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## **Spies, Lies, and Hypocrites**

**BARON WILLIS OF CHISLEHURST** was a noted screenwriter during the fifties and sixties. As a young chap Ted Willis had been Chairman of the Labour League of Youth and in 1941, after Soviet Russia became a 'respectable ally', Willis became General Secretary of the Young Communist League. The YCL was the quasi-independent youth wing of the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain, which was unbeknown to most of its members, directed and financed by Moscow.

Within seven or eight years Ted Willis began his long journey to the House of Lords by inventing the people's copper, PC George Dixon, in the screenplay for *The Blue Lamp*, released in 1950. He buried his youthful political indiscretions and consolidated his position as a friend of the Labour Party by writing *Dixon of Dock Green* in which the avuncular bobby, George Dixon, from 1955 to 1976 policed Dock Green, with a firm but fair hand without a hint of corruption, racism, violence, or brutality – it was, as one was expected to conclude – entirely 'true to life'.

Another communist intellectual of the period, Wolf Mankowitz, wrote with Raymond Williams, and C. Collins, the essay 'For Continuity and Change'. This was the manifesto of *Politics and Letters*, a journal of radical literary criticism. These people had prospered as communists at Cambridge, which at the time was functioning well as a nursery for 'friends' of the Soviet dictatorship, and for providing learned cover for highly placed spies moving freely in ruling circles in Britain.

So it is hardly surprising that Wolf Mankowitz attracted the attention of UK government spooks; the notes kept by MI5 have now surfaced and were made public last week in the National Archive at Kew. It was noted that Mankowitz operated as something of a

'fellow traveller' helping to bring students into the orbit of the Communist Party, and was even married to a card-carrying red.

He rehabilitated himself by breaking from the grip of the Communist Party in 1956 – he could live with the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland, and much else besides, but Mankowitz, like so many others, drew the line at the violent suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. At this point MI5 lost interest. Wolf became a renegade and went on to bring Secret Agent 007 to the big screen; he drafted the original treatment for *Dr No* (1962), and completed the screenplay for *Casino Royale* (1967), which you have to admit were much more fun than Ted Willis' *Dixon of Dock Green*.

Throughout the forties, fifties, and sixties, what is known as the Intelligence Community, kept tabs on a great number of people, most of whom it must be admitted presented very little threat to capitalism, or to 'the British way of life', whether or not they became turncoats and renegades. Famously, they missed the people that did them real damage: the spies within their own organizations, which it turned out, were penetrated up to the highest echelon by Soviet agents. Old boys from Oxbridge, up to and including the Keeper of the Queen's Pictures, spent years working for the KGB, apparently undetected by their bosses in Millbank and Whitehall. Not even 007 was entirely trustworthy.

It is difficult to fathom out in all this skulduggery exactly what the authorities *actually allowed* to go on under their noses, and what they really did not know about. Dirty tricks are, as George Smiley would say, "dirty tricks". This is why it should come as no surprise that the British Government allowed a Quartermaster and Director of Operations for the Provisional IRA in South Derry to go free after he had participated in the random murder of nine civilians – five Catholics and four Protestants – aged from 8 to 65 in Claudy, a small village in County Derry.

The reason they let the murderer off Scot-free was because he was a Roman Catholic parish priest and

things had become so fraught in the North of Ireland that the Government of Edward Heath feared what they called at the time “a complete descent into anarchy”. They indeed had created the conditions that they feared. In August 1971 they had swooped on Nationalist communities hauling off several hundred men and women, in the dead of night, into internment camps where they were held indefinitely without charges and without trials. Then, in January 1972, in response to mass resistance to internment, British paratroopers carried out the massacre in Derry’s Bogside known as Bloody Sunday. This was followed by a brief truce that came to a bloody end when the IRA detonated 22 bombs in Belfast on one day in late July 1972. Ten days later on 31 July at four in the morning the British Army swept into the Nationalist areas of Derry and ‘restored order’ with swift and overwhelming force. Seven hours later the IRA detonated three bombs in the village of Claudy.

Father Chesney, a priest at nearby Cullian, had been involved in the planning and execution of the bombing of Claudy and was consequently responsible for the deaths of the nine people killed on Claudy’s main street. Prime Minister Edward Heath, Northern Ireland Secretary Willie Whitelaw, and the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, took the view that it would cause more trouble than it was worth to arraign and charge a Catholic priest. So they quietly handed the matter over to the Catholic hierarchy.

Now one can understand the thinking of the British authorities attempting to keep the lid on an extremely volatile situation, but the actions of the Roman Catholic Church are a little more difficult to fathom. Neil Farren, the Bishop of Derry, and his successor, Bishop Edward Daly, had discussions with Father Chesney and prepared reports for the Rome. Cardinal Conway, the Bishop of Armagh and the Primate of All Ireland, also held conversations with Father Chesney and with Whitelaw. As a result of these talks a couple of weeks after the bombing the Cardinal moved the killer priest to a parish a few miles further away from

Claudy. The following year the Cardinal moved Father Chesney to Raphoe in Donegal in the Irish Republic. He was subsequently moved further away from Northern Ireland's border to Malin Head, Donegal, where he died of cancer seven years later.

Father Chesney was never questioned or detained by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and perhaps more surprisingly he continued to serve as a Roman Catholic parish priest. He was neither demoted nor excommunicated nor even removed from the country in which he had participated in the random murder of nine people. Indeed, in 2002 Dr Seamas Hegarty, the serving Bishop of Derry, said: "It is a matter of public record that Father Chesney was a priest of good standing in the Diocese of Derry."

Archbishop Gaetano Alibrandi, the Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland in the years 1969 to 1989, was the Pope's ambassador to Ireland. His reports, like those of Bishops Farren and Daly, and Cardinal Conway lie unavailable in the Papal archives. This is, of course, as it should be because the doings of the Holy Father – Christ's Vicar on Earth – and of the Roman Catholic hierarchy more generally, are quite legitimately the secret business of the absolute monarchy ensconced in the Vatican City. If they want to move child abusers about from one parish to another so be it. It's evidently, the same with murderers.

The Roman Catholic Church has always opposed the armed struggle being waged by Irish Republicans, just as it has stoutly defended a celibate priesthood for centuries; it has always opposed sex outside marriage, homosexuality, and much else. However, when its priests carry out random murders for political reasons, get their parishioners pregnant, or sexually assault little boys and girls, the Church insists that it is an internal matter; the Church insists that it is a law unto itself and refuses to acknowledge the civil law or the rights of the citizen. Pope Benedict XVI is a lawless absolute monarch, as well as a dangerous hypocrite. Could there be any better reason not to welcome him on a state visit to Britain?