

Ref. A0665

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Anthony Blunt: Cabinet

I had a quick word with the Attorney General after this afternoon's meeting. We neither of us think that you need say anything at Cabinet on this subject. These matters are traditionally handled by the Prime Minister and Ministers directly concerned, without involving a wider range of colleagues.

2. If you feel that you have to do so you could do so briefly, under the heading of Parliamentary Affairs. You might speak as follows:

Colleagues will have seen that a book has recently been published, alleging that, in addition to Burgess, Maclean and Philby, there were a Fourth Man and a Fifth Man. The book does not plainly identify those concerned, but drops hints and clues which enable the identities to be deduced. Newspapers have made those identifications explicit. We are reasonably satisfied that the allegations about a Fifth Man are a false trail. The same cannot unfortunately be said about the Fourth Man. You have come to the conclusion that the public interest requires a reasonably full statement of the facts. These are that in April 1964 Sir Anthony Blunt, then Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures, on the basis of an offer of immunity from prosecution if he confessed, admitted that he had been recruited by and acted as a talent-spotter for Russian Intelligence when he was a don at Cambridge before the war, had regularly passed information to the Russians when he was a member of the Security Service from 1940 to 1945, and in 1951 had used his old contacts with Russian Intelligence to assist in the arrangements for the defection of Burgess and Maclean. You could add that the present Attorney General had confirmed the judgment of his predecessors, that there is no evidence, apart from Blunt's confession, on which charges could be based.



This is a sorry story. There will be much public comment on the role of Ministers and the security authorities and on Blunt's relationship with the Palace, from which he retired only last year. Your Answer this afternoon will be a full one, to which you hope it will not be necessary to add.

MR.
AP

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

14th November, 1979