

10. 11. 1979

1.

PRIME MINISTER

Lord Butler telephoned this evening, about the Blunt affair. He was surprised that he had not learned of the case whilst he was a Minister. He emphasised his additional connections, both through Trinity College and through the Courtauld Institute, which initially took over his London town house.

I think that he was eventually reassured that the matter was raised between Prime Ministers, Home Secretaries and Attorney Generals, and had not come to light during his time at the Home Office. I have arranged for Sir Robert Armstrong to speak to him to explain that in 1964 it was handled only by the Attorney. (Lord Butler clearly felt that Sir Alec Douglas-Home should have brought him into the picture.)

Lord Butler specifically said that he did not want to trouble you with this, and I doubt whether you can add anything: I judge that he is put out not to have been brought into the picture in the past, and has no complaint against the present Government's exclusion of him from prior briefing on your statement. He will however be at his flat in London tomorrow afternoon if you want to have a word with him.

Lord Home also telephoned later, seeking confirmation that he had not been informed of the matter when Prime Minister. Sir Robert Armstrong spoke to him, and, I believe, left him satisfied that he could handle press enquiries on the basis that the Attorney General had dealt with the matter, which had not become one for collective decision.

15 November 1979

MAJ

He said he  
didn't know on the  
radio!

MS

19. 13.

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PA  
MJS

PRIME MINISTER

Lord Home telephoned this evening to ask us to confirm that he was not told when he was Prime Minister about Sir Anthony Blunt. Robert Armstrong spoke to him and confirmed that this was indeed the case, and that no Minister other than the then Attorney General, Sir John Hobson, was consulted. Lord Home was content with this explanation.

He had already been asked for comments by the press, and will now say that he did not know.

MJS

15 November 1979

(Removed from box by CAW.)



CABINET OFFICE

With the compliments of  
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NOTE FOR RECORD

Sir Anthony Blunt

I spoke both to Lord Home and to Lord Butler on the telephone on the evening of 15th November.

2. Lord Home said that he was being asked by the Press whether he had been told about Blunt's confession in 1964. He had no recollection of being told, and proposed to say that he had not been. I confirmed that there was no record of his being told either of the offer of immunity from prosecution or of Blunt's confession. The offer of immunity was authorised by the then Attorney General, Sir John Hobson, who would have been entitled to take the view that this was a decision made in his capacity as a Law Officer, which did not engage collective responsibility.

3. When I spoke to Lord Butler, he had already rung up earlier because he had been pursued by the Press. In his earlier conversation he had said that, though he was Foreign Secretary at the time, he was not told about the offer of immunity or about Blunt's confession. He was told by the Private Secretary at 10 Downing Street that the matter had been handled by the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Attorney General only. Lord Butler complained that he ought to have been told: he was the Foreign Secretary, he ought to have been Prime Minister, he was much involved in Trinity College, and Sir Anthony Blunt was Director of the Courtauld Institute which had been set up by his father-in-law. Following that conversation Lord Butler apparently spoke to reporters, to the effect that he understood that the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary at the time had been told and that he had not, though he thought he ought to have been. When I spoke to Lord Butler I told him Lord Home, the Prime Minister at the time, had not been told and would be telling the Press so. This made Lord Butler feel a good deal better. He told me that he was about to leave for the United States to deliver a lecture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The text of his lecture included a number of complimentary references to Sir Anthony Blunt, which he was in the process of now deleting.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

(Robert Armstrong)

16th November 1979