

Prime Minister.

To see.

This seems to be getting

a little out of hand.

John
Siri

Ref. A0864

MR. INGHAM

c Mr. Whitmore ✓

I have seen the article in today's Guardian (page 2) by David Leigh about Mr. Anthony Blunt's answers to questions.

2. It is an absolute travesty of the facts. Mr. Rubinstein came in on the evening of 3rd December. He left with me a list of questions put to Mr. Blunt by one newspaper (in fact the Evening News, though I should not wish to disclose the name); and he also showed me those of the proposed answers on which he desired to satisfy himself and Mr. Blunt that what was proposed to be said was not prejudicial to national security. I took delivery of the answers concerned. I rang him back within 24 hours to let him know that we did not ask for or suggest any deletions or changes.

3. Mr. Rubinstein has told me that he did not say to Mr. Leigh what Mr. Leigh reports him as having said in the second and third paragraphs of the article. He did not say that I should have to meet MI5 representatives, who would make up their minds what else Mr. Blunt was to be allowed to say. He did not say that "the statement" (whatever that is) would have to be returned to the Cabinet Office Secretariat so that they could pass it on for MI5 vetting.

Mr. Rubinstein would have no objection to it being disclosed that he did not say the things he was reported to have said. You could go on to say that I did not say what I was reported to have said. However what is pernicious about this piece is the implication that there is some kind of Security Service censorship on Mr. Blunt's statements and answers. We have not asked Mr. Blunt to submit his statements and answers to us. I have been asked whether I should be prepared to deal with Mr. Blunt's written answers to questions on the same basis as I dealt with his original statement: viz., that I should advise whether there was anything in them that might be prejudicial to national security. This is a matter of advice. There is no question of requiring deletions or changes. There is no question of our seeking censorship. There is no question of advising what would or would not be technically a breach of the Official Secrets

Act - something which would be for the courts and not for me to pronounce upon. There is no question of Security Service vetting.

4. The Cabinet Office role in this is a purely passive one; we are only responding to requests made by Mr. Blunt's legal adviser, and we are only concerned with those questions which they choose to draw to our attention. Our role is purely advisory. We cannot and do not require changes, and we are not vetting or taking any responsibility for the accuracy of the answers.

5. If you have an opportunity to make these points clear at the Lobby, I think it would be helpful that you should do so.

6. As I say, you are authorised to quote Mr. Rubinstein as saying that he has been misrepresented. I have asked him, if he must talk to the Press, to adhere strictly to the line agreed between us that the Cabinet Office role is to respond to requests for guidance as to whether certain proposed answers might be prejudicial to national security.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG
ROBERT ARMSTRONG

5th December, 1979

Blunt studies MI5 script

By David Leigh

A STATELY minute continued yesterday between Mr Anthony Blunt and Sir Robert Armstrong, secretary to the Cabinet, over what Mr Blunt is allowed to say about the Russians.

Mr Blunt's lawyer, Mr Michael Rubinstein, who went once again to the Cabinet Office in Whitehall yesterday, was told, he said, that Sir Robert would have to meet MI5 representatives, who would make up their minds what else Mr Blunt was to be allowed to say.

He said the statement

would have to be composed by Mr Blunt and returned to the Cabinet Office secretariat so that they could pass it on for MI5 vetting.

Mr Blunt's original statement about his spying was vetted by the Cabinet Office, which told him not to give anything away about certain areas during the ensuing press conference.

Last week the Observer named Mr Blunt's wartime Soviet controller as Mr Ernst Henry, a German then based at the Soviet Embassy in London. Mr Blunt says he did not know his contact's real name, although he

helped to identify him after his 1964 confession under immunity.

Mr Blunt also refused to describe exactly how he met him during the war and in 1951, when the spies Burgess and Maclean were fleeing. Mr Blunt also failed to disclose, until Mrs Thatcher pointed it out, that he had been in touch with Russia in 1953 over the "third man," Kim Philby.

Downing Street said yesterday: "The Cabinet Secretary said he was prepared to guide him about whether his answers were prejudicial to national security."

MR. VILE

cc. Mr. Whitmore ~~_____~~

Security
JW
LW

Blunt and The Guardian

I think I ought to write to David Leigh at The Guardian as attached, especially as the whole thing has gone off the boil in the Lobby. I would help to be able to say we have no power to require changes.



B. INGHAM

12 December, 1979



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

12 December, 1979

Dear Mr. Leitch,

Having now seen your piece about Blunt, MI5, etc. of December 5 - it did not appear in my editions - I think I should let you have a few facts.

First, Mr. Rubinstein came in at his own request to see Sir Robert Armstrong on the evening of December 3. He left a list of questions put to Mr. Blunt by a newspaper. He showed Sir Robert those proposed answers on which he wished to satisfy himself and Mr. Blunt that they did not contain anything prejudicial to national security. Sir Robert took delivery of those answers and rang him back the next day to let him know that he was not suggesting any deletions or changes.


I believe Mr. Rubinstein would deny quite a bit of what you reported him as saying on December 5, including the piece of fiction that "Sir Robert would have to meet MI5 representatives who would make up their minds what else Mr. Blunt was to be allowed to say".

However, the facts are that the Government has not, repeat not, asked Mr. Blunt to submit any of his proposed statements or answers to them. We have been asked by Mr. Rubinstein to advise on whether Mr. Blunt's proposed statements contained anything prejudicial to national security. In tendering our

/advice,

advice, there is no question of our requiring deletions or changes. We have no power to do so. We are not, therefore, seeking to exercise or exercising censorship. Nor is there any question of our advising on what would or would not be technically a branch of the Official Secrets Act. That would be for the courts to pronounce upon. Nor is there any question of Security Service vetting of Mr. Blunt's proposed answers.

All this is, I agree, quite dull stuff compared with your story but it does happen to be the truth.




B. INGHAM

David Leigh, Esq.,
The Guardian.

GUARDIAN WEDNESDAY 5 DECEMBER 1977

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Downing Street said yesterday: "The Cabinet Secretary said he was prepared to guide him about whether his answers were prejudicial to national security."

Never heard of him, says Blunt

By David Leigh

Mr Anthony Blunt, after much discussion with the Cabinet Office of "national security," yesterday gave his reaction to newspaper stories naming his Soviet contact as one Ernst Henry.

He had never heard of him, he said, and he did not recognise his picture.

To offer guidance on national security Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary, has agreed to look at various other questions journalists have submitted to the retired Russian spy. But the Cabinet Office stresses that neither Sir Robert nor MI5 is censoring, vetting, or giving any official imprimatur, to Mr Blunt.

Yesterday Mr Blunt's letter of resignation as an honorary fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects was accepted by the RIBA Council. It arrived just before they were due to discuss the problem of Mr Blunt, who has been already stripped of his knighthood by the Queen after his public naming as a Soviet agent who had been allowed immunity.

Mr Blunt's lawyer, Mr Michael Rubinstein, said: "He has told me he wishes to take this sort of step with any body which has a royal patron."