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LONDON SUNDAY TIMES
1 November 1981

I spied for Blunt says ex-officer

EXCLUSIVE

by Simon Freeman and Barrie Penrose

A FORMER officer in British military intelligence has admitted to The Sunday Times that he was part of the Soviet spy network run by Anthony Blunt—the former art adviser to the Queen who was stripped of his knighthood when he was exposed two years ago.

In a lengthy and detailed statement to us, the officer, Leo Long, a retired film company executive, says he supplied Blunt with top grade information during the war. Long says he confessed to British intelligence at the same time as Blunt—in 1964, twenty years later. But Long refuses to name other members of the Communist cells he belonged to at Cambridge, when Soviet spies were being recruited in the 1930s. "Some of them may be in positions of high responsibility now," he says.

Like Blunt, Long was never prosecuted for offences that he admits were "totally treasonable".

This appears to conflict directly with the spirit of a statement by Mrs Thatcher in the Commons in January last year. The Prime Minister was asked by Labour MP Dennis Canavan how many other traitors like Blunt had been given immunity from prosecution. She referred him to the statement made by the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, during a debate on the Blunt affair in November, 1979.

Sir Michael had said then: "It may interest the House to know that in these matters of secrecy one immunity has been granted since the war: the one in the case of Blunt. There is no question of 'pre-emptive immunity for special people.'"

Long is willing to testify to the security commission which, at Mrs Thatcher's request, is investigating British intelligence operations after repeated press allegations about the presence of undiscovered spies within the security services.

"I feel deep remorse for what I have done," says Long, who until late last week had not even told his wife about his role as a Soviet spy. "I got caught up in the whole thing. I have bitterly regretted it all my life. I am happy to give evidence to the security commission if it would help them at all. I just don't know whether what happened to me has any lessons for the future."

Long worked in MI14—the section of military intelligence dealing with German troop operations throughout the world. The section received information from agents throughout Europe. At this time—in 1941, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union—Britain was passing to the Soviet government a selection of the highly valuable Ultra material obtained from Bletchley's intercepts of German radio traffic. But we did not tell the Russians everything, nor did we reveal the source of the information. Blunt and his spy ring would have enabled the Soviet government both to obtain extra information and, more important, to assess just how frank the Western allies were being with them.

Long's confession that he was an important and longstanding spy seems sure to reopen the debate over the true scale of Soviet espionage in Britain, both during the war and since. His statement also reveals that:

- The Soviet spy ring in Britain during the Forties permeated government and military circles for more extensively than has ever been officially admitted.
- Other civil servants and intelligence officers—some still unnamed—spied for the Soviet Union and confessed only after promises that they would not be prosecuted, in marked contrast to the atomic scientist Dr Alan Nunn May, who was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment after being exposed as a spy in 1946.
- Blunt did not name every member of his spy ring. He told us yesterday that his confession to British intelligence in 1964 had been "selective."

Long's story undoubtedly confirms the suspicion that Blunt found it relatively easy to persuade the men he met at his own university, Cambridge, and at Oxford, to work for the Russians. Long told us that he became a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1936. "It all seems rather unreal now. I was a working-class boy and, like many people then, I had a deep sense of the inequity of society. The war against Hitler was building up. There was terrible disruption in this country."

Like many Cambridge students at the time, Long became involved with the Communist cells in the colleges. "I only knew Blunt because, I think, he was my supervisor in French studies," Long says. "I became involved with the Trinity Communist cell. We wanted to increase our Marxist education. We were supposed to get better degrees than non-Communists. We were supposed to penetrate and secure office in organisation like the Labour Party."

Long also became a member, like Blunt, of the Apostles—a secret debating society, many of whose members were committed Communists.

Long refuses to name other members of the cells or of the Apostles who were staunch Marxists. "It would be unfair to give names. Some of them may be in positions of high responsibility now. They were

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