

Following my telegram on the start of the Iraq war, Simon Butt, Head of Eastern Department, was sent out from London to tell me I was now considered "Unpatriotic". On return he met with Sir Michael Jay (PUS), to discuss how to deal with me. His letter records this conversation.

Apart from the underlying political context, there are two astonishing things about this letter. The first is the libel by a government department of the anti-war Labour MP Andrew Mackinlay, who to the best of my knowledge had never been in a strip club, in Poland or anywhere else.

The second is that he notes that after dinner I went out with a young lady to a jazz club (which I did - it was my secretary Kristina, and we just went for a quick drink). But while he blows that up with much innuendo, he fails to note something much more significant.

While we were having dinner, the grandson of our host, Professor Mirsaidov, a distinguished dissident, had been abducted from outside the house by Uzbek security services. He had been tortured to death and his body dumped back on the family doorstep at 4am. It had been intended as a warning to dissidents and the British Embassy not to meet each other.

Simon Butt was fully aware of these facts when he wrote this letter, but plainly the murder of our host's grandson - which was inconvenient for our important relationship in the War on Terror with Karimov - was much less worth mentioning than my going for a drink to a jazz bar.

Craig Murray
May 2006

PA: CRAIG MURRAY

1) Along with to see o/r

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You'll recall recent meeting. This sets out very clearly what has to happen and how. We'll have to see how he responds.

From: Simon Butt, Eastern
Date: 16 April 2003

cc: PS/PUS

Howard Drake, PC-SMS

2) Good - Please make sure they go on Indwi: it's important.

To: Linda Duffield

Howard
Thank you. Good that Simon Butt paid this visit. Let's ensure Eastern Department keeps us in the loop.

Howard Butt 24/4

SUBJECT: CRAIG MURRAY, TASHKENT

AL 28/k

1. I visited Tashkent from March-1 April. I briefed you orally o/r on my discussions with Craig on his performance, and we met with the PUS yesterday. This is to record the position more formally.
2. I emphasised again to Craig the importance we attached to his demonstrating that he was covering the full range of UK interests/Embassy activity in Uzbekistan. Craig took this point, and provided me with a set of personal objectives (attached) based on a suggested outline I had sent him some weeks ago. They will need some tweaking to be brought into line with the new guidance on SMS objective-setting, but I think that in general they are on the right, comprehensive lines. Craig's objectives for the Post also reflect a broad range of priorities, properly cascaded from those of the Directorate.
3. I discussed with Craig his telegram on US policy, sent and widely copied on the eve of hostilities in Iraq, and another example of his accustomed, rather emotional style. (He has since been instructed, with some of our other Ambassadors who have the same predilection, not to copy their reporting quite so widely, following complaints from Gulf Posts).
4. Craig was unapologetic. What he had said needed saying. He had again received congratulatory emails from a number of other Posts which had received the telegram. These were issues about which he felt strongly, and which needed to be aired. His drafting style reflected his feelings. He was not prepared to compromise on principles to further his career. I did not dispute his right to air the issues (I myself met with the US Ambassador and queried whether US policy was too indulgent towards Uzbekistan). But he should cultivate a more measured and less emotional style, and should not seek to give the impression that he was the only person in the FCO with a conscience. I noted also the need to back up his reporting in this area with constructive proposals for projects: it had not gone unnoticed that Tashkent

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had submitted only one project to the HRPF in the last bidding round (successfully) whereas other Posts in the region had submitted considerably more.

5. More generally, Craig conceded that his style is to bid high, and settle for less. For example, he felt that the Post could manage on its local budget allocation, although that is not, I think, the impression he had given RMU. He has expressed "shock and despair" that Estates Group is unable to fund the conversion of the old upstairs Residence to offices this FY, but in practice is acquiescing in the position.
6. I ought perhaps to mention, without further comment, one further aspect of Craig's unconventional style. After a dinner in Samarkand, the rest of the party returned to our hotel. Craig, in the company of our young female LE fixer, went off in search of a jazz club. I have heard from others that he has patronised strip clubs in Warsaw (where he encountered Andrew McKinley MP). But during my visit his general demeanour was perfectly correct, and I picked up no signs whatsoever of familial tension while staying at the Residence. It is not particularly palatable to set these tales down, but they should be recorded somewhere.
7. We are I think agreed that careful management will continue to be required. Craig is likely to continue to speak as he finds. But he accepts the need to broaden his functions beyond being a powerful advocate of respect for human rights (and he has got us to raise our game on this). He has opened up some valuable new lines of reporting through contacts he has made. He handled a trade mission last autumn well. He is currently organising a series of concerts of British music in a number of Uzbek cities. His public criticism of Uzbekistan's human rights record has not, so far, appeared to hamper his access or his capacity to organise worthwhile programmes for visitors. His staff made no complaints, and I detected no signs of discomfort in the presence of diplomatic, NGO, IFI or business contacts.
8. I find I am able to talk to Craig pretty easily, after a shaky start. I shall continue to attempt to combine firmness with fairness.



Simon Butt
Eastern Department
W90
Tel: 020 7008 2417
Fax: 020 7008 2414