

Some agent protection issues and more comment on SIS PR

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SIS lifestyle management services

All intelligence organisations can provide expertise and insider knowledge of a personal nature to staff, agents and favoured others. This may range from the mundane: home repairs carried out by vetted suppliers, say, to the more glitzy, for example access to exclusive clubs and events without reference to a waiting list. The equivalent in the private sector is provided to wealthy clients by banks, PR agencies and what are called concierge service companies offering a 'lifestyle management service' as a product. 'Destination specialists' can offer the same assistance overseas.

The SIS has always offered this type of service although for obvious reasons its components have changed over the years. At one time, access to British private medicine – Harley Street or private wings of world renowned NHS London teaching hospitals – was highly prized; until wealthy but undeveloped nations wised up and built their own top of the range facilities. In consequence it became difficult for their citizens who were of interest to the SIS to travel to Britain under the often genuine pretext of seeking medical treatment for, say, an elderly relative or sick child they were escorting.

Being entertained by the equivalent of 'celebrities', or those close to them, was also an SIS staple. My late father, an agent in the 1960s and 1970s, was puffed with pride when in the early 1960s he was invited to a private lunch by John Harvey MP – the Commons' 'oil' man – who was also former constituency chairman to Second World War Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. 'To think, he knew the Great Man!' my

father would say in wonder. It is impossible to overestimate what the name 'Churchill' meant in those days.

Gifts could also form part of what the SIS was offering. If, for example, a trusted agent advised it would be wise for the SIS to give a present to an important overseas friend who refused other inducement but was interested in, say, philately, it could arrange to have a philatelic addition created via a reputable printing company. This had the merit of costing the British taxpayer nothing while offering unreserved delight to the person for whom it was designed. My father recommended such an eventuality twice and on both occasions it was fulfilled. The honourable officials with whom he dealt and the upright company executives – regrettably it is no longer British – who provided the gift were scrupulous to ensure that by building-in the necessary checks there could be no philatelic profiteering.¹

Libya: agent protection issues

The top-end end of the SIS lifestyle management service today was exposed earlier this year when Moussa Koussa landed in Britain by private jet; his corruptly acquired assets were unfrozen in record time; the press reported that the SIS had previously colluded on his behalf in the kidnap and rendition of a Libyan national who, with his pregnant wife, was returned to Libya, imprisoned and tortured; and he was able to leave Britain for the safety of Qatar even though he was a murderer and torturer wanted for questioning by the British, American and Libyan police. A lesser but still deluxe example of the same service was that extended to Saif Gaddafi. In London he was supplied with a bodyguard, direct phone number, tame university school and doctorate. Spooks always want to know whose son is on the up/down and will

¹ SIS will have built in similar controls following the sale of paintings from its imaginative centenary art exhibition this year. These may include restrictions on the paintings' resale and provisions allowing the exhibition to be re-staged at some time in the future. If numbered prints are made and given as gifts from the taxpayer to SIS friends, the lower numbered prints are likely to be blocked, only the higher numbers released.

do much to please either or both. This is their job.

Some of the matters arising will have been of interest to those recently recruited or considering working with SIS, whether as staff or agent: criminal collusion tends to concentrate the mind. Particularly traumatised will be some individuals of other authoritarian nations, seeking the overthrow of their leaders and sharing information with SIS in the belief they have complimentary goals.² Others will have watched events unravel with a different priority. For example, long-standing SIS friends will have noted the benefits provided by SIS to Moussa Koussa and Saif Gaddafi setting the bar by which they may measure their own worth. As many will have been interested in whether or not SIS remains loyal to the men. If it does not, it will function less effectively.

This is the reason why Moussa Koussa was allowed to leave Britain for Qatar. His SIS case officer – I assume this was Sir Mark Allen – will have been aware of Koussa's hideous background but also the risks Koussa will have taken over a long period to work with SIS, and the security and other benefits Britain may have enjoyed as result. It is also why, if Saif Gaddafi makes it to the court in The Hague, it is likely that he will call SIS as a witness in his defence. Sent by his father to liaise with the SIS, it groomed him from a relatively young age. In addition, a leading British university, knowing the background, accepted substantial funds from him when the money belonged to the Libyan people.

The cosiness of the correspondence between the SIS and the former Gaddafi regime is also repellent. However, flattery goes with the territory – whether or not a recipient is a 'friend' in spook terms – as does appreciation of cultural nuance where extreme warmth and expression of friendship is important. (Sir Mark Allen was condemned for signing off letters 'your friend Mark'). Other SIS letters were even more

² Government policy change – e.g. engagement with Colonel Gaddafi rather than maintaining his pariah status – is always difficult for case officers because it can mean leaving some agents high-and-dry. This was certainly the case in my father's day when some Iraqi and Kurdish SIS friends felt utterly betrayed when it became known that irrespective of what was being said in public, the British government was supporting Saddam Hussein.

odious.) To argue that Sir Mark should not have been in touch with recipients in the first place is one thing; to argue that the way he did so was also wrong is another. The traditional and frequently hypocritical British end to a letter - 'yours sincerely' - would have been no better.

Much was also made of the fact that Sir Mark allegedly accepted a gift of dates and oranges. So far as I am aware, only the *Daily Mail* quoted what could be Sir Mark's letter referring to it: 'This is an informal letter to reach you by hand of Khalid who has just arrived in London with a very large volume of dates and oranges.'³ In this instance the 'dates and oranges' brought by 'Khalid' may not have been a gift at all but could have been a necessary euphemism to protect the courier carrying important information. Certainly this was the case in my father's day when in order to confirm that information had arrived safely, ubiquitous Middle Eastern names such as 'Khalid', and 'boxes of dates' figured in similar letters.⁴

Protecting agents: Lady Neville-Jones

Another agent protection issue - I would say one of the most important on recent public record - arose when Lady Neville-Jones, formerly Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, told Home Secretary Theresa May that Mrs. May did not have 'sufficient security clearance' to view raw intelligence about a potential terrorist attack. I believe Lady Neville-Jones was right to do so. This is because one of the most solemn promises made to agents - even unpalatable ones - when they are recruited, is that other than in edited form, no-one has access to the material - 'dates and oranges', perhaps? - provided. Lady Neville-Jones defended this principle and when it was not adhered to resigned as Minister of State for Security and

³ *Daily Mail*, 5 September 2011

⁴ Not everything in my father's papers was as straightforward. For example, I came across what looked like a scientific formula in one of his diaries. It was repeated every time he travelled to a particular European city. It was not until its final noting that I discovered what it was: a recipe for his case officer's wife's face-cream. On this occasion he had written beside it: *Why can't she go to Boots the Chemist like everybody else.*

Counter Terrorism (May 2011).

In misogynist wall-to-wall coverage of two senior women pitched against each other, the press ran with the resignation but only one newspaper, the *News of the World*, had the integrity to report the principle at stake.⁵ A Cabinet Office source was quoted as follows:

'It is unusual for a Home Secretary to see raw intelligence files. He or she is usually given a briefing, or edited extract. But there is no reason why they cannot see them and it has been done in the recent past. The security services are sometimes reluctant to do so but that is in their nature. Baroness Neville-Jones always felt she was closer to the agents than to her fellow politicians.....'

With agent protection as my interest, two things stand out. First, the admission that a secretary of state can see raw intelligence and 'it has been done in the recent past', means a key agent principle no longer applies. This throws up many questions including which intelligence chief was so weak that s/he allowed such basic agent protection to be jettisoned in the first place? And is its jettisoning made clear to active or prospective agents so they may make an informed choice as to whether or not to work with Britain?

Given the removal of other agent protection measures – not least, and as exposed by wikileaks, committing so much to electronic media – it is to the SIS's credit that so many continue to work with it.⁶ The debacle over special adviser Adam Werrity which led to the resignation of Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox, highlights further why raw intelligence should continue to be withheld. The alarm Dr Fox's conduct will have caused the SIS agent community in general, as well as parts of it specifically, is incalculable. The time it took officials

⁵ *News of the World*, 15 May 2011. Incidentally, the phone-hacking scandal which collapsed the *News of the World* appears to have been ring-fenced to it. Otherwise it would most certainly have unravelled by various paths into other areas including the intelligence agencies.

⁶ The degree to which correspondence has been committed to paper as well as on-line is absolutely astonishing. In my father's day, SIS even collected his typewriter ribbon for safe disposal.

to offload him is equally damning, indicative of much, including lack of respect for even elementary agent safeguards. This may have placed substantial strain on diligent SIS case officers prioritising agent safety, and dealing with those already under pressure, not least from their frightened families if they suspect or are aware of the SIS relationship. Sometimes they are.

Second, the comment: 'Baroness Neville-Jones always felt she was closer to the agents than to her fellow politicians.' A good case-officer, no matter how high she may fly or how much opprobrium she may attract over this or other issues, maintains a lifelong commitment to her agents. Lady Neville-Jones demonstrated not only her ongoing loyalty but also the seriousness with which she continued to view this duty of care.

The death of an SIS case officer

This duty of care was exemplified by one of my family's case officers about whose death this year I was sad to learn. He is the reason I heard at firsthand as a young adult that raw intelligence reports were not passed to others, and no matter the political pressure, certainly not to a secretary of state.⁷ But then, unlike some officials, he did not have a weak bone in his body. My late father was proud to work with him over a long period not least because, and unlike another of my father's case officers, agent safety was fundamental to him. Absolutely fearless, this case officer took more risks than ever he wanted his agents to do, and was living proof that a strong moral compass can survive even when pushed to the limits.

His obituary in a national newspaper was truncated necessarily because aspects of his work, or post-SIS commercial career, are likely to remain sensitive; but also because a true account may undermine the legend surrounding the early career of one of his much younger

⁷ The case officer said also that when the staff retired from the intelligence services, they no longer had security clearance to access 'raw intelligence'. That is, in his day, Lady Pauline Neville-Jones' security clearance status would have been lowered, if not removed, even though she had become a government minister

colleagues, the late SIS Chief Sir David Spedding. I do not know whether the unusual placing of a book review beside the obituary was also a current SIS 'alert', or padding to replace the paragraphs pulled. However, one omission baffled me: his role as exemplary case-officer, the lifeblood of the SIS, was not mentioned. It should have been for three reasons: as fitting tribute to the man, weighted example to the SIS case officers who follow him, and as a vehicle to include the agents and their families in collective loving homage to his memory.

Sir John Scarlett: reputation of agents

The exclusion is an indication that the SIS does not always seem to understand, let alone know how to communicate, its own DNA. This was exemplified when, speaking to the *Daily Telegraph* about the history of MI6 he had commissioned while still SIS Chief, Sir John Scarlett explained: 'In the language of those times, it was a profession that was respectable for gentlemen.....Clearly, with foreigners it was completely different – all sorts of 'scallywags', as they put it, were involved...'⁸

Accepting he meant no disrespect, at a stroke Sir John diminished the reputation of those 'foreigners'. Not all have a CV like Moussa Koussa. While the case officer I mention above served at a different period to the one Sir John is describing, at no time would he have referred to 'foreign' colleagues – men like my father – as 'scallywags'. The SIS case officer I knew who used the expression was the White Russian racist Alexis Forte. He did so in front of me when I was a teenager to disparage 'foreign' agents or their sources, usually of a different skin colour to his own. Imitating faux-British deprecation and affection, it could not be argued against since this would be to look oversensitive. It was an insult – as Alexis intended it to be.

Given our country's need for engagement with 'foreigners', and the good manners which should dictate how we refer to the majority who have gone before, Sir John's hackneyed comments were at the very least poor PR. A spook

⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, 9 May 2011

chief, even a retired one, who has international expertise but no domestic sense of context or history, should not be speaking to the press without a PR minder. This lack of minder was further highlighted when Sir John inadvertently forced the pulling of a press statement by Foreign Secretary William Hague on the day the last British troops left Iraq: it was reported at the same time that Sir John – who helped Prime Minister Blair make the case for the illegal invasion of Iraq – had taken a top job with an oil firm in the country.

Adept SIS PR campaign continues

Nevertheless and in spite of ongoing reputational damage, SIS continues to run an adept stand-alone PR campaign. Doubtless coincidentally, it was bookended this year by two BBC radio programmes: Tom Mangold's *Ship of Spies* broadcast on the BBC World Service in February 2011 and Andrew Marr's *Start the week* discussion with Gordon Corera, Rosemary Hollis, Frank Ledwidge and Rory Stewart MP in October 2011. The latter was a 'safe-hands' controlled explosion if ever there was one, presumably in preparation for swingeing criticism heading the SIS's way this November in the report of the Iraq inquiry. The former was a rotten trick and absolutely first class British stitch-up: while US spooks were on a cruise, the Brits were hosting a cerebral art exhibition (see below). So, the legend goes, retired American spies welcome divergence including living the high life and partying, whereas retired British spies get lost in the arts. Well no, actually they don't. They get lost in academia and filthy lucre – but that is not part of the PR story.⁹ Broadcast all over the world as the young of the Middle East and North Africa were in uproar, an aged line-

⁹ Academia: spies have always been intimately involved in the various cartels operating in universities, although these days this may also be because association with a leading university boosts a commercial career: it has replaced elevation to the House of Lords in the prestige stakes. Schoolchildren are also of interest. See 'GCHQ linguists and scientists are running after-school clubs and taster sessions for languages that are rarely taught in Britain', *The Times*, 8 January 2011.

up of former top US spooks spoke in favour of torture....¹⁰

SIS local outreach

The SIS itself is rightly moving away from the media-centric approach to communication. The big beasts of spook journalism cannot be bypassed when operations hit the headlines but can by specifically created PR outreach events.¹¹ These have cleverly been introduced by the SIS to protect against issue dominance and, while not reclaiming the narrative, takes dialogue away from the usual suspects letting in non-spook commentary. In this case, the PR events were a niche art exhibition depicting modern life in the service commissioned by Sir John Scarlett while still the SIS Chief, and Sir John's attendance at the Hay Book Festival in Cheltenham to talk about MI6's official history which, as noted above, he also commissioned.¹²

¹⁰ Colleen Graffy, US deputy assistant secretary of state 2005–2009, made an interesting comment about influencing young people. Writing in the *Sunday Times*, 11 September 2011, she said: 'In 2008 the State Department joined forces with Google, Facebook and others to teach social activists around the world how to use social media to advance positive changes for civil society. This included learning how to switch over Sim cards from mobiles and protect online identities. One attendee was from Egypt: he said he and his fellow activists planned to overthrow President Mubarak through the use of social media.'

¹¹ Local outreach has become necessary because SIS can no longer control narrative polarisation. Nor can the government. At one time it was able to deride protesters for having no unifying narrative in the same way a decade ago it derided environment protesters – who did – for their single issue politics. The collapse of Polarisation PR also makes it more difficult for it to sustain immoral armament deals and foreign policy.

¹² I deliberately use the old-fashioned term 'public relations' (PR) even though today it is a part of what is known collectively as 'comms' ('communications'). 'Communications' means having the strategic planning skills to ensure the most influential channels are used to tell the story to the right audience. It is selective – e.g. the then SIS Chief Sir Richard Dearlove addressing Lloyds of London, a non-representative and passive audience; rather than, say, the Law Society, a more representative and potentially aggressive one. 'Public Relations' is to address both which will become increasingly necessary as the impact and loss of Polarisation PR becomes felt.

Both events, neither of which I attended, ostensibly engaged the public on its own terms but in fact prevented examination of the SIS brand and its landscape. Both created new brand ambassadors and positioned the citizen as a performer with, say, the art gallery as the stage, the art as props and those memorably described by the *Daily Telegraph's* Arts correspondent as 'a coven of foreign office wallahs in pinstripe suits and black brogues', as fellow performers straight out of central casting.¹³ The book festival acted in the same way. Sir John Scarlett may well have been on the stage but the audience were in fact the people who performed.¹⁴

SIS Photo PR

The SIS made one of its boldest PR moves when it issued two apparently amateur photographs when Sir John Sawers succeeded Sir John Scarlett as its chief.¹⁵ First, in a wonderful piece of no-spin spin, an interactive photo of Sir John in his speedos was officially released. Taken by his wife, it told spy chiefs in authoritarian countries that Britain is a civilian nation and its spies conform to its culture; it told taxpayers that Sir John is of, not above, the people; and, crucially, that his wife is his equal, can present him as she will including inviting the

¹³ See Arts review in *Daily Telegraph*, 21 February 2011.

¹⁴ Upmarket supermarkets use the same trick to flog food products: the Jamie Oliver cookbook and advertising phenomenon is about no more than positioning the consumer as a performer with his/her own kitchen as stage, kitchen appliances as props, and guests as the audience. It is traditional social networking doing what its electronic offspring does on a mass scale: connecting brands and consumers by curbing, controlling, nudging and monitoring behaviour. I would not be at all surprised if in due course SIS PR goes into gaming which is likely to have a similar impact on the world as social networks.

¹⁵ Photographs have always been one of the easiest ways to judge a nation's development. For example, those released of Prime Minister Putin are always a 'look at me' command, never interactive. He changes his accessories – most recently a lion cub – but the technique has not been updated since the Soviet era: while lacking its iconic status, in technique the photograph of Putin's cuddle with a lion cub is no different from the Brezhnev/Honecker kiss.

public – especially women – to giggle at him with her.¹⁶ It was perfect for the post-prestige era: think *The Office* and you will see how the trick works.¹⁷

Its internet companion was wholly different and equally good. Unlike the speedo shot, it had to be taken seriously. It was a non-interactive bling photo with the necessary celebrity association: a gold-plated Kalashnikov which once belonged to Saddam Hussein allegedly held by Sir John's daughter under the family Christmas tree.¹⁸ However tasteless, it was perfect

16 The best example of British no-spin spin was at the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics 2008. China showcased its virtual image technology – the projection of lifelike holograms of models among actual models on a real-life catwalk – showing-off its military software capabilities in the process. Its virtual/flesh-and-blood regimented beauties then gave way to a bunch of British youngsters, in no order whatsoever, of all shapes, sizes and colours, mucking around doing their own thing on a London bus: subversive communications at their best which I still laugh about. Post-Beijing, China's Panda PR gains increasing momentum: a foreign relations commercial juggernaut and state metaphor, the subliminal messaging being that like the peaceful bamboo-eating giant that is under threat, the Chinese people are also peaceful but similarly under threat. Note: The opening and closing ceremonies of events such as the Olympics allow nations to make a 'big' (PR) statement to the world because the world is watching. Particularly noticeable in Beijing were beautiful Arab princesses in elegant Islamic dress leading out their national teams – while our leaders watched Team GB from the stands. The subtext being in Islam, women are leaders of men. Not when puritanical Islam has anything to do with it!

17 In the comedy, which purports to be a 'fly-on-the-wall documentary' without a narrator, there is a noticeable difference in the way the characters behave when caught on camera as opposed to playing to the camera.

18 Unlike interactive PR which can invite two-way dialogue – e.g. if a man wears a particular necktie – Bling PR is always associated with global celebrity: e.g. Prime Minister Putin and Presidents Obama and Sarkozy wearing a conspicuous pair of mirrored wraparounds because Tom Cruise wears them too. This identifies them among young people, especially overseas, as 'cool' – the same group SIS is targeting with the gold Kalashnikov photo. Celebrity PR: the reason why so much is expected of Prince William and his wife is because of the potential pulling power of their global celebrity. This could be cheaper on the taxpayer than, say, hiring international stars to perform at Buckingham Palace in front of important state guests. (Kevin Spacey and Sharon Stone were paid a reported £100,000 each for co-hosting Mikhail Gorbachev's 80th birthday charity concert at the Royal Albert Hall. *Evening Standard*, 1 April 2011)

low key Statement PR – and also a warning-command to interested parties, such as at the time, perhaps Colonel Gaddafi, and today possibly the President of Syria.¹⁹

Looked at together, the photos are an indication of the PR journey the SIS has travelled in the nearly twenty years since it was first officially acknowledged. Back then, for example, it was thought that all that was required to tick the local outreach box was for the SIS Chief to invite an actor to Christmas lunch at Vauxhall Cross because she happened to star in the Bond movies. Today, this crass populism has been replaced by the 'authenticity' of the 'speedo' shot.²⁰

Ten years ago, the bling/celebrity element of Statement PR projecting SIS overseas – which is what the ostentation of Vauxhall Cross is all about – was the hosting of what amounted to a state funeral for former SIS Chief Sir David Spedding: as a rule, the Brits tend not to eulogise dead spy chiefs.²¹ Today, the gold Kalashnikov photograph takes its place. It serves the same purpose but without the unhealthy, un-British spook aggrandisement, is substantially cheaper on

19 In her Christmas broadcast 2010, the Queen had an attempt at Statement PR in a clumsy merging of the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible and sport: Christianity is the only faith challenger to Islam especially in Africa, sport its secular equivalent. Incidentally, regarding Syria, I hear the phrase 'Syrian Oil' repeatedly. Have they swiped it from their neighbour Iraq? Have post-invasion borders slipped a bit? At one time Syria didn't have any oil but I accept I could be decades out of date.

20 Photo PR: done well, photography can be a powerful PR aid. For example, the photograph released by supporters of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic when he was captured presented him as a simple child. Because of its association with the late Princess of Wales, an iconic photo opportunity awaits any national leader's wife brave enough to sit in front of the Taj Mahal. President Sarkozy's wife, Carla Bruni, went to immense lengths to avoid doing so, so as not to invite comparison.

21 Statement PR: we are beginning to see the re-emergence of 'big' Statement PR in America as One World Trade Center in New York nears completion. It is due to open in 2014 avoiding the tenth anniversary of the Iraq War (2003). It delivers a knockout PR response to puritanical militant Islam's Statement PR, 2001. The latter was in two parts: it began in the East with the destruction of Afghanistan's two towering 2000 year old masterpieces, the Bahmiyan Buddhas. Heritage but not lives were lost; followers of an ancient faith

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the taxpayer and rightly removes the public from the statement.

Clothing is also being used as part of a PR mosaic. For example, while the media concentrated on what hats a present and former Prime Ministers' wife was wearing on Remembrance Sunday 2010, it failed to comment on a more important Cenotaph debut: Brits – albeit looking uncomfortable and grumpy – marching in the headgear of the Arab Legions, a historically inaccurate but necessary inclusion.²² Foreign Office examples include the Queen visiting Ireland for the first time and wearing a green coat; and following tragedy in Japan, Foreign Secretary William Hague interviewed in front of chrysanthemums.²³ Only the EU's foreign minister – Britain's Kathy Ashton – messed up. Speaking in Cairo about Colonel Gaddafi/EU foreign policy and interviewed on *Newsnight* she wore a noticeable gold brooch. Glinting in the camera lights, it looked like the 6 pointed star of Israel doing neither Israel nor the EU any favours.²⁴

Note 21 continued:

'warned' and traumatised. It ended, in PR terms, in America six months later when terrorists flew four aeroplanes into three locations including the Twin Towers. Here, the reverse was true. Heritage – mammon is indeed 'heritage' – remained but 3000 people were murdered. A decade later, One World Trade Center arises. Originally called 'Freedom Tower', its name was changed because 'One World' was 'more marketable'. Its first tenant is a Chinese real estate agency with close ties to the Chinese government. The address becomes part of China's Statement PR and an Accessory PR trophy.

22 Because of the collapse of Britain's economic and moral authority, only 'small' PR – rather than 'big' Statement PR – is available: e.g. those wearing Arab headgear at the Cenotaph so that Arabs feel included favourably in the nation's history. It seeks to create empathy. This is why, in the documentary *Bin Laden Shoot to Kill* shown on Channel 4, the Americans changed the name of the dog accompanying its forces to 'Cairo'. The *Daily Telegraph* review, 7 September 2011, said its name was 'Malibu'.

23 US versions include its First Lady Michele Obama wearing a red gown to a White House state dinner to welcome the President of China – red is a lucky colour for the Chinese. These days dresses not tiaras speak to empires. And, giving one of her keynote speeches on the Middle East, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton wearing a two-strand green necklace, an important colour in Islam.

24 *Newsnight* BBC 2, 22 February 2011

Development of SIS novelists

The SIS has also had the good sense and patience to encourage youngish men to establish careers as novelists – like espionage, PR is a long game. The authors I have noticed with SIS connection now maintaining the brand by feeding the espionage fiction habit are Charles Cumming and Matthew Dunn, although there are doubtless others. In addition, in an informative, wide ranging and presumably authorised *Sunday Times* article, Matthew Dunn fed into some of the points made by SIS Chief Sir John Sawers in his landmark, first public speech given in October last year.²⁵

Particularly pleasing, given my viewpoint, was Matthew Dunn's description of the officer/agent relationship. Gone, in the space of a decade, are demeaning words such as 'handler' and 'humint' which depersonalised, polarised and caused deliberate insult. In its stead come the genuine warmth of human relations and the duty of care felt so keenly by good SIS case officers: 'The bond between an officer and an agent is the closest there can be. It is intense and emotional. MI6 officers will often think of their agents as their family and will be as loyal to good agents as they are to Her Majesty's Government.' Yes, indeed – exemplified by the case officer I describe above with whom my father was so proud to serve our country.

²⁵ I believe Matthew Dunn made one PR error in the article. He described a young man with awesome skills who died in appalling circumstances when on secondment to SIS as a 'junior desk officer'. The word 'junior' is used to diminish, a typical SIS trick which should have been binned years ago. However, it is possible the word was used with the consent of the dead officer's parents because it served a necessary purpose. If this is not the case, it was callous in the extreme. The word 'young' rather than 'junior' would have been more appropriate. *Sunday Times*, 11 September 2011

Dunn's first novel is reviewed by occasional *Lobster* contributor Michael Carlson at <<http://irresistibletargets.blogspot.com/2011/08/matthew-dunns-spartan.html>>