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 Prime Minutes 17

To see; no
 problems here.

Ref. A087/1816

MR WICKS

↖ N.L.W

23.6.

The Blunt Papers

You will remember that in January 1987 Mr Tam Dalyell asked the Prime Minister about "the documents relating to national security allegedly bequeathed by the late Anthony Blunt to his brother and held in an institution in London".

2. In your minute of 20 January you said that the Prime Minister would like me to consider further the decision taken in 1985 not to seek access to the Blunt papers deposited at the British Library.

3. When I approached the new Chairman of the British Library, Lord Quinton, I found him more relaxed than his predecessor about giving access to the papers. He did not think that, when considerations of national interest were involved, the conditions under which the papers were held by the British Library should be regarded as precluding their being seen under suitable conditions by the Security Service. The main condition was that there should be no question of public use of or public reference to the papers without consultation with the British Library.

4. The papers have now been read by the Security Service expert on Blunt. They consist of a loose-leaf folder with much typescript and manuscript draft, with a clean carbon copy of the whole thing which runs to 75 pages. There must have been a clean original, of which the carbon is a copy; but the original is not among the papers deposited at the British Library. The original could have been destroyed; but it seems more likely that it is being held somewhere else. We do not know who is

holding it: it could be Blunt's solicitor, Michael Rubinstein; it could be Blunt's surviving brother, Christopher Blunt; or it could be Lady Rothschild, since Blunt did at one time say that he was going to leave a memoir of his life with her.

5. The draft in the British Library is of an autobiographical sketch, which is concerned more with the development of art history than with security matters. There is an account of Blunt's childhood, his schooldays, his time as an undergraduate and as a postgraduate at Cambridge, and his career in art history. On the security side no new revelations emerge. The sketch confirms the main elements of the story as it is already known, including Blunt's recruitment by Burgess in late 1935 to early 1936 to work for the Comintern; Blunt's own recruitment of Michael Straight and Leo Long, and his talent-spotting of John Cairncross; a visit to Russia with his brother Wilfrid in the summer of 1935 (as an art-loving tourist and on the same boat as a group of younger undergraduates including Brian Simon (a known Communist), Michael Straight and Charles Fletcher-Cooke); a visit to Spain with Louis MacNeice in Easter 1936; his advice to Burgess not to accompany Maclean in 1951; and his own decision (against the advice of his KGB contact in London) not to follow Burgess and Maclean to Russia that year. His time in the Security Service from 1940 to 1945 is lightly sketched. The account says that he was recommended for the Security Service by "a friend" (not identified, but we know it to have been Lord Rothschild); and that, after his own flat at the Courtauld Institute was requisitioned for the armed forces in 1940, Lord Rothschild offered him (and two girls, not identified though we know them to have been Tessa Mayor, later Lady Rothschild, and Pat Rawdon-Smith, later Lady Llewelyn-Davies) houseroom at Lord Rothschild's house in Bentinnck Street from which the Rothschilds themselves had moved out. There is no other named reference to the Rothschilds, though some of their actions are described. There is nothing to suggest that either of them was a Russian agent.

6. None of this proves anything: the sketch could have been so written as to make sure that it contained nothing inconsistent with what Blunt knew that the Security Service already knew. Negatively, however, it is useful to know that it contains no unwelcome surprises.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

23 June 1987

RESTRICTED



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute (reference A087/1816) of 23 June about the Blunt papers.

The Prime Minister has read it without comment.

N.L. WICKS

24 June 1987

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