

*Security**Prime Minister*

Ref. A082/0319

MR BUTLER*mb*

Recent press reports have drawn attention to the recent untimely deaths of two GCHQ employees, and have suggested that these deaths might have some security significance.

- 2. I attach a note upon which the Prime Minister could draw, if questions are put to her about these cases.
- 3. I also attach a fuller note on the details of the cases.

RIA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

29th November 1982



I have inquired into both the cases to which reference has been made. There is no reason to connect either of them with Prime; no reason to suspect that either of the two men was other than loyal and trustworthy in his work; no reason to suppose that either could have thought that they were under suspicion of disloyalty or espionage; and no reason to suppose that the Prime case, or fears of being suspected of disloyalty or espionage, had anything to do with either of their deaths.

Jack Wolfenden

Mr Wolfenden was 56 years old, and had been a Telecommunications Technical Officer in GCHQ since the mid-1960's. He was granted PV clearance in 1965, and this was re-confirmed in 1970, 1975, 1979 and 1981. At no stage was there any reason to doubt his loyalty or trustworthiness. There is no evidence whatever to link him with Prime: their ages, background and spheres of work were entirely different and there is no evidence that their paths ever crossed. Mr Wolfenden died as a result of an accident to a light aircraft which he was flying near Cheltenham on 25th July 1982. There were no suspicious circumstances surrounding the accident. He had written a letter on 24th July which was shown to the Coroner at his inquest; Mr Wolfenden had had some recent personal problems, but the Coroner seems to have been satisfied that the letter did not suggest a suicidal frame of mind.

Ernest Brockway

? Mr Brockway was 42 years old, and joined GCHQ as a Radio Operator in 1955. He was promoted to Station Radio Officer on 11th October 1962. He was granted PV clearance in 1965, and this was re-confirmed in 1970, 1976 and 1980. At no stage was there any reason to doubt his loyalty or trustworthiness.



Mr Brockway was happily married, and well liked and well thought of by his colleagues. His sick record had been generally sound until he was absent for a month last summer with depression. This was not thought particularly significant at the time either by the GCHQ Officer who visited him or by the Security Authorities. There is, however, no other known factor which might account for his apparent suicide. An inquest on his death opened yesterday (29th November). There is no evidence to connect Brockway with Prime: their spheres of work were entirely separate, and Brockway did not arrive in Cheltenham until five years after Prime had resigned. There is no reason to suspect him of disloyalty or espionage, and no reason to suppose that the fear of being so suspected had anything to do with his death.

JACK WOLFENDEN

1. Jack Wolfenden was born on 26th December 1925. He served in the Royal Signals from 1944 to 1948 and joined the Admiralty as a civilian Radio Operator in 1949, transferring to GCHQ when the civilian interception services were integrated in the 1960s. He was regraded to Telecommunications Technical Officer III in 1964 and to TTO II in 1973. He served at various locations in the UK and overseas

*Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4).
A Wayland, 18 October 2012*

2. Wolfenden was first granted PV clearance in 1965 and this was reconfirmed in 1970, 1975, 1979 and 1981. At no stage was there any reason to doubt his loyalty or trustworthiness.

3. He was married in 1953, but the marriage had broken down by 1975 and his divorce became absolute in March 1982. No third party seems to have been directly involved.

4. In May 1982 Wolfenden started co-habiting with a Mrs Pither, a divorced woman with a daughter. He returned from an overseas duty visit on about 17th July 1982 and soon after his return Mrs Pither told him he would have to leave her house. On the morning of Saturday 24th July he wrote her a letter which was shown to the Coroner at the inquest. At about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday 25th July 1982 Wolfenden took off from Staverton Airport (near Cheltenham) in a light aircraft owned by a group of flying enthusiasts of whom Wolfenden was one. From the evidence given at the inquest it seems that he spent some three quarters of an hour performing aerobatics before his aircraft crashed in a valley to the north east of Cleeve Common. No witness to the crash came forward but some golfers, failing to see the aircraft reappear as expected, investigated and found the wreckage. Wolfenden received severe multiple injuries and must have died at the moment of impact. There was no evidence to indicate the presence in the body of drugs, alcohol or carbon monoxide, and nothing to suggest that he had suffered a black-out. Nor was there any evidence that the aircraft was defective or had been tampered with.

5. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death. It has been suggested or implied in some media reports that Wolfenden killed himself, either because of his rejection by Mrs Pither or because he had been disloyal to the Crown and feared exposure as a result of charges brought against Prime 10 days previously. Whether he killed himself because of the break with Mrs Pither is open to speculation, but the Coroner seems to have been satisfied that the letter of 24th July did not suggest a suicidal frame of mind and Wolfenden does not seem to have been the sort of man who would have killed himself in a way which involves destroying an aircraft of which he was only part-owner. There is no evidence whatever to link him with Prime: their ages, background, interests and spheres of work were entirely different and there is no evidence that their paths ever crossed, inside or outside the office.

6. There is no foundation in press reports that Wolfenden had recently returned from Brunei: he had not and there is no evidence known to GCHQ that he had ever been to Brunei in his life.

ERNEST PETER BROCKWAY

7. Ernest Peter Brockway was born on 30th November 1939. He served in the Royal Navy from 1956 to 1964 as a Radio Operator and joined GCHQ in 1965. Following success at an internal board he was promoted to Station Radio Officer on 11th October 1982. He served at various locations in the UK and overseas * ~~~~~

* He had transferred to Cheltenham from the GCHQ station at Scarborough in March of this year.

8. Brockway was granted PV clearance by GCHQ in 1965 and this was reconfirmed in 1970, 1976 and 1980. At no stage has there been any reason to doubt his loyalty or trustworthiness.

9. He was married in 1958 and the marriage appears to have been happy and successful. His sick record was generally good, but for a month in September/August 1982 he was absent with 'depression': this did not seem particularly significant at the time either in the opinion of the GCHQ Welfare Officer who visited him, or in the opinion of the GCHQ security authorities. With hindsight it may, however, have been the first overt symptom of something more serious.

* ~ * Passage deleted and retained
under Section 3(4).



Apart from his wife and family he had a range of outside interests, mainly of a sporting nature, and he was well liked and well thought of by his colleagues.

10. An inquest on Brockway's death is due to open in Cheltenham at 4.15 today (Monday 29th November). The only information available to GCHQ is that he was found hanged at his home in Cheltenham on the morning of Wednesday 24th November 1982. Apart from the depression noted above, nothing is known which might account for his apparent suicide.

11. There is no evidence to connect Brockway with Prime, except possibly the fact that Brockway was trained as a Russian linguist during his service in the armed forces (Navy), but this is the case with many GCHQ employees. Their spheres of work were entirely separate and Brockway did not arrive in Cheltenham until five years after Prime had resigned.