

Prime Minister

Ref. A084/2819

MR BUTLER

I have made
a few comments
notAgree that Sir Robert
Armstrong should write to
Sir Anthony Kershaw as he
proposes?

FERB

25.10.

Security Service: Mr Peter Wright's Allegations

You will remember from my minute of 28 September (Ref A084/2600) that, when I saw Sir Anthony Kershaw on 24 September, he asked whether it would be helpful if he were to make a speech in the Debate on the Address, in which he would suggest the need for a monitoring system, and the Minister replying to the Debate could in his response refer to the fact that such a system already existed.

2. He told me that he would send me a copy of a draft of his speech. He was as good as his word and sent me the draft on 2 October before he had received your letter of 8 October.

3. The wording of Sir Anthony Kershaw's draft speech suggests that he has been advised by Mr Chapman Pincher in its preparation.

4. Whether such a speech will serve a useful purpose is difficult to judge until we have seen the whole of Mr Pincher's new book. The extracts from that book now being serialised in the Sunday Times are being analysed by the Security Service, and I will offer detailed comment on them when that analysis is available. My first impression of the first article last Sunday, however, was that there was quite a lot of hitherto unpublished information but very little new information in the article. Pincher does, however, claim that the Security Service did not know and that he has now discovered that Sir Roger Hollis was friendly in China with a known German Communist called Ewert, and he suggests that Ewert would certainly have been under instructions to look for potential agents for the RIS.

5. I think that we must reserve judgment on whether a speech by Sir Anthony Kershaw would be useful, and discuss that with him when we have read and digested the book as a whole. I propose to

reply to the letter which Sir Anthony Kershaw sent me on 2 October accordingly. I propose also to make a number of comments on the draft at this stage. These comments have been agreed with the Home Office and the Security Service.

6. I attach a copy of Sir Anthony Kershaw's draft speech and of the letter which I now propose to send him. I should be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister is content that I should write accordingly. The draft has been agreed with the Home Office and the Security Service.

7. I am sending a copy of this minute and of its annexes to the Private Secretary to the Home Secretary.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

24 October 1984

DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG TO
SIR ANTHONY KERSHAW MC MP, HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thank you for your letter of 2 October, enclosing a draft of a speech which you would wish to make in the Debate on the Address.

You will know from the Prime Minister's letter of 8 October the sort of line that the Government spokesman would be likely to take in reply.

Whether or not this is going to be a useful and appropriate way of proceeding is perhaps a little difficult to determine in advance of the publication of Chapman Pincher's book, which will I understand precede the Opening of Parliament by a few days. Do you think that we could meet and review the matter in the first few days of November?

On your draft as it stands, I have the following comments:

- (1) A minor point which arises in the first and third paragraphs on page 1, the fifth paragraph on page 2, and the second paragraph on page 5: where you refer to "the security services" it would be more accurate to refer to "the security and intelligence services".
- (2) In the second paragraph on page 2, you state that the RIS "have repeatedly been able to plant so-called defectors who have fed wrong information to us". That is certainly believed by some to be the case; but I do not think that it can be supported by hard evidence. If you want to keep the point, you could try saying something like: "Some people believe that they have been able to plant so-called defectors" etc.
- (3) You have been at some pains to be very balanced in the paragraph that spans the bottom of page 2 and the top of page 3, not coming down on one side or the other of the argument about Sir Roger Hollis. Then

suddenly the last sentence moves from the hypothetical to the direct: "he did immense harm". Would it preserve the balance if this sentence read: "But it is plain that if there had been such a spy he would have ^{done} (been in a position to do) immense harm to his country"?

- (4) Your paragraph about Lord Trend ^{is not} ~~does~~ ^{quite right,} (not accurately report what he did and the conclusion to which he came. He did not reinvestigate the case) ~~He~~ ^{he} reviewed all the investigations that had taken place, and found that they had been carried out exhaustively and objectively. He did not conclude that the case had not been proved; he "agreed with those who, although it was impossible to prove the negative, concluded that Sir Roger Hollis had not been an agent of the Russian intelligence service" (OR 26 March 1981, col 1080).

Lord Trend was of course not a "professional security man". But his knowledge of the Security Service and of its people, and his familiarity with this particular set of problems, was considerably greater than that of almost anybody else outside the Security Service. He took a year to conduct his review.


I do not think that it is fair to call his competence in question: no-one outside the Security Service - certainly not a judge - could have brought to his task a greater degree of knowledge, greater thoroughness, or a more objective approach. And I wonder (in any case whether, since you say that it would not be profitable to sift through the evidence again, it helps your argument to "rubbish" Lord Trend. The speech would stand perfectly well without this paragraph.)

if I may ask you to reconsider your rather derogatory remarks about Lord Trend. He was a very distinguished ~~public figure~~ public servant who will be deeply wounded by what you have said. Do you really think you are being fair?

- (5) The next paragraph talks of Chapman Pincher making available "a mass of information which has since proved accurate". His book

certainly made a lot of information public for the first time. In so far as it was accurate, however, it was not new to the security authorities (as the use of the word "since" might seem to imply); and it was by no means all accurate. Perhaps the first sentence could simply read: "In 1981, when Mr Harry Chapman Pincher published his book Their Trade is Treachery, my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister ...".

- (6) The last sentence of that same paragraph suggests that "the new revelations will require a rewriting of Lord Diplock's terms of reference". The inquiry into security procedures and practices by the Security Commission under Lord Diplock's chairmanship which was announced by the Prime Minister on 26 March 1981 was not a continuing review: it was a "one-off" inquiry. The Commission reported some months later and as much of its findings as could be disclosed were published in



a White Paper (Cmnd 8540) in May 1982. By that report the Commission discharged the remit given to it in March 1981. If it felt that a further review of security procedures and practices was called for, that would require a new reference to the Commission. Furthermore, Lord Diplock retired as Chairman of the Security Commission after the completion of that report; his successor is Lord Bridge of Harwich. Perhaps the sentence could be altered to read: "No doubt the Government is considering whether Mr Pincher's latest book calls for a further reference to the Security Commission".

- (7) In the second paragraph of page 4, the second sentence appears to imply that Bettaney had been suspect throughout his eight years of service. As you know, he has dated the beginning of his process of "conversion" to his time in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence or suggestion that his loyalty or motives were suspect

before then. Perhaps the sentence could read: "Bettaney was eight years in the Service and underwent two positive vettings ...".

- (8) In the first paragraph of your last page, I have to say that I think that "solid and fairly numerous" is an exaggeration. I don't think that the number of professionals who take the view described is "fairly numerous"; (and "solid" is a word which I would hesitate to apply to some of them.)

N.B. If we are complaining about his snide comments on hard (read, we cannot relate) in this way!

Mr Speaker, Sir,

I raise this afternoon the question of our Security Services. I do so with some reluctance, though no hesitation, because I as well as other Hon. Members realise that public debate about our security services is not always to the public interest and is seldom welcome to the Government of the day because the Government is not able to defend itself to its own satisfaction, because of the reticences which the maintenance of security impose upon it and because people like myself outside the magic circle of the initiates may blurt out in our ignorance truths which Governments must keep hidden.

However, Sir, I shall not, I hope refer to any facts which have not been made known to the public, facts which when they were so made known did not attract any legal censure or rebuke.

I therefore raise the matter of our security because I believe that the security services are of great and growing importance to the safety of our country. There are those who argue that the importance of these services is exaggerated, who say for example that the exact dimensions of a bomb or the weapons of a ship are no longer so vital, given the vast and saturating capability in weapons which some countries, including our own, may possess.

This is not true. The increasing power of weapons means that the ways of countering them, of stifling their destructive capability is more not less important than it was in the days of the rifle and the Maxim gun.

Furthermore, it is not merely a matter of hardware. Detecting the intentions and influencing the policies of possible enemies can be even more significant than that. The art of disinformation, of supplying wrong or misleading facts to one's opponent so that he misreads the situation which faces him can neutralise or disarm an enemy.

/For many.....

For many years the Soviet Union has been concentrating on the practice of disinformation. They seek to bring about a climate of opinion favourable to themselves. They have collected information about individuals to silence them or to influence them, they have fed wrong information about their own resources and intentions and about those of our allies.

They have been startlingly successful. Not many years back they prevented the deployment of the neutron bomb by the U.S.A. by entirely specious arguments which, nevertheless, caught the imagination of an alarmed European public. They have repeatedly been able to plant so-called defectors who, recommended or endorsed by Western security authorities, have fed wrong information to us.

They have recently achieved another success. By infiltration into the Labour Party, they have after 40 years of trying, succeeded in getting the Labour Party to adopt a defence policy which must be much more to their taste than the previous one.

One way, and a very good way, to spread disinformation is by spies. We know that the Soviet Union maintains many spies in this country, masquerading as trade officials and the like, some trying to persuade, some to find out secrets, some blackmailing and so on.

The best and most productive way to spy is to have your man actually in the security services of your opponent and, to the shame of those involved and to the shame of the country, that is what as we all know the Russians successfully did with people like Burgess, Maclean, Philby, Blunt and probably Ellis, all of whom were traitors, who should have been brought to book before they were.

We also know that allegations have been made by those who should have been in a position to know, that there was another spy who was never unmasked. It would not be profitable for me to sift once again through all the evidence about this. But I

/have been....

have been sent a mass of evidence about it. I know there are different views about the value of this evidence, and that many, probably the majority of those in the inner circles of knowledge of these matters strongly maintain that allegations about an undiscovered spy are wrong. But it is plain that if there was a spy he did immense harm to this country.

In 1974 an enquiry by Lord Trend, an immediate past Secretary to the Cabinet came to the conclusion that the case had not been proved. Some of us were surprised. Some of us wondered how one man, not a professional security man, could adequately ferret through 30 years of files and secrets and be sure that he had missed nothing and had been fully informed by those whom he questioned.

In 1981 when Mr Harry Chapman Pincher made available in his book "Their Trade is Treachery" a mass of information which has since proved accurate and which he has now added to by his new book, my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister set up another enquiry under the noble and learned Lord, Lord Diplock to review the security procedures and practices currently followed in the public service and to consider what, if any, changes are required. No doubt the new revelations will require a re-writing of Lord Diplock's terms of reference.

I venture to query whether such an enquiry is the right sort of enquiry to have. Judges are used to dealing with rules of evidence, with strict procedures designed basically to protect the accused against unfairness. They do not deal in the dirty lights of a world of confessions inadmissible in Court, of balance of probabilities, in which the benefit of the doubt is not given, in which fear, intimidation and self-interest are common coin. Of course Judges know the seamier side of life, how could they avoid it, but they try to deal with it by legal rules and not by other rules, of which the first is how to stay alive.

Can we be sure that even if the case for the fifth man was not proven, that the new precautions set up were on the

/basis.....

basis that he had existed. Surely that was the only safe, indeed the only sensible way to proceed. We do not know. All that we have is a statement that the procedures taken seemed to be working well. But were they?

After these enquiries, after the setting up of the new procedures we had Prime and Betanney. Betanney was discovered, but only after 8 years in the service and two positive vettings, which he sailed through without difficulty. Was it only at the end of his service that he exhibited character defects which should have ruled him out of security employment?

I am bound to admit that he was caught. But Prime, who was a spy of very great importance to the Russians, would never have been discovered at all if his wife had not denounced him after he had ceased spying.

These two cases must call into question the judgement that the present precautions are working well. It is not enough to say that there will always be one rotten apple in a barrel. In a barrel of this small size it would be possible to make sure there is not a single bad one.

And there is a further point which should be made. Assuming that there was a spy and I have said that, whether he was or not, one should in designing precautions, assume that there was, surely one must assume that one very important task for him as he neared retirement would be to ensure that he had a replacement spy. How do we know whether he succeeded or not?

It seems to me that these questions are not to be resolved by spasmodic enquiries by the great and the good. What is needed is a permanent presence within the institutions themselves, a sort of Inspectorate-General, keeping a professionally-informed eye upon the practices and personalities. Only such a procedure will calm the anxieties which exist.

/These.....

These anxieties, which are widely felt, are not fuelled by idle or prurient curiosity, intent on producing a quick paper back in time for holiday reading, or making a speech in the House to catch a headline. These anxieties are expressed by a solid and fairly numerous band of professionals who themselves worked in the departments concerned, who were not satisfied by what they saw and learned, and who are not today satisfied that enough has been done to prevent such things happening again. These anxieties are expressed by those who have spent years of study on these matters and are widely regarded as both patriotic and deeply informed.

We do not expect to be told all the details. We do not want, at least I do not want, Parliamentary control such as they have in the U.S.A. and which has done great harm to their security services.

But we do want and are entitled to have, firmer and more convincing assurances than we have had hitherto, and I believe this House will continue to press H.M.G. until we get them and will be right to do so.

2nd October. 1984.



File

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONGSECURITY SERVICE: MR. PETER WRIGHT'S ALLEGATIONS

Thank you for your minute of 24 October (A084/2819) covering a draft of Sir Anthony Kershaw's speech for the Debate on the Address and of the letter which you propose to send him.

The Prime Minister is content that you should write to Sir Anthony on the lines you propose, subject to the following suggestions:-

- (i) Page 3, last sentence of (3):
Substitute "done" for "been in a position to do".
- (ii) Page 3, first sentence of (4):
Amend to read:-
"Your paragraph about Lord Trend is not quite right. He reviewed all the investigations ..."
- (iii) Page 4, last sentence of (4):
Amend to read:-
"And I wonder if I may ask you to reconsider your rather derogatory remarks about Lord Trend. He was a very distinguished public servant who will be deeply wounded by what you have said. Do you really think you are being fair?"
- (iv) Page 7, last sentence of (8):
Delete the words after "fairly numerous".
The Prime Minister comments that if we are complaining about his snide comments on Lord Trend, we should not retaliate with snide comments about others.

I am copying this minute to Mr. Taylor (Home Office).

FERB

29 October 1984