

In a recent letter to the *Times*, Lords Hailsham, Drogheda, Carrington, Goodman and Weinstock, and Messrs Roy Jenkins and James Prior, said they felt it was a good time, in view of the new publicity about the Ward case, to place on record their sense of admiration for the dignity and courage displayed by Mr and Mrs John Profumo and their family in the quarter-century since the episode occurred. 'This letter,' they continued, 'also records our feelings that it is now appropriate to consign the episode to history.' It was an odd letter and I would be surprised if Lord Goodman had drafted it, even though it comes from his office. (It was Hailsham who said in June 1963: 'A great party is not to be brought down by a woman of easy virtue and a proved liar.' Something of a sting at the time.) The idea conveyed is that history is an oubliette down which you can throw episodes you would rather have forgotten. But the Profumo case, which should be called the Stephen Ward case, will not go down. The longer it is around, the uglier it gets. It is a shocking story, which will continue to discredit its participants, all the more so for as long as they pretend, like Lord Denning, that there was no injustice perpetrated against Stephen Ward, or say that these new revelations are 'invented'. No doubt to Ward's posthumous amusement, Denning is currently reported to be arguing for libel protection for the dead.

The noble Lord Goodman, who is also Profumo's adviser, has spoken out and has called Ward the historic victim of a historic injustice, and has said that the judge behaved in a way 'that rivalled Judge Jeffreys'. I agree with his sentiments about the Profumos, but compared to Ward's witchhunters, Profumo is an almost blameless character in the story, and I wonder why he needs such powerful gestures of support. He lied in the House of Commons and resigned. He must have got over it, or got used to it by now. There is nothing too bad about his present position. His marriage is flourishing. He has had a distinguished, although thwarted career since 1963; he's made a few million in the City; he has successful children, he was awarded the CBE, and to his class he has become a martyred hero, a reverse scapegoat, surrounded with friends and support.

The real scandal was not what Profumo did—having had the affair with Christine Keeler, he judged that he could lie his way out of it, and had it not been for her greed and scattiness, he might have done so—but how Stephen Ward was framed. Both of these books give a powerful description of the swift workings of the Establishment in the last days of Macmillan, defending itself with chilling brutality from scandal, finding their scapegoat, bending the law and suborning witnesses to prosecute him. The trial, as Goodman has said, 'was an injustice which took place in full view of everybody, clear to the world at large'.

So why don't most of us know about it? Mostly because the story sank like a stone after Stephen Ward's death. There had been too much blood. Fleet Street had behaved pretty disgracefully, and wanted no more of it. Only reporters who had attended the trial, and members of the judiciary, knew the extent of it. Ludovic Kennedy's book *The Trial of Stephen Ward* came out the following year and expressed their indignation. But there was a lot that Kennedy and others didn't know. Phillip Knightley, who wrote an excellent book about war reporting, *The First Casualty*, records his reluctance to drag up 'Profumo' until he saw the material his colleague, Caroline Kennedy, had acquired while working for a Zenith Productions film. It now became 'Ward'. Knightley provided the M15 background which is a major part of the new revelations in both these books.

What is conventionally remembered is that Profumo, Secretary of State for War, had

Poor Stephen James Fox

An Affair of State: The Profumo Case and the Framing of Stephen Ward

by Phillip Knightley and Caroline Kennedy.
Cape, 268 pp., £12.95, 11 May, 0 224 02347 0

Honeytrap: The Secret Worlds of Stephen Ward

by Anthony Summers and Stephen Dorril.
Weidenfeld, 264 pp., £12.95, 18 May, 0 297 79122 2

the affair with Christine Keeler at Ward's flat. Keeler was also consorting with Eugene Ivanov, the vodka-loving Soviet Naval Attaché, who was having great success in London society and who was also a friend of Ward. Profumo denied the liaison in the House of Commons, admitted it three months later and resigned. Incredible rumours of sex parties circulated, the frenzy of the century gripped Fleet Street, and the Macmillan Government, smarting from the Vassall spy case, came under attack. Its critics hammered the point that a minister had laid himself open to possible blackmail. Stephen Ward, who was an osteopath with a grant clientele, and who had led a mildly louche life, was charged with living on immoral earnings and committed suicide the night before the jury handed down its verdict of guilty. Everyone felt uncomfortable about Ward, but no one believed, since he was obviously rather wicked, that he was innocent. And there was great sympathy for 'poor Jack Profumo'.

The extent of the frame-up of Ward never really penetrated the national consciousness. Denning's very subjective report, which came out in September 1963 and was designed to discover whether there was a security risk, further vilified him. It depended for its evidence mostly on the prosecution witnesses at the trial.

The Knightley/Kennedy book comes close to describing a straightforward conspiracy between the Home Secretary (Henry Brooke), the head of M15 Sir Roger Hollis, and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (Sir Joseph Simpson), to 'shut Ward up'. It is a serious charge. But Knightley, one of the most experienced and reliable investigative reporters in this country, and Caroline Kennedy, are sure of their ground. There is, after all, a very fine line between a conspiracy and a wink and a nod. A host of witnesses were suborned by the Police, and some were forced to give false testimony against Ward. Policemen and witnesses have since confessed to what went on. The judge, Sir Archie Marshall, is alleged to have said on the telephone: 'Don't worry, I'll get him on the immoral earnings charge.' Stephen Ward committed suicide the day before the verdict because, as his letters reveal, it was clear to him, after the judge's summing-up, that he would not obtain justice, that his life was ruined, and because he didn't want to give his tormentors their final satisfaction.

The two driving energies in Ward's life were the love of sleaze and the love of high society, not a rare combination in London in the Fifties. He was fascinated by women, by their presence and their paraphernalia; he also picked up and collected waifs and prostitutes and, as with Christine Keeler (whom he called 'little baby'), turned them into objects of his Pygmalion fantasies. Sex fascinated him, but in a somewhat abstract fashion. He wasn't particularly active in this respect, and gets poor marks from the women he did sleep with. He collected pornography, had a liking for stiletto heels, was present on the flourishing orgy circuit of London in the late Fifties, but never took his trousers off. As an osteopath he produced, it seems, miracle cures. His first client, caught by chance, was Averell Harriman, and Ward, according to his M15 contact, was 'a good talker'. The image of Ward

is that of a smooth, smiling, attentive social climber, a great gossip, who 'loved putting people together'. 'Almost coquettish,' wrote Godfrey Winn, 'but in a completely masculine way.' His portraits, for some reason (they are not very good—and his large signature alongside the chin seems to take up much of the lower part of the face), were much sought after by his long list of rich and famous clients, which included several Royals. Ward's big social boost came when Lord Astor, who needed his constant attention, rented him a cottage on the waterfront at Cliveden.

Ward could never keep his mouth shut, but until almost the end, when he saw what was happening, he disguised the fact, revealed in both these books, that he was in close touch with M15 all the time he knew Ivanov, and had informed his case officer, Mr Woods, early on, of the Keeler/Profumo relationship. Ward had been involved by M15 in a 'honeytrap' operation against Ivanov, an attempt to blackmail him, or to pressurise him to defect. Keeler was a hopeless source for Ivanov: when he asked about nuclear warheads in Germany, she didn't know what he was talking

about. She would have been the circuit-breaker in any security leak. As time went by and the scandal worsened, it was less and less easy for Sir Roger Hollis, who was himself having an affair with a secretary in M15, to inform the Prime Minister. To do so would have revealed the plan to use Ward to bring Ivanov into a 'honeytrap'. The longer it went on, the easier it would be to accuse M15 of withholding important information. When Keeler and Profumo met at the Cliveden swimming-pool and began their affair, a meeting Ward always insisted he never engineered, M15's plan became complicated. They tried to embroil Profumo. He refused to be embroiled.

Denning reported none of this. His report describes Ward as a 'communist sympathiser'. And there remains the extraordinary and mysterious spectacle of Ward and Mandy Rice-Davies distributing pro-Soviet pamphlets in the Foreign Office during the Cuban missile crisis. Ward was, of course, dumped by M15, even though, as we discover, he played an important part, via Ivanov, in communications between the Russian and British governments at the time of that crisis—Ivanov speaking officially only through Ward, knowing that he was in close touch with the Government. Knightley and Kennedy tracked down case officer Woods, who said: 'I felt rather sorry for the poor chap at the end of the day.'

Profumo broke off his affair with Keeler towards the end of 1961. Ivanov returned to the Soviet Union in January 1963. That month, the Labour politician George Wigg, who was to be charged with importuning girls from his car, began to stir things up. He had suffered a Parliamentary defeat at the hands of Profumo, and he knew—from information provided by the erstwhile Labour MP John

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Lewis, who was an old enemy of Ward—of the Keeler-Profumo connection. At the same time, Keeler's relationship with Ward had deteriorated, and she was now obsessed with selling her story. This Ward managed to obstruct, for a while. On 21 March Trevor Kempson of the *News of the World* broke into Ward's cottage, and ransacked it, so desperate was the Street for evidence of orgies and black magic. The following day Profumo made his famous statement in the House denying any impropriety with Christine Keeler. Very soon afterwards the meeting between Hollis, Brooke and Simpson took place. Within a few days a large-scale police operation was in full swing to drag up any details on Ward's life that could be used to prosecute him. The junior police officers whom Kennedy and Knightley found agree that they never obtained any evidence against Ward on the immoral earnings charges during a seven-month surveillance. Now retired, they also claim that they were offered promotions if the prosecution was successful.

When Mandy Rice-Davies refused to cooperate, they found a minor offence they had ignored—using a forged driving licence—and remanded her on substantial bail while they prepared the charge. After the usual humiliations in jail, including the shaving of pubic hair, she gave in. According to Knightley and Kennedy, the charge of assault against Lucky Gordon, a Jamaican friend of Keeler's, was trumped up by the Police in order to force him to be a witness against Ward. Gordon refused to co-operate, but they couldn't stop the case: it was thrown out on appeal and Keeler was jailed for perjury. They blackmailed prostitutes, threatening members of their families. Ward's patients were systematically questioned, his friends' houses were raided and his practice began to crumble. Those friends abandoned him. Ward tried to strike back.

A month before Profumo resigned, he told the Prime Minister's secretary the true story of Profumo and Keeler. He wrote to the Home Secretary, to newspaper editors. But Christine—now working for the Christine Keeler Company Limited—was preparing her exposé, churning out tape after tape, fuelled with drink and speed. Ward was arrested on 6 June, two days after Profumo's resignation, and charged. The matter was now sub judice, which would stem the flow of press rumours. Rare examples of moral courage came from Claus von Bülow, who told Hailsham that Ward had had many opportunities to enrich himself by providing his former employer, Getty, with girls, but had never done so, and, ironically, from Dominick Elwes, who stood bail for Ward, and a few years later, at the time of the Lucan affair, was to suffer his own victimisation at the hands of his friends, and was also to commit suicide.

The trial amounted to a collection of smears and innuendos. Moral outrage won the day. If Ward had been pimping, ran the defence argument, so had Keeler's grocer. Nothing stuck other than that Ward's girls had contributed to his flat bills. Perhaps the most serious allegation which the two books make is that the Court of Appeal deliberately undermined Ward's defence. Sitting under Lord Parker while the Ward trial drew to its close, it quashed the Gordon conviction, without making its evidence public (which included Keeler's perjury), and sent a message to the Old Bailey which emphasised that they were *not* holding that Keeler was lying. Mandy Rice-Davies later wrote that her testimony in the Ward case had been untrue. Vicky Barrett, a prostitute who had described Ward as a conventional pimp, did the same.

Of the two books, *An Affair of State* is the more polished and convincing. *Honeytrap*, in some sections an admirable piece of sleuthing, gets diverted into loose speculation. Summers and Dorril make too much of the 'Kennedy connection'—of the great interest the FBI and

CIA took in the case. Much of their story depends on the London playgirl, Mariella Novotny, who claimed she slept with John Kennedy. Knightley dismisses most of her evidence as lies. The story comes to little more than Hoover's obsession with the Kennedys, and with Communist-inspired international vice rings. Both books give a fascinating portrait of Stephen Ward.

He certainly deserves a screenplay. The son of a vicar and a Balliol scholar who disapproved of him, he went to Paris, aged 17, and lived on a secret allowance from his mother. Bridget Astor, wife of David Astor, former editor of the *Observer*, remembers his being 'always considered a very glamorous figure around Torquay'. His uncle introduced him to osteopathy, seeing him as a clever drifter. Ward went to America, loved the Americans for their affability and openness, which he imitated, and worked hard at his college courses, taking jobs to pay for them, travelling widely, gravitating to prostitutes.

There are hints of breakdowns, rejections, difficulties in forming lasting relationships. There was one marriage that lasted three weeks. The bride found him a 'total stranger'. Along with the desire to please, Godfrey Winn reported 'an equal desire to manipulate and command'. Ward claimed that compassion was his motive in saving young girls from destitution or victimisation. He would talk to them for hours. And with this went his preoccupation with coffee.

What did we do? You'd be surprised. We sat and drank coffee and more coffee and we talked . . . anyone who was homeless and unhappy was welcome. I don't say I was not interested in female company. That would be humbug. But my attitude was always to make it clear that nothing was expected in return except good company and a steady stream of coffee.

The quote comes from *Honeytrap*, which also quotes Ward's perception of his arrival in society, at a party of Lord Milford Haven's:

I knew that one could never afford not to be noted at these events . . . How to be bright and yet not put one's foot in it. That was the problem. David was talking about shaving. I remember he thought shaving a bit of a bore, and to demonstrate the point he fingered a small cut on his chin. He said he had cut it that very morning. Suddenly, I said without thinking: 'well what are you worrying about—wasn't it blue?' Everyone thought it was very funny and even David smiled. So that was it, I told myself. The moment. The moment when everyone laughs at something you said. You will certainly be remembered as someone who dared to say something daring to someone like Milford Haven.

The Police could never understand how Ward could spend time in black dives in Notting Hill Gate when he could have been 'dining in Belgravia'. A latterday Ward would probably carry a supply of coke—not to sell, but to keep handy in the cause of social imperialism. Ward thought that by making himself useful he would be accepted by the Establishment: in fact, he was despised. Knightley and Kennedy write of Profumo's 'scarcely concealed dislike' for him.

A strange attitude to the case still prevails. Lords Grimond and Annan expressed their amazement that the BBC could contemplate making a documentary on the affair. If there has been an injustice, said Grimond, it should first be taken to the appropriate authorities: i.e. the Home Office. 'Does not this conduct,' said Lord Denning, 'tend to shake people's confidence in the courts and the police and is it not therefore to be condemned?' The IBA, too, having seen no script, has declared, to the annoyance of ITV editors, that they would 'not be pleased' if Zenith made a film of the affair which might eventually be offered to ITV. The effect of this has been to cause Zenith considerable problems in raising the money. 'This is not editorial interference,' said the IBA, 'just a matter of good sense.' □

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