

*This is a copy. The original has been extracted and retained under Section 3(4).*

*KGB. Panorama.  
Security*

Ref. A05762

MR. WHITMORE

Panorama Programme on the KGB

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are supplying you with material on this programme for Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon. There was, however, one specific aspect of the programme which concerned the Cabinet Office on which I have agreed with the FCO to let you have a note.

2. During the programme, the Cabinet Office was at one point described as "the discreet power-house of British Government" and responsible "for the co-ordination of all Britain's secret intelligence services". A British defence journalist, Richard Cox, described as a former member of the Foreign Office, explained in an interview how he had been cultivated by a member of the Soviet Embassy in London, Mr. Prokopy Gamov, who was one of the Soviet diplomats expelled in 1971. Cox said that he had never been questioned about defence issues in his conversations with Gamov, but that the Soviet official had been most interested in the making of policy and the running of the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet Office. In particular, Cox believed that the Russians wished to ask questions of him in such a way as to give the impression that there might be a spy in the Cabinet Office. The Russians would have expected Cox to relay his conversations back to Government officials and in so doing he would spread doubts and suspicion about security in the Cabinet Office. There was nothing, Cox thought, more demoralising to the Government and its intelligence activities than the suspicion that a spy might exist and ignorance as to his identity. Such suspicions might help to feed on any other doubts which there might be in the Cabinet Office about security.

*Paragraph 3 deleted and retained under Section 3(4).  
Wayland  
9 August 2011*

*Security*

4. If the Prime Minister is asked about this part of the Panorama programme at Questions today, I suggest that she should deal with the matter as follows:

Q. Does the Cabinet Office act as the co-ordinating organisation for intelligence?

A. It is the long-standing practice of the House that Ministers do not answer questions or comment on allegations about intelligence or security matters. I do not propose to answer questions about the role of particular Departments or agencies in these matters. [It is of course a matter of public record that the Secretary of the Cabinet is the Accounting Officer for the Secret Vote.]

Q. Are you satisfied with security in the Cabinet Office? Do you have any reason to believe that it has been penetrated by the KGB?

A. The Cabinet Office is subject to strict rules and procedures on security. I am assured that these are scrupulously observed. I have no reason to believe or suspect that it has been penetrated by the KGB.

Q. Were you aware that the Cabinet Office was a target for Soviet intelligence?

A. Departments which are concerned with major domestic and international issues are liable to be the object of attention from Soviet intelligence. That is why it is important to be vigilant and to ensure that security procedures are in good order and are strictly observed. The inquiry presently being conducted by the Security Commission will help to reassure us that they continue to be so.

*J/Wright*

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

*(approved by Sir R Armstrong and signed on his behalf)*20th October, 1981