

Ref: A0658



SECRET

MR. WHITMORE

29PS  
6

Prime Minister.  
 This is the latest version of the  
 reply to the leadbitter.  
 My pencilled amendments are  
 designed to meet the points which  
 you raised earlier this morning.  
 Are you content?  
 Yes, my  
 JMS 14/11

Sir Anthony Blunt

There are one or two further changes to make in the draft Answer.

For the sake of convenience I have had the Answer retyped in what I hope is now the final version. It includes a sentence leading in from Mr. Leadbitter's Question.

2. I also attach supplementary questions and answers, suitably brought up to date where necessary. They are of course prepared against the possibility of use in the House of Commons. For the purposes of dealing with the Press, though I realise that Mr. Ingham is bound to face some questions from the Lobby, I have to say that I think it would be wise for him to stand as far as possible on the Prime Minister's statement and to refuse to be drawn by probing questions. This is a minefield, and if you are not thoroughly familiar with it, it is both easy and dangerous inadvertently to put a foot wrong.

(Robert Armstrong)

14th November 1979



To ask the Prime Minister, whether she will make a statement on recent evidence concerning the actions of an individual, whose name has been supplied to her, in relation to the security of the United Kingdom.

DRAFT ANSWER

The name which the hon. Gentleman has given me is that of Sir Anthony Blunt.

2. In April 1964, ~~on being given an undertaking that he would not be prosecuted if he made a confession,~~ Sir Anthony Blunt admitted to the security authorities that he had been recruited by and had acted as a talent-spotter for Russian intelligence before the war, when he was a don at Cambridge, and had passed information regularly to the Russians while he was a member of the Security Service between 1940 and 1945. *He made this admission after being given an undertaking that he would not be prosecuted.*

*April  
Parliament  
concluded.*

3. Inquiries were of course made before Blunt joined the Security Service in 1940, and he was judged a fit person. He was known to have held Marxist views at Cambridge, but the security authorities had no reason either in 1940 or at any time during his service to doubt his loyalty to his country.

4. On leaving the Security Service in 1945 Blunt reverted to his profession as an art historian. He held a number of academic appointments. He was also appointed as Surveyor of The King's Pictures in 1945, and as Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures in 1952. He was given a KCVO in 1956. On his retirement as Surveyor, he was appointed as an Adviser for The Queen's Pictures and Drawings in 1972, and he retired from this appointment in 1978.

5. He first came under suspicion in the course of the inquiries which followed the defection of Burgess and Maclean in 1951, when the Security Service was told that Burgess had said in 1937 that he was working for a secret branch of the Comintern and that Blunt was one of his sources. There was no supporting evidence for this. When confronted with it, Blunt denied it. Nevertheless the Security Service remained suspicious of him, and began an intensive and prolonged investigation of his activities. During the course of this investigation he was interviewed on eleven occasions. He persisted in his denial, and no evidence against him was obtained.

~~To establish whether <sup>any</sup> others were involved and the extent of  
their role in security.~~

to obtain information from him about <sup>any</sup> others who might  
still be a danger. It was considered important to gain

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at risk. It was  
considered important~~

~~to establish~~

6. The inquiries which preceded the exposure and defection of Philby in January 1963 produced nothing which implicated Blunt. Early in 1964, new information was received which directly implicated Blunt. It did not, however, provide a basis on which charges could be brought. The then Attorney General decided in April 1964, after consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, that the public interest lay in trying to secure a confession from Blunt, ~~in order~~ not only to arrive at a definite conclusion on his <sup>own</sup> involvement but also to obtain his co-operation in the continuing investigations by the security authorities, following the defections of Burgess, Maclean and Philby, into Soviet penetration of the security and intelligence services and other public services during and after the war. Accordingly the Attorney General authorised the offer of immunity from prosecution to Blunt if he confessed. Blunt then admitted to the security authorities that, like his friends Burgess, Maclean and Philby, he had become an agent of Russian intelligence and had talent-spotted for them at Cambridge during the 1930s; that he had regularly passed information to the Russians while he was a member of the Security Service; and that, although after 1945 he was no longer in a position to supply the Russians with classified information, in 1951 he used his old contact with the Russian Intelligence Service to assist in the arrangements for the defection of Burgess and Maclean. Both at the time of his confession and subsequently Blunt provided useful information about Russian intelligence activities and about his association with Burgess, Maclean and Philby.

7. The Queen's Private Secretary was informed in April 1964 both of Blunt's confession and of the immunity from prosecution on the basis of which it had been made. Blunt was not required to resign his appointment in the Royal Household, which was unpaid. It carried with it no access to classified information and no risk to security, and the security authorities thought it desirable not to put at risk his co-operation in their continuing investigations.

8. The decision to offer immunity from prosecution was taken because intensive investigation from 1951 to 1964 had produced no evidence to support charges. Successive Attorneys General in 1972, in June 1974 and in June 1979 have agreed that, having regard to the immunity granted in order to obtain the confession which has always been and still is the only firm evidence against Blunt, there are no grounds on which criminal proceedings could be instituted.

Note of Possible Supplementaries and Suggested Answers

Q. 1 Was Blunt protected by former colleagues in the Security Service?

A. Colleagues of Blunt who were interrogated in the course of investigations to which I have referred co-operated fully.

Q. 2 Is it not the fact that Goronwy Rees informed the authorities in 1951 that Burgess had told him that Blunt was a Russian agent? Why was no action taken at the time?

A. Mr. Rees was the source of the allegation made to the Security Service in 1951 that Burgess had said ~~in 1951~~ that Blunt was one of the sources used by Burgess for his work for the Comintern. That allegation was thoroughly examined in the course of the prolonged investigation of Blunt from 1951 onwards, but, as I have said, no supporting evidence was obtained until Blunt confessed in 1964.

Q. 3 Was the Palace informed about Blunt's record?

A. The Queen's Private Secretary was informed in 1964, \* ~ ~ ~ ~ \*

Q. 4 Why was Blunt allowed to continue to hold a post in the Royal Household after his past relationship with the Russian Intelligence Service was known.

A. Blunt's position in the Royal Household, which was unpaid, involved no access to classified information and no risk to security. Following a promise of immunity from prosecution he had confessed and co-operated with his interrogator. The security authorities felt that it was desirable to avoid taking any action which might have put at risk his willingness to continue to provide useful information.

Q. 5 Did Blunt confess to recruiting other spies for the Russians or did he name any others whom he knew to be Russian agents?

A. As I have said in my statement, in addition to making his confession, Blunt has co-operated with subsequent interrogations and has provided useful information which has made it possible to take action to remove some possible security risks. It would not be in the public interest for me to go into detail on this.

Q. 6 Was Blunt the "Fourth Man"?

A. Let me put it this way: like Burgess, Maclean and Philby, he was a Russian spy.

\* ~ ~ \* Passage deleted and  
-1- closed under FOI Exemption  
Wayland, 11 March 2014



Q. 7 Was it Blunt's help that enabled Burgess and Maclean to defect before Maclean could be interrogated?

A. No. It was Philby's warning that led Burgess and Maclean to defect when they did, though Blunt assisted in the arrangements through his old contacts with Russian intelligence.

Q. 8 Did Blunt use information obtained from the Security Service to warn Burgess and Maclean?

A. No. The evidence is that Burgess told Blunt that Maclean was under suspicion.

Q. 9 Did Blunt help Philby to defect?

A. No.

Q. 10 When did Blunt cease to be a Russian spy?

A. Blunt has said that he has had no contacts with the Russians since 1956. We have no information to the contrary.

Q. 11 Did Blunt occupy a flat with Lord Rothschild during the War?

A. He lived during the war with others in a flat of which the lease was held by Lord Rothschild. Lord Rothschild was not himself living in the flat during that period.

Q. 12 Did Burgess, the present Lady Rothschild and Lady Llewelyn-Davies share this flat with Blunt?

A. Yes. Both Lady Rothschild and Lady Llewelyn-Davies have given the security authorities an account of their acquaintance with Blunt and Burgess, and have co-operated fully in investigations.

Q. 13 Why was the case of Blunt never referred to the Security Commission?

A. I cannot answer for previous Administrations. But it has to be remembered that Blunt did not confess until 1964, nearly twenty years after he left the Security Service. Security procedures in all the relevant services had already been extensively reviewed and overhauled in the light of the defections of Burgess and Maclean, and later of Philby, and there would have been little point in a further review of events and procedures of twenty years or more earlier. It could also have been considered that a reference to the Security Commission would be likely to frustrate the main objective of granting Blunt immunity and securing a confession: that of getting from him as much information as possible to assist other



inquiries with which the Security Service was concerned. The overriding consideration was the need to discover as much as possible about the extent of RIS penetration. For this Blunt's co-operation was indispensable.

Q. 14 Why was Corporal Berry prosecuted and Blunt not?

A. Decisions to prosecute are for the Attorney General. But I would remind the hon. Gentleman that there has never been any evidence which would sustain a charge against Blunt, other than his own confession which was obtained on a promise of immunity from prosecution.

Q. 15 Does the Government accept the identification of the "Fifth Man" suggested in Boyle's book?

A. We have no evidence to support any allegation that Dr. Wilfred Mann behaved as "Basil" is said to have done, and we have no reason to doubt the truth of Dr. Mann's reported statement to the Press that the allegation is without foundation.

Q. 16 Is it true that a senior British Government official stationed in Washington, having spied for the Russians, was detected by the CIA and "turned" by them into a double agent for the CIA, without the knowledge of the British authorities?

A. No. We are satisfied that there is no truth in any part of this allegation.

Q. 17 Have the United States authorities been consulted about the allegations about "Basil" the Fifth Man?

A. In such matters we do not comment on our exchanges with foreign authorities.

Q. 18 What criminal offences did Blunt commit?

A. That is not for me to say. Only a Court of Law could decide; and the authorities are constrained from preferring any charges in view of the immunity which was granted.

Q. 19 Why has there been a "cover-up" of this matter until it was brought out into the open by publication of the book?

A. I can only answer for the situation as I found it. But <sup>immunity was given</sup> ~~the Government gave~~ ~~immunity~~ to Blunt and he has since been a source of useful information; the Government could hardly therefore take the initiative in exposing him. Others who knew or suspected were no doubt deterred by the risk of proceedings for libel.



Q.20 [Any questions about why Ministers or others did or did not act in the manner they did?]

A. The statement gives an account of what happened. I cannot answer for the reasons for what was done or not done under previous Administrations.

Q.21 Will Sir Anthony Blunt forfeit his knighthood?

A. As awards in the Royal Victorian Order are in the personal gift of The Queen, and not made on a Ministerial recommendation, that is a matter for the Palace. I understand, however, that Sir Anthony Blunt's KCVO is to be annulled.

# WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

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Thursday 15 November 1979

## SECURITY

**Mr. Leadbitter** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on recent evidence concerning the actions of an individual, whose name has been supplied to her, in relation to the security of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Skinner** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on recent evidence concerning the actions of an individual, whose name has been supplied to her, in relation to the security of the United Kingdom.

**The Prime Minister :** The name which the hon. Gentleman has given me is that of Sir Anthony Blunt.

In April 1964 Sir Anthony Blunt admitted to the security authorities that he had been recruited by and had acted as a talent-spotter for Russian intelligence before the war, when he was a don at Cambridge, and had passed information regularly to the Russians while he was a member of the Security Service between 1940 and 1945. He made this admission after being given an undertaking that he would not be prosecuted if he confessed.

Inquiries were of course made before Blunt joined the Security Service in 1940, and he was judged a fit person. He was known to have held Marxist views at Cambridge, but the security authorities had no reason either in 1940 or at any time during his service to doubt his loyalty to his country.

On leaving the Security Service in 1945 Blunt reverted to his profession as an art historian. He held a number of academic appointments. He was also appointed as Surveyor of The King's Pictures in 1945, and as Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures in 1952. He was given a KCVO in 1956. On his retirement as Surveyor, he was appointed as an Adviser for The Queen's Pictures and Drawings in 1972, and he retired from his appointment in 1978.

He first came under suspicion in the course of the inquiries which followed the defection of Burgess and Maclean in 1951, when the Security Service was told that Burgess had said in 1937 that he was

working for a secret branch of the Comintern and that Blunt was one of his sources. There was no supporting evidence for this. When confronted with it, Blunt denied it. Nevertheless the Security Service remained suspicious of him, and began an intensive and prolonged investigation of his activities. During the course of this investigation he was interviewed on 11 occasions. He persisted in his denial, and no evidence against him was obtained.

The inquiries which preceded the exposure and defection of Philby in January 1963 produced nothing which implicated Blunt. Early in 1964, new information was received which directly implicated Blunt. It did not, however, provide a basis on which charges could be brought. The then Attorney-General decided in April 1964, after consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, that the public interest lay in trying to secure a confession from Blunt not only to arrive at a definite conclusion on his own involvement but also to obtain information from him about any others who might still be a danger. It was considered important to gain his co-operation in the continuing investigations by the security authorities, following the defections of Burgess, Maclean and Philby, into Soviet penetration of the security and intelligence services and other public services during and after the war. Accordingly the Attorney-General authorised the offer of immunity from prosecution to Blunt if he confessed. Blunt then admitted to the security authorities that, like his friends Burgess, Maclean and Philby, he had become an agent of Russian intelligence and talent-spotted for them at Cambridge during the 1930s; that he had regularly passed information to the Russians while he was a member of the Security Service; and that, although after 1945 he was no longer in a position to supply the Russians with classified information, in 1951 he used his old contact with the Russian Intelligence Service to assist in the arrangements for the defection of Burgess and Maclean. Both at the time of his confession and subsequently Blunt provided useful information about Russian intelligence activities and about his

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[Continued in Col. 683]

[Sir G. Howe.]

question that we should be constantly addressing to hon. Members on the Labour Benches is whether they are criticising us today for taking action to reduce public borrowing or public spending, or, on the other hand, for not spending enough. The dichotomy in policy on the part of the Labour Party has to be resolved. I hope very much that Labour Members opposite will support us, as we need their support, in continuing to reduce public expenditure so as to restore the health of the economy.

**Mr. Meacher:** Given that the main cause of an extension of the money supply is now the soaring amount of bank lending to the private sector, will the Chancellor accept that the supplementary special deposit scheme is now totally inadequate to remedy this? If that is so, why has he maintained it? Or, if he still thinks it is relevant, why has he not blocked such patent evasion measures as the issue of acceptances?

**Sir G. Howe:** For the reason I have explained to my hon. Friend, that action to block one variation of that kind is all too likely to lead to the development of some variation beyond it, making it more difficult to measure and identify what is taking place. As I said in my statement, I recognise that the supplementary special deposit scheme has many shortcomings about it, but it would be foolish to sweep it away without having further thought about what supplementary system ought to take its place. That is why studies are continuing on a monetary-based control.

The hon. Gentleman would be unwise to conclude that our problems spring mainly or wholly from expanding bank lending to the private sector. He should bear in mind the extent to which public borrowing has, as I said in my statement, been substantially and unpredictably increased to the tune of no less than £1,000 million, as a direct result of irresponsibility by no more than 80 people.

#### SIR ANTHONY BLUNT

**Mr. Skinner:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise a matter on the revelations affecting Sir Anthony Blunt, and a statement that has been provided in the form of a written answer today by the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister.

Sir Anthony Blunt is known to have confessed to having been involved in the Burgess-Maclean-Philby and others affair. I want to ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether you consider that this matter of security is so important that it should be the subject of a statement from the Dispatch Box so that it can be properly examined and probed by Members of the House of Commons? Is it not worth noting that it contrasts sharply with the relentless pursuit of the journalists involved in the ABC case, and Mr. Philip Agee?

Does it not warrant a statement now from the Box and also a full debate on the matter in the course of next week?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman is interested in the same question. I allowed him to make his full point of order in the knowledge that I am not responsible for national security. That responsibility does not lie with the occupant of this Chair. Therefore, there can be no point of order about that.

**Mr. Skinner:** On a different aspect of the point of order—[*Interruption*].

**Mr. Speaker:** There can be no point of order about national security, because I am not responsible for it.

**Mr. Christopher Price:** I want to raise a point of order about the issuing of written answers in this House. It is a convention in the House that, when a question is down for written answer, the normal time for the issuing of that answer is 3.30 pm. One of the reasons for that is that hon. Members should be able to raise during business questions matters which are the subject of written answers. On this occasion, Mr. Speaker, the answer to a written question formed the subject of a very important issue which has been reported in all the newspapers today, and on which I wished to address a question to the Leader of the House asking for an urgent debate next week on this issue. This answer was delayed until the end of business questions, which deprived hon. Members of their proper and rightful privilege of questioning the Leader of the House on this issue, when the whole country is wanting to know when we are to debate the double standards about the Official Secrets Act which this Government are attempting to introduce in another place, thereby making matters very much worse.

**Mr. Foot :** Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend, I believe that the House will agree that a matter of significance to the House as a whole arises here. Could not the Leader of the House assist us by saying that a statement will be made tomorrow so that questions can be put? I would have thought that this was a subject on which it might be at any rate debateable whether it should have been the subject of a statement rather than a written answer. Therefore, will the Leader of the House assist us by saying that a statement will be made tomorrow?

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. St. John-Stevas):** As to the point raised by the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Price), written answers come at various times of the day. There is no absolutely fixed time. Sometimes they come much later. There was no particular significance in the time chosen for this.

As to the need for a statement, in these matters of security it is advisable, as you have shown, Mr. Speaker, to tread prudently. I should have thought that the written answer by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was of such length and detail that we would be wise to consider that before pursuing any other matter.

**Mr. Foot :** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman made an important statement. I hope that what

he says means that he is not excluding the possibility that the Prime Minister will make a statement on the question so that she may have questions put to her on the subject. After all, this has been a matter on which statements were made in the House. I hope that the answer means that he is not excluding the possibility of a further oral statement on the subject.

**Mr. Cryer** *rose*—

**Mr. Skinner** *rose*—

**Mr. Speaker :** Order. We have dealt with that point.

## BILL PRESENTED

### TRANSPORT

Mr. Norman Fowler presented a Bill to amend the law relating to public service vehicles; to make provision for and in connection with the transfer of the undertaking of the National Freight Corporation to a company; to provide for the making of payments by the Minister of Transport in aid of certain railway and other pension schemes; to make amendments about articulated vehicles; to abolish the Freight Integration Council; to repeal certain provisions about special authorisations for the use of large goods vehicles and about charges on independent tramways, trolley vehicles and the like, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 79.]

Tuesday 13 November 1979

[Continuation from Col. 588]

**SOCIAL SERVICES****Spasticity**

**Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish a national plan for the prevention of spasticity and related handicaps; and if he will make a statement.

**Dr. Vaughan:** The Department encourages health authorities to maintain the highest possible standards of care for mothers and babies before, during and after delivery. Parents also have a responsibility in this matter and we aim to encourage expectant mothers to do all they can themselves by way of regular attendance at ante-natal clinics and in following advice offered on such matters as genetic counselling, diet, smoking and vaccination against rubella.

I am advised that spasticity is caused by a multiplicity of factors, and, whilst the aetiology of some forms of spasticity and handicap are known, in many cases it is as yet impossible to determine their cause. The results of the considerable body of research currently in both Medical Research Council and departmental programmes should help towards the prevention of spastic disorders.

**Maternity Services**

**Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will abandon the proposed cuts in maternity services; and if he will improve the services for pregnant women and unborn babies;

(2) if he is considering the closure of inefficient maternity units with a higher than average perinatal infant mortality and neo-natal death rate; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir George Young:** The Department is committed to maintaining and improving the quality of care for mothers and babies throughout pregnancy and child-birth. Responsibility for providing maternity services rests with health authorities and I expect them to keep the standard of their services under careful review. The closure of any maternity unit must always be considered in the

light of local circumstances. Where a particular unit has been found to be inefficient I would expect the health authority concerned to take appropriate action.

**Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will create first-class maternity special and intensive care facilities for the newborn in every health district; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir George Young:** The provision of services for mothers and babies before, during and after delivery is a matter for individual health authorities, which must determine levels of provision according to local needs and resources. Normally, a consultant maternity unit and special care baby unit would be provided in every district general hospital—or equivalent. Intensive care facilities for the newly born are required by a small proportion of babies whose highly specialised needs can best be met in a number of regional units where the substantial numbers of medical, nursing and supporting staff and specialised equipment required can most effectively be concentrated.

**Handicaps (Research)**

**Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will finance further additional research into the cause of handicaps; and if he will undertake studies to show which preventive measure will pay off best; and if he will make a statement.

**Dr. Vaughan:** The Medical Research Council, which is the main Government-funded body undertaking research relevant to these questions from funds provided by the Department of Education and Science and the Health Departments, has already been asked to consider whether it is feasible to commission more research in the perinatal and neonatal fields which are regarded by the Health Departments as priority areas. Much more fundamental research into the underlying causes of many of the conditions of handicap is needed before studies to evaluate the most effective preventive measures could be undertaken.

# LOBBY BRIEFING

time:

date:

NOTE OF THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE'S LOBBY AT 5.00 pm ON 15 NOVEMBER

## ANTHONY BLUNT

The Leader of the House said that the chances of the Government making any further statement on this case or security matters generally were extraordinarily slender. A statement or a debate on security matters was not the way to deal with this highly sensitive subject. The Leader felt that the Prime Minister had struck a good balance by providing a full and detailed answer to Ted Leadbitter's Question. Nearly all the events leading up to today's Answer had taken place before this Government had come to power. The Leader did not think a further statement was necessary nor did he feel that there was much support for the Point of Order raised by Michael Foot or Christopher Price in the House this afternoon. But naturally, as was the custom in the House, if other views were put forward strongly they would be taken into account.

Asked about the withdrawal of Anthony Blunt's KCVO, the Leader pointed out that this was a personal appointment made by The Queen but correspondents could assume that there would have been no disagreement between The Queen and the Prime Minister about the action taken today to annul the appointment.

Asked why the appointment had only been withdrawn today rather than at an earlier time, say in 1964, the Leader said that he could not add to the full reply given by the Prime Minister on the case as a whole. Answering questions that there was one law for the rich and another for the poor, the Leader said he believed that, for example, a Junior Officer who had acted similarly would have been treated in the same way as Anthony Blunt.

To questions that there might be a fifth, sixth or seventh man, the Leader said that the Government hoped that today's statement represented the end of the matter.

Asked whether the new Freedom of Information Bill before the House would inhibit the type of inquiry made by Andrew Boyle, the Leader said that he hoped it would not be so.