

CONFIDENTIAL

1.
Security

Ref. A0610

MR. WHITMORE

We will wait a few more days!

MT.

The Climate of Treason

Attorney. The Attorney General has now been consulted and has given his views on the three points in paragraph 3 of the minute I sent you earlier today.

2. On the first question, he takes the view that the Prime Minister should not be prevented from making a statement about Blunt by the possibility that he might contemplate legal proceedings. Indeed he goes further: he considers that it would be the duty of the Government, knowing what it does, to make it clear to Blunt that it was bound to disclose what it knows, and thus in effect to prevent him from taking such proceedings. It follows from this that, if the Prime Minister decides to make a statement (or give a substantive answer to a Question), Blunt must be told beforehand.

3. On the second question the Attorney General believes that the Prime Minister need not be inhibited by the likelihood of legal proceedings by * ~ * from stating, in reply to a direct Question, that the suggestion that * ~ * was a Soviet agent is new to the security authorities and there is no evidence in their possession to support it. If she makes a statement about Blunt, however, the statement itself should be confined to Blunt and should not volunteer information about the Fifth Man.

4. On the third question, the Attorney General takes the view that any legal proceedings instituted by * ~ * would not be prejudiced by a statement about Blunt.

5. I am now proposing to bring up to date the material already prepared, in consultation with those concerned.

6. I believe that, as things have now developed, a statement about Blunt has become virtually inevitable. If the Prime Minister shares this view, it will be for consideration whether to wait for a Member of Parliament to put down a Question, or whether to volunteer a statement. The draft already prepared is

* ~ * Names deleted and retained under Section 3(4).

Olwayland
11 March 2014

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really too long for an answer to an Oral Question; an oral statement would allow scope for wide-ranging supplementaries; would there be something to be said for a Written Answer to an arranged Question?

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

8th November, 1979

Prime Minister.

There is much to be said for a Written Answer to an arranged Question: it allows you to make the first public statement on the issue at a time and in a manner of your own choosing. But it would no doubt be followed by Oral Questions.

If you prefer a Written Answer, the draft that has already been prepared can probably stand, subject to some updating: there is, in my view, some advantage in giving a fairly full account of the sequence of events. But if you prefer to answer an Oral Question or to make a statement, you will no doubt want a shorter reply than the present draft.