



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 December 1986

*Prime Minister**Dear Nigel,*Peter Wright Case:Prime Minister's Meeting on 10 December

As you know, the Foreign Secretary will unfortunately be unable to attend the Prime Minister's meeting this evening. He has however asked me to pass on to you one or two points which he would like to have made on the question of future management of cases like Peter Wright and future policy on enforcing the duty of confidentiality which he understands is likely to be discussed at the meeting.

The Foreign Secretary has seen your letter of 27 November proposing revised arrangements for dealing with unauthorised publications, and also letters on the subject by Sir B Cubbon and Sir R Armstrong. He very much agrees that the Peter Wright case has underlined the need to establish a clearer and more structured system for dealing with cases of this kind in future and also the necessity of ensuring that Ministers in all departments concerned are informed at an early stage about impending publications. He also agrees that work needs to be done to consider ways of tightening up our present arrangements for preventing the unauthorised disclosure of confidential information. He understands that a start has already been made on the latter point in a working group of officials chaired by Mr Mallaby and that recommendations to Ministers will be coming forward in due course. He considers that for the immediate

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future the Ministerial group set up under the Home Secretary's Chairmanship, reporting as necessary to the Prime Minister, is proving effective, both in dealing with the immediate day to day handling of the Wright case and in considering some of the longer term questions which the case has thrown up. He believes therefore that it would be sensible to maintain this group in being for the immediate future. As regards the question of the possible establishment of some form of Cabinet Committee to consider policy questions in this area in the longer term, he sees no urgency about taking an immediate decision. His primary concern is that any new arrangements that are put into place - he has no doubt about the need for them - should have been the subject of full and careful consideration. As soon as possible after he and Sir Patrick Wright have returned to London from their present travels he will put forward some considered views on precisely how such a committee might be set up and the remit it would have.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of the Home Secretary, Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours Sincerely,
Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

N Wicks Esq
No 10 Downing St

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Dear Nigel,

The Peter Wright Case

I have had one further comment from the Foreign Secretary (now in Brussels) - on Christopher Mallaby's paper on future policy on unauthorised disclosure.

As you know, that paper suggests that there may be scope for treating the security and intelligence services differently to the rest of the public service. I should stress that the Foreign Secretary has not yet had time to consider these papers in detail. But his initial inclination is to think that it would be a mistake to get locked in to too narrow a definition, and that it would be best for legislation to apply not just to the security and intelligence services but to anyone dealing with the subjects in question. He would therefore favour a definition such as that used in the interception legislation.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of the Home Secretary, Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours Sincerely,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

Nigel Wicks Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

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