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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 December 1979

Dear Brandon,

Thank you for your letter of 4 December. I think that the most helpful thing I can do is to let you have the enclosed copy of a letter which Sir Robert Armstrong, the Secretary of the Cabinet, sent earlier this week to Ewen Montagu about the same matter. There is nothing that I can add to that letter.

*Lawson*

*Harriet*

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, Bt., M.P.

8



GR  
pp please

CABINET OFFICE

Nick  
You asked for a copy of this  
letter to send to Sir Brandon Rhys Williams.

With the compliments of  
The Private Secretary to the  
*Secretary of the Cabinet*

Sydney

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS  
Telephone 01-233 3000



CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet. Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO

Ref. A0935

12th December, 1979

Dear Mr Montagu,

Thank you for your letter of 28th November.

I should like to be able to be helpful in the matter about which you are very understandably concerned, but I know that you will understand the limitations that constrain me. For reasons with which you are clearly familiar, it is long-standing practice for the Government neither to confirm nor to deny speculation on security matters, and the Prime Minister has recently confirmed in an answer in the House of Commons to Mr. Michael Meacher MP, that she is not prepared to comment further on suggestions that other individuals are involved in the case of Anthony Blunt.

I am, of course, bound by what the Prime Minister has said. But I should like to remind you of three statements that are on the record:

- (a) The Prime Minister has said in the House of Commons that it was as a result of new information directly implicating Professor Blunt that in April 1964 he was interviewed again, and was offered immunity from prosecution, which led to his confession. It is self-evident that "new information directly implicating Professor Blunt" would have had nothing to do with Tomas Harris, or with his death.
- (b) In one of his answers at his Press conference on 21st November, Professor Blunt said that he was absolutely certain that the allegation made by Richard Deacon in his book The British Connection that Tomas Harris was a Russian agent was untrue.
- (c) In a letter to the Daily Telegraph, published on 1st December, Professor Blunt's solicitor, Mr. Michael Rubinstein, stated that Tomas Harris's death bore no relation whatever to Professor Blunt's decision to confess.

Yours sincerely,  
Robert Armstrong

The Hon. Ewen E. S. Montagu, CBE, QC, DL



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

MR. VILE  
CABINET OFFICE

The Prime Minister has seen Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 10 December (A0905) about Tomas Harris and the correspondence from Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, M.P. She is content that Sir Robert should proceed as he suggests. I should be glad to have a copy of his letter in due course to send to Sir Brandon.

N. J. SANDERS



11 December 1979

PRIME MINISTER

Ref. A0905

MR. SANDERS

To see. Are you contact

*Wm*

that Sir R Armstrong should write as at flag C and that you should then send a copy to Sir R Rhys Williams?

*MJS*  
*Wm*

You have asked for advice and a draft reply for the letter which

[A] Sir Brandon Rhys Williams MP sent to the Prime Minister on 4th December about Mr. Tomas Harris.

2. As Sir Brandon indicates, there have been a number of suggestions in the Press that Tomas Harris was associated with Mr. Blunt in his espionage activities. Because Tomas Harris was killed in a motor accident in Spain in 1964, it has been suggested that it was his death which released Mr. Blunt from the obligations of loyalty which, he claims, had up till then prevented him from confessing.

3. The "new information directly implicating Blunt" which led to his being interviewed in April 1964 has nothing whatever to do with Tomas Harris, and there is no reason to believe that Harris was ever involved in espionage. Indeed, he had a distinguished career in intelligence during the war.

4. Sir Brandon Rhys Williams' letter is one aspect of something like a campaign which is being conducted to try to clear Tomas Harris' name. His family is, understandably, considerably distressed by the suggestions that he was a spy, and one of the sisters is said to be almost hysterical.

[B] 5. Mr. Ewen Montagu QC wrote to me on 28th November about this: I attach a copy of his letter.

6. We are, of course, constrained by the answer which the Prime Minister gave to Mr. Meacher on 29th November, to the effect that she does not propose to comment further on suggestions about people involved in the Burgess/Maclean/Philby affair. One's personal inclination would be to make a categorical statement about Tomas Harris; but, if we start down that road, we shall get a series of questions about individuals.

[C] 7. I have therefore agreed with the Attorney General and the Security Service a draft letter to Mr. Montagu, which I was about to send.

8. I wonder whether, if the Prime Minister is content with that reply, she would be ready to deal with her letter from Sir Brandon Rhys Williams by sending him a copy of my letter to Mr. Montagu. That seems to me to be on the whole the best way of dealing with this matter.

*ReA*

FROM

THE HON. EWEN E. S. MONTAGU, C.B.E., Q.C., D.L.

24, MONTROSE COURT,  
EXHIBITION ROAD,  
LONDON, SW7 2QQ.

01-000 0000

CABINET OFFICE
A. 6790.....
29 NOV 1979
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

28th November 1979.

Dear Sir Robert.

I am writing to you in the hope that you may be able to assist in preventing what is, to the best of my belief, a gross slur, which will last for all time unless something is done now, to the memory of a man who has deserved well of this his country and is causing deep distress to his family.

The man is Tomas Harris with whom I worked during the war. The slur has already been reported in many newspapers -- both those allegedly responsible like the Daily Telegraph and in the sensational press -- and in many periodicals such as "Now". It is also already in sensational books and is, I know, to be repeated in at least one other already in the press.

Tommy had an English father and a Spanish mother and it was his brilliant handling of "GARBO" (a Spaniard) in our double-agent deception work that formed the greatest part of the cover for the landings in Normandy -- saving thousands of lives -- apart from many other deceptions of the greatest value.

Tommy was a very talented painter and he and Blunt became friends -- and through Blunt he became friends with Philby, Burgess and Maclean. He was killed in a motor smash in Majorca in January 1964 which, unfortunately, fits in with Blunt's having said that an event in 1964 released him from the need for secrecy so that he could confess in that year -- though I have heard from one of Tommy's sisters that Blunt has said to someone that, when he made his statement to that effect, he had thought that Tommy had died in 1965.

01-550 0000

24, MONTROSE COURT,  
EXHIBITION ROAD,  
LONDON, SW7 2QQ.

The result of all this is that, as I have said, many newspapers and magazines, led repeatedly by the Daily Telegraph with large headlines (a paper which, unfortunately, is read by many Anglophiles and expatriates in Spain) have accused Tommy of being the so-called "fifth man".

I, personally, cannot know that Tommy was not that man, but feel strongly that he was not, and there seem to me to be three alternative situations possible:-

1. That Tommy was working for the Russians.
2. It was someone else's death ~~that~~ ~~or~~ that enabled Blunt to confess.
3. It was something quite different that had that effect in 1964.

If possibility 1 above is correct that is the end of this matter and this letter is misconceived.

If possibility 2 is correct, my experience in intelligence work makes me understand why MI5 would be reluctant to break normal practice and make, or concur in the making of, a statement exculpating Tommy. The reasons are so well known that I need not detail them here.

If possibility 3 is correct, those reasons would or might still apply but, it would seem, far less strongly.

But surely, where a man has given loyal and invaluable service and his memory is being blackened forever through no fault of his own, an exception can be made through a statement, worded carefully enough to protect other interests, when that is the only way in which things can be put right. He can't sue for defamation as he is dead and if any of his friends say that he was not a traitor, the answer is "How do you know?".

Please forgive this long letter but the injustice to the memory of a fine man is great if Tommy is innocent and the distress to his family is immense (one of his sisters, devoted to him, is almost hysterical).

Yours sincerely  
Eric S. Tomlin

DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG  
TO THE HON. EWEN E. S. MONTAGU, CBE, QC,  
DL, 24, MONTROSE COURT, EXHIBITION ROAD,  
SW7 2QQ

Thank you for your letter of 28th November.

I should like to be able to be helpful in the matter about which you are very understandably concerned, but I know that you will understand the limitations that constrain me. For reasons with which you are clearly familiar, it is long-standing practice for the Government neither to confirm nor to deny speculation on security matters, and the Prime Minister has recently confirmed in an answer in the House of Commons to Mr. Michael Meacher MP that she is not prepared to comment further on suggestions that other individuals are involved in the case of Anthony Blunt.

I am, of course, bound by what the Prime Minister has said. But I should like to remind you of three statements that are on the record:

- (a) The Prime Minister has said in the House of Commons that it was as a result of new information directly implicating Professor Blunt that in April 1964 he was interviewed again, and was offered immunity from prosecution, which led to his confession. It is self-evident that "new information directly implicating Professor Blunt" would have had nothing to do with Tomas Harris, or with his death.
- (b) In one of his answers at his Press conference on 21st November, Professor Blunt said that he was absolutely certain that the allegation made by Richard Deacon in his book The British Connection that Tomas Harris was a Russian agent was untrue.

(c) In a letter to the Daily Telegraph, published on 1st December, Professor Blunt's solicitor, Mr. Michael Rubinstein, stated that Tomas Harris's death bore no relation whatever to Professor Blunt's decision to confess.

File

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Sir B. Rhys WILLIAMS

(The Hon. Sec.)

MR. VILE  
CABINET OFFICE

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Here is a copy of a letter from Sir Brandon Rhys Williams. I should be grateful if you could suggest a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to him, to reach us here by Friday, 14 December.

N. J. SANDERS

*So*

5 December 1979

ds

5 December 1979

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 4 December about Mr. Harris. I will place your letter before the Prime Minister and you will be sent a reply as soon as possible.

N. J. SANDERS

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, Bt., M.P.



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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

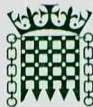
This letter from Brandon Rhys Williams asks you to clear Thomas Harris' name. I do not think you will want to do this but we will ask Sir Robert Armstrong for advice.

MS

5 December 1979

From: Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, Bt., M.P.

cf 10



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

4 December 1979

15/12

Dear Margaret,

I have been approached by relatives of the late Tomas Harris through a solicitor with a request that I should seek an authoritative statement that he is not known to have been engaged in espionage on behalf of the Russian Government. Since they are constituents I would like to help them, but I know nothing of the truth or falsehood of the allegations which recently have been printed about him. I have, of course, seen the reply you have very properly given, declining to give further information on the subject of Anthony Blunt.

If you feel that it would be possible to make a statement clearing Tomas Harris's name, it would obviously be very welcome to his sisters. Should you prefer not to make any statement at all in regard to him, I would recommend them simply to let the matter rest.

I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by my pressing for disclosure of confidential information and I would like to make clear that I am happy to leave the matter entirely to your discretion.

Yours ever  
Brandon

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London S.W.1.