

SECRET AND PERSONAL



Security 14

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PANORAMA PROGRAMME ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

You saw the Prime Minister this afternoon to seek decisions on two fresh developments on the Panorama programme on the intelligence services.

First, you said that Sir Ian Trethowan had asked that Mr. Tom Mangold, the producer of the programme, should be given the same kind of briefing as he had had and that he had suggested that this might be done by Mr. Sheldon and Sir Dick White.

Second, the Editor of Panorama had written to Lord Carr inviting him to take part in the programme. Lord Carr had been in touch with you to say that while he did not particularly wish to appear, he was ready to do so if the Government thought that it would be helpful. In that event he would like some briefing in order to refresh his memory. You said that you thought that there was something to be said for not discouraging Lord Carr from accepting the invitation partly because he might provide a useful counter-balance to the interview which Mr. Merlyn Rees had already given and also because if he refused to appear, the producers might turn to Lord Butler who was likely to be a good deal less reliable in any contribution he made than Lord Carr. Whatever advice we offered Lord Carr, we would have to make it clear to him that Ministers much preferred that the programme should not be shown at all, that we were attempting to distance ourselves from it as much as possible and that if it was shown, we might wish to attack the BBC publicly for broadcasting it.

/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that she was content for Mr. Sheldon to brief Mr. Mangold but she did not think that Sir Dick White should be involved.

She was strongly opposed to Lord Carr appearing in the programme for if he did so, he would lend it authority and credibility. Yet we did not know what the rest of the programme would contain. Lord Carr should be told that Ministers were dismayed at the proposed programme and had done all they could to discourage it because it was contrary to the national interest. He should be advised not to take part in it.

AWW.

7 October 1980

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