

Ref. A084/2976

MR BUTLER

34

Prime Minister
for information
at H.7 stage.

FERB
6.11.

Security Service: Mr Peter Wright's Allegations

In your minute of 29 October you told me that the Prime Minister was content that I should write to Sir Anthony Kershaw on the lines proposed in my minute of 24 October (Ref. A084/2819), subject to certain amendments.

2. I wrote to Sir Anthony Kershaw accordingly on 30 October.

3. Sir Anthony Kershaw responded today to my invitation to him to come and see me.

4. He said that he had been thinking further about his proposal to make a speech in the Debate on the Address. He supposed that, if he made such a speech, the Government would reply on the basis of the letter which the Prime Minister sent him on 8 October. That was a very clear letter; and the effect of it was to turn down the proposal he had made for a "permanent external presence" to oversee the Security Service and in particular the threat of penetration. He supposed that the references in the Prime Minister's letter of 8 October to the existing arrangements were to K7 in the Security Service, and he did not regard that as sufficient. What he wanted was something like a standing Security Commission (not a Parliamentary body). If his idea was publicly rejected in a speech in the House of Commons, it would go no further at this stage. He therefore proposed to pursue it in further correspondence with the Prime Minister and not to make a speech in the House of Commons.

5. He had so informed Mr Chapman Pincher, who was very angry and had said that he would try and get somebody else to raise the subject on the floor of the House of Commons: he had in mind Mr Peter Archer MP or Mr Alfred Dubs MP. Sir Anthony Kershaw did



not know whether he would succeed in persuading either of them to raise the matter, either in the Debate on the Address or on some other occasion. If the matter was raised in the House by somebody else, Sir Anthony Kershaw said that he would have no alternative but himself also to speak.

6. He had been envisaging that he would make his speech during the course of the foreign affairs debate on Friday 9 November.

7. So we are in the slightly unsatisfactory position of not knowing whether these matters will be raised during the course of the Debate on the Address. On the whole I think it seems likely that they will not; but I have draft notes for a reply nearly ready, in case they are required. I hope in a day or two to submit them to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, with copies to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in case these matters are raised in the foreign affairs debate.

8. You will have seen that the Sunday Times, having published three extracts from Chapman Pincher's latest book, are next week going to publish an article entitled "The Case for Hollis". I have not yet seen the article, but those who have tell us that it is a pretty effective hatchet job on Chapman Pincher.

9. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Private Secretary to the Home Secretary.

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Approved by
ROBERT ARMSTRONG
and signed in his absence

6 November 1984

Ref. A084/2991

MR BUTLER

Security Service: Mr Wright's Allegations

I reported in my minute of 6 November that Sir Anthony Kershaw MP did not now propose to make a speech in the Debate on the Address about the security and intelligence services and Mr Peter Wright's allegations, but that, if some other MP (eg Mr Peter Archer or Mr Alfred Dubs) was persuaded by Mr Chapman Pincher to make a speech, he would feel bound to intervene.

--- 2. In case this should happen I now attach notes for a reply to a speech on the lines which Sir Anthony Kershaw would be likely to follow. These notes have been agreed with the Home Office and the Security Service, and essentially follow the lines of the Prime Minister's letter of 8 October to Sir Anthony Kershaw.

3. I am sending copies of this minute and of the speech notes to the Private Secretary of the Home Secretary; and, since any intervention would probably come in the course of the Foreign Affairs Debate, I am also sending the Private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary copies of this minute and the speech notes, together with copies of the draft speech which Sir Anthony Kershaw sent me on 2 October and of the letter which the Prime Minister sent to Sir Anthony Kershaw on 8 October.

RIA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

8 November 1984

DRAFT PARAGRAPHS FOR GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN'S REPLY
TO SIR ANTHONY KERSHAW

My Hon Friend the Member for Stroud during his interesting and thoughtful intervention raised a number of questions about the security and intelligence services, and specifically about the Security Service.

I should in any case be obliged to reply only fairly briefly on these matters, since our long-established convention is not to discuss security and intelligence matters in any detail in this House.

My Hon Friend was dealing mainly with the possibility of penetration of the security and intelligence services. He referred to the material on this that he was sent by Mr Peter Wright, a former member of the Security Service, who gave wider currency to his views in a television programme last July. My Hon Friend was good enough to make this material available for study. The House will obviously not expect me to comment in detail upon the results of that study. I can say, however, that Mr Wright's thesis and the "evidence" adduced in support of it contain much that appears in the book which Mr Chapman Pincer published in 1981, entitled "Their Trade is Treachery". Furthermore, his memorandum contains many factual inaccuracies. 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 his account indicates that there were gaps in his information even then.

None of those known to have been Soviet agents since 1945 were members of the Security Service. A few people believe, like Mr Wright, 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. Many others, who have taken a more responsible attitude towards their obligations of confidentiality but have had no less access to the relevant material, 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 1945, they are convinced that Hollis was not a Soviet agent, and they think that Mr Wright's material does not begin to justify the view that he was. They regard Mr Wright's case as nothing but speculation completely unsupported by factual evidence.

Because it is usually impossible to prove a negative, it has not been possible to dispose conclusively of the allegation that Sir Roger Hollis was a Soviet agent. But 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 my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister to withdraw or alter anything that she said in the statement she made in the House of Commons on 26 March 1981, following the publication of Mr Pincher's book. There is no reason to believe that any further inquiry could offer any prospect of further clarification, let alone certainty, unless some totally new information were to become available.

Now of course we have had another book from Mr Chapman Pincher. That book was published only ten days ago. It is merely 600 pages long, and contains many details which did not appear in his previous book. The book is being studied intensively and in detail. That will take some time, and anything I say now is inevitably in the nature of an interim report. But I can say that at first sight it seems as if:

- a. the book repeats, with additional detail, the general thesis of Mr Pincher's earlier book;
- b. it appears to rely heavily on the material that was in Mr Peter Wright's dossier, and to that extent in subject to the same shortcomings;
- c. as in Mr Wright's case, his inferences are based on circumstantial evidence, and do not follow from the material on which he seeks to base them;
- d. in each case where Mr Pincher claims to have new information to support his thesis that the late Sir Roger Hollis was probably recruited

as an agent of the Russian Intelligence Service, the information is in fact either not new to the security authorities; or is known to be inaccurate; or is not germane to the central argument. Furthermore, his information is either deficient or incorrect in certain key respects which invalidate his case;

e. unless further study suggests otherwise, I believe that the conclusion is one again likely to be that there is nothing in the book which would lead my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister to withdraw or alter anything that she said in the statement she made in this House on 26 March 1981 following the publication of Mr Pincher's first book.

In this context I have noted with interest my Hon Friend's view that a further inquiry by the Security Commission would not be the right response to Mr Pincher's latest book. In my Hon Friend's view, what is needed is not another external inquiry but a permanent presence within the security and intelligence services, to keep an eye on the possible threats of penetration and the steps taken to provide against them.

We have, of course, to ensure as my Rt Hon Friend said in the House in March 1981, 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; but the circumstances of that case are also 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 standing arrangements for reviewing all available information concerning threats of penetration in the security and intelligence services. The House 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.

Mr Speaker, the Government are not convinced 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 my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has set out the arrangements for accountability in some detail, and Ministers who have special responsibilities in these matters take those responsibilities very seriously. It remains our 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.