion needs careful thought, because the Debate on the Address is likely to follow hard upon the heels of the publication of Mr Chapman Pincher's latest book, which is to be published on 30 October (with three extracts serialised in the Sunday Times during October). Peter Wright's dossier may be overtaken by whatever that book contains. We can only consider the appropriateness of Sir Anthony Kershaw's suggestion when we know the content of that book. Such indications as we have suggest that the book will be in effect a comprehensive anthology of spy cases and allegations since the Second World War, culminating in a proposal for some form of Parliamentary control of the security and intelligence services.

7. In the meantime I think that it would be timely for you to write to Sir Anthony Kershaw on the lines which I suggested in my minute of 7 September (Ref A084/2403). I have considered whether, given the imminence of Mr Pincher's book, a reply to Sir Anthony Kershaw should be delayed until the draft can be reviewed in the light of the book. On balance I believe that the right course is for you to write to Sir Anthony Kershaw now.

It is known that the Government has had Mr Wright's dossier since early August, and that Sir Anthony Kershaw came to see me earlier this week. Your Press Office is regularly asked when we are going to complete the study of Mr Wright's dossier. It would be difficult to account for another month's delay; and I can see some advantage in establishing a position on Mr Wright's dossier before rather than after Mr Pincher's book starts coming out.

--- 8. I attach a revised version of the draft letter to Sir Anthony Kershaw, taking account of your own comments and those of the Home Secretary, and incorporating a new paragraph about the arrangements for keeping the risk of penetration in the security and intelligence agencies under review. It is arguable that this new piece of information should not be put out in writing now, but saved up to be used as ammunition after the publication of Mr Pincher's book. On balance I favour including it in the letter to Sir Anthony Kershaw now. He has already been given the information orally, and might think it odd that it was not included in the letter. And I doubt whether this particular item of information is likely to be weighty enough to make the crucial difference to the response to Mr Pincher's book: if that book spells big trouble, we shall have to consider other possibilities anyway, and, if the book can be dealt with as you dealt with the earlier book in 1981, it will strengthen your position if this information is already in the public domain via Sir Anthony Kershaw. The Director General believes that there are now no significant reasons for not acknowledging that such arrangements exist.

9. You will see that I have retained in the second page of the draft a modified version of the reference to the difficulty of proving a negative, which you suggested deleting from the first draft. I do so in deference to the view of Lord Trend that it is an important point and should be explicitly stated.

10. I am sending a copy of this minute and the revised draft letter to the Home Secretary.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

28 September 1984

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO
SIR ANTHONY KERSHAW MC MP, HOUSE OF COMMONS

Following the recent Granada TV programme, Mr Peter Wright sent you a copy of his memorandum on the allegations against Sir Roger Hollis and their implications, and you agreed to make a copy of the memorandum available for study by the security authorities here.

That study has now been undertaken, and its results have been submitted to me.

You will obviously not expect me to comment in detail upon it in this letter. I can say, however, that both Mr Wright's thesis and the "evidence" adduced in support of it are basically the same as in Mr Chapman Pincher's book "Their Trade is Treachery". Furthermore, his memorandum contains many factual inaccuracies. It is also clear that Mr Wright did not know everything that was happening while the investigations and inquiry were going on. Many of the inferences he seeks to make do not follow from the material on which he seeks to base them. And he seems to shift his ground from one utterance to the next. It is of course eight years since he was officially concerned with these matters, and had access to the information.

There are a few people besides Mr Wright who think that there is evidence that the Security Service was penetrated at a senior level at least until 1965, and that the available information points in the direction of Sir Roger Hollis. There are many others (it must also be said) who have taken a more responsible attitude towards their obligations of confidentiality but have had no less access to the relevant material, who take an opposite view with no less conviction. They do not agree that there is evidence to prove that the Security Service has been penetrated since the end of the Second World War, they are in no doubt that Hollis was not a Soviet agent, and they think that there is not a shred of justification in Mr Wright's material for the view that he was. They regard Mr Wright's case as nothing but circumstantial innuendo completely unsupported by factual evidence.

It is not possible to prove that Sir Roger Hollis was a Soviet agent. Equally it is impossible to prove that he was not, though that is what most of those concerned believe: it is of course usually impossible to prove a negative. The whole matter has been the subject of exhaustive investigation, inquiry and review over many years. There is nothing in Mr Wright's memorandum, or in any of the various statements which Mr Wright has made to the press, which would lead me to withdraw or alter

anything that I said in the statement I made in the House of Commons on 26 March 1981, following the publication of Mr Pincher's book. I do not believe that any further inquiry could offer any prospect of further clarification, let alone certainty, unless some totally new information were to become available.

I have also, given my official responsibilities for security and intelligence, to have regard for the need to maintain its effectiveness in its primary role of safeguarding national security. The activities of Mr Wright and one or two other former members of the security and intelligence services are, to say the least of it, unhelpful in this regard and damaging to morale. It would not be right for me to impose on the Service the additional burden and distraction that a further inquiry would entail, unless there were some very good reason (which there is not) to believe that it would serve a useful purpose. In a matter of this kind there has to come a time for finality, to draw a line at the bottom of the account and close it. In my view that time has now come in respect of the Hollis allegations.

So much for the past. It might be said that, even if we are satisfied that the probability is that Sir Roger Hollis was not a Soviet agent, even if there is no evidence that the Security Service

was penetrated in the years after the War, we must assume that it has been and continues to be a target for penetration, and (as I said in the House in March 1981) make sure that the arrangements for guarding against penetration are as good as they can possibly be, both in the area of the security and intelligence services and throughout the public service.

These arrangements are kept constantly under review. They were comprehensively reviewed and strengthened in 1962; and again in 1982, with a review by the Security Commission and implementation of its recommendations. Further changes were made in the light of the Prime case, again following a report by the Security Commission. Bettaney's attempt to enlist as a Soviet agent was fortunately frustrated before any serious damage could be done; nonetheless the circumstances of that case are now being reviewed by the Security Commission, who will be able to say whether there should be further modifications of recruitment, personnel management or protective security procedures in the Security Service.

In addition to these general arrangements for guarding against penetration, we have special arrangements for keeping under continuous review all available information concerning threats of penetration in the security and intelligence services.

You will not expect me to go into detail about these arrangements, but they include an element of regular oversight from outside the services as well as the use of specialist analytical and investigative capacity within them.

I do not believe that any wider system of external monitoring would be appropriate in this field, or indeed possible without in some degree putting at risk the security which the services are there to protect. The security and intelligence services are accountable to Ministers. In various statements in the House I have set out the arrangements for accountability in some detail, and I can assure you that my colleagues and I who have special responsibilities in these matters take those responsibilities very seriously. It remains my view that this accountability to Ministers, together with the arrangements for guarding against penetration and the provisions for review of particular breaches of security by the Security Commission, strike the right balance between the need for those services to operate in secrecy and the importance of guarding against the risks of penetration.

Security: Security of Secret Services
A2.

28 SEP 1957

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LPO ABK

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

SECURITY SERVICE: MR. PETER WRIGHT'S
ALLEGATIONS

The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute of 28 September (ref: A084/2600) and, subject to the Home Secretary's views, is content to write to Sir Anthony Kershaw now. She had one or two detailed comments on the draft.

First, she has again queried the middle sentence in the third paragraph which says that Mr. Wright did not know everything that was happening while the investigations and enquiry were going on. In the attached redraft, I have deleted this sentence but have tried to cover the point in a redraft of the final sentence of that paragraph.

Second, the Prime Minister thought that the first sentence of the fourth paragraph might be confusing to people who do not realise that Philby and the others who have been revealed as Soviet agents did not belong to the Security Service. I have suggested an additional first sentence in that paragraph to cover this point.

Third, the Prime Minister felt that the opening of the fifth paragraph makes it sound as if Sir Roger Hollis was a Soviet agent. I have suggested a redraft to cover this point.

Finally, the Prime Minister asks that, if possible, the draft should be shortened. I have not seen much scope for that, but suggested a few abbreviations; and have in particular omitted some words at the point when the draft moves from the allegations about Hollis to the present arrangements for guarding against penetration.

ST
Could you and Mr. Taylor (Home Office), to whom I am copying this minute, please let me know if you are content with the attached revision of the letter to Sir Anthony Kershaw.

1 October 1984

FORB.

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