

Ian Fleming's Sir Miles Messervy, the Ultimate Leadership Enigma

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ABSTRACT

This paper will counterbalance the innumerable papers and articles that have been written about Fleming and James Bond. It does so by studying and analysing the character of Bond's superior, M. I have not come across a study relating to this very interesting and enigmatic person, though references can be found obliquely in studies of 007. The paper looks at key aspects which are important to M's character and leadership qualities, and how they are translated into his interactions with people, especially his subordinates. The following analysis is based solely on Ian Fleming's novels and have nothing whatsoever to do with the films on Bond. According to me, the less said about the films the better, especially when compared to the novels. M deserves a lot more analysis and study than has been accorded to him, and this paper is an attempt to see the public and private faces of the person. A familiarity with the Bond novels is required if this paper is to be of complete relevance to the reader. Fleming has created in M, a person who is the ultimate boss and the ultimate enigma.

KEYWORD: leadership, reporting officer, leadership styles, ethical behavior

Introduction - The Leader

The reader of this paper should understand that it is an account of an unusual person and brings out the fascinating characteristics of an unusual leader. It is a straightforward narrative, which is told in a straightforward way without any convolutions. (The abbreviation 'M' is believed to derive from the first real life head of MI6, Mansfield Smith-Cumming, who used his initial 'C' to indicate he had seen a paper and so became referred to as 'C', a practice which carried on with his successors). But why did I choose M and not anyone else in the Bond novels? The reason is that M gives the novels an illusion of reality insofar as we are taken into the arcane world of a government office when M comes into the picture. It is all a matter of contrast which Fleming does so superbly well. M and the surroundings of his office gives the stories a grounding in prosaic reality. We are lulled into a willing suspension of disbelief and will accept without question what comes later. The initial sessions start innocently enough. It usually begins with M summoning Bond to his office. Then comes the conversation during which M tells Bond the problem he (Bond) will soon be sent to solve, while M fills his pipe from the tobacco kept in a container which was the base of a shell and Bond sitting opposite him (with the Chief of Staff and Miss Money penny outside). This is a typical government office scenario with nothing to warn the reader of the complexity of the problem Bond will have to solve which M will throw at him. Verisimilitude is heightened with the bland description of the weather seen from M's office window while M is talking to Bond. Sleeting rain or fleecy clouds, freezing temperatures *et al.* And once the problem has been told, Bond walks out of

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the office to meet Bill Tanner and Miss Money penny both of whom know most of the time what the problem was which M had on his plate. A simple beginning, followed by a complex and spell binding story with no unnecessary distractions for the reader, ending in the unforgettable climax. By and large, this is usually how a Bond novel progresses.

Let us look at M's first words and last words in the first and last of the 14 novels. For the record, he does not appear in 'The Spy Who Loved Me' and some of the short stories. In 'Casino Royale', the first novel written in 1953, M has just finished reading a memo from Head of S about Le Cheffre and comes across a few words in French. He rings the sender and the following conversation takes place.

'Head of S?'

'Sir.'

'What the hell does this word mean?' He spelt it out.

'Obtaining, sir'.

'This is not the Berlitz School of Languages, Head of S....' and so on.

In the last novel 'The Man with the Golden Gun' published in 1965, Bond has been nominated to receive a knighthood and M has written to Bond for his formal acceptance to be conveyed to Her Majesty (Bond already has a CMG - Commander (of the Order) of St Michael and St George and now the word 'Knight' would be added). M's last 'appearance' is in this novel through an 'Eyes Only. Personal

from M' message to Bond. We are therefore 'seeing' him for the last time through a coded message. It ends, 'YOU HAVE DONE WELL AND EXECUTED AYE DIFFICULT AND HAZARDOUS OPERATION TO MY ENTIRE REPEAT ENTIRE SATISFACTION STOP WHEN WILL YOU BE REPORTING FOR FURTHER DUTY QUERY... THIS AWARD NATURALLY HAS MY SUPPORT AND ENTIRE APPROVAL AND EYE SEND YOU MY PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS ENDIT MAILED FIST.

These two exchanges reveal M to be a person who will stand no nonsense (his question of when Bond will return for duty in the second example is typical) and also with a softer side to him (both these facets of a person's character are often seen to go together). Bond for example, was tough but a sucker for people, especially girls, with one wing down. In fact he was first attracted to and then married Tracy because he was drawn to her because of her troubles.

We will go on to examine M as a person and as a leader in the glimpses we get of him between the first and last novels. He is an unusual person and I for one venerate his omniscience and the way he conducts himself as the head of the Secret Service. This is an important job to hold and M does it with panache and dignity. The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), commonly known as MI6, is the foreign intelligence service of the government of the United Kingdom, tasked mainly with the covert overseas collection and analysis of human intelligence (HUMINT) in support of the UK's national security. SIS is a member of the country's intelligence community and its Chief is accountable to the country's Foreign Secretary.

Formed in 1909 as a section of the Secret Service Bureau specialising in foreign intelligence, the section experienced dramatic growth during World War I and officially adopted its current name around 1920. The name MI6 (meaning Military Intelligence, Section 6) originated as a flag of convenience during World War II, when SIS was known by many names. It is still commonly used today.

But to get back to M.

First of all, would you like to have a boss like M? What are the problems a subordinate would face from him? Broadly, these would be:

- A determined mind which will be difficult to change.
- Inflexibility in matters as seen when M made Bond change his gun after it snagged in his clothing ('From Russia with Love'). Sending Bond on a 'holiday' which ended with Bond almost getting killed ('Dr. No') as Bond had 'bungled' his last job.
- No sympathy shown when he sends a subordinate on a job the latter does not like (keeping a watch on Hugo Drax's Moonraker, the day after Bond had clashed with Drax in Blades in a game of bridge).
- No praise given for taking initiative when Bond decided to go as Sir Hilary Bray to get hold of Blofeld in Switzerland. In fact, M shows irritation and veiled anger at Bond's plan. He gives it only his reluctant approval.
- A single minded purpose and ruthlessness which would be difficult to put up with on a daily basis. This could also be annoying if overdone.
- And on a broader perspective, a reluctance to employ people who would be of use to the Secret Service because of M's foibles such as a dislike of people with beards.

M is a person for whom the Secret Service is the be all and end all of existence. Because of this, he has developed and honed the characteristics mentioned above (which were already there in him) to an exaggerated degree. But what kind of man is he as a leader of a vast and secretive organization? This is an interesting point. I will look at this aspect of M by referring to a talk given by Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw at the Defence Services College, Wellington, India in the late 1990s. The Field Marshal was talking to a batch of soon to be officers of the Indian Army on the qualities a leader should possess and this is what he had to say, amongst other things. (Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, MC, also known as Sam Bahadur, was the Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian Army during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, and the first Indian Army officer to be promoted to the rank of Field Marshal).

'What are the attributes of leadership? The first, the primary, indeed the cardinal attribute of leadership is professional knowledge and professional competence. Now you will agree with me that you cannot be born with professional knowledge and professional competence even if you are a child of Prime Minister, or the son of an industrialist, or the progeny of a Field Marshal. Professional knowledge and professional competence have to be acquired by hard work and by constant study. In this fast moving technologically developing world, you can never acquire sufficient professional knowledge.

'You have to keep at it, and at it, and at it. Can those of our political masters who are responsible for the security and defence of this country cross their hearts and say they have ever read a book on military history, on strategy, on weapons developments. Can they distinguish a mortar from a motor, a gun from a howitzer, a guerrilla from a gorilla, though a vast majority of them resemble the latter.

'Ladies and Gentlemen, professional knowledge and professional competence are a *sine quanon* of leadership. Unless you know what you are talking about, unless you understand your profession, you can never be a leader. Now some of you must be wondering why the Field Marshal is saying this, every time you go round somewhere, you see one of our leaders walking around, roads being blocked, transport being provided for them. Those, ladies and gentlemen, are not leaders. They are just men and women going about disguised as leaders.'

Let us now look at M keeping in mind the words of the Field Marshal. Two excerpts from what the Field Marshal has said stand out and is of relevance to this paper. The first is, 'the first, the primary, indeed the cardinal attribute of leadership is professional knowledge and professional competence.' The second, 'unless you know what you are talking about, unless you understand your profession, you can never be a leader.' Let us see how M fares in these areas. As far as professional knowledge and professional competence, there is no doubt that he has both these attributes and that too to a very high degree. He has displayed it time after time in the novels and I need not quote examples to prove this. But if an example were needed, I will look at his reasoning and subsequent conclusion that Giuseppe Pettacchi landed the plane with the atom bombs in the Bahamas and not in the more obvious places ('Thunderball'). This was an uncanny bit of mental deduction. Another would be his certainty that Sir Hugo Drax could cheat at cards (when the Chairman of Blades, Basildon told him his suspicions), and used Bond's

skills to stop him ('Moonraker'). The last of course, led to a much bigger affair than anyone had realized lay in store. The third would be his suspicions which turned out to be correct that Goldfinger was the foreign banker, the treasurer of SMERSH. This fact was deduced from seeing the gold bar from Tangier which had Goldfinger's trademark 'Z' scratched on it. So there is no need to doubt M in the quality and depth of his knowledge and competence which bordered on the uncanny. And, (this fact is actually not mentioned in any of the novels), he raised no objections in Bond marrying the daughter of Marc Ange Draco, the Head of the Union Corse. M, had he got the opportunity would have wished the couple giving them all his blessings. M knew that the marriage to the daughter of someone in the opposite camp would be good for Bond and that Marc-Ange would also be of help to the Secret Service in trying to capture the Blofelds of this world. M would clinically 'use' Marc-Ange to help him (M) solve the problems of this world. Unfortunately, Blofeld escaped the ambush on top of the mountain at Piz Gloria, an ambush set up by Bond and members of the Union Corse. The novel in which the last incidents happens is 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service', which is one of the most moving and brooding of the Bond sagas and ends in the death of James Bond's wife just hours after they were married. I do not know why Fleming had to kill Tracy. It seems so unnecessary and painful. But then I am sure he had his views on this matter. As an aside, it would have been interesting to see if Fleming thought about the story of novel to follow when he was working on the current one.

The second excerpt from the Field Marshal's speech reads 'unless you know what you are talking about, unless you understand your profession, you can never be a leader.' M never hesitates once a decision has been made in his mind. He knows the profession inside out. The only time he hesitates, and I shall come to this incident again, is in 'For Your Eyes Only' when he 'uses' Bond to settle a private revenge. Let us now get back for the last time to the Field Marshal's speech. He is still talking about leadership.

'What is the next thing you need for leadership? It is the ability to make up your mind to make a decision and accept full responsibility for that decision. Have you ever wondered why people do not make a decision? The answer is quite simple. It is because they lack professional competence, or they are worried that their decision may be wrong and they will have to carry the can. Ladies and Gentlemen, according to the law of averages, if you take ten decisions, five ought to be right. If you have professional knowledge and professional competence, nine will be right, and the one that might not be correct will probably be put right by a subordinate officer or a colleague. But if you do not take a decision, you are doing something wrong. An act of omission is much worse than an act of commission. An act of commission can be put right. An act of omission cannot.'

The key phrase here is 'the ability to make up your mind to make a decision and accept full responsibility for that decision.' M is the type of leader who would always accept full responsibility for a decision gone wrong. The only time he hesitated in taking a decision, was when he wanted Bond to kill the people who had murdered a close friend of M and his wife. M was in fact their best man when they got married. This happens in the story 'For Your Eyes Only'. He begins by asking Bond, 'James, has it ever occurred to you that every man in the fleet knows what to do except the commanding admiral?' There was a give-away small cleft of worry

between the between the frosty, damnably clear grey eyes. Bond took the cue and helped him arrive at a decision and this resulted in M sending Bond as an executioner to Echo Lake near the US/Canadian border where the killers lived in safety; Bond eliminated the killers. Again, the only time when Bond disobeyed M was in 'The Living Daylights'. Bond has been asked by M to kill the Russian gunner, codenamed Trigger who is going to shoot a British agent making a run into Berlin. Bond finds the gunner is a girl for whom he had developed a soft corner during the three days of waiting for the British agent to break cover and run. He could have killed her but fires his rifle in such a way that he only injures her arm. The British agent in Berlin says he will put this in his report. Bond could not care less. But how would M have reacted on reading it? My feeling is that he would not even have mentioned the incident to Bond. The protection of subordinates, to act as a shield and buffer is one of the greatest hall marks of a leader. M had this trait and this would have saved Bond. M would have accepted full responsibility for what Bond did if the question had come up in the future. M knowing Bond as he did, would have realized Bond's sentimental side had come into play and was the driving force in Bond not killing Trigger. Bond for M was worth a hundred Triggers.

M made a mistake in the very last novel, or rather, took a 'calculated risk' would be a better term, when Bond returns from the dead and wants to meet M to report on what happened to him for a year or so. M agrees to meet Bond. Bond is brainwashed by the Russians at the time and tries to kill M but did not succeed. Curiously, we get to know more of M in this novel than is usual. Bond reveals M's full name (Sir Miles Messervy) when he contacts his old office (and, on a personal note, I wish that Fleming had not done so; for me, some of the mystique went out of M's character when it was revealed M had a surname. The glamor of the anonymity of not knowing the name was somehow lost). Secondly, we get to know what the Chief of Staff sometimes thinks of him ('You cold-hearted bastard'). This reaction was after M had just given instructions to the Chief of Staff regarding what to do with the unconscious Bond after he (Bond) had fired a cyanide gun at M. Thirdly, we get to know the human side of M which is now fully revealed but was only hinted at in the earlier novels. That aspect will be covered in the coming paragraphs which also looks at M as a human being.

To sum up this section on M as a leader, it cannot be denied that it is a leader's job to manage the resources he has efficiently. Any leader who does not do it needs to be replaced. As ruthlessly as M would have replaced any of his staff who was not pulling his or her weight. A very strong leader can stand up and tell the truth. Now, once you build a track record, you can give a forewarning of tough times. M could give this forewarning of tough times ahead especially to Bond, because he had established himself as a strong leader and knew it also. But to go back to the question I raised at the beginning, would you like to have a boss like M? This is not susceptible of a quick reply, tough superficially it may appear to be an easy question. Most people would reply saying they would like to have M as their boss because of his obvious leadership abilities. But as we have seen, these abilities come with a rider. The rider is that the subordinate has to live up to M's impossibly high standards to get on with him. Slip just once, and you are out of a job. M can be savage when the need arises. In 'You Only Live Twice' he tells Sir James when asked what M was going to do with Bond

because of the latter's very justifiable depression (after Tracy was killed). 'Fire him. Just as if he'd been shot to pieces or got an incurable disease. I've got no room in the section for a lame-brain, whatever his past record or whatever excuses you psychologists can find for him.' But to work under an autocratic leader (which M was) also has its benefits. For the record, the autocratic leader style particularly emphasises the distinction between authoritarian leaders and their followers. These types of leaders make sure they create distinct professional relationships in the organization. M did this with Bond, his Chief of Staff Bill Tanner, and his secretary Miss Money penny. The latter once reflects when she has handed M a few letters to sign and is looking at her boss's bowed head – 'did she love or hate this man; one thing she was certain and that was that she respected him more than any man she knew.'. But the difference with M is that apart from creating a professional relationship with subordinates, he also had their well-being at heart (though this aspect was carefully hidden from them). But autocratic leadership is vital in many workplace environments and this style is necessary within organizations and companies that demand error-free outcomes. And the Secret Service was definitely such an organization. While autocratic leadership is one of the least popular management styles, it is also among the most common. M had an autocratic style, but where M was different was that his style was autocratic and in its own way flamboyant, yet carefully thought out and characterised by extreme loyalty to seniors (this would be the Prime Minister) and subordinates alike. Yes, he would be a tough person to have as your boss, but he would also be a boss who would earn your everlasting admiration and love. You would also learn about how important it is not to pass the buck or giving vague and contradictory orders before asking you to do something. M would therefore never send Bond on a mission unless the latter had all the facts and information necessary to take on the challenge. These qualities are to me, the essence of leadership and Bond was lucky to have M as his boss. So would you be. The problem is that the Ms of this world are a rare commodity.

The Person

Let us now look at M as an individual, as a human being, as a person.

Beneath the tough exterior, I suspect there is a compassionate man who is essentially a 'people person'. It would have hurt him to do something harsh to a subordinate. It is difficult to think of M in this way, but let me try and show you the reasons why I said this. M likes to protect his subordinates to an inordinate degree and this is a hallmark of a people person. M takes this to great extremes but in the end he proves he was right in taking the people oriented decision.

There is a major instance where M comes to Bond's rescue. This is after Bond's recently wed wife Tracy has been murdered by Blofeld. Bond has naturally lost all his zest for life as a consequence and the quality of his work has gone down the drain. He also botched a couple of assignments and endangered himself and his colleagues while in the middle of them. In 'You Only Live Twice', the novel which follows the one in which Tracy is killed, Bond makes his first appearance completely shattered and is described by Fleming in the following words, 'The state of your health, the state of the weather, the wonders of nature – these are things that rarely occupy the average man's mind until he reaches the middle

thirties. It is only on the threshold of middle age that you don't take them all for granted, just part of an unremarkable background to more urgent, more interesting things.' Bond has taken to alcohol and has tried various therapies to try and shake off his depression – all to no avail.

M is worried about him and has consulted Sir James Molony, (Sir James is a noted psychologist and good friend of M, whose expertise is frequently utilized by the services). He told M to give Bond a really tough assignment, which will be a wakeup call on his supreme talents which are now dormant. M follows the advice given by Sir James, and this pulls Bond out of his mental rut. Bond goes to Japan in the course of the assignment and finally kills Blofeld but gets a blow on the head which results in him losing all memory of his identity.

But the point is that M went out on a limb to save his subordinate, a thing which very few leaders would have done. Within the tough outer shell, there lurked a caring human being is what comes out; what is called 'tough love'.

I will refer to one more incident to prove what I said in the last paragraph. One of the most detailed interactions in the novels which M has with Bond is, curiously enough, in the last novel. M, as we get to know from various sources (mainly the secretaries) has a very high opinion of Bond. In 'Thunderball', Miss Money penny tells him, 'You know he thinks the world of you – or perhaps you don't. In any case, in 'The Man with the Golden Gun', a brainwashed Bond makes an abortive attempt to kill M. he does not succeed and after firing the cyanide gun at M, faints. M's reactions which follow are indicative of the liking he has for Bond. When Bill Tanner his Chief of Staff asks him if he plans to court martial Bond, the response is, 'Certainly not' (M's voice was gruff). '007 was a sick man. Not responsible for his actions If one can brainwash a man, presumably one can un-brainwash him. If anyone can, Sir James (Molony) can. Bond is also put back into the service.

Now, I do not think that a person without feelings would have acted like M did. We have seen he stood by his subordinates. Here, he is seen standing by and protecting one of them though the subordinate had tried to kill him. And once Bond had been un-brainwashed, M sets him to eliminate 'Pistols' Scaramanga, the fastest gun in the world who carries a lot of negative baggage. Bond has now to prove himself which he ultimately does.

I have quoted two examples of M's 'softer' side. Why does M do this if he wanted to be seen as a tough leader? The answer I feel is that his main priority was taking care of his people. He projected the toughness because he did not want to be seen as a pushover. His secretary wonders if she loved or hated this man. She is of the view that, 'One thing was certain. She respected him more than any man she had known or had read of.' The question arises now is what is it about M that makes people respect him so much? I feel that (apart from his protective attitude), it is his ability to see the bigger picture which is kept hidden from lesser mortals; M had this ability to a great extent, and the people he came in contact with, including his secretary, realized this. He had the uncanny knack to see beyond what was in front of him and see the world from different angles at the same time. This was what made him the ideal head of the Secret Service. And this is the reason for the respect people had for him.

Linked to this, is the ability to maintain perspective in the midst of action. This is critical to lowering resistance from colleagues, etc. Any military officer knows the importance of maintaining the capacity for reflection, especially in the 'fog of war.' Great athletes must simultaneously play the game and observe it as a whole. This skill is called 'getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony,' an image that captures the mental activity of stepping back from the action and asking, 'What's really going on here?'

That takes me to the next attribute of M as a person; the possession of moral courage. What is moral courage mean for the head of the Secret Service? Moral courage is the ability to distinguish right from wrong and having done so, say so when asked, irrespective of what your superiors might think or what your colleagues or your subordinates might want. A 'yes man' is a dangerous man. He may rise very high, he might even become the top person in an organization. He may do anything but he can never make a leader because he will be used by his superiors, disliked by his colleagues and despised by his subordinates. Moral courage empowers good leadership, and it challenges and, potentially, prevents bad leadership. In other words, moral courage and good leadership pair well together. And in M, moral courage and good leadership combined to create an individual who would never take short cuts or put the lives of people under him in deliberate danger. Bond, and others in the 00 section, of course, had to sometimes put their lives on the line. But that was in the line of duty, and M would not have it otherwise. Carrying the 007 number meant that the person would lead a dangerous life. Of course M would send Bond and others on dangerous missions; but that was all part of the overall scheme of things in which the Secret Service played a major role.

One final question. Was M a team player? I feel he is a team player though not in the usual sense we understand the term. The Secret Service functioned as a team because of the very nature of its dangerous work. M as its head, would not I feel have had to foster mundane things like team spirit, collaboration etc. His role was to ensure that the various units in the service meshed smoothly and seamlessly. I would say his role was many levels higher than that required of a CEO of a major company. Danger which was always present in the Secret Service which M led, is a binding force and is conducive to the formation of teams. M only had to see that the binding force was always there and remained undisrupted.

A naval person to the core, a principled person, a caring person, and someone who put his country above all else. To me, these are the qualities which together form the essence of M as a person.; the 'Mness' so to speak of the individual.

Conclusions

We have traversed the route between the first and the last novels of Fleming and come across M in various *avatars*. Some of these avatars are likeable, some forbidding and some downright arbitrary and clinical. If we look at the way M turned down a request by the Prime Minister to give Bond a decoration at the end of *Moonraker*, we see this last side of M. He did not even consult Bond who was with him in M's office when the Prime Minister called. So Bond had to be fobbed off with a mere thank you from M's boss. But we also see the slow developing of the relationship between boss and subordinate, ending in the fulsome praise accorded by M to Bond in the last message deciphered by Mary Goodnight

to a convalescing Bond. In some ways the relationship of M with Bond is like that of Sherlock Holmes with Dr. Watson. Holmes is very fond of Watson but would never allow this to be revealed to the good doctor. Except for once when Watson is hurt and Holmes says, 'You're not hurt, Watson? For God's sake, say that you are not hurt!'

Watson's response? 'It was worth a wound -- it was worth many wounds -- to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.' A lot of sentiment and attachment is revealed by these words from Holmes. While the relationships can be compared, the circumstances however cannot. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson lived in the same apartment while M and Bond only met mostly during office hours. This makes a lot of difference as the first pair would have more time to know each other. But the 'M - Bond relationship' is not emotional at all and carries on at a much more objective level. The only time M unbends slightly is in *'Moonraker'* when he takes Bond to Blades and we see some of the human side of M (he actually calls him James!). We see this side of M again in *'On Her Majesty's Secret Service'* when we are taken inside M's home Quarterdeck towards the end of the story. We get a glimpse here of his life at home and of the way he interacts with people who care for him in his home. But the unbending stops when the members of the two other ministries come to solve the mystery of what Blofeld was doing in the Swiss alps and the relationship between M and Bond reverts to type. But the unusual thing is that M is at home and at ease in both types of relationships with Bond. He does not condescend or be overly nice to Bond when he is being 'unofficial'. The kindness he sometimes shows is an offshoot of the M we all know and are familiar with. The man behind the mask is seldom revealed to the reader. Which is exactly how Fleming wanted M to be seen.

He is the ultimate enigma because he is the ultimate leader in terms of intelligence and knowledge and a people person *par excellence*. All these qualities will not be evident if someone knows him only for a short while. Bond would have realized that his boss is an enigma because of the former's innumerable interactions with him. Bond also loved and respected the enigma. 'Besides, I am already married, to a person called M', he once said. (I do not know if he regretted the choice of words later). But the words describe the relationship in a unique way.

To backtrack a little, this paper has looked at M as a leader in the opening paragraphs. I will conclude it by once again going back to looking at M as a leader. Leadership is an improvisational art. You may be guided by an overarching vision, clear values, and a strategic plan, but what you actually do from moment to moment cannot be scripted. You must respond as events unfold. To use our metaphor, you have to move back and forth from the balcony to the dance floor, over and over again throughout the days, weeks, months, and years. While today's plan may make sense now, tomorrow you'll discover the unanticipated effects of today's actions and have to adjust accordingly. Sustaining good leadership, then, requires first and foremost the capacity to see what is happening to you and your initiative as it is happening and to understand how today's turns in the road will affect tomorrow's plans. M had the ability to move from

the specific to the general perspective and back again without a glitch. This came to him naturally and was perhaps his greatest quality as a leader. Link this trait with the humanness which was masked, and we come up with an individual who was the right man to lead the Service. Observe the humanness which 'In Russia with Love' makes him check with Bond if he was still carrying on with Tiffany Case. Essentially because his coming assignment was to bring back a beautiful Russian spy who claimed she had fallen in love with Bond's photograph, along with a brand new Spektor machine which would unlock a lot of secrets for the home side.

How many bosses would have the sensitivity revealed by M's question?

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