



Police

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Letters

Why police spies are nothing like 007

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Caterina Murino with Daniel Craig as James Bond: 'Most of the women Bond slept with knew that he was a spy'. Photo: Eon Productions/Ronald Grant Archive

Your report rightly characterises Judge Tugendhat's references to James Bond in the undercover police case ([Judge: we all know spies sleep with](#)

[targets, just like Bond](#), 18 January) as bizarre; but they also draw attention to an essential factor he seems to ignore. Bond's fictional contexts are life-and-death conflicts against international military or global criminal enemies: both situations in which the spy's or government's right to whatever knowledge or advantage is being sought is not in question, and extreme subterfuge (as well as violence) are justified. Hostile foreign powers, and murderous criminal organisations, don't in that sense (and certainly not in spy fiction) have much right to privacy.

But protest and pressure groups, being citizens of this country and subject to its laws, do have such a right. The government and its agencies could ask such groups and their individual members for the information they seek, but can't legally or openly demand it. The means by which authorities seek to obtain knowledge which they may have an interest in, but have no right to, ought to be subject - morally and then by extension legally - to some requirement of proportionality. In plainer terms: agents in occupied France were heroic to "sleep with the enemy", [Mark Kennedy](#) decidedly not so.

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- The judge who based views about police spies on the behaviour of James Bond opens a fine can of worms. Of course he is inaccurate - as far as I recall, most of the women Bond slept with knew perfectly well that he was a spy, as indeed were many of them, so the parallel with a police officers deceiving sexual partners for years with declarations of love is nonsense. But in view of the muddle often involved in public policymaking, does this not suggest an alternative source of good policymaking? For instance, the NHS director who professes himself confused at the complexity of the NHS ([Report](#), 18 January) might do worse than propose reforms based on Carry on Doctor. And children might be better off if their services were planned with reference to Swallows & Amazons, Just William or Where the Wild Things Are.

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