

Security, scandal and the Security Commission Report, 1981

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ABSTRACT: This research note introduces the December 1981 report of the Security Commission, a standing body first formed in the 1960s to provide retrospective reviews of security lapses in government service. While criticised as a 'stable-locking operation' by some, and quietly abolished in 2011 under government reforms to public bodies, the Security Commission completed fifteen reports in total between 1965 and 2004. The December 1981 report was never released, in part thanks to differences over its recommendations, with the main conclusions forming the basis of a statement by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, published as a Parliamentary Command paper in May 1982. But the 1981 report – extracts of which are included here – is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was the first major review of government security since the Radcliffe Report of 1961, itself only partially released, and, second, resulted in a number of recommendations that changed government vetting for the rest of the 1980s, especially the focus on homosexuality as a security threat. Finally, the report of the Security Commission recommended the avowal of Britain's foreign intelligence agency, the Secret Intelligence Service – a recommendation that proved especially controversial at a time when Thatcher, senior civil servants and intelligence officials were reluctant to admit that Britain had a peacetime 'secret service'.

The standing Security Commission was first formed in 1964 as a body tasked with reviewing security lapses in government circles. Resulting from a series of scandals culminating in the Profumo Affair of 1963, the Commission was the product of cross-bench discussions and in its lifetime completed a total of 16 investigations, including reviews into the conduct of armed forces personnel, a Security Service (MI5) officer, an employee of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), a member of the Diplomatic Service and even Ministers, at the request of successive Prime Minister's. As of today, fifteen reports have been published in part or their entirety, some understandably subject to redactions of sensitive details. The exception is the 1981 report – for Lawrence Lustgarten and Ian Leigh, writing the most comprehensive overview of the Security Commission to date, this is the 'most wide-ranging, and perhaps the most important' of the Commission's reports.ⁱ In the end, only a selective summary of the findings were released to Parliament in May 1982, a release justified by concerns about 'national interest' and the disclosure of the 'most sensitive aspects of security procedures'.ⁱⁱ That is not to say that the published statement (sometimes referred to as the 'Diplock Report') said nothing; a significant part of the findings released to MPs offered a substantive insight into the process of Positive Vetting (or PVing) – a security screening process that had been first used in Britain in 1951 and publicly announced in 1952, requiring an expensive series of document and background checks for civil servants and defence contractors engaged in top secret work – and the first major attempt to understand the security implications of using computers in the public service, as well as provide an update on the security threat of the 'extreme left' and calls for a scaling back of security over classification and the rising costs of security processes.ⁱⁱⁱ But the published summary left out wider details of Britain's system of security

vetting, and the Commission's recommendation that the policy of successive governments to pretend that the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6) simply did not exist should now come to an end – a proposal rejected by the government. In the event, SIS was not avowed until 1994.^{iv}

Now the full report – subject to some redactions regarding GCHQ recruitment – can be found in The National Archives, Kew.^v The release of the document by the Cabinet Office seems all the more surprising given that the department had previously declined to release a copy after several requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).^{vi} In December 2019, the department wrote to the author that the Commission's report was subject to section 23(1) of the FOIA, preventing the release of information 'supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters', including the Security Service, GCHQ, SIS, and the Security Commission, amongst other bodies.^{vii} The same request was also rejected under section 21(1), preventing the disclosure of information 'reasonably accessible' elsewhere; the Cabinet Office response citing an article by journalist Peter Hennessy in December 1981, containing the initial findings of the Commission that had leaked.^{viii} A week after the Cabinet Office response, an almost complete copy of the report was found at Kew. This research note argues that the Security Commission's 1981 report was significant, shaping government attitudes to Whitehall in-house security for the rest of the 1980s, reaffirming the focus on so-called 'character defects' for security vetting, and gives an important snapshot into the full extent of security procedures aimed at protecting government departments and defence-related work from foreign intelligence agencies during the final decade of the Cold War.

The Security Commission was the result of the longstanding effects of the Profumo Affair, and the direct need for a committee to investigate security matters free from the bipartisan squabbles that had arisen in earlier spy scandals, first raised in private by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan 1963, and subject to talks between the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, Labour's Harold Wilson. Proposals for a commission were first announced by Macmillan's successor, Alec Douglas-Hume, in December 1963, during the debate into the Profumo Affair.^{ix} In January the following year, and having discussed the matter further with Wilson, Douglas-Hume announced the formation of the commission to investigate, if specifically asked by a Prime Minister, and following talks with the Leader of the Opposition, security breaches and 'advise whether any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable'. It was to be chaired by Lord Justice Winn (a wartime naval intelligence officer and part of the Admiralty's Submarine Tracking Room^x) and members would include the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Norman Brook, and the recently retired First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Casper John.^{xi} During its lifetime, the Commission often reviewed security policy, suggesting, if lapses had occurred, minor changes, though its role suffered from limited resources and powers of investigation. As Christopher Andrew notes, members of the Commission were viewed as 'well-intentioned, enthusiastic amateurs' by officers in MI5's C Branch^{xii}, while Conservative MP and intelligence writer Rupert Allison branded the work of the Commission as little more than a 'stable-locking operation', particularly criticising the Commission's May 1985 report into

former MI5 officer Michael Bettaney, arrested in 1983 having tried to pass information to the KGB.^{xiii} Nonetheless, the Commission proved a useful body to review security policy and, before the creation of the Parliamentary Intelligence & Security Committee, provided an element of oversight, carrying out a series of reviews from the 1960s.

The first report of the Commission was in June 1965, with the cases of Frank Bossard and Sergeant Percy Allen; Bossard, on the staff of the Ministry of Aviation's Guided Weapons Division, was arrested in March 1965 in possession of images of top secret papers for his GRU handler, and Allen, then working in the Ministry of Defence, was detained having passed documents to the Iraqi assistant military attaché, in exchange for money.^{xiv} During Wilson's tenure, the Commission reported a total of five times – 1965, 1966^{xv}, 1967^{xvi}, 1968^{xvii} and 1969^{xviii} – followed by a further two reports in 1973, commissioned by Edward Heath, one looking at the security implications of Earl Jellicoe and Lord Lambton's use of prostitutes.^{xix} It was also active under Margaret Thatcher, completing another five reports, including four on the intelligence agencies, including significant reports on GCHQ mole Geoffrey Prime, MI5 officer Michael Bettaney who had been arrested in 1983 while preparing to meet Soviet contacts in Vienna, and a review into personnel security among service personnel in 9 Signal Regiment then stationed in Cyprus.^{xx} The Commission met once during John Major's premiership, investigating the case of Michael Smith, an electronics engineer working in classified List X firms, recruited by the KGB and codenamed BORG, arrested after the defection of Russian intelligence officer Victor Oshchenko and his family in July 1992, whose spying was, the Ministry of Defence concluded, 'potentially extremely serious'.^{xxi} Smith had been sentenced to twenty-five years in November 1993, later reduced to twenty after an appeal, and was one of the 'most important' KGB 'List X' agents, according to information from Soviet intelligence files.^{xxii} In February 2000, it investigated the selling of secrets to journalists by Chief Petty Officer Steven Hayden, specifically a report on Iraqi WMD, passed to a journalist from *The Sun*, which paid Hayden £10,000 for the story, and found guilty under section one of the Official Secrets Act 1989, and jailed in October 1998.^{xxiii} The Security Commission's final report was in May 2004, investigating vetting for jobs in the Royal household, triggered by the case of *Daily Mirror* journalist Ryan Parry, who had secured a job at Buckingham Palace to secure insider stories. The Commission had found serious lapses in Royal security which could have been 'exploited by terrorists or others to endanger the Queen, her family and official guests'.^{xxiv}

The Security Commission no longer exists. Its website, archived in July 2008^{xxv}, listed Lord Justice Mantell, famous for his role in presiding over the trial of killers Fred and Rose West, and appointed a surveillance commissioner in 2006, as the final chair.^{xxvi} In 2011, Ian Leigh commented it was effectively in 'hibernation ready to be summoned'^{xxvii}, and in July 2012, a former chair, Lord Lloyd of Berwick, told the House of Lords it was time to give the Commission 'what one might call a decent burial'^{xxviii}, although the Commission itself had already been abolished under the Public Bodies Act 2011, giving Ministers the power 'to abolish, merge, modify constitutional or funding arrangements, or modify

or transfer functions of public bodies through secondary legislation'.^{xxix} Although the disappearance of the Commission has been blamed on the growing power of the Intelligence and Security Committee, first formed in 1994, and strengthened by the Justice and Security Act 2013, the investigation of security breaches are now 'dealt with on a case by case basis by the Government; no permanent group has replaced the work of the Commission'.^{xxx}

Of all the Security Commission's reports, Lord Diplock's final review as chair was the most significant and wide-ranging, a contrast to previous reports which had largely been single-issue and recommended only minor reforms to government security. Diplock had chaired the Security Commission from 1971, having enjoyed a long legal career. Softly spoken, and a powerful advocate with an eye for detail, Diplock was considered a 'safe pair of hands' for government inquiries. In 1972 he had led a commission recommending the establishment of the controversial 'Diplock courts' in Northern Ireland, abolishing trial by jury in cases where witness intimidation by paramilitary groups seemed likely, and reviewed the Foreign Enlistment Act in 1976, in response to the recruitment of British mercenaries in the Angolan civil war, and had been personally asked by Thatcher to delay retirement to complete the review.^{xxxi} Beyond its immediate effect, its legacy was felt into the early 1990s, largely because of its recommendations on the employment of homosexuals in the Diplomatic Service. The report was also the first major review of Whitehall security since Lord Radcliffe's report on 'Security Procedures in the Public Service' delivered to officials in 1961, initiated by Macmillan following a series of embarrassing security scandals, including the Portland spy ring and the subsequent Romer report into Admiralty security^{xxxii}, and the unmasking of SIS officer George Blake as a KGB agent in April 1961. In many ways, Radcliffe's report was a foretaste of the themes covered by Diplock. Like Thatcher in 1981, Macmillan had hoped the commissioning of a wide-ranging review of security would silence mounting criticism of the Conservative's security record in government, while highlighting for the public the problems of security 'in a free society'.^{xxxiii} There were other similarities with the Commission's later report; Radcliffe took a holistic approach to security, dividing his report into three major sections on personnel security, relations between government, media and the D Notice system, together with a largely still classified section on George Blake's recruitment and spying.^{xxxiv} The similarities were not a coincidence; the terms of reference handed to Diplock were almost an exact copy of those given to Radcliffe. Addressing MPs in the House of Commons, Macmillan believed Radcliffe's report showed there was 'no radical defect in existing security procedures', and was useful in promoting 'wider public understanding of both the importance and the difficulty of the problem of security'.^{xxxv} Naturally, there were excisions; reference to Blake, especially given the non-avowal of SIS were cut, as were references to the secret process of 'negative vetting' – a security check against MI5's records for new entrants to the civil service or anyone entering roles that required 'confidential clearance', discussed later in this note. Sections on vetting and Communist influence in the civil service were also kept out of the final published report, which was met with general approval.

The origins of the Security Commission's 1981 report stem from intelligence and security disclosures during the Thatcher era. Although 'positively besotted' by the world of secrets and spies, Thatcher was opposed to greater public acknowledgement of Britain's agencies and preferred to maintain the shroud of secrecy over their day-to-day work.^{xxxvi} Unfortunately for the Prime Minister, however, her period in office also saw the gradual erosion of the consensus that had long protected the agencies in the past. Calls for greater oversight, whistle-blowers and spy scandals were to run throughout her tenure, starting with the revelation that Sir Anthony Blunt, wartime MI5 officer and Keeper of the Queen's Pictures, had been the 'Fourth Man' in the Cambridge spy ring, having made a full confession in return to immunity in 1964. The full disclosure of Blunt's treachery and the secret deal to protect his past was effectively a ticking time bomb for a number of Thatcher's predecessors, but was finally revealed by journalist Andrew Boyle's book, *The Climate of Treason*, forcing a public statement in November 1979.^{xxxvii} Thatcher's statement was not the end of the matter as more security-related revelations followed. In March 1981, she was again dealing with the fallout from the Cambridge Five, this time over allegations published by veteran journalist Chapman Pincher's book *Their Trade is Treachery*, claiming that MI5 Director General Sir Roger Hollis had been a Soviet spy.^{xxxviii} Although wide of the mark on his central claim, Pincher had been right that Hollis had been actively investigated by a joint team of SIS and MI5 officers, codenamed FLUENCY, chaired by MI5's Peter Wright of *Spycatcher* infamy, and with investigating historical penetration by Soviet intelligence and the paranoid belief that both agencies still contained moles.^{xxxix} In fact, investigators found little evidence of Hollis' duplicity and had closed down the inquiry, an outcome supported by a follow-up review by former Cabinet Secretary Sir Burke Trend – an inquiry falsely reported by Pincher to cast doubt on Hollis. Once again, Thatcher was reluctantly forced to talk about security. On 26 March, she delivered a statement to the House of Commons, pointing out that Pincher's book was 'inaccurate or distorted', reaffirming that Hollis was not an 'agent of the Russian intelligence service'. Having consulted Labour Party leader Michael Foot, Thatcher also announced a new review of security, echoing Macmillan's statement in 1961.^{xl} Carried out by the Security Commission, the first aim of the review was to advise of safeguarding information 'against penetration by hostile intelligence services', and vetting arrangements to exclude anyone 'with allegiances that they put above loyalty to their country and those who may for whatever reason be vulnerable to attempts to undermine their loyalty and to extort information by pressure or blackmail'.^{xli}

The final 1981 report stands out for a number of reasons. Perhaps surprisingly for a body that had previously avoided proposing major changes to security policy, the decision of the Commission to recommend SIS's avowal – a measure aimed at aiding recruitment, ending the official line that Britain did not have a foreign intelligence agency, and stopping uncomfortable enquiries by 'aggressive investigative journalists', proved especially controversial and resulted in opposition from intelligence officials and civil servants. From time to time references to 'secret service', MI6 and even SIS had appeared in Hansard, having been raised by MPs and members of the House of Lords, yet official avowal was a long way off. In effect, in Fleet Street and even Parliament the very existence of SIS was what Tony Giffard, the Earl of

Halsbury, when talking about GCHQ in June 1978, had called ‘a *secret de Polichinelle*: it is a secret that everybody [sic] knows and no one may talk about’.^{xliii} For the Commission, the official government line of non-avowal was a clear sign that too much information was overclassified, and symptomatic of a wider problem of Whitehall’s culture of secrecy that resulted in the spiralling cost of protective security and the withholding of unnecessary information, leading to the Commission’s recommendation of a ‘thorough review’ to cut existing red tape.^{xliiii} In fact, the Commission’s radical suggestion met resistance; anticipating Diplock’s findings, a working party under Intelligence Co-ordinator Anthony Duff had already recommended continued silence on SIS, pointing to the likely follow-up questions about agency funding, control and oversight that would inevitably result in more calls for openness, a view endorsed by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong. Ironically avowal in 1981 could have actually eased Armstrong’s later embarrassment during the so-called ‘Spycatcher trial’ when the Cabinet Secretary was forced to admit he had been ‘economical with the truth’ when referring to SIS in a Sydney courtroom in 1987 – an episode that would forever haunt Armstrong and only serve to highlight the absurdity of the government position.^{xliv} Rather than publication, and supporting the views of other officials, Armstrong at the time argued in favour of a short statement to Parliament, containing the substance of the report, citing the precedent set by the 1956 statement on security, but leaving out some of the more sensitive passages from the Commission.^{xlv}

The findings are also important in giving a snapshot of security vetting in the early 1980s, especially the scope of both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ vetting procedures, and the growing focus on so-called ‘character defects’, especially homosexuality as a bar to PV clearance. Negative vetting involved a simple check against MI5’s records, later supplemented by checks against criminal records. The full extent of this process is hard to assess; the campaign group the National Council for Civil Liberties suggested there were ‘at least 700,000 and possibly as many as one million’ civil service officials, members of the armed forces, employees in the private sector and others on government-related work subject to negative vetting alone, in addition to 68,000 publicly acknowledged PV posts engaged on ‘highly classified’ work.^{xlvi} In fact, the number of NV posts may have been far fewer than the total suggested. In the Home Civil Service, 180,000 posts were subject to NV clearance, as were 203,000 posts in the armed forces. Negative vetting also applied to over 12,000 defence contractors or those working in ‘List X’ firms (private companies engaged in sensitive government work) and to 13,500 positions in British Telecom and the Post Office.

The process of positive vetting applied to a much smaller number of posts - 68,000 in total, including over 16,000 in the Home Civil Service; 22,400 across the Ministry of Defence, Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the intelligence agencies; and 17,200 in the armed forces – a significant increase on the 27,000 reported in 1961.^{xlvii} A real concern for officials was the escalating costs involved. Although negative vetting was a relatively cheap and straightforward process, the positive checks were costly and complex. When first implemented in 1951, it was stated that such measures would only apply

to around 1,000 civil servants, a figure later increased to 11,000, in part a response to IS calls for increased atomic security following the adoption of proposals from the Tripartite Conference on Atomic Energy in July 1951.^{xlviii} Maintaining departmental investigating officers and the system of record checks, questionnaires, referees, and interviews involved in the process was a huge drain; by 1980 it cost £700 to put just one individual through the PV process (over £2600 in 2018^{xlix}), and the series of regular re-reviews every five years, in addition to annual checks in some cases, would see costs grow to an estimated £6 million for 1980 alone (over £25 million in 2018).^l Although earlier attempts had been made to scale back excessive secrecy, the Commission questioned the need for positive vetting across the Home Civil Service concluding, in Peter Hennessy's words, that the 'palisades should be drawn to protect only those persons and files that really need it' with an overall cost benefit to 'the number of documents carrying a high security classification, as guarding them is very expensive'.^{li} By June 1982, Sir Robert Armstrong had started a civil service-wide review of PV posts, which gradually reduced the numbers, although to what extent is not known.^{lii}

The report also revealed the large number of applicants and serving officials and defence-related contractors refused negative vetting. Although employers had been offered some flexibility in disclosing vetting decisions, the process of negative screening essentially stayed secret. As late as June 1986, Armstrong wrote to Thatcher that the process was 'not disclosed to the individuals vetted and is not publicly avowed'.^{liii} Britain had a long history of security screening; in the inter-war period, workers on defence-related work in munitions factories, naval docks and temporary officials in sensitive government facilities were vetted against MI5's records^{liv}, with the system officially extended to civil servants under the 1948 'purge procedure' first announced by the Attlee government.^{lv} This widespread screening of civil servants, defence contractors and certain positions in the military, was largely kept secret and mentioned only a few times by Ministers, specifically by Macmillan during the debate on the Burgess-Maclean affair in 1955.^{lvi} By the early 1960s, checks against MI5's records had also been supplemented by checks against criminal records, based on files held by the Criminal Records Office, resulting in a large number of individuals being denied clearance.^{lvii} A year after Radcliffe's recommendations were published, officials privately admitted in May 1963 the number of NV failures ran to as many as 1,200 a year, including around 600 people in industrial employment and List X firms.^{lviii} By 1967, of the 233,000 NV cases processed there were 2,273 failures for existing staff and 3,790 for applicants.^{lix} Understandably, given the large numbers involved, officials were unwilling to disclose the process fearing a political backlash and calls for greater openness. By the early 1980s, the number of NV refusals was far higher than the number of officials removed under the established 'purge' procedure. In June 1982, Peter Hennessy obtained figures showing that since 1948 twenty five officials had been dismissed on security grounds, eighty-eight were transferred to non-secret work and a further thirty three reinstated to their posts, an Advisory Tribunal made up of retired Civil Servants (informally known as the 'Three Advisors') having found in their favour.^{lx} By contrast, two years earlier MI5 had made 540 'adverse assessments' having put the names of officials through their registry, with an additional 3,400 having adverse reports based on

‘previous convictions for reportable offences’.^{lxi} In an unknown number of cases, applicants would have been rejected without officials providing further information.

Finally, Diplock’s report cast a significant shadow over the careers of homosexuals, especially in the FCO. Since 1951, the department had discriminated against gay men, thanks in part to the security issues stemming from the Burgess and Maclean defection, and the general attitude that homosexuality brought discredit on the work of British diplomats. Although homosexual acts in private had been legalised by the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, homosexuality had continued to be a bar to posts in the Diplomatic Service, intelligence agencies and armed forces, especially due to fears that officials were susceptible to blackmail and were a vulnerable target for foreign intelligence agencies, a policy that remained unchanged by the 1980s.^{lxii} In making its case, the Commission was supported by the Security Service, which, in April 1981, had concluded that, thanks to the threat of blackmail, homosexuality was a bar to sensitive posts.^{lxiii} Blackmail and the exploitation of a range of ‘character defects’ – excessive drinking, drug taking, promiscuous sexuality activity, and a range of other factors – had become a growing concern for Western intelligence agencies with the decline of the ideological spy of the early Cold War years, a decline accelerated by the growing acknowledgement of the Stalinist terror, and the Soviet invasion of Hungary (1956) and suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968. In the published statement in May 1982, the Diplomatic Service was singled out and homosexuality would ‘continue to be a bar ... and, if undiscovered upon initial PV, should result in removal’.^{lxiv} Effectively, the removal of PV would mean a virtual ‘glass ceiling’ which negatively impacted ‘long-term career prospects’.^{lxv} Recalling her time as head of the FCO Security Department, Veronica Sutherland stated the bar caused much angst, admitting she felt ‘very uneasy ... at times when I had to tell some poor young man that, I’m sorry, we couldn’t continue his employment, which I didn’t like doing ... it was a nasty business’.^{lxvi} As the FCO itself acknowledged, Diplock had made it ‘easier ... to defend our traditional line that male homosexuality is incompatible with a career’ in the Diplomatic Service, although the report itself said little about female same-sex relationships – much to the annoyance of diplomats.^{lxvii} Between 1979 and 1986 thirty-five FCO officials had their PV certificates withdrawn; eleven were for homosexuality, with a few established officials identifying themselves as gay allowed to work in London on a restricted ‘Alternative Positive Vetting’ process, though a larger number suppressed their sexuality, with the bar shaping internal FCO culture – something James Southern’s recent study highlights.^{lxviii} Although a series of yearly reviews starting in 1984 acknowledged the self-destructive nature of a bar, which forced personnel to conceal their sexuality, thus making them more vulnerable to blackmail, and caused much ‘personal stress’ and a ‘loss of trained manpower’^{lxix}, officials, citing Diplock’s ruling, were unwilling to change policy fearing public and political backlash. ‘Ian’ Buist, who had worked in Kenya and East Africa as a junior diplomat, later joining the FCO’s Overseas Development Administration, alongside his campaign for homosexual acceptance as part of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, recalled that Diplock reflected the ‘insulting, if traditional’ attitudes of government.^{lxx} Writing in March 1982, Buist made it clear the FCO was ‘its own worst enemy’ suggesting it was even in the interests of ‘the Service to recognise and

encourage emotional relationships'.^{lxxi} Nonetheless, as the Commission's secretary also made clear to union officials in 1983, it was not the job of the Security Commission to 're-examine earlier recommendations' unless appointed to do so by the Prime Minister.^{lxxii} As late as October 1990, FCO Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Patrick Wright, pushing for a change in policy, noted that, despite support from MI5 and the Ministry of Defence, the bar could only be ended by seeking approval from the Commission following reference to the Prime Minister.^{lxxiii} On 23 July 1991, responding to a question from Conservative MP Sir John Wheeler, the new Prime Minister John Major finally announced an end to the homosexual bar.^{lxxiv}

Although the effects of Diplock's report lay in the future, the significance of the Security Commission's report cannot be overstated. In the first major review of Whitehall security since 1961, the Commission had made radical proposals aiming to curb the excessive veil of secrecy in Whitehall that had increased the costs of personnel security in protecting secrets that were effectively open ones among journalists, politicians and retired civil servants. Though its proposal to avow SIS was strongly opposed at the time, the Commission's recommendation was essentially the right one and may even have avoided later embarrassment had it been approved. On vetting, although finding very little to change, the report also showed the growth of the 'security state' and use of negative and positive vetting far beyond the limits originally envisaged – as the below extracts show. Although the numbers of those put through the positive vetting process were acknowledged in the government's 1982 statement, the numbers of staff subject to NV essentially remained hidden and were only finally hinted at in a April 1990 report by the Home Affairs Select Committee on the use of criminal records for employment, in which it was revealed there were over 500,000 searches in 1989 by government departments – around 1 per cent of the adult population of Britain, ranging from security checks to an increasing number of referrals for those with 'access to children'.^{lxxv} At the time, no mention was made of MI5's checks. In their evidence to the committee, Home Office officials acknowledge that criminal checks were important for 'the protection of national security' and were 'not carried out on all civil servants, they are only carried out on those who might have access to classified material'.^{lxxvi} By July 1990, Thatcher finally announced 'defined and published criteria' on vetting rules to MPs, announcing new reforms to positive checks and a system of checks designed to counter terrorist activity, while cutting back on the overall cost of security. As such, Diplock's final report as chair of the Security Commission helped set internal Whitehall security policy for the final decade of the Cold War. It also took a more enlightened approach to security - recommending SIS's avowal, for example, while ensuring that important secrets remained hidden – and can be seen as a missed opportunity for government openness in the 1980s.

Note: Below, sections of the 1981 Security Commission Report are published under Open Government Licence. Its full final report ran to nineteen pages, with an additional eight page annex on recruitment and personnel management in the 'secret agencies' – part of which has been released, including a significant section on SIS recruitment, though information on

GCHQ is still withheld – and a one side brief on specialist advisors to House of Commons select committees. The published extracts below focus largely on vetting, over classification of records and agency avowal, and leave out parts of the report later redrafted as the Prime Minister’s statement to the House of Commons in May 1982, including the opening sections on ‘threat’ of new subversive groups on the ‘extreme left’, security classifications in government and rules on the application of vetting decisions across Whitehall. The Security Commission’s review of security legislation post-Radcliffe has also been omitted, along with a section on electronic and computer security, and the annex on intelligence agency recruitment and personnel policy. The released copies of the 1981 Security Commission Report can be found at The National Archives, Ken, in PREM 19/1634.

Document

Report of the Security Commission, December 1981^{lxxvii}

PRIME MINISTER

INTRODUCTION

1. In your letter of 6 April 1981, you asked the Security Commission “to review the security procedures and practices currently followed in the public service and to consider what, if any, changes are required”.
2. These terms of reference are the same as Part I of the terms of reference of an ad hoc Committee on the Security Procedures in the Public Service under the Chairmanship of Lord Radcliffe (“the Radcliffe Committee”) which was appointed in May, 1961, and reported in November of that year, except that their terms of reference made specific mention of “recent convictions for offences under the Official Secrets Acts” in the light of which their review was to be undertaken. This was a reference to the notorious Portland spies, who of whom had been civilian employees of the Admiralty, and to a former member of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), George Blake. The investigation of the security issues involved in the Blake case formed Part II of the Radcliffe Committee’s Report ... A heavily edited and expunged version of Part I of Radcliffe, which also incorporated Part III of it verbatim, was published in April, 1962, under the title “Security Procedures in the Public Service”.
3. The occasion of the present reference to the Security Commission was the publication of Mr Chapman Pincher’s book “Their Trade is Treachery”. This dealt with a number of cases of proven or suspected disclosure of highly secret information to the Soviet bloc intelligence services by persons who had been recruited to the Foreign Office of one of the Secret Services (SIS and the Security Service) many years before the improvements recommended in Radcliffe had been put into effect and for the most part before even a rudimentary form of Positive Vetting, for those with access to particularly sensitive information, was first introduced in 1952.
4. It does not fall within our terms of reference to examine once again allegations against individuals who now are either dead or have long ago been publicly exposed. As mentioned in your speech in which the current reference to the Security Commission was announced in Parliament, the vases with which Mr Chapman Pincher’s volume deals have all been the subject of intensive examination and re-examination

in the utmost detail and no useful purpose could be served by our going over yet the same well-trodden ground.

5. Like Radcliffe, we have taken "security" in our terms of reference to mean the safeguarding of such information in the possession of the Government as would by its unauthorised disclosure cause injury to the interest of the country. (Information which falls within this description we shall refer to under the generic description "classified information"). Thus, our Report does not cover the protection of Government buildings or their contents or vital installations against sabotage or terrorist attack, although it does cover physical precautions for denying access to classified information by unauthorised persons.

6. We have regarded our task as best performed by re-examining Radcliffe in the light of the experience of the last twenty years, and the changes that have occurred during that period (1) in changes of the nature of the threat against which security precautions are directed, (2) in changes of attitudes among the public, the media, and the Civil Service itself, (3) in legislation, and (4) in technology, including particularly the use of computers and other forms of office automation.

7. In carrying out this task, we have used the unexpurgated version of Part I of Radcliffe which differs considerably from the published version, and of which only a few copies still remain in existence. Although the extant copies are still classified as TOP SECRET, the recommendations contained in the unexpurgated Radcliffe, with only a few significant exceptions, have been fully implemented. They can be found in the pages of the Manual of Personnel Security Measures and its sixty-one annexes upon a careful and persevering perusal of those documents. ...

Over-Classification

17. Over-classification is, in our opinion, the error that is most commonly committed in carrying out current security procedures. Radcliffe recorded the unanimous opinion of those who gave evidence in 1961 that the security system then was trying to protect too much and suggested for consideration by departments, various methods by which over-classification might be reduced. The problem has been considered periodically by a series of working parties since then and has been the subject of two reports by distinguished senior ex-civil servants. Nevertheless, we are satisfied that considerable over-classification still persists. This is not only objectionable upon grounds of managerial efficiency and economy: it adds considerably to the expense of the security procedures and the manpower needed to carry them out. It also tends to weaken the efficiency of the procedures by bringing them into disrepute not only with the press and the public generally, but also with those civil servants themselves whose duty it is to carry them out and upon whom the effect of obvious over-classification cannot be other than to encourage laxity.

18. To give but one example, which strikes as unnecessary, there is the classification as SECRET or CONFIDENTIAL of the mere fact of the existence of Cabinet committees with the consequence that any document which refers to a Cabinet committee must bear that classification even though the information itself which the document is intended to convey is a matter of public knowledge. It is often referred to in the press to which hostile intelligence services can have recourse if the information is of any interest to them.

THE VETTING SYSTEM

23. Radcliffe refers to two kinds of security clearance of personnel:

a. Normal Vetting (NV) which in general is **covert** and applied to all persons who have any access to material classified as CONFIDENTIAL or above, and are members of the public service in a civilian capacity or of the armed forces, or the police, or the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) or are employees of British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL) or of any firm of contractors engaged on government contracts (List X firms); and

b. Positive Vetting (PV) which is largely an **overt** process and is applied to those persons in any of the categories mentioned above and who, at any rate in theory if not always in reality, have regular and constant access to material classified as TOP SECRET.

c. Since Radcliffe there has been introduced a variety of NV known as "Full Record Check" that is **overt** and, on the insistence of the USA with whom much atomic information is shared, is applied to all recruits by UKAEA and BNFL. It is applied also to recruits to police forces. The only way in which this differs from ordinary NV is that the applicant for employment is required to fill in a written questionnaire in the same form as that which is used in PV and is thus made aware that he is being subject to vetting.

Normal Vetting

24. The nature of NV is described in Chapter II of the Manual of Personnel Security Measures but there are no comprehensive statistics about its extent. The number of posts in the non-industrial Home Civil Service, for which NV is required, is estimated to be about 180,000, ie one-third of all Home Civil Service posts. This number might well be considerably reduced if our recommendation for removing from the security classifications of CONFIDENTIAL and above, information the disclosure of which to the public would cause political or administrative inconvenience, is vigorously pursued; but paucity of statistics makes it impossible to predict the extent of the reduction.

25. In addition there are 12,500 NV posts in British Telecommunications, and about 1,000 in the Post Office. In the armed forces, NV is applied to all officers, and in the Navy and Royal Air Force to the majority of other ranks as well, requiring some 203,000 clearances in all. In 1980 NV was applied to 12,200 employees in List X firms.

26. We were surprised by the limited nature of the information which is disclosed by Normal Vetting. It is restricted to an examination of departmental records which is disclosed by Normal Vetting. It is restricted to an examination of departmental records for evidence of unsuitability, to a search by the Security Service for any traces of suspected disloyalty to this country or membership or active support of any subversive organisation, and to a search by Scotland Yard for any previous convictions or reportable offences which the subject of the check may have committed and are recorded against him in what used to be called the Criminal Record Office (CRO) but has been re-named the National Identification Bureau (NIB).

27. Out of nearly 300,000 NV checks in 1980, only 540 (0.19%) were given adverse assessments by the Security Service, but a substantially higher proportion, some 1.16% had previous convictions for reportable offences recorded against them in NIB.

28. We have naturally considered whether, in the light of these results, NV is worth continuing. We have, however, no doubt that it is. The cost of NV is relatively small, about £6 per submission. The time taken to complete the check is short and although when stated as a percentage of the total number of checks undertaken the number of persons debarred from

access to classified material may look small, the actual number of individuals involved is not inconsiderable and any single one of them may be capable of causing injury to the interests of the nation.

29. A possible weakness in the NV system results from the historical anomaly that, while the Security Service is responsible for maintaining records of members and supporters of subversive and terrorist organisations in the United Kingdom, other than those concerned with Irish Republican extremism, the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police is responsible for maintaining these records in relation to Irish Republican extremism. The Special Branch records were not checked as a matter of routine in all cases, but only if the Security Service in the course of its own check perceives what it considered to be an “Irish connection” ...

30. We have also considered whether NV ought still to remain covert. The risk involved is not informing the subject of an NV check who has not obtained clearance of the reasons for his NV failure is the possibility, remote though it may be, of a mistake by the Security Service or the NIB as to his identity. If he were informed of the reason for his failure he would have the opportunity of clearing himself by correcting the error.

31. There is thus some risk of an injustice being done to some individuals although we are satisfied that the precautions taken to establish the identity of the subject if any NV check make the risk very small indeed. It is one which we consider must be accepted in the interests of the nation. Little harm would be done by revealing that failure was due to previous convictions recorded against him by NIB although some might suspect that the police check was not limited to convictions as such. Previous convictions in fact constitute the reason for some six out of seven NV failures; but if any of them were to be given on request reasons for their failures, it would not be possible in an increasingly actively trade unionised service to give reasons in some cases and to refuse them in others. In most of that minority of cases in which the failure resulted from a Security Service check, it might well be that reasons could not be given without disclosing information in the possession of the Security Service obtained from highly sensitive sources, which would endanger those sources or at least prejudice their future usefulness. This seems to us to be a conclusive reason why NV should continue to be covert and the nature of the NV check should not be disclosed – even though it must be widely realised that some sort of check of a person’s antecedents is likely to have been made. **We recommend that consideration should be given to withdrawing Annexes 69 and 60 of the Manual of Personnel Security Measures which give to departments a limited discretion to disclose to the individual concerned who was under consideration for an NV post, not only the fact that he was rejected on security grounds but also in some cases the reason for his failure.**

32. In reporting to departments the result of its security check in NV cases, the Security Service either states that there is no security objection or uses one of three formulae, A, B, and C, according to the degree of suspicion which the Security Service records raise as to the loyalty of subversive sympathies of the subject at the check. These formulae are set out in Annex 12 of the Manual of Personnel Security Measures. They range from advice that the subject should not have access to information classified as CONFIDENTIAL or above, to advice that the information about the subject in the Security Service’s records should not necessarily debar him from access to make other arrangements if particularly delicate information is involved ...

Positive Vetting

34. The nature of the procedures followed in PV are set out in Chapter III of the Manual of Personnel Security Measures. Compared with NV, is an expensive and time-consuming process, but if properly carried out it does expose, as NV fails to do, "character defects" which render uncertain the subject's trustworthiness or discretion, or his ability to resist pecuniary temptation or exposure to blackmail. It is character defects rather than disloyalty for ideological reasons or subversive tendencies (which should have come to light on NV checks) that have been the cause of all known cases of disclosure of information to hostile intelligence services that have occurred since Radcliffe. P.V., however, has three disadvantages:-

- a. As already mentioned it is expensive, particularly in the use of manpower, in the field work undertaken by investigating officers in interviewing the subject of the PV check and his referees. The average cost of field-work alone is estimated at some £700 per investigation and this in our view is probably an under-estimate.
- b. The PV process involves considerable time, its completion averaging three months or more in ordinary cases, though in cases of urgency the process can be carried through much more expeditiously than that. In those departments or services, viz. the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, and the three services engaged in secret intelligence work, the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), where, with relatively minor exceptions, all candidates for recruitment have to be PVd, the delay may result in the loss of valuable recruits especially those with specialised qualifications who accept other offers of employment during the waiting period.
- c. In a department in which there are many PV posts, the failure of a member of the staff of the department to obtain PV clearance upon transfer to a PV post may block his chances of promotion and, under existing rules, would prevent his reaching the grade of under-secretary or above. In any event it may well affect adversely the prospects of his career in lower grades of the public service, although it would appear that, in the majority of cases in the Home Civil Service, it has been found possible by good management to avoid this result, as the paucity of appeals against refusal of PV appear to show. In fully PVd departments, however, the withdrawal of PV for a character defect may well mean that the officer may well be compelled to accept early retirement unless it is found possible to transfer him to a non-PV post of an appropriate grade in the Home Civil Service.

35. The criteria of unfitness of PV post are if there is evidence:

- I. that the subject or his spouse, or his parent or guardian with whom he is or has recently been living
 - a. has been involved in an act of sabotage, espionage, treason, sedition, or any breach of the provisions of the Official Secrets Acts;
 - b. has been an associate of suspected spies or saboteurs;
 - c. has any connections with a subversive organisation;
- II. that the subject himself
 - d. has grossly infringed security regulations;
 - e. falsified an application form or a security questionnaire;
 - f. has been convicted of a criminal offence indicating habitual criminal tendencies or serious character deficiencies;
 - g. has shown himself by act or speech to be unreliable, dishonest, untrustworthy or indiscreet;
 - h. has engaged in infamous, immoral or disgraceful conduct;

- i. has significant financial difficulties;
- j. has been an alcohol or drug addict;
- k. has suffered from any illness which might effect his judgement;
- l. is a homosexual and therefore vulnerable to a blackmail approach;
- m. has been held captive or interned for a substantial period in Communist hands;
- n. does not conform to the nationality rule of the department concerned.

36. The criteria listed under I and II.d are security reasons for refusing PV. In contrast those listed under II m. and n. are sometimes described as defects of circumstance. The rest of those listed under II are referred to as character defects.

Homosexuality as a bar to PV clearance

37. The most controversial of the character defects is male homosexuality because of the change in English Law and public opinion on this subject that has taken place in the post-Radcliffe years. It is claimed that an unconcealed, acknowledged and stable relationship in England and Wales with another consenting adult of the same sex in which no homosexual acts take place in public no longer involves a party to such a relationship in any vulnerability to blackmail and thus does not constitute a security risk in officers whose service is confined to these countries. Homosexual relationships between consenting male adults are, however, still offences against the criminal law of a number of foreign states to which persons serving in the Diplomatic Service and the services engaged in secret intelligence are liable to be posted. **[REDACTED] In these services we recommend that homosexuality, even if acknowledged, should continue to be a bar to employment in any PV post though an exception might be made for officers employed by GCHQ for specialist work which will not involve their ever being posted outside England and Wales. In the armed forces, homosexual acts even between consenting adults are disciplinary offences rendering the perpetrator liable to compulsory discharge. Here too we recommend that homosexuality must, on security grounds, remain a bar to appointment to a PV post.**

38. Homosexual tendencies may remain latent only or may manifest themselves in so broad a gamut of forms from inconspicuous stable relationships through promiscuity or exhibitionism to pederasty that we consider that, in the Home Civil Service, homosexual inclinations or relationships should not necessarily be treated as an absolute bar to PV clearance, but should be dealt with on a case to case basis, paying particular attention to whether the way in which the individual has indulged his homosexual tendencies casts any doubt upon his discretion or reliability.

39. Since PV is overt an officer knows that he is being PVd and where the reason for his failure is a character defect he may well have appreciated from questions put to him by the investigating officer what the character defect alleged against him is ...

The Number of PV Posts

42. Altogether, there are about 68,000 posts for which PV clearance is required. Of these 16,600 are in the Home Civil Service, of which all, except some 3,500, are in the Ministry of Defence (MOD), 700 are in British Telecommunications and the Post Office and 3,150 in List X firms. There are 17,200 in the armed

forces. The Diplomatic Service has 7,700 and the Security Service, SIS and GCHQ have 11,200 between them. UKAEA and BNFL have 9,100 and the Police (Special Branches) 2,350.

43. We have not been able to obtain reliable statistics of the proportion of cases in which PV has been refused. Those that we have been able to obtain vary between 1% (UKAEA) and 8% (GCHQ). Of some 2,700 civilians employed by Government contractors and PV'd in 1980 by the Ministry of Defence for the first time, 125 (4.6%) were refused clearance.

44. We have naturally considered whether this expensive procedure, with its accompanying disadvantages to which we have referred, ought to be contained, but, at any rate so far as concerns PV on first appointment to a PV post, we have no hesitation in recommending that it ought. If the criterion for a PV post, viz. the regular and constant access to information classified as TOP SECRET is properly applied, the potential damage to the nation which could be caused if such information were disclosed to the intelligence services of a hostile state in our view justifies the very considerable expense of maintaining the system of PV, which is estimated in 1980 to have been of the order of £6,000,000 and the other disadvantages to which we have referred.

45. Nevertheless, we have the strong impression that departments in the Home Civil Service have been too ready to classify as requiring PV clearance posts which do not really satisfy the criterion of being classified as such. We make below some recommendations for reducing their numbers in the Home Civil Service, but **we also recommend that departments should themselves review each of their existing PV posts with a view to seeing whether the number of them could be reduced.**

SECRET INTELLIGENCE WORK

55. The methods of recruitment and personnel security measures that are currently in use in the three organisations engaged in secret intelligence work (the Security Service, SIS and GCHQ), in so far as they differ from those employed by other government departments, are not set out in the Manual of Personnel Security Measures. Because of this, and because the occasion of the present reference to us was the anxiety as to whether gaps in security in the recruitment procedures of MI5 and MI6, which undoubtedly existed before and during World War II, still continued to exist, we have thought it helpful to set out in summary form in Appendix A the present recruitment and vetting procedures of the Security Service, SIS and GCHQ.

...

57. GCHQ is an openly acknowledged government department under the ministerial responsibility of the Foreign Secretary. As such it is required to recruit its staff, all of whom are subject to PV clearance, through the Civil Service Commission and no attempt is made to conceal the identity of members of its staff

58. The existence of the Security Service is openly acknowledged and so, in very general terms, are its functions. It has in our view not been rendered any less effective for that: nor has any embarrassment been caused to the Home Secretary, to whom the Security Service is answerable, by questions addressed to him in Parliament about its operations or the methods and techniques that it employs. Until 1979 the Security Service did not make use of the Civil Service Commission at any stage of its recruitment procedures. It now does so in the manner described in Appendix A. For obvious reasons the identity of members of the Security Service is so far as possible kept concealed; and unlike members of GCHQ they are not permitted to be members of a trade union.

59. The fact that the SIS has continued in existence after the end of World War II is officially supposed to be a secret with the consequence that any document that even mentions it by name is required to bear the classification SECRET, although it may contain no information whatever about SIS operations, methods or techniques, or the identity of any member of the service. The official pretence that SIS does not exist, quite apart from the expensive over-classification of documents that this entails, is in our view so absurd that it is calculated to bring with it into disregard by the media and the public, legitimate security measures to prevent disclosure of the operations, methods and techniques of all three organisations engaged in secret intelligence work which are essential if they are to perform their functions effectively.

60. That we have a secret intelligence service is common knowledge. It is frequently referred to in the press sometimes by its full title or more often as the "Secret Service" or by its former designation "MI6". While we were engaged in writing this report the obituary of Sir John Rennie appeared in The Times newspaper with the sub-title "Former Head of MI6". To go on officially pretending that no such organisation exists can do nothing but diminish the credibility of security measures in general and provide encouragement to aggressive investigative journalists to disclosure to the public and thereby to hostile intelligence services information about our own secret intelligence work which it is vitally important to keep secret.

61. We have not heard any plausible reason for continuing the policy of non-avowal of SIS. We strongly recommend that it should be abandoned. The existence of SIS should be acknowledged; and it should in future be placed upon the same footing as the Security Service. The identity of its members should be concealed and this would preclude their joining a trade union.

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ⁱ Lustgarten and Leigh, In *From The Cold: National Security and Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 478.

ⁱⁱ Cmnd. 8540, *Statement on the Recommendations of the Security Commission* (London: HMSO, 1982), p. 3. See also Thatcher's statement to the House, Hansard, HC. Deb, 19 May 1982, Vol. 24, Col. 99-100W.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cmnd. 8540.

^{iv} With the publication of the Intelligence Services Act, 1994

^v The report and context can be found in PREM 19/1634, 'SECURITY. Security Commission: review of security procedures; appointments; cases referred; 'Three Advisors' on appeals against positive vetting clearance refusals – terms of reference and procedures', 1981-1986. The file was opened in December 2014.

^{vi} On the use of Freedom of Information for intelligence history, read Murphy and Lomas, 'Return to Neverland? Freedom of Information and the history of British intelligence', pp. 273-87. For another study of FOI in the UK context, see Dobson, 'The last forum of accountability? State secrecy, intelligence and Freedom of Information in the United Kingdom', pp. 312-29.

^{vii} Cabinet Office to author, 5 December 2019. For the sections of FOIA, read 'Freedom of Information Act 2000' (original as enacted) < <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/introduction/enacted> >

^{viii} On Section 21, see Ibid. Hennessy's article is an accurate summary of the broad findings of Diplock's report, read Hennessy, 'Whitehall brief: Hunt for new "mole" ruled out'.

^{ix} See Hansard, HC. Deb, 16 December 1963, Vol. 686, Cols. 859-80.

^x On Winn's wartime work, read Kahn, *Seizing the Enigma*, pp. 171-3.

^{xi} See Hansard, HC. Deb, 23 January 1964, Vol. 687, Col. 1271. The process was changed by Wilson in May 1965 following the conviction of Frank Bossard in the Ministry of Aviation and Sergeant Percy Allen in the Army Department, allowing the commission to investigate cases after a criminal case had finished (see Hansard, HC. Deb, 10 May 1965, Vol. 712, Col. 33-35).

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- ^{xii} Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 500.
- ^{xiii} Hansard, HC. Deb, 15 December 1988, vol. 143, col. 1153.
- ^{xiv} Cmnd. 2722, 'Report of the Standing Security Commission June 1965' (London: HMSO, 1965). For an overview of the Committee's work, read Lustgarten and Leigh, *In From The Cold: National Security and Parliamentary Democracy*, pp. 476-487.
- ^{xv} Cmnd. 3151, 'Report of the Security Commission' (London: HMSO, 1966).
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- ^{xxvi} Mantell passed away in May 2010, read 'Obituary: Sir Charles Mantell', *The Telegraph*, 11 May 2010.
- ^{xxvii} Leigh, 'The role of Judges', p. 100.
- ^{xxviii} Hansard, HL. Deb, 9 July 2012, vol. 738, col. 1008.
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- ^{xxxii} CAB 301/248, 'Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Breaches of Security, 1961'.
- ^{xxxiii} CAB 21/6014, Report of the committee on security in the public service: memorandum by the Prime Minister.
- ^{xxxiv} Extracts from Part 1 and the whole of Part 3 was later released as a Command Paper in 1962. Part 2 on the Blake case has never been published and is still largely redacted in Cabinet Office files. For the published conclusions, see Cmnd. 1681, 'Security Procedures in the Public Service' (London: HMSO, 1962).
- ^{xxxv} Hansard, HC. Deb, 5 April 1962, Vol. 657, Col. 647.
- ^{xxxvi} Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography, Vol. 3*, pp. 230-6.
- ^{xxxvii} Hansard, HC. Deb, 15 November 1979, Vol. 973, Cols. 679-81. On the wider context, read Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography, Vol. 1*, pp. 483-5.
- ^{xxxviii} See Pincher, *Their Trade is Treachery*. On Chapman's interviews, see Chapman Pincher, 'Reflections on a lifetime of reporting on intelligence affairs', p. 162.
- ^{xxxix} On FLUENCY, read Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 503-521.
- ^{xl} Hansard, HC. Deb, 26 March 1981, Vol. 1, Cols. 1079-1080.
- ^{xli} *Ibid.*, Col. 1081.
- ^{xlii} Hansard, HL. Deb, 26 June 1978, Vol. 394, Col. 46.
- Halsbury had been referring to a visit to GCHQ. Despite being told never to refer to it under any circumstances, Halsbury had pointed out where he wanted to be dropped off to a local taxi driver. 'Oh, that's the Government Communications Headquarters', he replied. Although not officially fully avowed until 1982, GCHQ was acknowledged and fell under the responsibility of the Foreign Secretary and recruited through the Civil Service Commission. It had also been mentioned for the first time in Hansard in May 1954 as 'Communications Centre, Chelmsford' in the context of security vetting. During a debate on the armed forces in May 1978, Labour MP Robin Cook told MPs that GCHQ was 'recruiting linguist specialists in the cryptography department, advertises for specialists in Dutch and Italian, whom I had assumed until now were on our side. It also advertises for specialists in Swedish, although we all respect the neutral and separate stance of the Swedes' (Hansard, HC. Deb, 25 May 1978, Vol. 950, Col. 1813).
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- ^{xlix} Figure obtained using the Bank of England's 'Inflation Calculator' < <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> >
- ^l PREM 19/1634, Report of the Security Commission, 1981. A later report estimated the cost to be £750 (PREM 19/916, HC 59, 'Report of an Inquiry by the Right Honourable Lord Bridge of Harwich into the appointment as The Queen's Police Officer, and the activities, of Commander Trestrial; to determine whether security was breached or put at risk, and advise whether in consequence any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable' (London: HMSO, 1982), p. 17).
- ^{li} Hennessy, 'Whitehall brief' (Information released through Freedom of Information Request (hereafter FOI): note to A.B.P. Smart, 7 February 1975).
- ^{lii} CAB 318/2, Armstrong to Wagg, 9 June 1982.
- ^{liii} PREM 19/1879, Armstrong to Thatcher, 5 June 1986.
- ^{liv} Luff, 'Covert and Overt Operations', pp. 747-8.
- ^{lv} Read Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Government*, pp. 196-202.
- ^{lvi} Hansard, HC. Deb, 8 November 1955, Vol. 545, Col. 1499. Questioned by Labour MP Richard Crossman, Macmillan replied: 'I said it was of a negative kind. It was merely said, "Have you got anything against this man?" and the point of the positive vetting is diligent research into the previous records' (Ibid., col. 1501).
- ^{lvii} On the work of the CRO, read Thomas, *Criminal Records*.
- ^{lviii} CAB 21/6000, minute to Macmillan, 3 May 1963.
- ^{lix} CAB 134/3271, N.V. checks made in 1967. A Treasury note suggests that the total number of NV checks was as high as 250,000 (T 216/763, 'The confidentiality of normal vetting: note by the Treasury').
- ^{lx} Hennessy, *The Secret State* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 102.
- ^{lxi} PREM 19/1634, Report of the Security Commission, 1981.
- ^{lxii} On the FCO's policy, read James Southern's excellent, *Homosexuality at the Foreign Office, 1967-1991, FCO History Notes: Issue 19* (London: FCO).
- ^{lxiii} CAB 134/4564, PSC(81)3, Security policy in regard to homosexuality, 28 April 1981.
- ^{lxiv} Cmnd., 8540, p. 8.
- ^{lxv} 'The Fight for Equality in the British Civil Service: Note by Ian Buist, C.B.', < <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/Buist.pdf> >
- ^{lxvi} British Diplomatic Oral History interview: Sutherland, Veronica Evelyn, pp. 17-18 < <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/Sutherland.pdf> >
- ^{lxvii} FOI: note by F.B. Wheeler, 15 March 1982. Copies of the papers have been deposited in the 'Intelligence and Security FOI collection' in the University of Salford's Archives and Special Collections. For information and access, see < http://www.salford.ac.uk/_data/assets/xml_file/0006/776886/IntelligenceSecurityStudies.xml > In 1975 MI5 ruled that lesbianism 'may make someone vulnerable to blackmail (eg: if the lesbian is married ...) but that in general her vulnerability is probably less than that of the male homosexual'. In 1981, MI5 noted a relaxed attitude to lesbianism which had 'some security significance'. MI5's conclusion was that lesbians were 'less vulnerable' offering 'more scope for discretion' for security posts, but that generally the 'same principles' applied to male and female homosexuality. Following Security Commission's ruling, the FCO started a review of attitudes to lesbians in the Diplomatic Service (on MI5's advice, see FOI: 'Review of security policy in regard to homosexuality: Note by the Security Service', 5 August 1981).
- ^{lxviii} FOI: Cooper to Ford, 14 July 1989. See the excellent Southern, *Homosexuality at the Foreign Office*.
- ^{lxix} FOI: 'Homosexuals and the Diplomatic Service': note by A.M. Wood, 17 May 1984.
- ^{lxx} 'The Fight for Equality in the British Civil Service: Note by Ian Buist, C.B.', < <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/Buist.pdf> >
- ^{lxxi} FOI: 'Employment of homosexual officers in the Service', note by Buist, March 1982.
- ^{lxxii} FOI: letter to A.R. Nuttall, Trade Union Side Chairman, 19 December 1983.
- ^{lxxiii} Entry for 1 October 1990 in Wright, *Behind Diplomatic Lines*.
- ^{lxxiv} Hansard, HC. Deb, 23 July 1991, Vol. 195, Cols. 474W.
- ^{lxxv} On criminal checks, read Thomas, *Criminal Records*, pp. 106-130.
- ^{lxxvi} House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, Third Report: Criminal Records, April 1990, p. viii.
- ^{lxxvii} The report and context can be found in PREM 19/1634, 'SECURITY. Security Commission: review of security procedures; appointments; cases referred; 'Three Advisors' on appeals against positive vetting clearance refusals – terms of reference and procedures', 1981-1986.