


# When the trumpets 'Blair' too soon


 As I write, the media is salivating at the Met's discomfort over the circumstances surrounding the fatal shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes.

Sir Ian Blair is trapped like a rabbit in headlights as the word-smiths of hindsight pick over the decisions he has made in relation to the case.

In my opinion, Sir Ian has a slight penchant for shooting from the lip whenever he sees a TV camera. It is now clear that attempts to link Mr Menezes with the anti-terrorist operation were unfounded.

He should have learned, when the day after London was chosen to host the 2012 Olympics, he told John Humphreys on Radio 4 that there would be no problem with terrorism, because the Met was admired by every police force in the world as the 'gold standard' for public safety. Within an hour of


that proud boast, the suicide bombers struck in the capital. This put Sir Ian up there with Michael ("there will not be a hurricane") Fish in the lexicon of ill-fated punditry.

Recent commissioners, with the notable exception of Sir Peter (now Lord) Imbert, have felt obliged to be instant communicators, not always with happy results. Sir Ian could do worse than take a lead from Sir Joe Simpson, commissioner from 1958 to 1968, and the only one to die in office. He was a man of few statements and hardly ever went near a TV studio, but was universally respected by the men and women he commanded through one of the most difficult decades in Met history. Times have changed and public figures live in goldfish bowls, but Sir Ian should reflect that there is such a thing as bad publicity. 




Tony Judge, founder of *Police* magazine in 1968

## The super cops are on their way


 Whilst following the unfolding saga of the countrywide anti-terrorist operations, I have been wondering what difference it would have made if SOCA (Serious and Organised Crime Agency) were up and running. Who would be bossing the show, and how would this shotgun marriage of elements of three investigative services work together?


Although the Government and all interested bodies have denied that SOCA is a British FBI, the similarities are obvious. What has emerged about the activities of the London bombers and would-be bombers shows clear links with serious organised crime. If, after next April, the public sees the country's

response to terror being directed by a body in which the elements of public accountability are much weaker than that which applies to police forces, the current concerns about the erosion of civil liberties will be multiplied.


As it happens, the standing of the FBI with the large American police forces is possibly at its lowest ebb. There is criticism of the Bureau's failure to prevent 9/11 and there is little evidence to suggest that its intelligence gathering at home and abroad is contributing to the US Government's homeland security strategies. Isn't it typical of British policing that we adopt major "new ideas" from the US just as they have reached their sell-by date? 

## Treachery

 It is a sad reflection on the dubious loyalties of some people working in the police service that yet another major investigation is beset by the leakage of confidential documents. This is intended to put the investigators under pressure and results in instant media verdicts as to guilt or innocence. Are the people who betray their obligation to preserve confidentiality whistle-blowers or simply disaffected employees with an urge to bite the hand that feeds them? Contrary to the myth that all the activities of

British institutions are shrouded in secrecy, we have the most open society in the western world. When, for example, we hear smug announcements on the Today programme, that "the BBC has obtained documents that show..." the impression is given that, but for heroic reporters searching for truth, these facts would never have seen the light of day. It's rubbish. In this case, the leakers make it less likely that justice will be done to dedicated and courageous police officers. 

## Counsel of despair

 Next month will mark the 20th anniversary of the horrific murder of PC Keith Blakelock during the riot at the Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham on October 6, 1985. It was, at the very least, insensitive to announce at this time that Winston Silcott, wrongly convicted of the murder, has been chosen by the London Police Authority to act as an 'adviser' to the Metropolitan Police.

Whatever his role in the events of that night, in the mem-

ory of thousands of serving and former Metropolitan officers Silcott, rightly or wrongly, is associated with the night of rioting that ended in a tragedy that will never be forgotten in police circles. He could well be a reformed character, and quite possibly he could perform a useful service as a mentor to young people in the locality. But it seems to me that to link him so publicly with the Metropolitan Police is taking the current fashion of reconciliation and forgiveness too far. 