

CAB 301/861

STP

Cecilia Kin flic.

2504

The Pavilion  
Greenfield Park

Dublin 4

CABINET OFFICE  
695870

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16 OCT 1981

FILING INSTRUCTIONS

FILE NO.

Oct 15.

Dear Robert,

We were so pleased that

you called yesterday and submitted yourself to the ear-bashing I inflicted on you.

Here is a story that may amuse you when you can forget about the weighty problems that confront you.

As you must have noticed I have recently been accused in some newspapers of planning a coup - perhaps military perhaps not - to overthrow the government in 1968. This story gained widespread publicity abroad. There was even a big piece in the leading Swedish newspaper - with my picture! Unbelievable! Most newspaper stories this one had no foundation in fact. I was at the time very close to your predecessor Burke Troend who would have belied any such nonsense on my part. But Harold Wilson and Solly Zuckerman both told newspapers, while the coup story was running, that they believed the

story was true. How can this be explained?

Now going back to May 1968, the  
secretary of my company came to me at  
breakfast with a letter from my co-directors  
not only removing me from the chair-  
manship but also from the Board. No  
reasons were given then or since.

It now occurs to me that Wilson,  
distrusted that the Daily Mirror had  
cooled towards him, decided to remove  
me. So perhaps he told my colleagues in  
the strictest secrecy that he had evidence  
that I was planning a coup. It y  
coolness was due to the fact that it  
was now clear that Wilson was no  
Prime Minister, that he would lose  
the 1970 election & I wanted, in good  
time, to get the Mirror out from under.

In 1971 Ted Heath told me  
he knew Wilson had played a part  
in my removal but that, so far, he  
had not discovered what part. Recent  
events have led me to suspect that I  
now have the answer.

With every good wish from us both

Yours ever

Cecil King



**SECRET**

HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

*S9P (coup)*

6 April 1981

SIR BRIAN CUBBON KCB

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

CABINET OFFICE	
A	1906
6 APR 1981	
FILING INSTRUCTIONS	
FILE No.	.....

*Dear Dan [unclear] JW 14/4*

... Further to our telephone conversation last week I now enclose the only paper which Mr Callaghan appears to have seen while Home Secretary concerning the alleged 'coup' attempt in 1968 - 1969.

*Yours ever,  
Paul Wright*

L P WRIGHT  
(Private Secretary)

D J Wright Esq.

**SECRET**

File

CABINET OFFICE  
Ref. A04649...  
6 APR 1981  
MR SANDERS  
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FILE No. ....

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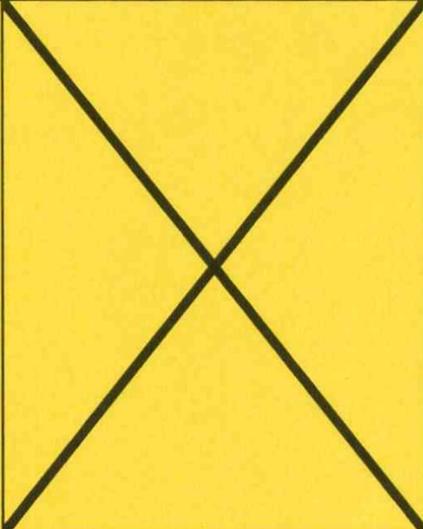
In your letter of 31 March, you asked for a draft reply to a letter from Ted Leadbitter MP to the Prime Minister about the 1968 "coup". I attach a draft which has been cleared with both the Home Office and the Security Service.

D. J. WRIGHT

D J Wright

6 April 1981

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DRAFT LETTER TO MR. TED LEADBITTER, MP

Thank you for your letter of 30th March.

The reference to the Security Commission which I announced in my statement on 26th March is for a review of the security procedures and practices currently followed in the public service, and they will not be inquiring into allegations about past events.

In any case, I do not think that the allegations to which you refer call for a public inquiry. The three surviving participants have all given their accounts of what is supposed to have passed at the meeting in question, and I have seen nothing in these accounts or anywhere else to suggest that there was anything that came even remotely near to being a serious conspiracy to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON S.W.1.A. 0.A.A.

The Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London S.W.1.

30th. Mar '81.

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

The allegations made in the press recently regarding discussions involving Cecil King, Mr. P. Cudlip, Mr. S. Zuckerman and Lord Mountbatten suggesting the subversion of a democratically elected Government in 1968 in the view of many represents an act of treachery.

While you are not responsible for what is reported in the press it is quite clear from the statements made by Sir Harold Wilson and others that there must be now some action to get at the facts. Either an attempt to plan the overthrow of a Government existed or it did not. The nation must know if it is one or the other.

Giving evidence to the Security Commission is not enough. I understand from the press today that view has been made.

Obviously from the statements already made from some of the people concerned, and in 1975, that perhaps more than one of the influential characters concerned are not telling the truth. That in itself must be purposely dealt with.

I believe the nation has now had enough of cover-ups in high places. Serious offences have been committed without punishment for a selected few who seem to consider themselves above the law. Some appear to have made money at it. Indeed some involved in the subversion talks may still be in high office. A specific investigation is needed and if the facts support an act of treachery then action should be taken. If not then some fools should be exposed.

Yours sincerely,

*John Leatham*



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

*Dear David*

CABINET 31 March 1981  
A 1779  
1 APR 1981  
FILING INSTRUCTIONS  
FILE No. ....

I attach the letter to the Prime Minister from Ted Leadbitter M.P. about the 1968 "coup" which we have been expecting. I should be grateful if you could suggest a draft answer for the Prime Minister to send to Mr. Leadbitter, to reach us here by Thursday 9 April.

*You ever*

*Nick*

David Wright, Esq.,  
Cabinet Office.

Coup etc

# Prime Minister faces questions on 'coup' attempt



by Simon Freeman, Barrie Penrose and Colin Simpson

Jones: a report

THE prime minister will reply tomorrow to allegations that there were plans in 1968 for a military coup to overthrow Harold Wilson's Labour government.

Ted Leadbitter, a Labour MP whose question in late 1979 led to Mrs Thatcher's Commons statement naming Anthony Blunt as a former Soviet agent, has tabled a question asking if the prime minister "is satisfied with the arrangements for detecting any plans to subvert the elected government and if she will make a statement."

Leadbitter, who has already written to Mrs Thatcher requesting a full investigation into the allegation, says he expects a "written, considered answer" to his formal question.

So far Mrs Thatcher has not commented publicly on the allegations. But there has been reaction throughout the world to last week's report in The Sunday Times. This revealed that M15, Britain's domestic security service, had investigated a military coup plot and had reported the details, including the names of some of the alleged plotters, to the then home secretary, James Callaghan.

According to Sir Martin Furnival Jones, who was head of M15 at the time, no action was taken against any of the conspirators — who included at least one major-general, other military officers and some civil servants—although he thought that some may have been "reprimanded."

Last week's Sunday Times report also described a meeting in 1968 between Lord Mountbatten, Cecil King, then chairman of the IPC newspaper group, Lord Zuckerman and Hugh Cudlipp, King's successor at IPC.

Although the details of that meeting are disputed, there is no doubt that there was talk about Mountbatten's possible role if the Wilson administration could no longer govern. At that period, some people believed the country was on the brink of civil disorder and perhaps a general strike.

Last week, however, Jones was reported by The Times as saying that he had not disclosed details of the investigation and that we had misquoted him on "a number of quite important particulars." We have since written to him, pointing out that this is incorrect.

In an extensive interview, he had told us that it was "correct" that people had talked about a coup. Asked who these people were, he said: "Military, civil servants . . . mostly military." They were not junior officers, like captains: "Oh, no, more senior than that . . . There was one major-general."

While describing those concerned as a "pretty looney crew," he considered the matter serious enough to report it.

"I don't recall the RAF or navy being involved. Just army. I don't confess to be able to reflect their minds. I suppose they were thinking the country was becoming ungovernable. I never worried about these things. If

you worried about things you'd be dead," he said.

Jones confirmed, however, that he did not tell the prime minister but, instead, followed protocol by reporting to his direct superior, the home secretary. Sir Harold Wilson, who confirmed last Sunday's allegations that there had been talk of a coup by people "high up in the press," did not learn what had happened until February 1976.

According to Lady Falkender, his former political secretary, Wilson learnt about the plot at a luncheon at the Savoy hotel given by the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee. Zuckerman had mentioned a forthcoming book by Cudlipp which included a passage about the King-Mountbatten meeting in 1968. Lady Falkender said Cudlipp talked in the manuscript about machine guns being placed in London's streets.

Wilson immediately tried to locate Lady Falkender, who was in the hotel. She said: "When he heard it, he was absolutely bursting. We had had it confirmed, so to speak, in detail."

Although many people in government at the time seem sceptical about the seriousness of the plot, Zuckerman was very cautious when he discussed the matter in 1977. Talking from London zoo to two journalists, Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour, he clearly believed it was a high-risk occupation to speak about it on open telephone lines, and spoke of the call being monitored by the Cabinet Office.

Times (Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1988)

COUP file



Earl Mountbatten with Lord Zuckerman: Who spoke of treachery?—and Mr Cecil King with Lord Cudlipp: Who asked for the meeting?

# Mountbatten and the coup that wasn't quite

By Louis Heren, David Nicholson-Lord, Craig Seton, Stewart Tendler and Dan van der Vat

Thirteen years ago, when—it was revealed this week—Sir Harold Wilson feared a high level coup was being plotted against his government, his most vehement opponent in the Press, Mr Cecil Harmsworth King made an entry in his diary which is crucial to unravelling the controversy.

It was made on May 8, 1968. It is not in the published version and has remained secret until today. Mr King has revealed his handwritten note to *The Times* to shed light on the role of Lord Mountbatten, Lord Zuckerman, then chief scientific adviser to the government, and himself. He was then chairman of the group owning the *Daily Mirror*.

The entry describes a meeting at 2 Kinnerton Street, Belgravia, the London house of Earl Mountbatten of Burma:

Hugh and I called on Dickie Mountbatten at his request at his flat at 4.30. He insisted that Solly Zuckerman should be there. Dickie spoke of him as a man of invincible integrity and as one of the greatest brains in the world. . . .

Solly seemed embarrassed by this and hurried away as soon as he decently could. Dickie does not really have his ear to the ground or understand politics. After Solly had gone, Mountbatten said he had been lunching at the Horse Guards and that morale in the armed forces had never been so low.

He said the Queen was receiving an unprecedented number of petitions, all of which have to be passed on to the Home Office. According to Dickie, she is desperately worried over the whole situation.

He is obviously close to her and she is spending this weekend at Broadlands. He asked if I thought there was anything he should do. My theme was that there might be a stage in the future when the Crown would have to intervene; there might be a stage when the armed forces were important.

Dickie should keep himself out of public view so as to have clean hands if either emergency should arise in the future. He has no wish to intervene anyway.

Mr King said he had not previously revealed his diary entry because he regarded it all as confidential, "especially the part about the Queen. . . . I have mentioned it now because of all this nonsense about plots."

The present controversy centres upon that meeting over tea in Belgravia during days of economic crisis for Wilson's government. One account has King initiating the meeting, seeking to enlist Mountbatten as a national leader and being denounced for "treachery" by Zuckerman. Lady Falkender, Wilson's former political secretary, suggests that Lord Mountbatten, instead of being an innocent and shocked listener to King, was "a prime mover" in the supposed coup.

We have traced the origins of the meeting to a chance encounter at the Albert Hall earlier in 1968, during the reunion of the Burma Star Association.

Sir Edward Pickering, then the editorial director of the *Mirror* Group, was invited by Lord Mountbatten to join him on the platform. They were old friends. Sir Edward happened to say that Mr Hugh (now Lord) Cudlipp, who also knew Mountbatten, was with his boat on the Solent that weekend (Saturday, May 4).

Mountbatten said he would like to talk to Mr Cudlipp about various things Cudlipp

*My dear Hugh,*

Thank you for your letter and enclosure of 4th November, which I had the opportunity of discussing with Solly as we both happened to be in London on Wednesday evening.

Your description of the interview is incomplete and inaccurate. I have discussed this with Solly and my Private Secretary, John Barratt, who was coming down from his office and had reached the landing to my sitting room when he heard Solly make his statement.

All three of us agree that Solly said words to this effect: "This is rank treachery. All this talk of machine guns at street corners is appalling. I am a public servant and will have nothing to do with it, nor should you Dickie". I expressed my agreement with him. He then left.

Part of the letter (left) that Lord Mountbatten wrote to Hugh Cudlipp, who then published his description of the incident

was then editorial director of the *Mirror* group. Sir Edward passed the message on, and Mr Cudlipp arranged by telephone to lunch with Mountbatten at his Hampshire mansion, Broadlands, on Sunday, May 5. In his book, *Walking on the Water*, published in 1976, Cudlipp said Mountbatten's name came up in a subsequent Saturday morning thinking session he had with Mr King. He also said that King—then canvassing Cabinet Ministers and others about the failures of the Wilson government—thought a meeting with Mountbatten might be propitious.

Mountbatten's son-in-law, Lord Brabourne, insists today also that it was Mr King who wanted to see Mountbatten. Mr King told us at his home in the Dublin suburb of Donnybrook this week: "Cudlipp gave me a message that Mountbatten wanted me to call at his private house. I did not know why he wanted to see me; there was an invitation from Mountbatten to both of us to see him at his private flat in London."

Lord Cudlipp told *The Times* this week that he brought about the famous meeting at his Broadlands lunch. "These two people were concerned about the country in their different ways and I thought it would be a good idea if they met and discussed their views. That was what it was all about."

## Mountbatten called it 'dangerous nonsense'

Lord Brabourne told *The Times* that he clearly remembered a conversation with his father-in-law concerning the forthcoming meeting with Mr King. "We were worried about what was going to be discussed. We had read Mr King's articles [condemning the Wilson government] and it was suggested that Lord Mountbatten should have a witness."

Lord Brabourne therefore telephoned the then Sir Solly Zuckerman on the morning of the meeting: King and Cudlipp were already invited; Zuckerman now accepted an invitation to attend also.

There are several versions of what happened next. The only contemporary description comes from Mr King; the only contemporary comment from Lord Mountbatten, who, according to Lord Brabourne, dismissed the whole affair as "dangerous nonsense" in his private diary for the time.

Lord Cudlipp's account in *Walking on the Water* reads: He [King] spoke with his accustomed candour. He did the talking and I sat back in my chair to observe the reaction, detecting an increasing concern on the part

of the two listeners. He explained that in the crisis he foresaw as being just around the corner the Government would disintegrate, there would be bloodshed in the streets, the armed forces would be involved.

The people would be looking to somebody like Lord Mountbatten as the titular head of a new administration, somebody renowned as a leader of men who would be capable, backed by the best brains and administrators in the land, to restore public confidence.

He ended with a question to Mountbatten—would he agree to be the titular head of a new administration in such circumstances?

It is at this point in the Cudlipp version that the meeting ends dramatically with talk of treachery:

Mountbatten turned to his friend: "Solly, you haven't said a word so far. What do you think of all this?"

Sir Solly rose, walked to the door, opened it and then made this statement: "This is rank treachery. All this talk of machine guns at street corners is appalling. I am a public servant and will have nothing to do with it. Nor should you, Dickie." Mountbatten expressed his agreement and Sir Solly departed.

Only a minute or two elapsed between Zuckerman's departure and King's. Lord Mountbatten was, as always in my experience, courteous but firm: he explained explicitly but briefly that he entirely agreed with Solly and that that sort of role, so far as he was concerned, was "simply not on".

There is a curious history to the Zuckerman accusation of treachery which Mr King insists was never made: "I think if I had been accused of treason in such circumstances by a man like that I would have remembered it". The material was in fact supplied to Cudlipp by Mountbatten.

Lord Cudlipp gave *The Times* a copy of a letter to him from Lord Mountbatten dated November 6, 1975, one year almost to the day before the Cudlipp book was published. It refers to the submission by Cudlipp of part of his manuscript for comment.

"Your description of the interview is incomplete and inaccurate," Lord Mountbatten wrote. He had discussed it with his private secretary and Zuckerman, and "All three of us agree that Solly said words to this effect: 'This is rank treachery. All this talk of machine guns at street corners is appalling. I am a public servant and will have nothing to do with it, nor should you Dickie.' I expressed my agreement with him. He then left. . . ."

"Not more than a minute or two elapsed between Solly's

departure and yours. I was merely courteous and explained explicitly and briefly that I entirely agreed with Solly and that sort of role, so far as I was concerned, was 'simply not on'." Lord Mountbatten wrote. Lord Cudlipp was clearly happy to accept without question Lord Mountbatten's version, as his book shows.

Asked about the extent to which Lord Mountbatten's letter (reproduced in part on this page) had altered his original draft, Lord Cudlipp said: "I cannot now trace or recall the minor additions and adjustments made to my draft."

They concerned details in my narrative. The principal contribution was an extended version of Lord Zuckerman's remarks when departing from the meeting. The final version was what we had agreed."

Lord Zuckerman told *The Times* that Mr King was already with Lord Mountbatten when he (Zuckerman) arrived: he remembers the meeting as lasting 10 to 15 minutes against Mr King's recollection of 30 to 45 minutes. Mr King says: "I went to hear what Mountbatten had to say. I did not go to express my views. I just listened."

But Zuckerman recalls: "I did not know what it was about, and was dumbfounded and silent when I heard King, who was the only one who was talking. Cudlipp kept his trap shut the whole time."

His recollection was that Mr King began by saying that the Government could not continue, and was unable to maintain law

and order. There would be riots, bloodshed, and machine guns at street corners.

"To me, the whole thing sounded like James Bond. There was nothing that I was aware of in the state of the country at the time that suggested public disorder."

"When Mountbatten said: 'Solly, you are silent', I literally did not even bother to speak from the chair. I stood up, and said: 'This is rank treachery.'"

Lord Zuckerman interestingly added that he had never seen the Mountbatten letter to Cudlipp asking him to correct his manuscript. When asked this week: "You were not asked to agree with it in any way?", Lord Zuckerman replied: "No, I read what Cudlipp had written, but did not see what Mountbatten had written. I would have a copy of it if I had, I certainly have not."

## Cecil King: 'I may make mistakes but I am not a lunatic'

There is one other witness to part of the proceedings, Mr John Barratt, who was Lord Mountbatten's private secretary.

"I do remember coming down the stairs, and as Lord Zuckerman was walking out of the drawing room I heard him making some remark to the effect that this is treason or treachery. He walked out and in a matter of seconds Lord Mountbatten called me and asked me to see Mr King out. Hugh Cudlipp went with Mr King. That was the end of it."

Lord Mountbatten told me what had happened and said it was something in which he was not prepared to become involved. I remember his saying to me that King had put up some story that the Government was collapsing, and maybe Mountbatten was the person to head it. Lord Mountbatten said: 'Not me, chum.'

Lord Brabourne said of the meeting: "Lord Mountbatten did not take it seriously. Once the meeting was over, it was dismissed from his mind. He thought it was dangerous nonsense."

When we asked Mr King why his version differed from those of the others, he said: "Old men forget. It happened 13 years ago. I had a note of it, others did not."

On one point everyone agrees: there was no planning for a military coup. Lord Cudlipp told us: "It would never have crossed King's mind. He was not that sort of person. Cecil King could not have mustered a group of Brownies."

Mr King told us: "This is the most absurd story. Nobody

ever heard of this military coup idea until 13 years after I retired. I may make mistakes but I am not a raving lunatic.

"If you are going to have a coup, surely it has to arise out of something. You have got to have a detonator, but at that time there simply was not one."

"There was latent dissatisfaction, but nowhere were people going out on the streets. I feared at the time that there might be a general strike or something like it. I think all governments are afraid of this."

During *The Times* interview with Mr King, there was an interruption for the delivery of a telegram. It was from Lord Cudlipp, and read: "All this talk about an alleged military coup in 1968 has not come from me at any time and is grossly unfair on you. I very emphatically denied on radio and television and in press interviews today [March 30] that either you or I ever heard of such rubbish."

Lord Cudlipp told *The Times*: "I was there throughout the whole interview [Mountbatten and King]. I do not recollect—I am not saying it did not occur—any mention of the Queen. . . . I do not recollect any mention of the Queen's correspondence."

It is clear that Mr King's chief target was Mr Wilson. He told us this week that he urged Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey to depose him by constitutional means—perhaps before it was too late, perhaps not, but not by a coup d'etat.

The day after the now-famous meeting, Labour suffered heavy losses in local elections. That evening King wrote a signed leading article headed "Enough is Enough" for the front page of the *Daily Mirror*, which said: "We are now threatened with the greatest financial crisis in our history. It is not to be removed by lies about our reserves, but only by a fresh start under a fresh leader."

The phrase "lies about our reserves" was a key one because Mr King had been a director of the Bank of England until then. (He resigned that night).

Rumours that he was a key participant in a putsch backed by senior civil servants, the military and big business began to circulate at about the same time as the *Mirror* article appeared. There was even talk of persuading the Queen to stand aside, of an interregnum in which the Queen Mother and Lord Mountbatten would play key roles, and, most fantastic of all, of exiling Mr Wilson to Scotland.

Some people close enough to the centres of power even thought that Mountbatten's "vanity and sense of destiny" might tempt him to join in. On the other hand, as a former director-general of MI5 remarked, these well-known rumours were nothing more than "loose talk by gin-sodden generals".

Lord Elwyn-Jones, Attorney General in 1968, emphatically denied that he had ever been asked to consider prosecutions of any persons who might have been involved in "extra-parliamentary activities".

There was, however, one coup in 1968. Mr King did not plan it. Lord Mountbatten did not know about it. The Government was delighted about it. At the bitter end of his momentous month of May, on the 31st, Mr King himself was dethroned as chairman of the International Publishing Corporation—by Cudlipp. No official explanation of this boardroom putsch has ever been given. Mr King was not there when it happened.



Lord Mountbatten's London house: Where there was said to be accusation of "treachery".

*File*

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): To ask the Prime Minister, whether she is satisfied with the arrangements for detecting any plans to subvert the elected Government; and if she will make a statement.

DRAFT ANSWER

I would draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the directive to the Director General of the Security Service, reproduced in paragraph 238 of Lord Denning's Report in 1963, and to Lord Denning's observations in that section of his report on the functions of the Security Service.

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cc. ~~Paul Wright~~  
PS/Sir B Cusson

*JW*  
3/4

BACKGROUND NOTE

*Copy to [unclear]*  
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Mr. Leadbitter's question results from articles in the Press about alleged plans for a "coup" in 1968. (Mr. Leadbitter has also written to the Prime Minister about this. Sir Robert Armstrong will be submitting a draft reply.) These recent revelations are not new: reports that a possible "coup" was discussed between Lord Mountbatten, Mr. Cecil King, Lord Cudlipp and Lord Zuckerman, in May 1968, first appeared in Lord Cudlipp's book "Walking on the Water" which was published in 1976 and then in the Pencourt File published in 1978. Mr. King's account of the meeting appears in 'The Times' of 3rd April.

A copy of the extract from the Denning Report referred to in the Draft Answer is attached.

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which the Prime Minister's secretariat is not in a position to give. The Prime Minister's personal contact with the Director-General of the Security Service need not be wholly interrupted as a result of this change in Ministerial responsibility. The Prime Minister would doubtless continue to send for the Head of the Security Service from time to time, to discuss the general state of his work and particular matters which might be of specially close concern to him. And on matters of supreme importance and delicacy, the Head of the Service should always be able, at his initiation, to arrange a personal interview with the Prime Minister."

### (iii) Sir David Maxwell Fyfe's Directive

238. On 24th September, 1952, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, then Home Secretary, issued this Directive to the Director-General of the Security Service, which is the governing instrument to-day:

"1. In your appointment as Director-General of the Security Service you will be responsible to the Home Secretary personally. The Security Service is not, however, a part of the Home Office. On appropriate occasion you will have right of direct access to the Prime Minister.

2. The Security Service is part of the Defence Forces of the country. Its task is the Defence of the Realm as a whole, from external and internal dangers arising from attempts at espionage and sabotage, or from actions of persons and organisations whether directed from within or without the country, which may be judged to be subversive of the State.

3. You will take special care to see that the work of the Security Service is strictly limited to what is necessary for the purposes of this task.

4. It is essential that the Security Service should be kept absolutely free from any political bias or influence and nothing should be done that might lend colour to any suggestion that it is concerned with the interests of any particular section of the community, or with any other matter than the Defence of the Realm as a whole.

5. No enquiry is to be carried out on behalf of any Government Department unless you are satisfied that an important public interest bearing on the Defence of the Realm, as defined in paragraph 2, is at stake.

6. You and your staff will maintain the well-established convention whereby Ministers do not concern themselves with the detailed information which may be obtained by the Security Service in particular cases, but are furnished with such information only as may be necessary for the determination of any issue on which guidance is sought."

### (iv) General Principles

239. After hearing a considerable body of evidence, I found general approval that the Directive of Sir David Maxwell Fyfe embodies the correct principles. I would try to summarise the salient points:

(1) The Head of the Security Service is responsible directly to the Home Secretary for the efficient and proper working of the Service and *not* in the ordinary way to the Prime Minister.

(2) The Security Service is, however, not a department of the Home Office. It operates independently under its own Director-General, but he can and does seek direction and guidance from the Home Secretary, subject always to the proviso that its activities must be absolutely free from any political bias or influence.

(3) The function of the Security Service is to defend the Realm as a whole from dangers which threaten it as a whole, such as espionage on behalf of a foreign Power, or internal organisations subversive of the State. For this purpose it must collect information about individuals, and give it to those concerned. But it must not, even at the behest of a Minister or a Government Department, take part in investigating the private lives of individuals except in a matter bearing on the Defence of the Realm as a whole.

(4) The Head of the Security Service may approach the Prime Minister himself on matters of supreme importance and delicacy, but this is not to say that the Prime Minister has any direct responsibility for the Security Service. He has certainly none in day-to-day matters. It would be a mistake for the Prime Minister to take such responsibility because he cannot in practice exercise adequate supervision, and he has not the secretariat for the purpose.

### (v) Application of Principles

240. The result of these principles is that, if the Director-General of the Security Service is in doubt as to any aspect of his duties—as, for instance, when he gets information about a Minister or senior public servant indicating that he may be a security risk—he should consult the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary then will have to take the responsibility for further action, that is to say, whether to take steps to eliminate the security risk or to put up with it. If a mistake is made, it is the Home Secretary who will be responsible to Parliament.

241. It was suggested to me that, when the conduct of a Minister was in question, it would be preferable for the Director-General to approach the Prime Minister direct rather than approach the Home Secretary because the Home Secretary might find it embarrassing to have to investigate the conduct of another Minister. The majority view was, however, that in all cases there should be a clear and unambiguous channel to the Home Secretary.

### (vi) Ministry of National Security

242. Most witnesses thought it was not desirable to set up a Ministry of National Security, and for these reasons: It is important that each Government Department (*e.g.*, the Service Departments) should be regarded as responsible for its own internal security. It would lead to slackness if each Department could feel it could leave its security to others. The Security Service performs a very useful function in advising Government Departments on their security problems but should not take them over. If it be right that each Government Department is responsible for its own internal security, then the Security Service itself deals with national security as a whole. The great body of opinion before me was that this should be dealt with as the responsibility of the Home Secretary and not as the responsibility of a separate Minister.

