

Ref: A0700



ans
Prime Minister
JML
19/11

MR. WHITMORE

Blunt

As agreed I received Professor Blunt's Legal Adviser at his request this morning at 11.45. The purpose of the interview was to enable the Legal Adviser to satisfy himself and his client that a statement which Professor Blunt proposed to make contained nothing which would be prejudicial to national security. I made it clear at the outset that there was no question of my asking or insisting upon changes in the draft statement: I would indicate if I saw any matters that might be prejudicial to national security and it would then be up to Professor Blunt and his Legal Adviser what they should do about it.

2. I attach a copy of the draft statement, as it emerged from our discussion. This incorporates a number of changes that Mr. Rubinstein said he proposed to put to his client; and expected him to accept them.

3. Professor Blunt is proposing to issue this statement on the afternoon of Tuesday, 20th November, embargoed for 5.00 pm. The present intention is that he should read the statement over to BBC and ITN and then answer questions from those two separately, for 10 minutes each. He will then meet two journalists from The Times (Mr. Louis Heren and Mr. Stewart Tandler) for 10 minutes and answer their questions. Mr. Rubinstein said that Professor Blunt did not propose to hold a full Press conference; I had the impression that he doubted whether Professor Blunt could take that. The arrangement with The Times would be that it would make the text of the questions and answers available to the rest of the Press. I said, speaking purely personally, that I thought that Professor Blunt and Mr. Rubinstein should reckon with the fact that, if the broadcasting organisations and The Times were given opportunities to question Professor Blunt and the rest of the Press was not given similar opportunities, the reaction of the rest of the Press to his statement might be less sympathetic than it might otherwise have been. Mr. Rubinstein took the point and obviously was impressed by the argument. He remained doubtful



whether Professor Blunt could cope with a full Press conference, but he promised to consider whether a representative of the Press Association might join the two journalists from The Times for the purposes of the interview.

4. Mr. Rubinstein asked whether we should wish to see the transcript of the questions and answers before they were circulated to the rest of the Press, so as to ensure that they contained nothing prejudicial to national security. I said that I should not wish to do that. I had responded to his request that we should see the statement, but I did not wish there to be any impression that Professor Blunt was in some way under licence from the Government. He had indicated that he accepted that he was constrained by the Official Secrets Act, and I was entirely content to leave it at that.

5. I think that the statement is helpful rather than otherwise. It does not say in terms that Professor Blunt regrets what he did; but it does indicate that he had come to feel a degree of contrition about it, and was relieved when the constraints of personal loyalty and fear of prosecution were removed and he was able to speak freely to the authorities.

(Robert Armstrong)

19th November 1979

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In the mid-nineteen thirties it seemed to me and to many of my contemporaries that the Communist Party and Russia constituted the only firm bulwark against Fascism, since the Western democracies were taking an uncertain and compromising attitude towards Germany. I was persuaded by Guy Burgess that I could best serve the cause of anti-Fascism by joining him in his work for the Russians. This was a case of political conscience against loyalty to country: I chose conscience.

When later I realised the true facts about Russia, I was prevented from taking any action by personal loyalty; I could not denounce my friends. In 1964 an event took place which meant that I was no longer bound by this loyalty, and, being promised immunity, I felt free - and was indeed relieved - to give the authorities all the information in my possession.

From 1945 I ceased to pass any information to the Russians, but in 1951 I was in contact with them on behalf of Burgess, I was also pressed to go to Russia. I refused.

Andrew Boyle has stated that I obtained from a former colleague in MI5 the exact date on which Maclean was to be interviewed. There is no truth in this story. I had no contacts with MI5 between 1945 and 1951, and I had no information from any other source as a result of which I might have tipped off Maclean; and I did not in fact do so.

In 1945 I went back to my normal academic work and was also appointed Surveyor of The King's Pictures. I did not apply for or seek this appointment, but I was pressed to allow my name to be put forward, and, when offered it, accepted on the grounds that I knew there was much work to be done on the collection and that I believed I could do it. I resigned from this post in 1972 on the grounds that I felt I had done what I could for the collection, which was in effect being looked after by my Deputy, Sir Oliver Millar; but I was asked to stay on as Adviser for The Queen's Pictures and Drawings.

In 1956 The Queen honoured me with a knighthood. It has been said that I "accepted" the knighthood. In fact, as a member of the Royal Household, I was not told in advance and the first that I knew of the matter was reading the announcement in The Times. When Mr. Michael Rubinstein told me that The Queen was going to strip me of my knighthood I immediately wrote to the proper authority offering to resign it, but presumably the letter did not arrive before the announcement was made.



When I was told of the impending statement by Mrs. Thatcher, I did not at any time contemplate leaving the country but I realised that there would inevitably be a barrage of enquiries from the Press while questions were being asked in Parliament. I knew that I could not give helpful answers to questions which might be put to me so long as I was unaware exactly what the Ministerial answers would be. I should add that I remained - as I still remain - under the constraint of the Official Secrets Act.

I am encouraged by the letters from my former students and by messages from colleagues and friends to hope that I shall be able to resume my work as an art-historian.

November 1979

BERNARD INGHAM

PA

MS

Mr Blunt's solicitor requested an interview to enable him to satisfy himself and his client that there was nothing in Mr Blunt's proposed statement that would be prejudicial to national security. The Prime Minister agreed that I should see Mr Rubinstein on that basis. The interview took place at 11.45 am yesterday.

Mr Rubinstein was told that there was nothing in the proposed statement that we should regard as prejudicial to national security. No deletions were asked for or suggested. Some minor changes of wording were suggested for consideration, in the interests of clarity or accuracy.

[It is quite untrue that I asked for the deletion of reference to a 'Fifth Man': there was no such reference in the statement.]

Mr Rubinstein described the arrangements for issuing the statement and for subsequent questioning of Mr Blunt. Speaking purely personally, I said that, though it was none of my business, I thought that they would find that the arrangements were felt to be excessively restrictive. [In fact I suggested that, if it was felt that Mr Blunt's health would not stand a full press conference, he should at least add somebody from PA to The Times team.]

RFA

20 November 1979

C.W.
H.W.

NOTE OF LOBBY BRIEFING GIVEN BY BERNARD INGHAM AT 1100, 16 NOVEMBER

ANTHONY BLUNT

In reply to the question of why the Cabinet Office was involved, Mr. Ingham said that the Secretary to the Cabinet had telephoned Mr. Blunt's solicitors on Wednesday on the Prime Minister's instructions. It was a common courtesy that when a statement about an individual was to be made the person concerned was notified in advance. We could not confirm at what time the call had been made but found it astonishing that correspondents should think it might have been before 6.30 a.m. The solicitors would not have been given the full statement but would have been told that it was to be an answer of substance.

Assuming that only No. 10, the Home Office and the Table Office knew of the question in advance of its appearance in the Order Paper, there was speculation that Mr. Blunt might still have useful contacts who had "tipped him off to disappear" before the facts were made public. Mr. Ingham said he found this notion fanciful. Correspondents seemed to be suffering from "a touch of the Smiley's". Mr. Blunt had nothing to "flee" from, apart from shame. He had confessed many years ago. He had left the service in 1945 and since then had had no access to sensitive material. We did not know that he had "disappeared". We had no knowledge of or interest in his whereabouts. He was now of no interest to the Government. His present whereabouts were a matter for his solicitors.

Correspondents asked when the Prime Minister, as head of the security service, had been aware of the full facts - since it was reported that Lord Home had not been aware of them when he was Prime Minister. Mr. Ingham said the Prime Minister knew the full story this year - we would not confirm when but said it was before last week. He could not answer for previous administrations. However, from his experience in Government, he thought it unlikely that such "mistakes/omissions" in informing Prime Ministers would happen in the future.

It was not the Government's intention to make any further statements on this matter but, of course, they would reply to specific questions in the House. In reply to the question on whether any de-briefing of Mr. Blunt was now over, we said that correspondents were free to draw that conclusion.

We could not deal with any questions on possible embarrassment to the Royal Family over this revelation.

Correspondents asked whether there would be any statement on Dr. Wilfred Mann as the "fifth man". Mr. Ingham said that the Government had no evidence to support any allegation that Dr. Wilfred Mann behaved as "Basil" was said to have done, and we had no reason to doubt the truth of Dr. Mann's reported statement to the press that the allegation was without foundation.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. RUBINSTEIN, SOLICITOR TO MR. ANTONY BLUNT,
ON WORLD AT ONE, FRIDAY, 16 NOVEMBER, 1979

FWJ

Mr. Rubinstein was asked who actually passed on the crucial message which warned Mr. Blunt he was finally to be exposed officially as a Soviet spy.

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

Sir Robert Armstrong of the Cabinet Office.

INTERVIEWER:

And he told you when?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

On Wednesday morning.

INTERVIEWER:

About what time was that?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

10.30?

INTERVIEWER:

Exactly what did he tell you?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

He told me that Mrs. Thatcher would give a written answer to a question by an MP, Mr. Leadbitter, the following day.

INTERVIEWER:

Did he tell you, in fact, what would be in that statement?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

No. Perhaps he didn't know. But he didn't tell me what would be in it. He said that Mrs. Thatcher would give a statement based on the information she was given by her advisers. That was my impression.

INTERVIEWER:

You understood from the message from the Cabinet Office that it would, in fact, say that Mr. Blunt was a self-confessed spy?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

I expected that that would be one of things it would say.

INTERVIEWER:

Didn't the Cabinet official mentioned say exactly why they were telling you early?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

I think it was as a matter of courtesy to my client.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you then immediately tell your client?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

No. I had an opportunity during the day to tell him and I took that opportunity.

INTERVIEWER:

What did he say?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

He appreciated the courtesy but, otherwise, I can't tell you what he said.

INTERVIEWER:

Did he then give you any indication as to what he might do as a result of this?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

No, he didn't.

INTERVIEWER:

Have you had any contact with him since?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

I can't say.

INTERVIEWER:

You say you can't say. I understand that, but could you, in fact, give some indication as to where Mr. Blunt might be now?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

No. I don't know where he is, now.

INTERVIEWER:

During your association with Mr. Blunt, did you, in fact, have any reason yourself to believe that he'd been a spy at one stage?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

I don't think that's a question I can answer.

INTERVIEWER:

Can I ask you, as a solicitor, if you were put in that position, or a similar position, where you knew your client was a spy, or had engaged in some illegal activity, would you then feel constrained to do something about it?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

That is a very important question and, of course, to answer a question of that kind, one has to consider the feelings of one's partners. But we are dealing here with somebody who, to my knowledge, was a pardoned spy and a spy who has been pardoned on whatever grounds, in whatever circumstances, is not simply a self-confessed spy.

INTERVIEWER:

Can I ask you how long your association with Mr. Blunt - your professional association - goes back? How many years?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

I can't tell you that.

INTERVIEWER:

Have the security authorities in Britain ever approached you about your client?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

One crucial question remains to be answered and that is if there's any thought in Professor Blunt's mind of heading for the Soviet Union. Do you think there is?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

No. I don't.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you have any reasons for this?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

Just my instinct about the man.

INTERVIEWER:

When do you expect him to appear back in Britain?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

I've no idea whether he's in or not in Britain from that point of view so why should I know when he'll appear back in Britain?

INTERVIEWER:

Can I ask you if ... When Mr. Blunt reappears, whether you'll expect him to make a statement?

MR. RUBINSTEIN:

That is entirely a matter for him. I think it's quite possible that he will.

Prime Minister.

To ask.

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QUESTIONS TABLED FOR NEXT WEEK REGARDING "THE FOURTH MAN"

Monday 19 November

Mr. Bob Cryer (Keighley): To ask Mr. Attorney General, if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions with a view to prosecution for breaches of the Official Secrets Act the conduct of Dr. Wilfrd Mann in connection with the defection of Burgess and Maclean. (PW)

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): To ask Mr. Attorney General, if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions with a view to prosecution for breaches of the Official Secrets Act the conduct of Sir Anthony Blunt in connection with the defection of Burgess and Maclean. (PW)

Mr. Christopher Price (Lewisham West): To ask Mr. Attorney General, if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions the case of Sir Anthony Blunt, with a view to prosecution under the Official Secrets Acts in respect of the Burgess and Maclean case. (PW)

Tuesday 20 November

Mr. Bob Cryer (Keighley): To ask the Prime Minister, if any persons other than Sir Anthony Blunt have been granted immunities, waivers or concessions of any kind in connection with the defection of Burgess and Maclean.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): To ask the Prime Minister, following her statement regarding Sir Anthony Blunt, whether any other persons connected with the Burgess/Maclean case, have been given concessions or immunities from prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act; and if she will list the names.

Mr. D. Clark (South Shields): To ask the Prime Minister, whether a formal warning was given to Anthony Blunt's Solicitor prior to her Parliamentary answer of 15 November, and if so why.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton North): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will specify under what legal provisions Anthony Blunt was given an immunity from prosecution; and whether there is any power to revoke this decision at a later stage.

10.11.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham West): To ask the Prime Minister, in the light of the fact that the Prime Minister in 1964 was not informed of the spying activities of Sir Anthony Blunt by the then Head of MI5, whether she will institute procedures to ensure that a similar failure to inform her does not occur in future.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham West): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will set up a public inquiry into the full security implications of the Blunt affair.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham West): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will make a further statement regarding the other public services in which it is suspected that there may have been penetration by foreign security services in relation to the Blunt affair.

All above Questions are Priority Written.

107. B.
INTERVIEW WITH ANTHONY BLUNT BY CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

- 1300, 20 November

Morris: Professor Blunt, you say in your statement that it was a case of political conscience against loyalty to country. You chose conscience. Do you now regret having made that decision?

Blunt: Very much. The time seemed right, but looking back at it now I realise it was disastrous and an appalling mistake and also I ought to have realised at the time that I didn't understand enough about politics really to take a decision of this kind.

Morris: You claim that Guy Burgess recruited you as a Russian spy. Wasn't it the other way round?

Blunt: No.

Morris: Who was the spymaster then in Cambridge at that time?

Blunt: No-one.

Morris: So how did this spy ring get off the ground?

Blunt: Well, they were not recruited in Cambridge. I doubt if I can say more than that, but that is absolutely certain.

Morris: There was a spymaster, though - Samuel Cahen - who was operating in Britain at the time. Did you have any contact with him?

Blunt: I had never heard the name until I read it in Boyle's book.

Morris: You were obviously a fairly influential figure as a Don at Cambridge. How many other spies did you recruit after Burgess recruited you?

Blunt: That is a question that I cannot answer, I am afraid.

Morris: Why not?

Blunt: Because of the Official Secrets Act.

Morris: Are there other spies to your knowledge then still in

existence from that spy ring?

Blunt: I think there must have been.

Morris: How many?

Blunt: I don't know.

Morris: Guy Burgess was a known homosexual. You too have, I understand, homosexual leanings. Was there an affair between you and Guy Burgess?

Blunt: No. Absolutely not.

Morris: So what was the leverage, then, that made you join as a Russian spy? Was it not homosexuality?

Blunt: No. In no sense. It was simply that he persuaded me - I say he - and there was the whole atmosphere at that time based on the anti-Fascist feeling. There was very strong pressure towards the Left, and I think we all - and then of course there was the Spanish Civil War which made it more intense - we all felt it was our duty to do what we could against Fascism and it was put to me by Guy that it was my duty to do this. I now realise that that was totally wrong. But it had nothing to do with homosexuality and it was, as I say, a matter of belief.

Morris: You stand now exposed as a spy, a traitor to your country. What other regrets apart from your words at the beginning of this interview have you to say now to the people of Britain who must still abhor what you did?

Blunt: I can only say that I acted according to my conscience and I bitterly regret what I did.

Morris: No more than that? You would hope to resume a normal life now?

Blunt: I would hope to.

Morris: Do you really expect that to happen?

Blunt: I do not know.

Morris: You worked at Buckingham Palace for a number of years. When you confessed in 1964 was The Queen aware of your confession?

Blunt: As far as I know, not. But this is something which I simply have not got accurate information - precise information - about. My understanding was that she was only told very much later. But from what has been said by Mrs. Thatcher and others, I may be wrong.

Morris: On the other hand her Private Secretary at the time, Sir Michael Adeane, was informed, surely he would have told The Queen?

Blunt: Well, I didn't know that he was informed. That again I only learned from Mrs. Thatcher's statement.

Morris: But in the circumstances surely as a self-confessed traitor would not the real gentlemanly thing to have done at the time would have been resigning from the Palace staff?

Blunt: I don't see that - I was there to do a job, and I still thought it was important to do and I was still doing it. I don't see why a confession in 1964 made any difference.

Morris: It was still deception thought of the Royal Family, wasn't it?

Blunt: If you had said that I should never have accepted the job I could see the logic. But why I should have resigned in '64 particularly I do not see.

Morris: Can we take you back now to the time when Burgess and Maclean had defected? Who tipped them off? Was it you?

Blunt: Philby.

Morris: You are quite sure of that?

Blunt: Absolutely certain. I had no information of this kind at all,

I had no contact with my former colleagues in MI5; I had no access to any information on this subject and the suggestion that I could have gone to an old friends in MI5 and asked this - the trickiest of all questions - it is absurd. It is also untrue.

Morris: Did you yourself though in turn tip off Philby when he was about to be questioned as a spy?

Blunt: No.

Morris: So who tipped him off?

Blunt: I do not know that.

Morris: You have been exposed as the fourth man. Who was the fifth man?

Blunt: I don't know. And the fifth man as mentioned by Boyle was a complete surprise to me. I had never heard any stories in any way corresponded to that. I am not saying it is not true but I simply had no indication that laid in that direction.

Morris: What about your friend in the art world, Thomas Harris, who was killed in an accident in Spain in 1964. Was he not involved in this spy ring?

Blunt: He, I am absolutely certain, was not. He was a great friend of mine and he was a great friend of both Philby and Guy Burgess but I am absolutely convinced that he was not involved. And I know that MI5 hold the same opinion.

Morris: You have admitted obviously that you spied for the Russians over a long period. How much were you paid for that spy work?

Blunt: Nothing.

Morris: Nothing at all? No reward of any kind? No awards of any kind?

Blunt: No.

Morris: So why did you do it apart from the political conscience?

Blunt: Well that was my reason.

Morris: How much do you think the Russians benefited by what you told them?

Blunt: Not, I think, a very great deal. I think that the information that I gave them about the German intelligence services during the War would have been useful but not very important. It might have helped them decipher a certain number of German codes but it was not high-grade stuff. I never had access to that sort of high-grade stuff.

Morris: But surely any information, however meaningless it may seem, could have led British agents to their death at that time -

Blunt: No. It never - no information that I had had any connection with any British agent or any British secret service.

Morris: Can you be absolutely sure that no British agents died as a result of your spying?

Blunt: Yes.

Morris: Categorically?

Blunt: Categorically.

Morris: Now, when you had made your confession were you at any time thinking in terms of defecting yourself to Russia - going away from this country for ever?

Blunt: No.

Morris: Why did you decide to stay here?

Blunt: Because I was totally disillusioned with Russia and by that time also even with actual Communism. And there would have been no possible reason to go there and all my interest in work lay here.

Morris: But you had struck a deal with them. What were you hoping to achieve? Perhaps a reactivation by the KGB?

Blunt: Was I hoping to achieve that?

Morris: Were the security service hoping to achieve that?

Blunt: Oh, I see, sorry. I don't think so.

Morris: So what in fact was your deal with the security service?

Blunt: They simply gave me immunity and I gave them a great deal of what I hoped was very valuable information.

Morris: Are you shocked now that that immunity has been blown?

Blunt: Shocked in what sense?

Morris: That no longer can you be regarded with the same respectability that you were.

Blunt: Of course I am.

Morris: What would you hope to do now in the future?

Blunt: I should hope to be able to go back to my academic work in art history.

Morris: Do you feel that your friends will accept you again though?

Blunt: From the evidence I have in writing and verbally and indirectly yes.

Morris: You do mention in your statement that you were invited to go to Russia on a visit and you say you refused. Why did you do that?

Blunt: I wasn't invited to go on a visit. I was ordered to go.

Morris: By whom?

Blunt: By my Russian contact.

Morris: Are you prepared to say who that contact is now?

Blunt: I don't know.

Morris: So how did you have communication with the Russians?

Blunt: Well it was through Burgess at that point. This was just after he had gone and they ordered me to go too but I couldn't bear the thought of living in Russia and preferred to take the risk of going on here rather than living under a regime which I by then abhorred.

Morris: Why do you think, Mr. Blunt, you were so successful for 40 years to conduct yourself unlike Burgess, Maclean or Philby in a double life?

Blunt: Well they did as well. They did it in a rather different way.

Morris: You worked in the War years for in effect two masters - your MI5 masters and your Russian masters. Was there not a conflict of interest there?

Blunt: On the whole not because they realised.

Morris: Why do you think your exposure now has suddenly come to light? Do you think there is some struggle within the security services?

Blunt: No. I think it was merely the ingenuity of Andrew Boyle.

Morris: Finally, my last question is on Andrew Boyle's book. You made considerable efforts to try and get that book stopped. Would you have gone into a witness box and perjured yourself?

Blunt: I made no attempts to get it stopped. An attempt to see an advance copy. But I made absolutely no attempt to get it stopped. I said I couldn't because I never succeeded in seeing the book.