



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

25 February, 1983

*Dear Mr. Leadbitter,*

When you asked a Question about Mr. Michael Whitney Straight's interview on Canadian television, I said that reports of the interview suggested that it contained no new information which had implications for British national security.

I have now received the full transcript of the interview, and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. I can confirm that it contains no new information which has implications for British national security. It does not add anything to what Mr. Straight told the security authorities 20 years ago, which was fully investigated.

*Yours sincerely*

*Raymond Storer*

Ted Leadbitter, Esq., M.P.

*F105* *DSG*  
*cc: Igo (24/2)*  
*CO*

*SW*



FIVE  
ASG  
cc: I GAD (24/2)  
CO

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

25 February, 1983

Dear Arthur

When you asked a Question about Mr. Michael Whitney Straight's interview on Canadian television, I said that reports of the interview suggested that it contained no new information which had implications for British national security.

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Yours sincerely

Raymond Delbe

Arthur Lewis, Esq., M.P.

SW



10 DOWNING STREET

CABINET OFFICE

A 2573

15 FEB 1983

FILE INSTRUCTIONS

FILE No. ....

THE PRIME MINISTER

14 February 1983

*Dear Mr. Leadbitter,*

Thank you for your letter of 26 January concerning an interview on Canadian television with Mr. Michael Whitney Straight.

Although I am seeking to obtain a transcript of this interview, I have not so far obtained one. Nevertheless, as I said in reply to your Written Question of 27 January, reports of the interview already available to me, including points referred to in your letter, suggest that it contains no new information with implications for British security.

In your letter you refer to the disclosures made by Mr. Straight in 1964 about Mr. Anthony Blunt and Mr. Leo Long: I gave a detailed account of the circumstances in response to a Written Question from the hon Member for Stirlingshire West on 9 November 1981 (OR, Col 40-42). Mr. Straight was subsequently interviewed by British security authorities on a number of occasions. The only people whom he identified as possible Russian agents and who were for a time employed by the Government were Blunt, Burgess and Long. He mentioned a number of other individuals as having been Communist associates of his at Cambridge. All the information provided by Mr. Straight was thoroughly examined at the time and, on the basis of reports of the interview so far, I see no reason to reopen these investigations.

I should also make clear, as I did in my statement on the Blunt case and my Written Answer about Long, the fact that

/ somebody

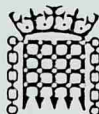
somebody has been the subject of investigation or has been interviewed does not necessarily or even generally mean that they have been positively suspected. Many people have been investigated simply to eliminate them from the inquiry, while others have been interviewed not because they themselves were suspected but for any information they might be able to give about those who were.

Your letter also mentions other breaches of security, including "recent happenings at Cheltenham", which I take to refer to the Prime case. The case of Prime and two other cases are currently the subject of references to the Security Commission who have been asked to investigate their implications for national security.

Yours sincerely  
Raymond White

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Ted Leadbitter, Esq., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Prime Minister,  
10, Downing Street,  
London S.W.1.

26th. Jan '83.

Dear Margaret,

National Security.

Michael W. Straight is well known to our intelligence service. As a student in Cambridge in 1937 he was recruited by A. Blunt in support of the Russians. He was later to expose Blunt.

I will not add to this introduction of him for all the facts of his background will be known, only to stress his importance in that he became a speech writer for President Roosevelt and confessed to his activities in 1964.

In a television programme in Toronto two evenings ago he stated that ....' plenty of people in England are aware of the circumstances about spying but have chosen not to speak..'

He was asked if there was a 5th. 6th. or 7th. man - are there any big shots being protected by whom and why? Although in response to the question, 'Do you know who they are?' ~~was~~ 'No', he went on to say that 'I know I went to MI5 and gave them names of at least 150 people and of these I would guess 30 to 40 who have been leading lives of Moles in the Labour Party (I am not aware of the reason for naming one Party) as barristers and judges and various other people in public life. One or two in the Foreign Office, the Home Office, and in the Treasury who have been allowed to retire..'

Mr. Straight claimed they have either talked and not been exposed or not talked and allowed to retire as long as they got out gently. He states he doesn't know what actually happened to them, but that he did supply to British Intelligence the names he could identify and they went on from there. They didn't ask him any questions and they didn't disclose information to him.

The above is to my knowledge a correct account of the interview in Toronto. In view of the serious import of Mr. Straight's comment, his own disclosures on A. Blunt and Leo Long, the recent happenings in Cheltenham, the unfortunate record over many years of breaches of national security and the continuing belief that there is penetration of our intelligence service and communications I respectfully suggest a full scale enquiry into these related matters and any others arising from Mr. Straight's revelations.

I may seek to table some questions.

Yours sincerely,

*Neil Maclean*



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Thank you for your minute of 23 February (A083/0625). She has written to Mr. Ted Leadbitter and Mr. Arthur Lewis on the lines which you recommended, and I attach copies of her letters.

I have asked Mr. Rickett to make arrangements with your office about placing a copy of the transcript of the interview in the Library of the House.

E. E. R. BUTLER

25 February, 1983

Ref. A083/0625

MR BUTLER

Prime Minister  
 Letter to Mr.  
 Leadbitter and Mr. Lewis  
 attached for your signature  
 FEB 23.2

Towards the end of January Mr Ted Leadbitter asked the Prime Minister a Parliamentary Question for Written Answer about the interview on Canadian television with Mr Michael Whitney Straight. On 26 January he wrote her a letter on the same subject. I attach for ease of reference copies of the Question and Answer and of Mr Leadbitter's letter of 26 January and the Prime Minister's reply of 14 February.

2. In her Parliamentary Answer to Mr Leadbitter, the Prime Minister said that reports of the Straight interview suggested that it contained no new information which had implications for British national security. She said that, if it proved otherwise when the full transcript was available, she would let Mr Leadbitter know.

3. Subsequently, in a further Answer to a Parliamentary Question by Mr Arthur Lewis, the Prime Minister said that she would arrange for a copy of the transcript of the interview to be placed in the Library of the House.

4. We have now obtained a copy of the transcript of Mr Straight's interview; I attach a copy herewith. As expected, the interview contains no new information with implications for British national security. The only three persons named as spies are Mr Anthony Blunt, Mr Guy Burgess and Mr Kim Philby. Mr Straight is recorded as saying that he gave the Security Service the names of at least 150 people who were associated with Blunt as members of the Communist Party before the Second World War and he guesses that 30 or 40 had been leading the lives of "moles" in England; but he does not name any names. As his book makes clear, the 150 he names are people who were or may have been Communists. Though he speaks in the interview of 30 or 40 "moles", when he was interrogated he named only two people who might have been "moles" in that sense: Lady Llewelyn-Davies and Mrs Hubback.

5. The full transcript confirms that the interview contained no new information. The Prime Minister is not therefore strictly under any obligation to write further to Mr Leadbitter. But she is under an obligation to put a copy of the transcript in the Library.

6. I attach a copy of the transcript for that purpose.
7. The Prime Minister may like to write both to Mr Leadbitter and Mr Lewis to tell them that she is placing a copy of the \_\_\_\_\_ transcript in the Library. I attach a draft letter.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

23 February 1983

Chairman's 2.2.63 96

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will seek to obtain a transcript of an interview on Canadian television with Mr. Michael Whitney Straight: and if she will assess whether the content of the interview has any implications for national security.

DRAFT ANSWER

I am seeking to obtain a transcript of Mr. Straight's interview. Reports of the interview already available to me suggest that it contains no new information which has implications for British national security. If it proves to be otherwise when the full transcript is available, I will let the hon. Gentleman know.

MACMILLAN:

In the 1930's Cambridge University was a fertile breeding ground for Communist sympathisers. Many undergraduates were disillusioned with Capitalism and worried by the rise of Fascism, some saw Communism as the only answer to regimes like that of Adolf HITLER's. At the centre of the Communist movement at Cambridge was an exclusive club called "the Apostles", a group made up of leading intellectuals, many of them homosexual. Some joined the Communist Party, a few went on to become spies for the Soviet Union. Spy number one was Anthony BLUNT, pictured here in an open necked shirt. A leading member of "the Apostles", BLUNT became a talent spotter for the Soviets. His job was to pass on promising recruits to his Soviet bosses. At one point he made an unsuccessful attempt to recruit Michael STRAIGHT.

Spy number two was Guy BURGESS, a close friend of BLUNT's and also a member of "the Apostles". BURGESS, who was called the most brilliant undergraduate at Cambridge, joined the British Foreign Service and ended up working at the British Embassy in Washington. It was there that Michael STRAIGHT says he threatened to blow the whistle on BURGESS. In 1951 BURGESS fled to Moscow after being warned that the British authorities had discovered he was a Spy. Spy number three was Donald MACLEAN who defected to Russia with Guy BURGESS. Another Cambridge man, he too worked in the British Foreign Service. It is not known how much information he fed the Soviets, but it is assumed he gave them valuable details about American nuclear weapons while he worked at the British Embassy in Washington.

The fourth recruit from Cambridge was Kim PHILBY. He is regarded as the spy who did <sup>the</sup> most damage to Western Security. In 1940 PHILBY joined MI6, Britain's Secret Service, he was recommended for the job by his friend Guy BURGESS. In 1949 PHILBY went to Washington as Liason Officer with the CIA. In fact he helped the CIA set up their anti-Soviet spy network. He was forced to resign from MI6 after being accused of helping BURGESS AND MACLEAN escape to Russia. Although an official

MACMILLAN cont.:

investigation cleared PHILBY of spying, he fled to Moscow in 1963 and was presented with the Red Banner Order, one of the U.S.S.R.'s highest honours. Of the four Cambridge spies only Anthony BLUNT has remained in Britain, for many years he worked as Art Adviser to the Royal Family and the Queen made him a Knight for his loyal service. BLUNT confessed to being a spy in 1964 when faced with evidence Michael STRAIGHT gave the FBI, but he was given immunity from prosecution in return for supplying information about Soviet spy rings.

U...  
The BLUNT confession was not made public until 1979 and that's when Michael STRAIGHT's long involvement with the Spies first came to light. STRAIGHT was never a spy himself, he was the son of a wealthy and well connected family. He worked for the ROOSEVELT administration, was editor of "The New Republic" and was a one time Deputy-Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

MACMILLAN:

But it wasn't until he was offered a post in the KENNEDY administration that the anguished Michael STRAIGHT revealed to Western Security Forces all he knew about the Spy ring. Now Michael STRAIGHT has gone public with a recently published book "After Long Silence".

Mr STRAIGHT, I'd like to begin with an overall question if I could. How is this book going to make your anguish any easier to bear?

Michael STRAIGHT:

The only answer I can give you is DOSTOIEWSKI's, that through suffering we are redeemed. It's a very large answer but I understand it. I understand what Mrs GINSBERG(ph), who is in a Soviet slave camp for eighteen years, said, that repentance and confession are good for the human soul. I believe that, not that this book is a confession, it is not, but she had nothing to confess and yet people who have been a part of a great world tragedy need to share their experiences with others and I needed to share mine. (3)

MACMILLAN

What took so long to come to terms with? Why was it so hard? You had so many opportunities to tell people, people in high places, your own cousin, Deputy Director of the CIA. What stood in your way?

STRAIGHT:

Several things. First, I was not speaking for myself alone. As the book points out, not only my own family, but two other families who were connected with me would have suffered greatly from this experience, had it been made known. At the time there was no question at all that the FBI was leaking like a sieve to Joseph MACARTHY. I felt that if I went to the FBI I would be before the MACARTHY Committee in a couple of weeks. I felt that if I went to the British Intelligence I would be facing BLUNT and BURGESS in a British court.

MACMILLAN:

Now these were two people who didn't mind sending you, in the late 30's, to work against your family by joining the Morgan Bank.

STRAIGHT:

Right... I wasn't motivated by love of them, so much as by fear of the pain that I would cause to others in my own family and to the magazine that I was editing, and I suppose to myself, selfishly.

MACMILLAN:

When you think back at your student times together with these men, and knowing what they did subsequently, what do you think of that circle that you formed in the early thirties at Cambridge?

STRAIGHT:

I think it could be only judged in the light of that time. The nation state was collapsing in Europe, unemployment was devastating, war was coming, HITLER was on the march.

MACMILLAN:

Mr STRAIGHT, what bound that world of friends together (4)

MACMILLAN cont.:

at that time? I mean ideology and intellectual thinking is one thing, but what was the intensity of that friendship based on, that lasted so long and did so much damage finally.

STRAIGHT:

A sense of brotherhood. Very deep sense for me. A sense of great love... I... in the book I mentioned, in a letter to my mother: I don't love Communism but I love the Communist friends that I have. And I did love them. They were fine people, most of them. Misled as I was.

MACMILLAN:

Do you remember the meeting that you describe so well in 1959, when BURGESS says to you, after a long dinner, to try to sound you out "Are you still with us".?

STRAIGHT:

Yes.

MACMILLAN:

And you said "you can see from the way I talk I'm not with you".

STRAIGHT:

Yes.

MACMILLAN:

And, and he says "but you're not totally unfriendly either". (Yes.) And you said "If I were totally unfriendly I wouldn't be here." (Yes.) What game were you playing?

STRAIGHT:

I wasn't playing a game. I think what he was trying to do was to say 'Have you turned us in, or are you about to turn us in?' And I was replying, 'I haven't gone to British Intelligence and I'm not about to'. That was all. As I explain in my book, I grew up as a young child, I was not built to confront people and to have enemies, and I found it very hard to say " Yes I'm going to turn you in". (5)

MACMILLAN:

But were you... I mean, it seems absurd. I mean even if you thought he was low level, you knew enough about the way that system worked, that he'd be connected to others. That he would have higher up control.

STRAIGHT:

I don't ~~don't~~ see your point.

MACMILLAN:

Well, <sup>when</sup> you say I'm not totally unfriendly and you don't turn him in, you're putting, sort of, this decency towards someone that you've really broken with. You don't believe in his faith anymore, you quite despise the faith he holds (Yes.) And yet you defend him.

STRAIGHT:

Not defend him, no.

MACMILLAN:

Well protect him.

STRAIGHT:

Yes, I suppose. I can only repeat what I have said, that at that moment I found it very hard to go to court in an open struggle and to confront both of those men.

MACMILLAN:

Both BURGESS and BLUNT told you, several years later, that they were always wondering how long it would take you to turn them in.

STRAIGHT:

Yes. No, Mr BLUNT said that. He told that to me, yes.

MACMILLAN:

Did you take that as... as something of forgiveness? How did you interpret that statement?

STRAIGHT:

I interpreted it as not forgiveness, but as repentance on the part of Anthony BLUNT, who was essentially non-political(6)

STRAIGHT cont.:

a decent good human being, who, like me, was dragged out of his depth at a terrible moment in world history. I don't, I don't put BURGESS in this category, I think BURGESS was an amoral vagabond, but I think BLUNT was a moral human being who was dragged out of his depth.

MACMILLAN:

Since the exposure of HOLLIS and the suggestion that not just PHILBY but HOLLIS, head of what.. MI.. MI (Five.) Five. There's talk now, fifth man, sixth man, seventh man. (Yes.) Are there big shots still protected?

STRAIGHT:

I think so. Incidentally Mr HOLLIS has not been found guilty, Mrs THATCHER simply said: "Not proven", which means that no final case was established against him.

MACMILLAN:

Um, let me pick up on what you said, big shots still being protected, by whom? And why?

STRAIGHT:

Either they've talked and <sup>have</sup> been assured in turn that they would not be exposed, or they've chosen not to talk and were allowed to retire by the British Government, as long as they got out quietly.

MACMILLAN:

Do you know who they are?

STRAIGHT:

No. I know that... I went to MI5 and.. and gave them names of at least a hundred and fifty people and of those one hundred and fifty I would guess that thirty or forty had been leading the lives of "moles" in England. That is to say as members of the Labour Party in Parliament, as barristers, as judges, ah, various other people in public life, one or two in the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the Treasury, who've been allowed to retire. Who is in those roles, I don't know. I'm sure that British Intelligence does know... ah... I don't know what happened to them. I simply went over with British Intelligence the names that I could identify and they went on from there. (7)

STRAIGHT cont.:

I didn't ask them questions and they didn't volunteer information to me.

MACMILLAN:

The 'old boys net.' lives.

STRAIGHT:

Well, yes and no. I think there is every reason, as the British Government said, not to air all this in the newspapers if you can learn more from somebody by protecting them. I am for learning more and not washing all this in the newspapers, after the point at which the British people themselves have been led to understand what the problem is, and the British Government has been led to take the Security measures that it has to take.

MACMILLAN:

Mr STRAIGHT, we thank you so much.

STRAIGHT:

Thank you.

Security

MR. RICKETT

The papers below are self-explanatory.  
Could you please arrange for a copy of  
the transcript of the interview with  
Mr. Whitney Straight to be placed in  
the Library, if Robert Armstrong's office  
have not already done so.

PERB  
....

25 February, 1983

Placed in library of House on  
25-2-1983