



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

1 July 1980

Mr. Leadbitter

Thank you for your letter of 6 June.

As I told the House of Commons on 21 November, I do not propose to confirm or deny or comment on further allegations and insinuations of the kind you mention in your letter. The offences alleged would, if the allegations were substantiated, be serious criminal offences. If those making the allegations have evidence to back them up, and they will produce that evidence to the proper authorities, it can be investigated and decisions can be taken on whether to prosecute by those whose business it is to take such decisions. If they do not have such evidence, then they are in my view acting irresponsibly and reprehensibly in publishing their allegations and insinuations, and I should be acting no less irresponsibly if I gave them further currency in statements in the House or letters to Members of Parliament.

Mr. Blunt's case was entirely special. He had on his own admission committed serious offences; but I was in a position to say so in a statement to the House only because there was no possibility of prosecuting him, on account of the offer of immunity from prosecution on which his admission - the only available evidence - was based.

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I would add only one other point. In the course of the prolonged and thorough investigations that followed the defection of Burgess, Maclean and Philby and the admission of Blunt, a great many people were interviewed sometimes to obtain any relevant information they could provide, sometimes to see if they could be eliminated from further enquiries. The fact that somebody was interviewed cannot and should not be assumed to mean that he was himself under suspicion, and it would be quite unfair to suggest that it did mean that.

As to the case of Miss Lamble, that involved quite different considerations from the case of Mr. Blunt. I explained in my speech to the House on 21 November the circumstances which in 1964 caused the Attorney General to authorise an offer of immunity from prosecution which led in due course to Mr. Blunt's confession. In the case of Miss Lamble, as the Attorney General explained to you in his letter of 18 January, the police investigation established a prima facie case against her which was thought to justify charges under the Official Secrets Act, and she was thus arrested and charged. Her subsequent statements indicated that she might not have intended to act in a manner prejudicial to the safety of the State. The Attorney General took that into account in deciding not to consent to a prosecution.

Yours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher

Ted Leadbitter, Esq., M.P.

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