Friday 12 March 2010 brought the latest bad news, when the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) released its 2009 report. Referring to evidence of abuse that had been hidden from it in the Binyam Mohamed case, the Committee noted that it had only recently learned ‘that at least four members of staff saw the information, including the team leader … and their section head’. So five more members of MI5 will be drawn into the pending criminal investigation.

‘The allegations of collusion in torture and the lack of respect for human rights will wound [MI5 agents] personally and collectively, and … will make it harder for them to do their jobs,’ said Manningham-Buller. But the problem is not the allegation of complicity, but the fact that the allegations have been proven true time and time again – against a background of concerted government obfuscation.

The next government must order a full and independent inquiry. Nobody who is forthright about his mistakes should be sent to jail. The process should be conducted in a spirit of honesty and reconciliation, for we can only learn from history if we know what that history was. Then, when the next inevitable crisis comes, we may hope to respond with greater wisdom. If, on the other hand, officials continue to dissemble, we will still be wading through this mire for many years to come.

* With grateful acknowledgements to the author for his permission, and to The Independent on Sunday, where this article appeared on 14 March 2010.

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The Chilcot Enquiry
(Three haiku questions)

After the Iraq invasion comes the Whitehall whitewash – why so bland?

Seven years too late, which sop will soothe a public still concerned with truth?

When slimy creatures wriggle, sliding off the hook as always – what’s new?

Alexis Lykiard