Lobster

Winter 2009/10

John Booth:
Arnhem 65 years on

Phil Chamberlain:
The construction industry blacklist: how the Economic League lived on
‘a consultant’
reviews Alpha Dogs

Robert Henderson:
Laissez faire as religion

Solomon Hughes:
The curious case of Prospect

Simon Matthews:
The life and times of Simon Dee

Robin Ramsay:
The miners and the secret state
The economic crisis
Subservience to America

Dr. T. P. Wilkinson:
Superstition and Farce: the survival of the Inquisition in American political culture

Book reviews
Welcome to the first on-line edition of Lobster. I have kept this as close to the original hard copy versions as is practicable. It remains just words (no pictures); the subject matter hasn’t changed. What has changed are
(a) typeface: Times New Roman does not suit the screen;
(b) there is only one column of text instead of two or three (with an infinite amount of space there is no reason to stuff two or three columns on a page);
(c) the type size is bigger for reading on screen and thus probably further away than a hand-held hard copy would be. Other than that, it is as before.

It is the hope of Website creator and manager Ian Tresman and I that we will be able to offer future Lobsters free, with the costs of the website being paid for by the income from CD-Rom sales and access fees to earlier Lobsters. We shall see.

The previous issues of Lobster are available in other forms. Hard copies of most issues can be had from me (e-mail me <lobster@lobster.karoo.co.uk>); digital versions of them are available on-line for a small fee at this site; and a CD-Rom of them can be bought from this site.
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Francis Wheen, Strange Days Indeed

David Chandler, Hollow Hegemony: Rethinking Global Politics, Power and Resistance

Solomon Hughes, War on Terror Inc.: Corporate Profiteering from the Politics of Fear
The devil has all the best songs:
reflections on the life and times of Simon Dee

Simon Matthews

The death of sixties broadcaster Simon Dee in August produced a crop of obituaries that commented on his brief period of fame and the claims he subsequently made about his career’s demise. Most of the accounts suggested that he was eccentric, slightly paranoid, of little talent and had an exaggerated sense of his own significance. The reader’s attention was drawn to his comments that he had been classified as a national security risk by the Special Branch and that the CIA effectively controlled broadcasting in the UK.¹

Dee served in the RAF from 1953 to 1958, spending much of this time in the Middle East, culminating in his being attached to RAF Intelligence in Baghdad in 1957-1958. This was a critical period that saw the UK humiliated by the USA during the Suez crisis in late 1956. At its simplest this event, more than any other, highlighted a split in the British establishment. One section took an essentially Gaullist view: Britain should be able to act alone and should retain a domestic economy and services commensurate with this. Another increasingly influential and powerful section saw Suez as proof that Britain could no longer operate either as a separate force in the world or have a particular role of its own that it was at liberty to pursue and should work closely with the US and engage in a number of other activities, such as

¹ See The Daily Telegraph 30 August 2009 and others the same day.
‘modernising’ its economy on more liberal lines than the post-1945 political consensus had hitherto indicated.

With his military service complete Dee had various occupations in the more fashionable areas of London, including running a coffee bar in Soho and working for a society photographer. In the early 1960s he met Ronan O’Rahilly, a young Irish hanger-on in the London music scene. O’Rahilly told him that he would be starting an independent commercial radio station – the first venture of this type in or near the UK – and offered Dee a job as a presenter. Dee accepted and started broadcasting on Radio Caroline in March 1964.

Radio Nord

Prior to its dropping anchor off the coast of East Anglia, the ship used to accommodate Radio Caroline had an interesting history. Originally known as the MV Olga, it was a small coastal cargo vessel of the type commonly found in northern Europe. In 1960 it was purchased by two wealthy US businessmen, Gordon McLendon and Clint Murchison Junior. The Olga was registered in Nicaragua and equipped to operate as a floating commercial radio station, broadcasting music and news bulletins to southern Sweden (Stockholm essentially) while anchored just outside Swedish territorial waters. It commenced transmission in March 1961.² Its radio broadcasting equipment had been shipped across the Atlantic from Texas (where McLendon and Murchison were based) and assembled by US specialists. It was sufficiently powerful to be heard far beyond the southern part of Sweden. In good weather conditions the signal was accessible as far east as

² McLendon and Murchison were keen not to be publicly identified with Radio Nord. The station was thus managed by Jack Kotschack, a Swedish/Finnish businessman, who had produced a couple of minor Swedish films in the 1950s. It is not clear how Kotschack came to be in contact with McLendon and Murchison.
Leningrad, Karelia, Finland, the Baltic States, northern Poland and East Germany. Broadcasting in Swedish would not have represented an impenetrable difficulty to many listeners in these areas, the language being widely understood and spoken then and now in Finland, Karelia and Estonia.

Given that both McLendon and Murchison had significant business experience – McLendon’s in commercial broadcasting – we might wonder why (or if) they pursued this venture purely on economic grounds. A floating radio station is far more expensive to operate than a land-based operation. In a typical land-based station, for example, the studio, offices and broadcasting equipment would all be contained in 2 or 3 floors of an office block or within a medium sized building. A ship, however, requires a crew, regular maintenance in a dockyard and a supply vessel while on station, as well as the usual technical staff, presenters and a land-based office. Would the income from radio commercials targeted at the relatively small population of southern Sweden really be enough to cover all this and produce a profit? And why have a US-manufactured transmitter shipped across the Atlantic and installed by US specialists? Was there really no comparable equipment available in Europe? If the rationale of McLendon and Murchison had been solely to open up the then restricted European radio market to a profitable US-style commercial radio station they could surely have selected another location – such as off the coasts of France or Italy or Germany for example – where their ship would reach much greater audiences and would broadcast in a far more widely spoken language. Given the location actually chosen by them, which was certainly convenient for reaching an audience behind the Iron Curtain, Radio Nord looks just as likely to have been an arms-length, privately funded operation broadcasting propaganda to Eastern Europe. Radio Nord broadcast until June 1962 when the difficulties caused by the Swedish government restricting supply of the vessel resulted in her
sailing to Spain, to await orders from its owners.³

The UK interest

In September 1962 Radio Nord sailed north from Spain and anchored off the south east coast of England while McLendon and Murchison tried to conclude the sale of the ship to a group of UK investors led by Alan Crawford, an Australian music publisher. Crawford, who owned a number of record shops in London, said subsequently that he was interested in setting up a commercial radio station that would broadcast pop music to UK audiences because it would boost sales in his record shops at a time when pop music received very little exposure on the BBC Light Programme. Crawford may have had other reasons for involvement in this venture. He was also, for instance, a business partner of Major Oliver Smedley. Smedley was a founder member of the Institute of Economic Affairs and a prominent figure in UK free trade and libertarian political circles. Both Crawford and Smedley knew of the broadcasts of Radio Nord and both had been directors of a company called CBC (Plays) Limited, which aimed to promote commercial radio, since 1960 – the year that McLendon and Murchison purchased the MV Olga.⁴

Interviewed in 1984 Crawford could not remember how he found out who the owners of Radio Nord were or how he contacted them. Whatever the circumstances, McLendon and Murchison were happy to do a deal and gave Crawford specific advice on the arrangements and legal structures he needed to put in place to successfully operate a privately owned offshore station in an environment where it would be unlawful:

establish a core group of investors with whom the

³ Radio Nord remained on the air through the winter. During this time the Baltic freezes over, there is little daylight and temperatures are below zero for many months on end – hardly pleasant conditions for the crew of a small cramped ship.
⁴ See <www.offshoreechoes.com>
company would be publicly associated whilst having all the companies and bodies associated with the venture registered offshore – preferably in a secretive domain.

The immediate problem facing Crawford in 1962 was that possible UK investors knew from an elementary perusal of the Radio Nord finances that the amount of money needed to run a floating commercial radio station was enormous compared with a land-based option; that the UK authorities could still hamper the operation of any proposed station; and that profits might be considerably less than expected. As a result of this negotiations with Crawford took until August 1963 to finalise.\(^5\) The eventual deal was that Radio Nord would be leased by McLendon and Murchison to a consortium led by Jocelyn Stevens, the owner of the UK high society gossip magazine *Queen*. The funding came via a network of companies registered in Liechtenstein and day-to-day management of the business was carried out by Major Smedley. Noting the difficulties in supplying an offshore vessel and the sanctions that any irate government could use against it, Crawford, Stevens and Smedley reached an agreement with Egan O’Rahilly, the owner of a private harbour at Greenore in Eire, that the vessel would be serviced and supplied there. O’Rahilly’s son, Ronan, an appropriately youthful figure who knew Crawford through Crawford’s record shops in London, was the public front for the operation.\(^6\) The MV Olga/Radio Nord ship was renamed Radio Atlanta, and sailed to Greenore to be fitted out in late 1963.\(^7\)

The assorted investors bought a second ship, a

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\(^5\) Because the negotiations with Crawford took so long to conclude, the MV Olga/Radio Nord was ordered back to Galveston, Texas and decommissioned by McLendon and Murchison.

\(^6\) In O’Rahilly’s account of this period he gives himself a central role in bringing Jocelyn Stevens into the venture. It is not clear that this was the case.

\(^7\) The name Radio Atlanta was selected to commemorate the town of Atlanta, Texas, where McLendon had established his first radio station.
redundant Danish ferry, the MV Fredericia, in December 1963 for use as a radio station and it was registered by its new owner (ostensibly Ronan O’Rahilly) in Panama. By early 1964 both Radio Atlanta and the MV Fredericia were under refit at Greenore. On 28 March 1964 the Fredericia, now renamed Radio Caroline, took up station off Harwich and began broadcasting. Simon Dee presented its first programme. It was joined on 12 May 1964 by Radio Atlanta which dropped anchor in approximately the same location. The presence of two offshore stations so near to London, and their (for the time) refreshingly new broadcasting style and popularity with a young audience, quickly led to official enquiries. The Director General of the BBC duly received a confidential briefing on their activity on 21 May 1964 which stated:

Approximately 50% of the funding for both ships came from UK backers, specifically Jocelyn Stevens and the British Printing Corporation via its key directors Sir Geoffrey Crowther and Max Rayne.\(^8\)

The remainder of the funding was held in bank accounts in Liechtenstein under the control of Dr Peter Marxer.

The transmitting equipment on both vessels was powerful and of US manufacture.

Both ships had been fitted out in a privately owned port in Eire owned by a Mr O’Rahilly.\(^9\)

The memo concluded with its author drily requesting ‘a word on the telephone about the confidential nature of this information....’

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\(^8\) Granada TV interviewed Stephens and O’Rahilly on May 12th 1964 in the offices of *Queen*. These served initially as the administrative HQ for Radio Caroline.

\(^9\) Egan O’Rahilly, father of Ronan, was a close colleague of Eamonn de Valera and Sean MacBride. MacBride, who was Chairman of Amnesty International at this time, wrote the legal opinion that Radio Caroline would have relied on if subjected to serious legal challenge. Through his wife, an Irish-American, Egan O’Rahilly also had connections to influential figures in US politics.
This comment presumably indicates that there were certain things that the author of the memo did not wish to put in writing.

The UK backers

Jocelyn Stevens, the most prominent of the UK figures associated with the venture, had a conventional upbringing for a member of the privileged elite in the 1940s and ’50s – Eton, the Rifle Brigade and Cambridge. Socially well connected (his wife was a lady-in-waiting to Princess Margaret) in 1957 he became proprietor of Queen magazine, announcing in the publication that ‘he wanted to destroy British Establishment society as it was as a result of the 1956 Suez debacle.’

The most significant figure he employed at Queen was Robin Douglas-Home, nephew of Sir Alec Douglas-Home. Robin Douglas-Home, who counted himself a friend of both Frank Sinatra and John F. Kennedy, appears to have had access to quite a considerable variety of interesting information. On 31 July 1962 Queen published the first piece of gossip linking John Profumo to Christine Keeler and Eugene Ivanov. It is not known who supplied Queen and/or Robin Douglas-Home with this information, but its appearance was a significant part of the events that led to the collapse of the MacMillan government.10

The career and political inclinations of Major Oliver Smedley have already been noted. During the negotiations to purchase the MV Olga by UK investors, Smedley was also active as a founder member of the Keep Britain Out campaign. This campaigned against the attempts then being made by

10 Robin Douglas-Home was divorced by his wife, model Sandra Paul, in 1965 as a result of his affair with Princess Margaret. He was found dead in 1968, the death being ruled as suicide due to clinical depression. Sandra Paul later married David Wynne-Morgan, who ran Annabel’s night club, and is today married to Michael Howard MP, Conservative Party leader 2003-2005.
Harold MacMillan to take the UK into the Common Market. Smedley, who was Vice President of the Liberal Party at this point, actually announced when Radio Atlanta started broadcasting in May 1964, that it was intended to be ‘the last bastion of freedom if the country went Communist.’ This could only have been an allusion to the possibility that the general election that was due in late 1964 would result in a Labour government that Major Smedley and his colleagues regarded as seriously – even dangerously – left-wing.

Sir Geoffrey Crowther went from Cambridge where he had been President of the Union in 1928, to Yale via a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship. He had an American wife and was editor of *The Economist* from 1938 until 1956. He was a member of the Council of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and in the 1940s had edited *Transatlantic*, a magazine published at that time by Penguin Books.

Max Rayne was a property developer and conducted various business ventures with SAS founder David Stirling in the 1950s and '60s. He later married Lady Jane Vane-Tempest-Stewart, sister of Lady Annabel Birley, subsequently the wife of Sir James Goldsmith.

At the simplest the common denominators that the above figures shared were:

a disinterest in the post-1945 political settlement of high spending on social welfare and various state and governmental activities;

a belief instead in the efficacy of the free market;

a recognition that Harold MacMillan, the candidate favoured by the US for the Conservative succession in 1957, was by the early 1960s struggling badly and was seen by

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11 During his stewardship *The Economist* invented the humorous character ‘Mr Butskell’, a British politician who combined the attributes of both R. A. Butler and Hugh Gaitskell and whose commitment to a high spending state enabled him to be at home in either of the two main political parties.
many as a failed leader who would produce electoral defeat and the return to power of Labour.  

The wider context

The association of public figures such as Stevens, Smedley, Crowther and Payne with what was then an unlawful venture in the UK also needs to be put into a broader social and cultural context. There were many people in Britain in the 1950s and 60s who believed that US society offered a valid model for the UK to emulate. There is not sufficient space here to record every step in the Americanisation of Britain but significant episodes in this long march were surely the legislation in 1954 that established commercial television, the ‘Traffic in Towns’ study of 1960 (which led to US style developments and road networks in city centres) and the scrapping of retail price maintenance in 1963, which produced the great supermarket expansion of the 1960s and 70s.

12 Note should also be taken of the satire boom – which began in the UK in 1961-1962 – attacked and mocked the MacMillan government which it portrayed as ineffectual and complacent. It thus shared some common ground with the line taken by Queen magazine and the promoters of Radio Caroline.

13 ‘Traffic in Towns’ studied the growth of car ownership in the UK and recommended major road construction schemes including some within town centres. It appeared at the same time as Reshaping British Railways – aka ‘The Beeching Report’ – which proposed closing 50% of the UK rail network. ‘Traffic in Towns’ studied mainly US models rather than European options and was prepared by a Committee led by Sir Geoffrey Crowther. Other members were T Dan Smith, Leader of Newcastle City Council (a local authority that, more than any other, opted for US style redevelopment during this period) and Oleg Kerensky, a noted bridge engineer. Oleg Kerensky was the son of Alexander Kerensky, briefly Prime Minister of Russia in 1917, until ousted in a Bolshevik coup. T. Dan Smith actually began his political career in the Revolutionary Communist Party – a significant UK Trotskyist group – with Gerry Healy, Ted Grant et al, where he learnt the importance of a tightly organised and disciplined political machine. One wonders if Smith and Kerensky Jnr. discussed politics while serving on ‘Traffic in Towns’.
But not all efforts to change the fabric of cultural and social life in the UK necessarily went the way of those who were pro-American. The Pilkington Committee which between 1960 and 1962 looked at the future of broadcasting in the UK is an interesting case in point. Its conclusions severely criticised ITV for relying too much on recycled US product. It recommended that the BBC should start a second, high brow, television channel. It was opposed to the licensing of commercial radio stations and it recommended instead that the BBC should set up a network of state-run local stations specifically to thwart this objective. Lobbying for commercial radio and funding an offshore ‘pirate’ station was thus quite a logical activity for some of those disappointed by the outcome of the Pilkington Report and was of a piece with the other initiatives listed above.14

In July 1964 both ships were under the same management and were broadcasting across the whole of the UK from two different locations. Radio Atlanta (ex-Radio Nord) moved to a position off the Isle of Man and was renamed Radio Caroline North, while the other vessel, the original Radio Caroline, stayed off the coast of East Anglia and was known as Radio Caroline South. Test transmissions showed that their signals had sufficient power to reach the USA from these positions in favourable weather conditions. The existence of privately owned commercial radio stations owned by figures in the UK who were sympathetic to the Americanisation of their own country does not prove that the US either planned or engineered such a course of events at an official level. However if the Radio Nord template was in any way typical, it

14 For an interesting discussion of these issues see ‘How American Mass Media Manipulated British Commercial Radio Broadcasting’, an academic paper published by the Romanian Journal of English Studies. Its authors, Eric Gilder and Mervyn Hagger, are involved with the John Lilburne Research Institute, a free market think tank based in Texas. Its website <www.johnlilburne.com> contains some fascinating information.
was clear that political, cultural and social influence favourable to the US could be exerted by wealthy freelance individuals (or companies) operating at arms-length from government. The circumstances around the establishment of Radio Caroline fit with this theory.15

**Fighting Mr Wilson**

despite the curious memo prepared for the Director-General of the BBC, the Conservative government lead by Prime Minister Douglas-Home government took no action against Radio Caroline. This was noted at the time by Anthony Wedgewood Benn MP, who commented in his diaries for the period that he assumed that this was because they were actually quite happy with the station broadcasting. Although they trailed Labour by 10% in the opinion polls in May 1964 the Conservatives narrowed the gap considerably and only just lost the October 1964 General Election.

The new administration formed by Harold Wilson took a very different line about unlicensed privately owned radio stations, but with a parliamentary majority of only four could not immediately make the issue a major priority. This state of affairs lasted until the March 1966 General Election when Labour were re-elected with a majority of 96 – sufficient to contemplate a wide programme of parliamentary legislation.

It is still curious that while the record of the 1966-1970 Wilson government indicated a general inability to deal with a range of issues – devaluation, Rhodesia and trade union reform for example – no such inhibitions existed when it came to their taking action against unlicensed popular entertainment. One possible reason for this may have been

15 We should note that from the early 1950s the CIA sponsored a Gray Broadcasting programme in which either fully or partially privately funded and run radio stations produced pro-US material in various parts of the world. [www.faqs.org](http://www.faqs.org) has a number of badly scanned documents on this topic.
the multiplication of offshore radio stations between 1964 and 1966.

By 1966 the two Radio Carolines had been joined by others, the best known of which was Radio London. This, too, had an interesting background. The station was owned by Don Pierson, a successful businessman from Dallas, Texas, who had discussed setting up the venture with Gordon McLendon, founder of Radio Nord. Pierson originally wanted to name the station Radio KLIF London, after KLIF, the radio station that McLendon ran in Dallas. McLendon was not happy with this and it broadcast instead as Radio London from a vessel anchored off Essex. Radio London earned substantial revenue from relaying programmes and advertising from the Texas based Radio Church of God, a Christian evangelical organisation led by Herbert W. Armstrong, that produced a current affairs programme ‘The World Tomorrow’.16

In addition to Radio London others that could be heard included Radio 270, anchored off Scarborough and funded by a former Conservative MP, Wilf Proudfoot, (who owned an early chain of UK supermarkets) and Radio City, based in a disused WW2 fort off Margate and run by Reg Calvert, a successful manager and promoter of a number of 1960s pop groups,17

16 Herbert W Armstrong was a major US evangelist from the 1930s onwards who moved into radio broadcasting. A core part of his creed was that the white citizens of the US, UK and British Commonwealth were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel and therefore entitled, according to Biblical prophesy, to inherit the Earth. Armstrong and the Radio Church of God also took the view that the coming Armageddon of World War Three would be caused by a United States of Europe, led by Satan – in this instance German Christian Democrat politician Franz Josef Strauss, a key advocate of European unity. Because of this much of their broadcasts from Radio London were stridently anti-Common Market. In this they had something in common with the views of Major Oliver Smedley.

17 His roster of artists included Screaming Lord Sutch, the Rockin’ Berries, the Fortunes and Pinkerton’s Assorted Colours. In 1964 The Fortunes released ‘Caroline’, a single on Decca, that was used as the daily theme music for Radio Caroline.
as part of an arrangement he had with Major Smedley. Calvert also dabbled in politics. Under his guidance Screaming Lord Sutch stood as a National Teenage Party candidate in the 1963 bye-election caused by Profumo’s resignation and also ran against Harold Wilson in Huyton in 1966 – when the government forcing ‘pirate’ radio stations to close was something of a political issue with younger elements of the electorate.

Despite their popularity, neither of the two Radio Carolines were profitable – no doubt the extremely high operating costs noted above accounted for this – and as a result Smedley, Stevens and the other backers soon wanted the ships sold and the broadcasting equipment moved into a disused coastal fortification off Margate. Calvert established Radio City as the first stage in this process with a generator supplied by Smedley. It transpired that, despite being outside territorial waters, the disused coastal fortress was still owned by the Ministry of Defence. In May 1966 Smedley arrived at Radio City in a motor launch with a group of dockers and seamen.\textsuperscript{18} They removed the generator, thus forcing Radio City off the air. Hearing of this Calvert went to Smedley’s home and in the ensuing fracas Smedley shot Calvert dead. At the ensuing trial Smedley was acquitted on the grounds that he had acted in self-defence. Calvert’s tinkering in politics and the sensational nature of his death thus provided a second reason for the Wilson government to use valuable parliamentary time on legislation against ‘pirate’ radio stations, time that could have been used to better effect on other issues. A bill making Radio Caroline and its imitators illegal was introduced to Parliament in late 1966 and became law as the Marine Broadcasting Offences Act in August 1967.

The passage of the legislation through Parliament

\textsuperscript{18} The dockers and seamen used in this expedition were temporarily unemployed at this time due to the National Union of Seamen’s strike, an issue that also preoccupied Wilson.
provoked a campaign of opposition which did much to tarnish
Wilson’s and Labour’s reputation with the younger section of
the electorate at this point.\textsuperscript{19} The campaign against the Act
reached its crescendo in May, June and July 1967 during the
final stages of the legislation. In reply to a question put to him
in Parliament Edward Short, the Postmaster-General, solemnly
informed his colleagues that Radio Caroline had influenced the
outcome of the May 1967 Greater London Council (GLC)
elections, in which Labour had lost control of London for the
first time since 1934. This was nonsense. The GLC had been
established by the previous Conservative government in 1963
as the replacement body for the London County Council (LCC),
precisely because enlarging the LCC area to include the
surrounding suburban parts of London made it easier for the
Conservatives to win the elections for the new authority.
Short made his comments, though, against a backdrop of
Labour having lost control of a range of major local authorities
in May 1967.\textsuperscript{20} The notion thus being propagated by Short, to
assembled Labour MPs, many of whom represented marginal
seats affected by these disastrous results, was that Radio
Caroline and possibly other stations represented a sort of
anti-left, fifth column that ought to be curtailed in the interests
of democracy. The truth appears to have been that by May
1967 Wilson and Labour were unpopular for a range of
reasons and that pirate radio stations played only a minor role
in this change.

The campaign in favour of the ‘pirate’ stations
particularly involved The Move, a group who had just

\textsuperscript{19} In 1969 the Wilson government agreed to lower the voting age
from 21 to 18 with effect from 1970. Thus those voting for the first
time in June 1970 would have been aged 15,16 or 17 when the ‘pirate’
stations were taken off the air and some may have felt hostility to
Labour in 1970 as a result.
\textsuperscript{20} In the May 1967 local elections Labour lost control of Bradford,
Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle,
Nottingham, Southampton and Wolverhampton.
established themselves at that point, and their manager Tony Secunda. In May and June 1967 The Move began destroying effigies of Harold Wilson on stage with an axe as part of their ‘auto-destructive’ pop art stage act. Secunda followed this in August 1967 by distributing promotional postcards for their latest record, ‘Flowers in the Rain’, showing a naked man in the bath on which the Prime Minister’s face was superimposed, with a caption that implied that Wilson was having an affair with his secretary, Marcia Falkender. The postcard found its way into the hands of George Wigg MP, who passed it to Wilson. Wilson sued Secunda and The Move and won.21

During the period between the appearance of the postcard and the subsequent legal denouement, Secunda and The Move found themselves under surveillance by the state (presumably Special Branch) who followed them on tour around the UK as they promoted ‘Flowers in the Rain’. Wilson’s lack of humour arose from the allegations that he was having an extramarital relationship with Falkender. Attempts to smear him with this stretched back as far as 1960 but were not that well known or in the public domain in 1967. Who told Secunda that Wilson was having an affair with Marcia Falkender? The use of the security services against a pop group suggests that Wilson may have taken the activities of Radio Caroline and the other pirate stations somewhat more seriously than has previously been thought. Did he think that they were part of the attempts to destabilise and

21 The litigation was dealt with on Wilson’s behalf by Lord Goodman. Goodman instructed Quintin Hogg QC MP to pursue the case against Secunda. This was ironic (or intentional) given that Hogg had raised the issue of a Wilson-Falkender relationship – without naming names – as early as 1963. The BBC’s response to the ‘pirates’, Radio One, went on the air in September 1967 with Tony Blackburn playing ‘Flowers in the Rain’, possibly an act of mild rebellion by Blackburn, who had been a Radio Caroline DJ.

In settlement Wilson was allocated the entire royalties of ‘Flowers in the Rain’ in perpetuity.
discredit him? If he did the presence of free market, libertarian, UK figures and US oil magnates amongst their backers would have been significant to him.

When the Maritime Broadcasting Offences Act became law in August 1967, the majority of the ‘pirate’ stations closed and virtually all of the better known DJs and presenters transferred to the new BBC pop station, Radio One. Radio Caroline stayed on the air. By this point Stevens, Smedley and the other publicly known backers had dropped out due to the furore between the Calvert shooting in 1966 and the passing of the Maritime Broadcasting Offences Act. The Radio Caroline operation was now reduced to Ronan O’Rahilly with finance coming from Phil Solomons, an Irish record company owner. Despite this, in March 1968 both Caroline ships went off the air. They were towed back to harbour in Amsterdam following failure by O’Rahilly and/or Solomons to pay for their crew, servicing and maintenance costs while on the air.

Radio Caroline never produced the profits expected by its backers in its early years. Its final financial crisis in 1967-1968 seems to have been exacerbated by O’Rahilly diversifying into film production. He spent a great deal of time in 1968 as Executive Producer for the film ‘Girl on a Motor

22 Solomons owned and ran Major Minor records which had an early success with the Irish protest singer David McWilliams and his single ‘Days of Pearly Spencer’. This was played continually on Radio Caroline and as a result charted everywhere in Europe. It was not played on Radio One due to the involvement of Major Minor with Radio Caroline and was not, therefore, a hit in the UK. Major Minor achieved a no. 1 hit in the UK in November 1969 (at a time when Radio Caroline was no longer broadcasting) with ‘Je T’Aime Mois Non Plus’ by Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin – the first instance of a record that was banned everywhere and impossible to hear on the radio reaching the top of the charts.
Cycle’ which starred Marianne Faithful and Alain Delon. Very much a European prototype for ‘Easy Rider’ and its slew of imitators, it gave an indication of the direction that O’Rahilly would now follow.

**Dee time**

Simon Dee left Radio Caroline in 1965 and joined the BBC Light Programme where he worked successfully as a record presenter. He later became one of several figures hosting Top of the Pops before being given his own BBC TV chat show, ‘Dee Time’, in April 1967. Down to the present day, the many other programmes of this type still follow the original ‘Dee Time’ formula: a mixture of live music and interviews with contemporary celebrities, politicians and cultural figures. It was hugely popular. On one occasion an audience figure as high as 18 million was recorded. While Radio Caroline passed into temporary obscurity, Dee enjoyed enormous success, covering the 1967 Miss World competition and being seen in the company of Princess Margaret. In 1969, though, he angered the BBC by demanding a pay rise. They dropped ‘Dee Time’ and he switched to London Weekend TV where he started a new series, ‘The Simon Dee Show’, in January 1970. On 28 February 1970 Dee hosted an episode in which he interviewed George Lazenby and Diana Rigg, the stars of the then current James Bond film ‘On Her Majesty’s Secret Service’. Lazenby, who was managed by Ronan O’Rahilly, used his appearance on the show to speak at some length about the

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23 ‘Girl on a Motorcycle’, known as ‘Naked Under Leather’ in the US, was based on an obscure French novel in which a young woman rejects bourgeois conformism and rides across Europe on a motorbike visiting various lovers whilst wearing a one piece leather jump-suit. The film was moderately successful despite, or because of, being described as ‘sub-porn claptrap’.

24 Dee said at the time that he was leaving Radio Caroline ‘while the going was good’ possibly an indication of the parlous state of the station’s finances and of the looming legislation to ban it.
assassination of JFK. He named a number of living US public figures as having played a role in the killing. This was an extraordinary direction for a piece of TV to take in 1970 but ‘The Simon Dee Show’ was broadcast live and not pre-recorded and/or edited as would be the case today. London Weekend TV told Dee immediately after the programme that his show would not be continued and that his contract was being terminated. The curtailment of ‘The Simon Dee Show’ ended Dee’s television career.

Challenging Harold again

Whatever the circumstances behind the demise of Simon Dee’s TV career, both Dee and O’Rahilly – and Radio Caroline – reappeared in public life in the run up to the 1970 general election. The background to this episode was intriguing.

When Radio London ceased broadcasting in August 1967

25 Various accounts say that Lazenby was either drunk, stoned or tripping while making these statements. Dee himself was known to be a regular cannabis user at this time, something that may have accounted for the freewheeling and slightly disorganised nature of some of his shows. This was not the first time Dee had been associated with the murder of JFK. In 1969 he had tried to get a copy of the Zapruder film for broadcasting on Dee Time.

26 A discussion of the little that is known about this episode is at <http://educationforum.ipbhost.com/lofiversion/index.php/t14731.htm>.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that LWT was not unhappy to have a reason to fire Dee. His audience was falling. Further, one of LWT’s shareholders, David Frost, also had a chat show (in a similar format) on the station and was trying to break into the American market. He may have surmised that this would be less likely to occur if he could not demonstrate that action had been taken about the antics of Dee and Lazenby.

The media in 1970 had not yet left behind the era of Reithian deference and was quite capable casting into oblivion individuals who committed minor infractions or told inappropriate jokes. Kenny Everett was sacked by the BBC in 1970 for speculating about whether or not the wife of the Minister of Transport (John Peyton MP) had bribed a driving instructor £5 so that she could pass her driving test.
its owners, the Radio Church of God, offered the vessel to two Swiss businessmen, Edwin Bollier and Erwin Meister, with extensive interests in the electronics industry. Ultimately they decided against purchasing Radio London and fitted out their own ship instead, the SS Mebo II, with transmitting equipment twice the power of anything previously carried by either Radio London or Radio Caroline. Named Radio North Sea International, it took up station off the coast of Essex in January 1970 and began broadcasting. Despite Post Office jamming from April 1970 it remained on the air. Ronan O’Rahilly contacted the owners in early May 1970 and persuaded them to rename the station Radio Caroline International during the immediate run up the 18 June 1970 UK general election and to explicitly endorse the Conservative Party.

There was a straightforward reason for this. The Conservative opposition, under Edward Heath, had included in its manifesto proposals to introduce legislation to licence a number of privately owned commercial radio stations across the UK.27 As well as using Radio Caroline International to relay the vote-Conservative-not-Labour message, O’Rahilly and Dee also took a road show around selected UK parliamentary constituencies in a double decker bus covered with pictures of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung on which the face of Harold Wilson had been superimposed. O’Rahilly said of this later:

‘I have had some very heavy battles, politically, very heavy battles. The biggest one was with Labour in 1970. I produced 5 million posters. I fought in a 100 marginal constituencies in the UK. We had double decker buses all over, we had hundreds of thousands of young people handing out leaflets.’ 28

27 The first independent local radio stations – as they were called by the Heath government – were set up in October 1973 in London (LBC and Capital Radio) and December 1973 in Glasgow (Radio Clyde).
28 Interview at <www.offshoreechos.com/oem_interviews-01.htm>
As Labour had been consistently ahead in the polls by as much as 49% to 42%, most political observers were taken by surprise when Heath won the 1970 general election. Various explanations were advanced then and subsequently for this unexpected outcome. The key factor in all of them is a recognition that the UK electorate of the time were actually more conservative and traditional than either the Wilson government of 1964-1970 or the political intelligentsia realised; and that the extremely rapid social, economic and cultural change during this period alienated a section of the population without affecting the outcome of contemporary opinion polls (which were in any event less sophisticated than those of today). In this context the role of Radio Caroline International and the O’Rahilly/Dee road show in May and June 1970 may have been more significant than was generally realised at the time. Harold Wilson evidently thought so – he is reputed to have vowed to ‘finish off’ O’Rahilly during the election campaign. But dealing with O’Rahilly – a citizen of Eire, who resided overseas – was not straightforward. Simon Dee was an easier target. Wilson and the Labour Party made a formal complaint to the police that Dee had broken electoral law by campaigning in a partisan fashion during and election without submitting expenses. As late as December 1970 Dee was still being questioned by the Special Branch on this subject, though charges were never brought.

Loving Awareness

While Dee assisted the police with their enquiries O’Rahilly

Re rapid change in the 1960s: between 1963 and 1971 the following occurred: the end of National Service, the abolition of the death penalty, decolonisation, legalisation of homosexuality and abortion, the closure of 50% of the national rail network, the reconstruction and demolition of numerous town centres, the development of tower blocks, the appearance of large, visible ethnic minority communities in the UK, decimalisation and the announcement that metrication would follow.
pursued his career as a film producer. He steered George Lazenby away from starring in any more films in the James Bond series, persuading Lazenby that plots in which a solitary British agent continually demonstrated amazing prowess in beating the enemies of the West were of declining relevance and would not sustain their box office appeal. Instead of this O’Rahilly assembled the funding for ‘Universal Soldier’, intended originally as a starring vehicle for George Lazenby and Jimi Hendrix. Unfazed by the death of Hendrix, the film continued in production with Lazenby playing an amoral mercenary whose services are sought by various post-colonial states in Africa. The female lead opposite Lazenby was played by Germaine Greer. In the film Greer gets Lazenby to see the error of his ways and persuades him to follow an alternative life style.30  ‘Universal Soldier’ was an expensive film to make and had only limited box office success when released in early 1971. This, together with the clear inaccuracy of O’Rahilly’s advice on the longevity and appeal of the Bond franchise, led to Lazenby dismissing him as his manager.

With his career as a mainstream film producer over, O’Rahilly finally paid off most of the debts that had encumbered the original Radio Nord/MV Olga vessel and the ship sailed from Amsterdam and started broadcasting off the coast of Essex, as Radio Caroline, once more. Initially and anachronistically the station played in 1972 the same records (and radio commercials) that it had broadcast in 1967-1968.

In March 1974 O’Rahilly completely revamped the format

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30 Greer came to prominence in 1968 as co-presenter, with Kenny Everett, of the TV series ‘Nice Time’. She was also a contributor to *Suck*, a sex magazine published in Amsterdam and banned in the UK, and *OZ*, which was run by a fellow Australian Richard Neville. *OZ* at one point published a photograph of her vagina. In ‘Universal Soldier’ Greer appears in hot pants, smokes cannabis and has a lot of sex with Lazenby. During this time she was also a lecturer at Warwick University. A profile of her in *Rolling Stone* while they were making *Universal Soldier* is at <www.ibiblio.org/mal/MO/philm/germaine/>
and launched his latest business venture – the Loving Awareness concept. This involved switching the Radio Caroline play lists to the type of AOR (adult orientated rock) that was popular in the US but hardly heard at all in Europe at that time and specifically promoting with it the benefits of a meditative, West Coast-style hippy culture. As part of this project O’Rahilly put together and funded a rock group that he hoped would promote this concept with their music. This was the Loving Awareness Band who were eventually unveiled to the media in simultaneous press conferences at the Hilton Hotel in Amsterdam (this event being hosted by Simon Dee) and the World Trade Centre in New York in May 1976. These events were largely ignored by the UK media but were covered very extensively in Europe and also by 3 major US TV stations. The publicity that O’Rahilly had devised for the launch went to great lengths to proclaim that the Loving Awareness Band were as good as the Beatles and would be acclaimed – like the Beatles had been in the 1960s – as the dominant musical force in western culture in the years to come. The Loving Awareness Band duly went to Palm Springs, California, where they recorded an LP that was released on the Dutch Phonogram label in September 1976. Despite being broadcast continually on Radio Caroline it did not sell in significant quantities. A limited number of live appearances by the group across Europe did not promote sales either.

What was striking about Loving Awareness even at the time was how out of kilter it was with everyday existence in the UK in the mid 1970s and how musically conservative the

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31 By 1976 Dee’s career was in low gear. He had spent a period in prison for debt and had not been regularly employed for some time.
32 The members of the Loving Awareness Band were not the Beatles but were certainly seasoned session musicians. The core of the group came from the North East of England and had formerly been in Skip Bifferty, a moderately successful psychedelic band in the period 1967-1969. One track by the Loving Awareness Band can be heard on <www.youtube.com>.
material performed by the Loving Awareness Band sounded when compared to what was available from other artists at that time. The changing fashions of the mid 1970s and the lack of any relevance that Loving Awareness had to its audience meant that it fizzled out. In August 1977 the Loving Awareness Band left O’Rahilly and became the Blockheads, backing band to Ian Dury, and a very different, more accessible and more successful musical entity altogether.

Fade out

Gordon McLendon and Clint Murchison Junior remained prominent figures in Texas business and politics throughout the 1960s and 70s. McLendon became of interest to the continuing investigation of who had killed President Kennedy in Dallas in November 1963. It was noted that McLendon was known to Jack Ruby, who made a point of asking to speak to him directly after his arrest for killing Lee Harvey Oswald. McLendon was also alleged to have provided funding to help establish the Intercontinental Penetration Force (a.k.a. Interpen) – a private sector sponsored mercenary group that attempted to overthrow Fidel Castro in 1961-1962. McLendon was also a friend of David Atlee Philips, arguably one of the CIA’s most influential figures in the post-war period. He helped Philips establish the Association of Former Intelligence Officers in 1975, during the aftermath of the Watergate affair, when the reputations of many in the CIA and their supporters on the political right in the US were at a low

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33 Loving Awareness was launched at a time when groups like Dr Feelgood, Kraftwerk and Can had just achieved commercial success. By November-December 1976 the first records by Blondie, the Damned and the Sex Pistols had been issued in the UK.

34 Ruby was a frequent visitor to McLendon’s radio station KLIF. This has led some commentators to speculate that McLendon and Ruby were connected to the group of people who organised and carried out the Kennedy assassination.

35 See <www.cuban-exile.com>
ebb. Clint Murchison Junior is less well known and after he inherited his father’s considerable fortune in 1969 he devoted himself to his extensive business interests.36

The loans affair
Allan Crawford returned to his chain of record shops in London and his music publishing business after ending his involvement with Radio Caroline in 1966. His career prospered: in the late 1960s he was responsible for the ‘Top of the Pops’ series of LPs issued on the Pickwick label. These were sold at a budget price and contained cover versions of contemporary hit records. In the mid 1970s he reappeared in Australia as the business partner of and official spokesman for Tirath Khemlani. In 1974 Khemlani offered a substantial loan – ostensibly from sources in Saudi Arabia – to the Gough Whitlam government at a time when, like every other country in the western world, Australia was battling with inflation and a shortage of funds for key investment projects. The loan was designed to reduce the dependence of Australia on raising funds from US banks, to access sources of funds outside the jurisdiction of the various US dominated financial institutions (such as the World Bank and the IMF) and also to circumvent the bureaucratic attitudes and restrictions of the Australian Treasury. The Whitlam government did not instigate the negotiations with Khemlani, never received the money, and never paid commission to either Khemlani or Crawford. After awaiting the appearance of the Saudi funds in 1974-1975 (which failed to materialise), Whitlam switched instead to the conventional approach of requesting a loan from a US bank, which insisted as part of its requirements that any other loan

36 Clint Murchison Snr. was a major business figure in the US from the 1930s onward. He was a friend of J. Edgar Hoover and Lyndon B. Johnson. There are numerous postings on the Web detailing a gathering that he supposedly organised in Dallas on 21 November 1963.
negotiations were ceased. By late 1975 details of the Khemlani loan had been leaked to the Australian press, causing considerable embarrassment to the Whitlam government and playing a factor in its eventual removal by the governor-general of Australia.\textsuperscript{37} An involvement in these events, even if marginal, was quite a career step for Crawford given his prior role in producing Pickwick Top of the Pops Vol. 8 (or similar), complete with a sleeve showing a girl in a bikini, and destined for sale to unsuspecting shoppers in Woolworth’s.

Jocelyn Stevens relinquished any involvement in Radio Caroline in 1965 and in 1968 sold \textit{Queen} magazine to the Hearst Corporation, the owners of \textit{Harpers}, the longest established high society magazine in the US. Stevens moved to Beaverbrook Newspapers where he became Managing Director of \textit{The Evening Standard} (1969) and later \textit{The Daily Express} (1972).

Other individuals prominent in the launch of Radio Caroline continued to feature in public life for many years afterwards. For Major Smedley shooting a business rival dead in 1966 did not prove any impediment to continuing his political ambitions. In the 1970 general election he stood as the Liberal Party candidate in Bethnal Green – an area noted for the robust, individualist opinions of its electorate. He remained active in various anti-EEC campaigns throughout the 1970s. His colleague at the Institute of Economic Affairs, Sir Anthony Fisher, became one of the most influential exponents of the renewed right-wing economic liberalism of the late 1970s and early 80s.

37 The Khemlani Loan is covered extensively at <www.theage.com.au> and elsewhere. Khemlani was later detained in the US in 1981 attempting to sell stolen securities.

For the Australian left’s view of the ‘loans affair’ as a CIA operation to discredit the Whitlam government see <www.serendipity.li/cia/cia_oz/cia_oz2.htm>. 

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Ronan O’Rahilly remains a problematic figure and one whose influence is difficult to determine. Partly this is due to his tendency to provide accounts of events that are difficult to verify and often at odds with the recollections of others. Prior to the launch of Radio Caroline he claimed that he ran the Scene Club (he didn’t); that he managed the Beatles for a week (did Brian Epstein know this?); and that he was so annoyed by his failure to secure Georgie Fame a record deal in 1962 or 1963 (details of when are hazy) that he eventually produced a record by Fame on an independent label (there is no proof of this). After Radio Caroline began broadcasting he maintained that the station was named after the daughter of the late John F. Kennedy (it wasn’t). This tendency continued down to the press conferences that launched the Loving Awareness Band in 1976 when various claims were made – equally difficult to either prove or disprove – that the new group had the support of the Beatles. In a nutshell the account that O’Rahilly gives of how Radio Caroline started is designed, in the opinion of some commentators, to draw attention away from who its backers actually were and what their intentions might have been.

Radio Caroline continued broadcasting until early 1980 when a storm beached the vessel on the coast of Essex. The ship was then 60 years old and had not been properly seaworthy for some time. It was towed away and scrapped. O’Rahilly has continued to own and promote Radio Caroline either as a ship-based station or an on-line broadcasting franchise; but in an era with a bewildering array of radio stations it has never matched the popularity and impact that it had between 1964 and 1967.

Gaddafi
The most curious – and dramatic – aftermath of all concerns Radio North Sea International, the station that had broadcast
briefly as Radio Caroline International in 1970. In August 1974 Radio North Sea International went off the air when the Netherlands banned unlicensed offshore radio stations. The ship was then laid up in a Dutch harbour by its owners, Erwin Meister and Edwin Bollier, and eventually sold in February 1977 to the Libyan government. Renamed Radio Jamharia, it anchored off Tobruk and broadcast ‘Libya International in English’, supporting and endorsing the Gaddafi regime, much of it aimed at neighbouring Egypt. This continued until 1984 when the ship was decommissioned, stripped of its fittings and sunk as a target for bombing practice by the Libyan air force.

The extent of the business relationship between Meister, Bollier, their company Mebo Electronics and the government of Libya became clear – and publicly known – at the Lockerbie bombing trial in 2000. Bollier was called as a key witness in the trial, it having been determined that a timer manufactured by Mebo Electronics had detonated the explosives that had brought down Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie on 21 December 1988. Careful procedural arguments made by the prosecution underscored that while Bollier was not being charged at that point as either an accomplice or an accessory, such charges could be made against him at a later date if thought to be justified. Questioned extensively in June 2000, Bollier admitted that he had travelled to Berlin to meet Markus Wolf, the head of the foreign intelligence service of the STASI, in 1970. Mebo Electronics had subsequently supplied detonators, encryption systems, electrical timers, lie detectors and suitcase bombs to East Germany. The view the STASI had of Bollier was interesting: recently released documents from

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38 Radio North Sea International was anchored very near the Orford Ness Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. Orford Ness had a very extensive array of Over the Horizon radar antennae that were used to track Soviet communications and monitor Soviet missile tests. The pirate station could, therefore, have been either interfering with this work or listening in to it on behalf of the eastern bloc.
their archives indicate that they were not sure of his loyalty and thought it possible that he was working for the CIA.

In 1977 Mebo Electronics broadened its interests to Libya and supplied significant amounts of the same equipment to the Gaddafi regime. As well as a straightforward trading relationship the company was also used by Libya as a means of passing loans to organisations and individuals that Libya wished to fund. Bollier admitted that Mebo Electronics rented office space to Abdelbaset Al Megrahi, the man eventually convicted of the bombing, in the building it used as its HQ. The trend of the questioning that was put to Bollier evidently unnerved him. In the later stages of his testimony he made clear, through his lawyer, that if charges were brought or considered against him he would call an extensive array of witnesses on his behalf. This list included Colonel Oliver North, President George Bush Snr., General von Tenda (the former head of BOSS the South African intelligence service), Gerrit Pretorious (formerly secretary to President Pik Botha of South Africa) and a range of other individuals including serving CIA officers. It is not clear that these witnesses would have attended if requested to do so, what connection if any they had with Bollier. It is possible that if the Lockerbie bombing is subject to a full enquiry – as some hope – Edwin Bollier may yet be questioned further about his trading activities in the 1970s and 80s. The events listed above certainly make a deeper evaluation of the activities of Radio North Sea International between 1970 and 1974 of interest.39

Postscript

In December 2003 Channel 4 TV broadcast ‘DeeConstruction’, a discussion programme involving Simon Dee that analysed the changes that had occurred to the media since his period of fame and commented on the contemporary prevalence of the

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39 Details of the exchanges involving Bollier at the Lockerbie Trial are at <www.web.archive.org/web/2002110541308/>
celebrity cult. It was followed by a 30 minute, one-off episode of ‘Dee Time’ that used the same format as the 1960s series: live unedited interviews with well known figures and some incidental music. Despite poor reviews it seemed on the night no worse than Jonathan Ross (which has, of course, much more money thrown at it) and Dee himself (contrary to what would later appear about him in his obituaries) appeared modest, not particularly bitter, and intelligent.

The programme did not mention his claims about MI5, the CIA et al in detail but did remind viewers that the specific reason for his demise was being deemed responsible for the broadcasting of George Lazenby’s theories about who killed President Kennedy. What should we make of his claims now? He said he was monitored by the security services. It turns out that this was indeed accurate – and would clearly have been the case anyway due to his closeness to Princess Margaret at one point. (Anyone near the Royals will be looked at by the security services). He was also on record as having made comments on TV about the Prime Minister Harold Wilson that were highly disparaging, and, for the time, regarded as unprofessional. We also know that his electoral antics in 1970 with Ronan O’Rahilly led to a Special Branch investigation. If, as some suppose, Radio North Sea International was an eastern bloc intelligence operation, then Dee touring the UK promoting Radio Caroline International would also have been of interest to them.

Dee also said that the CIA controlled the UK media ‘then and now’. For this the most that can be said is that there is no evidence for such sweeping claims. But given what we know about the peculiar history of how pirate radio came about between 1961 and 1964, what it was intended to promote, the various propaganda programmes that the CIA did run, a statement of this type cannot quite be regarded as the silly conspiracy theory that many would have us believe.
Who let the dogs out?

Alpha Dogs
How political spin became a global business
James Harding

Reviewed by ‘Consultant’

In early 2006, a Nepali citizen was kidnapped by Maoist rebels. He had been carrying out opinion surveys on behalf of (pollster) Stan Greenberg’s US firm, to find out what the Nepali people believed about their country. In return for his release, the Maoists demanded not money, nor the release of political prisoners, but the polling data.¹

The background to this story is told in Alpha Dogs, written by James Harding, a former reporter for the FT, and published just as he was promoted to editor of The Times. His is an important book on the underexplored global influence of US pollsters and ‘political consultants’. Even if not the best possible book on the subject – more later – it is essential reading nonetheless for the light it shines into a shadowy world.

Over recent decades elections all around the world have been subject to international influence managers, known as ‘political consultants’, who are usually based in and share the

¹ Alpha Dogs, p. 227
collective assumptions of Washington. For example, a firm of political consultants (PN & A) once boasted of ‘more than 300 political campaigns and public affairs projects in 40 states and in 33 countries’ (which included South Africa, El Salvador, Poland, Nicaragua and Egypt).²

Harding’s way into this largely unknown political activity is via one set of such practioners and their war stories, from a formerly dominant firm called Sawyer-Miller, the remnants of which are now buried inside Weber Shandwick.³ Minor Wasp film-maker David Sawyer and advertising man Scott Miller (one of the original ‘Mad Men’ responsible for ‘Coke Is It’) met in the 1970s and began working together on local US election campaigns. Some of their initial success came by taking lessons learned from focus groups set up to market mouthwash, and applying these to electioneering. Then they took their tactics – primarily TV ads, non-stop polling and sound bite political messages - further afield, on the premise that ‘The things that drive elections are the same in Nebraska as they are in Ghana.’⁴

By 1982 the Sawyer Miller Group (SMG) was formally launched with vaguely idealistic claims of using modern communications to create a new bond between rulers and ruled, even to topple dictatorships and autocratic governments. Soon SMG had clients around the world and this is where the book grows in importance.

Readers of Lobster have a special interest in US international influence, particularly where it is less than transparent. The international work of US political consultants – some of it under false names in obscure hotel suites booked under cover identities – lies somewhere on a spectrum which runs from, at one end, boasting loudly of your influence as a

²  <http://web.archive.org/web/20010202020200/www.pnoble.com>
³  <www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=BSMG_Worldwide>
⁴  Mark McKinnon, the Sawyer Miller alumnus responsible for George W Bush’s 2000 and 2004 ad campaigns, quoted in Alpha Dogs p. 7.
friend of the candidate;\(^5\) to the activities of such organisations as George Soros’ pro-democracy Open Society Institution; through the somewhat dubious *National Endowment for Democracy*;\(^6\) to finally (and hardly referenced by Harding) the CIA’s strategic tilt over the last 30 years from covert to overt, from ‘Quiet Americans’ to ‘democracy-building’ and other euphemisms.\(^7\)

It is to the considerable discredit of the journalistic profession that far too little of this important activity has been discussed to date, except of course when consultants want it written about \(^8\) (presumably in order to drum up new business). One might say that while perhaps too much has been written recently on ‘spin’,\(^9\) with diminishing returns, far too little has come out in public about the deeper influence of these international consultancies, who hide behind the arras yet claim somehow to change the history of the world.

Harding’s book is at least a first draft of some parapolitical narratives, filling in important detail and telling some important new stories. He writes, for instance, on various Israeli elections (including Shimon Peres against Begin, when SMG were brought in by the Bronfman family);\(^10\) Peru

\(^5\) Lord Gould – former (?) pollster Philip Gould – is a prime example in the UK.
\(^6\) The shadier activities of the NED are comprehensively discussed at e.g. <www.iefd.org>
\(^7\) See William Blum *Rogue State*, chapter 18, for a detailed account of what Blum calls US ‘attempts to overthrow more than 50 foreign governments, most of which had been democratically elected’ (listed at <http://killinghope.org/bblum6/overthrow.htm>).
\(^8\) In Mexico, rival candidates boast of the importance of ‘their’ US consultants whereas in France, for example, the presence of a US consultant is an election-losing secret.
\(^9\) Despite the subtitle of the book, possibly inserted by the publisher, Harding is not really interested in ‘spin’, which apart from anything else is first and foremost a British term (derived from cricket).
\(^10\) A short but useful academic overview has since been published – see ‘Falafel and Apple Pie’, Dahlia Scheindlin and Israel Waismel-Manor (in *Routledge Handbook of Political Management*, 2009)
1990, where their novelist candidate Mario Vargas Llosa ignored their advice and an apparently impregnable lead evaporated;\textsuperscript{11} Venezuela, where they were allowed to spend 10 times more per head than in the US (their candidate still lost); South Korea where they worked for Kim Dae-Jung (who they encouraged to leave politics for a few years before returning to campaigning with a nomination for a Nobel Peace Prize under his belt: he won the presidency in 1997); Chile, guiding the country to come out against the dictatorship of General Pinochet (with Soros again hovering in the background, SMG services never came cheap); Czech Republic (Vaclav Havel) and Poland (Lech Walesa).

\textbf{In the UK?}

As well as working across the world from Colombia to Nigeria, did SMG come to the UK? Yes, though the little Harding tells us is not as revealing as it might be: a leading US consultant has said he was working for the Labour party, courtesy of Patricia Hewitt, long before the well-known 1990s assistance from the Clintonites (this is still supposed to be a secret\textsuperscript{12}). This influence has continued: after the Iraq war Labour paid £530,372 to Mark Penn, a Washington-based adviser to Hillary Clinton. During the run-up to the 2005 election Penn ran secret polling of British voters from his company’s call centre in Denver while he stayed at the Waldorf Hotel in London and advised Tony Blair.\textsuperscript{13}

Harding tells us a lot which is new about the toppling of President Marcos by former convent girl Corazon Aquino in

\textsuperscript{11} Already told by Vargas Llosa himself in his wonderful memoir \textit{A Fish in the Water} (1994), as well as by his son Alvaro in Granta in 1991.


\textsuperscript{13} After the election, Blair sent Penn a signed photograph declaring: ‘Mark, you were brilliant. Thank you.’ In ‘The Price of Spin’, David Charter and Sam Coates, \textit{The Times}, 25 April 2006.
1986. Aquino ran when her husband – Marcos’ political rival – was murdered at Manila airport on his return to challenge the president.\textsuperscript{14} SMG sent Mark Malloch Brown, a journalist with a South African background who had worked for \textit{The Economist}.\textsuperscript{15} Malloch Brown developed what SMG called a ‘backboard shot’: if one can’t feed a story to state-controlled media, play it off the international media, knowing the local press will feel honour bound to report the coverage. ‘Our one access to daylight was the US media and its knock on to the Filipino media...It was a huge, huge stitch-up.’\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Iran 2009}

Harding’s description of the events of Manila 1986 may shed some light on the still under-explored Iranian elections of 2009 and on the uncertainty in the days and weeks which followed.\textsuperscript{17} The re-elected Iranian President (‘no gays in Iran’) Ahmadinejad\textsuperscript{18} has – since his success in holding power in disputedly ‘democratic’ elections\textsuperscript{19} – claimed there was international interference in the election process, by which he probably means by the US. But just because the Iranian government claims interference – and indeed hosts ‘show trials’ of suspected perpetrators – this does not automatically

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Marcos had himself been assisted by a US consultant, Joseph Napolitan, when running for President in 1969. See \textit{Alpha Dogs} p. 120.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Former Cabinet Minister Baron Malloch-Brown, recently UN Deputy Secretary General and then at the FCO, who stopped working for Gordon Brown’s Labour government earlier this year.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Malloch-Brown, quoted in \textit{Alpha Dogs} p. 130.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Just as the Shah’s Persia was perhaps the only state ever brought down by cassette, the present Iranian government will go down in history for playing ‘The Lord of the Rings’ on state television to coax potential street protestors into staying at home.
\item \textsuperscript{18} This is true in the sense that once discovered Iranian homosexuals are executed or forced to undergo a sex change.
\item \textsuperscript{19} A somewhat curious designation: Freedom House places Iran in the company of China, Russia, Zimbabwe, Cuba and Libya when it comes to political freedoms and civil liberties (democracy is famously not only about voting).
\end{itemize}
mean there was no US interference (which would probably have to be run through the British embassy, as the US have no official base in Tehran).20

Consider two less-discussed events around the June 12 election: first, there has been much talk about the 'spontaneous' Twittering by dissidents and the impact on Iranian voters, but research shows the facts to have been more – let’s call them – complicated21 (or indeed ‘just none of them appear any longer to be true’).22 And in an eerie echo of some SMG campaigns from the past, a major story appeared in the turmoil immediately after this election: it was claimed documents had just emerged (good timing) directly implicating Ahmadinejad in the assassination of a Kurdish opposition leader in Vienna,23 as one member of an Iranian terror commando unit who were responsible for the 1989 execution-style slayings.

Within a fortnight of the election Iran said it had caught the ring-leaders, including Hossein Rassam, an Iranian employed by the British embassy as their chief political analyst; it said those arrested had ‘confessed’ to ‘provoking people, causing tension and creating media chaos.’ 24 At his trial Rassam said ‘the embassy had allocated a budget of

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20 By way of background, see the recent AP report, quoted at <www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/20/kian-tajbakhsh-iranianame_n_326933.html>, and an interesting overview at <http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/banking-on-a-velvet-revolution-1.500985>
22 <http://trueslant.com/joshuakucera/2009/06/15/what-if-we-are-all-wrong-about-iran/>
£300,000 to set up links with political groups, individuals and activists.’\textsuperscript{25}

The willingness of Iran to detain hundreds of people at a time and use torture on them is one side of this story. For the other perhaps Baron Malloch-Brown will comment on the similarities or otherwise with the ‘provocations and media chaos’ generated by the ‘backboard shots’ he orchestrated against Marcos in 1986.

**Weaknesses**

Harding’s book suffers from one major difficulty: the stories told by political consultants are almost inevitably self-serving and are not (so far) backed up by documents accessible to scholars. The book is essentially drawn from what consultants say – Harding says it is based on ‘about two hundred interviews’\textsuperscript{26} – and uses far too little in the form of primary source material (such as background briefing notes for candidates and parties written by the consultants, many of whom came to prominence as academics or journalists and are comfortable with communicating at length on paper). This is not history.

To take one specific example, Harding repeats the claim that the 1996 Russian election was won for Yeltsin by US consultants, who said they had a back channel to Clinton. This is one tale we have heard before: the consultants involved spread their story across the cover of *Time* magazine.\textsuperscript{27} Harding in turn writes that Yeltsin won with ‘the help of

\textsuperscript{25} <www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6788611.ece> It has since been widely reported that Hossein Rassam was sentenced to four years in jail at the end of October 2009.
\textsuperscript{26} *Alpha Dogs* p. 233
\textsuperscript{27} M. Kramer, ‘Rescuing Boris’, *Time*, 15 July 1996.
(pollster Dick) Dresner and his colleagues from California.’ 28

But this is only the consultants’ version, albeit published on the front cover of Time with the line 'Yanks to the rescue'. In reality there is a confusion of accounts as to whether Yeltsin benefited from the work of the consultants, e.g. The New York Times ('when all the real decisions were made, they – the Americans – were not present’ 29) and a White House insider account which refers to the consultants' ‘minuscule influence’.30 Another respected commentator doesn't even mention political consultants, American or not;31 yet another writes that the 1996-1999 period was the ‘era of unlimited flights of fantasy’ 32 for consultants. This confusion has been summarised as ‘No doubt all have strong motives for telling a partial version of what happened, for reasons of commercial advantage, pique, or local or national pride.’ 33 We will need to wait for documents to surface, so that some history can be written, rather than just anecdotes gathered into a book.

Another weakness stems from Harding relying mostly on the more talkative consultants. We know there are Republicans who are effective political consultants, but hear little about them from Harding (most of the few books in the area have been written by those best known for advising Democrat candidates so Harding missed an opportunity to balance the picture). And what of those firms – one prominent UK PR company comes to mind – with a history of working for

28 Alpha Dogs p. 219
29 New York Times 9 July 1996
dictatorships, in Africa and elsewhere? Being led by SMG consultants means Harding shows us only one kind of client and one kind of work.

There is a further problem, deeper than just the unreliable evidence on which Harding relies. Some academic accounts suggest the US may in fact have had less influence – there may be less ‘Americanization’ of politics – than Harding assumes.\textsuperscript{34} Perhaps local – e.g. national – politics is more resilient and resistant to outside influence than SMG would claim.

Nonetheless David Sawyer and Scott Miller were among the first to understand the power of television to influence elections,\textsuperscript{35} which they called ‘electronic democracy’. Even if there has been a concomitant growth in ‘democratisation’ some of us – Harding included – are sceptical of where this and other aspects of the ‘permanent campaign’ have led us.

This book is about how the world really works and so needs to be read, if only as an inspiration for more research. It closes with another quote from former SMG player Mark Malloch Brown: ‘I am appalled by our legacy’.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} See e.g. the extended discussion in Fritz Plasser with Gunda Plasser, \textit{Global Political Campaigning}, (Westport Conn., Praeger Publishers, 2002).
\textsuperscript{35} TV is no longer at the cutting edge: database manipulation is where it’s at these days, computerised segmentation derived from direct mail and technically known as ‘propensity modelling’.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Alpha Dogs}, p. 224
The construction industry blacklist:
how the Economic League lived on

Phil Chamberlain

One morning in February, two investigators from the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) knocked on the door of The Consulting Association based discretely off an alley in Droitwich, West Midlands. 66-year-old Ian Kerr opened it. The investigators announced they had a search warrant and were coming in. A thirty year covert operation to build a database blacklisting union activists in the construction industry had just come to an end. It was also a vindication of one of the ICO’s most ambitious investigations. The data watchdog took unprecedented legal steps during its eight-month probe. It eventually named more than 40 of the country’s biggest construction companies as having potentially broken data laws. The ramifications led to questions in Parliament and a promise by the Government to outlaw blacklisting.

Throughout the Cold War the most prominent organisation involved in the blacklisting of so-called subversives was the Economic League. It was paid by companies, and worked closely on occasion with Special Branch, to compile databases of individuals. It was wound up in the early 1990s after pressure from the media and Parliament exposed its personnel and flawed operations.¹

Many of its operatives went to ground and the files went

with them. Kerr was one of them. Michael Noar, former director general of the Economic League, told The Guardian that Kerr had worked for the organisation spying on trade unions: ‘He was a key guy. He was one of our most effective research people. His information was genuine and reliable.’

Rumours of blacklists
For years rumours circulated in unions that the construction industry in particular still used blacklists. How they were stored was a mystery. Last summer The Guardian ran an article looking at the issue and talked to some construction workers who said they had been blacklisted. One was Steve Acheson, a 55-year-old electrician from Manchester who had barely worked in a decade. He had won an employment tribunal for wrongful dismissal which, unusually, had accepted evidence that Acheson had been blacklisted.

Part of the evidence came from Alan Wainwright who had worked in management for a number of construction companies. He came across Ian Kerr in 1997 and was told that Kerr was a private investigator employed to carry out checks on staff to identify undesirable employees. Wainwright met Kerr twice and Kerr told him many construction companies supplied him with information.

Wainwright worked for Crown House, Drake and Scull and Haden Young and said he found the same system operating with Kerr at all three. Laing O’Rourke, which now owns Crown House, Emcor, which owns Drake and Scull, and Balfour Beatty, owner of Haden Young, say they do not condone or use blacklists.

After raising concerns about fraud, but disillusioned with the company’s response, Wainwright left Haden Young in

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2006. He launched and lost an employment tribunal and became convinced that he too had been blacklisted. But no-one seemed interested in his story.\(^4\)

However, the *Guardian* article was read by an employee at the Information Commissioner’s Office who brought it into the office. It landed on the desk of investigator David Clancy. On the door to the office he shares with his three fellow investigators, all with police, military or Customs and Excise background, there is a sign saying ‘Abandon hope all ye who enter here’.

Clancy’s first job was to establish if there was a case worth looking into. So he went to talk to Steve Acheson.

‘The day he turned up I had just received a letter turning me down for work,’ said Acheson. ‘I told him he couldn’t have come at a better time. To be honest I didn’t think he would find much. I told him this but he said “Once I get my teeth into something I don’t let go.”’\(^5\)

After getting copies of Acheson’s evidence from his tribunal hearings, Clancy tracked down Alan Wainwright who had a huge amount of information to share. It was clear that there was a *prima facie* case that required investigating.

From the evidence gathered, the ICO investigators believed that Haden Young had information they required. Powers contained in schedule 9 of the Data Protection Act 1998 meant that the ICO could give seven days notice that they would turn up to look for it. Alternatively they could make an application to the Crown Court for a warrant in order to effect an immediate search if they believed that giving a warning would mean evidence being spirited away. This power

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\(^4\) The full details on his case are available at his blog
<www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/may/15/construction-industry-whistleblower-blacklisting-workers>

5  Interview with author.
hadn’t been used before in a case of this kind but a judge granted the search warrant and in September Haden Young was raided. Information was found that ultimately identified The Consulting Association. Now they needed to know more about this organisation.

**The Consulting Association**

David Clancy said:

‘We identified an organisation that held a key piece of information for us. We have powers under Section 58 of the Act to ask an organisation for information for the furtherance of the Commissioners’ duties. We served the section 58 notice. They declined and suggested we get a court order.’

The ICO then considered the unusual step of serving a notice under schedule 9, a demand for access with seven days notice. This hadn’t been done against third parties before.

Recalled Clancy:

‘There was great deal of legal argument about whether we were acting beyond our powers. But we were aware they held evidence and schedule 9 doesn’t say our powers of entry are only against perpetrators.’

As it was the organisation capitulated and gave them the name and address of Kerr and The Consulting Association. It was back to court for another search warrant and the Droitwich raid was on.

More than 40 of the biggest names in the industry had, at one time or another, subscribed. Details on the fees

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6 Interview with the author.
7 It may just be coincidence but the West Midlands seems to be at the heart of both the Economic League and The Consulting Association. The Association was based in Droitwich, Kerr lived in the Bromsgrove area and Caprim, another company set up by ex-League members and involved in vetting, was based in Alcester, Warwickshire. It was run by Jack Winder, a freemason in the county.
charged by The Consulting Association and the names of the subscribing firms were released by the Information Commissioner’s Office. They were:

Amec Building Ltd
Amec Construction Ltd
Amec Facilities Ltd
Amec Ind Div
Amec Process & Energy Ltd
Amey Construction – Ex Member
B Sunley & Sons – Ex Member
Balfour Beatty
Balfour Kilpatrick
Ballast (Wiltshire) PLc – Ex Member
Bam Construction (HBC Construction)
Bam Nuttall (Edmund Nuttall Ltd)
C B & I
Cleveland Bridge UK Ltd
Costain UK Ltd
Crown House Technologies
(Carillion/Tarmac Const)
Diamond M & E Services
Dudley Bower & Co Ltd – Ex Member
Emcor (Drake & Scull) – ‘Ex Ref’
Emcor Rail
G Wimpey Ltd – Ex Member
Haden Young
Kier Ltd
John Mowlem Ltd – Ex Member
Laing O’Rourk (Laing Ltd)
Lovell Construction (UK) Ltd – Ex Member
Miller Construction Limited – Ex Member
Morgan Ashurst
Morgan Est
Morrison Construction Group – Ex Member
Yet for all the money flowing in the investigators were confronted by a shabby two-room office. The furniture dated from the 1970s and 1980s, with an electric typewriter on one of the desks and a sophisticated photocopying machine.

Almost immediately one of the investigators found a ring binder in a rather tatty plastic cover. Inside it were names, addresses and national insurance numbers. Then they found a card index. It very much resembled the way a police local intelligence filing system might work. It was organised alphabetically and each card related to a name in the folder. There were files on 3,213 construction workers. Clancy describes seizing the database as being ‘like Christmas’.

‘This had been going on for years,’ he said. ‘Steve Acheson and others had never been able to get to bottom of it but suddenly we had got an answer. It was a nice feeling.’

Kerr subsequently pleaded guilty before magistrates in

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8 [www.ico.gov.uk/for_the_public/topic_specific_guides/consulting_association.aspx]
9 Interview with the author
Macclesfield to breaking data protection laws. He could not be prosecuted for blacklisting because at the time it was not against the law. The government had included the provision in the 1999 Employment Act but never formally brought that clause forward. It said there was no evidence that blacklisting existed and that this was reaffirmed when it carried out a consultation in 2003.

In court
Magistrates were unimpressed by Kerr’s absence at the court hearing and the limited information they were offered on how The Consulting Association was organised. They described their sentencing powers as ‘wholly inadequate’ and referred the case to Crown Court for sentencing. When Kerr appeared before Knutsford Crown Court weeks later he was given a £5,000 fine which was condemned by almost all involved, including the Information Commissioner, as derisory.

Following the case the ICO did issue enforcement notices against 14 companies which had subscribed to The Consulting Association:
Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Limited
Balfour Beatty Construction Northern Limited
Balfour Beatty Construction Scottish & Southern Limited
Balfour Beatty Engineering Services (HY) Limited
Balfour Beatty Engineering Services Limited
Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Services Limited
CB&I UK Limited
Emcor Engineering Services Limited

10 See <www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/may/27/construction-worker-blacklist-database1>
11 The background is set out in the consultation document issued by the government this summer which reverses that position and now proposes making blacklisting illegal. See <www.berr.gov.uk/consultations/page52145.html>
12 See <www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/jul/16/companies-warning-trade-union-blacklist>
Emcor Rail Limited
Kier Limited
NG Bailey Limited
Shepherd Engineering Services Limited
SIAS Building Services Limited
Whesoe Oil & Gas Limited

Essentially these are warnings against their future handling of personal data. There was no other sanction. Despite calls by some councils that named firms shouldn’t get public sector contracts this has not been followed through.

The companies named have responded with some shows of contrition but generally a steadfast refusal to admit any significant wrongdoing. It is fair to say that in most companies the employment of Kerr would have been kept very quiet. The fact that a particular firm had paid for the services of The Consulting Association came as genuine shock to some.

**Kerr and the Economic League**

The Knutsford hearing confirmed several details about Kerr and The Consulting Association. His solicitor admitted that Kerr had worked for the Economic League and, when that folded, The Consulting Association had been set up by construction firms to continue its secret vetting work. Kerr was paid to run the organisation which was not registered as a company but was described by his solicitor as a trade association – a meaningless term. Quite where the hundreds of thousands of pounds in fees went is unclear. Kerr told the court he only

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13 This article in *Construction News* is a useful summary: <www.cnplus.co.uk/hot-topics/legal/firms-distance-themselves-from-data/5205466.article>

14 One aspect that has not been fully explored is the role of human resources managers. So far that sector does not appear to have taken on many of the lessons or accepted any culpability for the Kerr scandal. See <www.berr.gov.uk/consultations/page52145.html>
earned around £46,000 a year. Further details on the operation of the association are buried in the government’s consultation document issued in the summer on changes to outlaw blacklisting.

Presumably relying on information from the ICO (which has found Kerr to be reasonably co-operative) the document says:

‘The TCA began its vetting activity in 1994 when it acquired information about individuals from a source unknown to the IC. Judged by the age of the information held by the TCA, it appears that a system of this kind was operated for at least 30 years. While that system may have been used more intensively in the past it was by no means dormant.

Around 40,000 checks on individuals were undertaken by the TCA during 2008 at the request of member companies. New material has also been added to the database in recent years.’

Indeed McAlpine’s largest checks were made when it won the contract to build the Olympic stadium.

The report continued:

‘The TCA is a membership-based body, and when it folded earlier this year, about 25 companies were members, some of which seem to have used the TCA to a small extent only.

These members made various payments to the TCA, including an annual fee of £3,000 and in most cases they also paid a fee of £2.20 for each check on an individual. Member companies appear to have been actively involved in governing the TCA’s activities, and their designated persons were invited to annual and quarterly meetings convened by the TCA. The TCA was chaired by a representative of the member companies.’

15 <www.berr.gov.uk/consultations/page52145.html>
The process by which people were checked was described by an investigator as exactly the same as the one used by the Economic League two decades earlier as described in the exposé *Spies At Work*.16

‘Before engaging staff in future, a call should be made to 01-681-7346, code number 555, and they will require the full names, the area of living, date of birth and National Insurance number of the proposed employee. You give him the code number, you do not give the company's name or mention it. If there is the slightest suggestion of any information held against the proposed employee from this source you do not engage.’

*Spies at Work* describes the ‘service group’ of the Economic League as an arm specifically for the construction and associated industries where special funding for dedicated staff was in place. The list of members of this group contains many of the past and present subscribers to the TCA's services.

One unforeseen by-product of the ICO’s investigation has been the disclosure of files to the individuals concerned. Some within the ICO argued that they constituted evidence and should be treated as such and not touched. Instead the ICO has turned data controller. Anyone who thinks they might have a file can ring a hotline and, once confirmed, they receive a photocopy of their file. The names of any individuals are blanked out but other than that the file is as the TCA constructed it. As of November 2009, around 1,800 had rung the hotline and some 230 files disclosed. That still leaves several thousand unclaimed.17

And what kind of files are we talking about? The best analysis has been carried out by the ICO and it is estimated that about three-quarters of the files concern trade unionists and activities associated with trade unions. Professor Keith

16 *Spies At Work*, chapter 9. See note 1 above.
17 Information to the author from the ICO.
Ewing, from the Institute of Employment Rights, studied a number of files after he was commissioned by the building union UCATT to write a report on the issue. 18

‘I was deeply offended at the amount of intimate and personal detail so meticulously gathered,’ he said. ‘At the same time some of the files were hopelessly inconsistent.’ 19

The files were card indexes, sometimes with newspaper clippings or photos attached. Each person had their National Insurance number and other personal data to identify them. The source of the information was hidden by code numbers although Kerr has given a list of these to the ICO. 20

Steve Kelly, 43, from Essex, was one who received a copy of his file. The 18 page document runs from 1998-2007 and includes minutes from a union branch meeting along with allegations that Kelly was a ‘trouble maker’, involved in ‘intimidating workers to join the union’, ‘threatening supervisors’, and even ‘writing abuse on the toilet walls.’

Dave Smith, 44, has a large file which starts in 1999 and includes details on the car he drove, newspaper clippings and union correspondence. He says:

‘The file specifically identifies incidents when I raised health and safety concerns. At no point in the file is my competence as an engineer ever questioned. I believe the folder is *prima facie* evidence of deliberate and vindictive discrimination and victimisation.’ 21

Mick Dooley, whose employment tribunal case against Balfour Beatty alleging blacklisting will be heard in the New Year, said:

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18 *Ruined Lives: Blacklisting in the construction industry*. See <www.ier.org.uk/node/433>
19 Interview with the author.
20 For instance 3271/81 stood for Crown House Technologies; 3221/X stood for SPIE; 3223 for Balfour Beatty; 3286 for Emcor (Drake and Scull) and 3292/R for Emcor Rail
21 Interview with the author.
'A secret file was kept on me with damming false information, some of which could have come from government sources. Details of my movements, phone calls and conversation I had, all found their way back to my blacklist file.'

John Winstanly, 66, from Liverpool, found that his file dated back to 1975 when it was started by the Economic League. That would have been at the time when the League actively worked with Special Branch to share information. So far there has been no indication that such links were formed with The Consulting Association.

Michael Anderson discovered that on his file there was a note saying that the union Amicus had recommended he not be employed. Several of those who have received their files have raised concerns that information appears to have come from union officials. Anderson said:

'I have written and asked Unite the union to conduct an independent inquiry into who “of Amicus” was responsible for supplying information that I was “not recommended” by my own trade union. I have received no reply.I have also asked how other privileged detailed information about which members attended union branch meetings and discussions held at branch fell into the hands of The Consulting Association. I have received no plausible reply.'

The blacklisted construction workers are taking court cases on

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22 Interview with author. Dooley has a number of interesting stories to tell about the harassment he received as a union activist. That includes pornographic material posted to his home and a message left on his home answering machine insinuating an affair which was traced back to an employee of the Canadian Embassy.

23 No evidence has been offered to substantiate rumours that Kerr was a former Special Branch officer, though little is known about his past.

24 Interview with author and speech given at supporters group meeting
a number of different avenues. The most popular is an employment tribunal and enough have been started for them to be lumped together into one hearing. Some are looking at action under the Data Protection Act; others through the Human Rights Act. A firm of solicitors has engaged a QC who is an expert on data protection to bring a class action civil claim.

It is likely that a number of these cases will fall by the wayside before they see the inside of a court room. There are high thresholds to meet for these cases to succeed. Nonetheless a few may get to see a construction firm in the dock.

The other way that companies may be forced to explain a bit more about how the blacklisting system worked is by a Parliamentary inquiry. John McDonnell MP told a meeting of the Blacklist Support Group that he wanted to see a public inquiry into what he described as ‘one of the worst ever cases of organised abuses of human rights in the UK.’

And one way to get that might be through Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights. McDonnell will ask Andrew Dismore MP, whose chairs the committee if he will look into the issue. The committee, made up of a dozen members from both houses, undertakes inquiries on human rights issues and reports its findings and recommendations to the House.\textsuperscript{25}

What people are waiting for is the government to publish the new rules aimed at outlawing blacklisting as it pledged to do back in 1999. Many Labour MPs were shocked to find that Kerr could only be prosecuted under data protection laws because of this anomaly. Ministers at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, led by Lord Mandelson, have promised to make the rules tough. However the draft regulations appear to have a number of loopholes.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} See \texttt{<www.hazards.org/blacklistblog/2009/10/21/push-to-strengthen-blacklist-law/>}

\textsuperscript{26} UCATT press release. Prof. Ewing (see above) also has strong criticisms of the proposals.
Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, who has his own file, said:

‘For example many of those blacklisted were due to health and safety issues, therefore the regulations should cover all activities associated with trade unions. The regulations should also stipulate that if a blacklist is discovered all those blacklisted should be informed of that fact and receive automatic compensation.’

Also, the rules do not also give people a right not to be blacklisted.

Back at the ICO there is a feeling of satisfaction at how this particular investigation has panned out. It is seen as a case which has helped make its reputation. It’s easy to forget that at a number of points it could have ground to a halt. It may not even have started if the ICO employee hadn’t seen the newspaper article. The hearing before the judge was setting a precedent and could have failed. When the sudden search of the construction company was made, Kerr was still untouched. A simple phone call would have alerted him to the ICO’s interest. If one was made he didn’t stop. Indeed material continued to be added to his database subsequently. Even on the day his premises were raided the investigators only got in because the owner of an adjoining property let them in through a communal door. ‘The stars must have been all aligned,’ says Dave Clancy.

Despite the proposed regulations, uncovering future abuses may require similar levels of luck.

To see if The Consulting Association held a file on you ring the ICO’s helpline on 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 545745 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday and choose option 1.

27 UCATT press release. Prof Ewing also has strong criticisms of the proposals.
For ongoing coverage of this issue see the blog run by Hazards magazine <www.hazards.org/blacklistblog/> or the author’s blog <http://takingoutthetrash.typepad.co.uk/>

Photographs by the author relating to this story can be seen at <www.computerweekly.com/galleries/236324-1/Data-protection-raid-reveals-anti-union-blacklist.htm>

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The economic crisis

Robin Ramsay

The tune changes

The headline in *The Guardian* 29 July 2009 was ‘Mandelson backs British ingenuity to engineer a new industrial age’. Lord Mandelson was quoted as saying:

‘We, like other governments, had taken for granted that our wealth would continue to be generated from the size of the financial sector, and that this would be replicated in the coming decade – but it won’t.’

From the former MP for Hartlepool, the belief that ‘our wealth [had been] generated by the size of the financial sector’, is an astonishing piece of self-delusion. Did Mandelson look round his run-down constituency and think the wealth was coming from financial services?¹

In *The Telegraph* 27 August 2009, ‘Lord Turner puts in focus regulators’ task’, Philip Aldrick stated:

‘financial services accounts for 7.1pc of GDP, our second biggest industry after manufacturing and proportionately one of the largest among leading nations. In the past 10 years, the financial services industry has grown by 1.2 percentage points of GDP. In the same time, manufacturing has shrunk from 19.4pc to 13.3pc of GDP.’

(emphasis added)

¹ As an exercise, ask yourself which economic changes *would* regenerate places like Hartlepool, say, (or Hull, where I live); then ask yourself if those changes are compatible with membership of (a) the World Trade Organisation and (b) the European Union. (Never mind whether or not they would be compatible with lower carbone missions etc.)
So financial services are only 7.1% of GDP. Even after three decades of policies indifferent, if not positively hostile, to manufacturing,\(^2\) and a decade during which a 6% decrease in manufacturing GDP has been traded for a little over 1% increase in financial services, manufacturing remains almost twice the size of the financial sector.\(^3\) Yet it has apparently taken the financial crisis to reveal this simple fact to NuLab. The City will not feed and heat and clothe and employ us all and we have to look elsewhere. So manufacturing is suddenly back on the agenda. At any rate back on the agenda of ministers’ speechwriters.

The delusion about the size of the City is at the centre of the current problem. In so far as there was any theory behind NuLab’s relationship with the City, it was the belief that the City was the UK’s comparative advantage\(^4\) in the world economy as we moved into a post-industrial ‘knowledge economy’. Precisely what this new economy would look like, and how having a financial hub in London was going to benefit – say – the voters of Hartlepool was never explained.

**Fear of the City**

But London-as-world-financial-centre was tied in with another part of NuLab’s economic thinking, the fear of what the City could do to a government it didn’t approve of. Like the City’s size and contribution to the economy, this was also grossly exaggerated. In the days of fixed currencies, yes, the moneylenders could organise ‘a run’ on the pound, and force the government to use reserves or, in the worst case, borrow from the IMF to maintain the value of sterling. But with floating

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\(^2\) A case could be made that the John Major governments did better by manufacturing, thanks due in some part to Ken Clark as chancellor.

\(^3\) Admittedly all these figures are little better than educated guesses and can be inflated/deflated by changing definitions.

currencies, in a global financial economy, in the long run there is little they can do. If the global economy diminishes what governments can do, it also diminishes what cabals of financiers can do. Profit is the only motive in global finance. The data considered by currency traders round the world does not include political approval or disapproval. NuLab didn’t understand this. Their initial posture towards the City was fear mixed with butt-kissing. As chancellor, Gordon Brown may have famously not worn the expected dinner suit for his address at the annual meeting of the City bigwigs, but as his central policy that night he gave them Aleister Crowley’s notorious credo: do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law. NuLab would continue to offer London to the world as a barely regulated financial playground.

And there was an apparent up side for the government: as the City grew, so did its contribution to the exchequer. There has been much talk in the last year of the City as the goose which lays the golden egg, terribly important as a source of taxes to the exchequer, too important to be tampered with. We were told recently that the combined taxes of the financial sector, i.e. the City plus all the rest, in 2007 was £67.8bn, 13.9% of the total. Assume, for the moment, that the figure is genuine, (though, in a report paid for by the City, the chances are good that the figure is overstated). Let us say that half of this, 7%, is generated by the role of the City as a world financial hub. Let us say that NuLab introduced policies which the international banks did not like and half of them unplugged their laptops, put their houses on the market and moved somewhere else. That would only be about 3% of the UK total tax take. Significant, but not crippling so.

5 According to a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the City of London Corporation, the financial sector employs 1.04m people, including 450,000 at the 336 domestic and foreign banks operating in the UK and 320,000 in the City alone. The report is available at <www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/>

6 Thinking along similar but much more detailed and technical lines is a report at <www.cresc.ac.uk/publications/documents/AlternativereportonbankingV2.pdf>
But this government has no intention of tampering with the imaginary golden goose. It has done nothing of substance to reduce London’s role in the next financial bubble and crash. And one there will be: not only because the government will allow banks to carry on as before, but because technology will create one. Computers and clever brains mean that economic trends are almost automatically ‘bubbled’ by the panoply of gambling activities made possible by computers, none of which this government (or the next; or any conceivable British government yet) is thinking of prohibiting.

**The EU to the rescue?**

They may yet not need to: the European Union may do it for them. The EU is discussing proposals for a European Systemic Risk Board and three supervisory bodies: a European Banking Authority, a European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority and a European Securities and Markets Authority, planned to come into being at the end of 2010.

Precisely what these will do, if they get created, is not clear. But the threat is alarming the City’s boosters. In October the Commons Treasury Committee announced ‘an urgent inquiry over fears that European Union plans for financial regulation and supervision could damage London’s pre-eminent role as a world financial centre.’ 7 And Ruth Lea, erstwhile director of free market propagandists the Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute of Directors, said at a conference in September:

‘I am extremely worried about the City of London. Britain may be able to influence EU regulation, but we won’t be calling the shots. *Britain should consider the nuclear option of leaving the EU.*’ 8 (emphasis added)

We shall see. A lot of politics lies in front of the implementation

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8 [www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601102&sid=aoK0x3qYrfCI](www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601102&sid=aoK0x3qYrfCI) Lea has never been a fan of the EU.
of any effective proposals: the American financial system, which has a near complete grip on the thinking of the governments of the US and UK, is not going to sit still for anything meaningful in the way of regulation. Meanwhile Gordon Brown will continue to put forward great proposals for global action, such as the so-called Tobin tax, which he thinks will make him look good but have no chance of being implemented.
Consider C. Wright Mills, probably the first American scholar to bother tracking the elites in the US and to theorise about decision-making outside the formal legitimising rituals of elections etc. His 1956 book the *Power Elite* – published ten years before Carroll Quigley’s *Triumph and Hope* – was entirely marginalised.¹ His argument was that there is actually a complex institutional structure for class formation in the US; and this is still the fundamental taboo in all US political and social science. Dwight Eisenhower would allude to this in his farewell address as the ‘military-industrial complex’. However Mills’s concept was far broader. The competing theories and the ones essentially maintained even on the left in the US are those of Popper, Bell and Schlesinger.² It is part of the way the US Left supports the idea that it is not like Britain, not a class society, that prevents it from challenging the official mythology of how the state works. Ironically the US Left has spent almost a century trying to prove that Marx’s analysis does not apply to either the economy or politics.

There is another queer point in US political culture and that is its quasi-religious foundation. The US is not a political entity but a global institution with a destiny like the Roman Catholic

¹ Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*, 1966
Church. Just as most liberation theologians could not abandon the Catholic Church, the US Left cannot abandon the central theological foundation of the USA – an idea that it is socio-political salvation compared to Europe. When people write that conspiracy theories distract from greater political movement, this has the same cognitive and rhetorical function as the insistence even among radical clergy on the legitimacy of the priesthood, the mass, and the elected Papacy for the guidance of world Catholicism.

Producing the cadre

It is somehow fitting that the three main elite institutions for producing the cadre (Harvard, Georgetown, and Johns Hopkins) are Anglo-American, Roman Catholic and Prussian in character. Harvard creates the clubmen; Georgetown trains the American ‘Jesuit’ (exercito) military and foreign policy types; and Johns-Hopkins trains the quantitative, administrative, and medical bureaucrats for the US government (USG) social management agencies. I am sure one could compare these to the various Catholic religious orders: Johns-Hopkins and Georgetown train the US equivalent of Dominicans and Jesuits and Harvard is something like a pontifical university training those who are on an episcopal or cardinal track. Chicago has a kind of Franciscan orientation which may explain why it has produced/harboured both radicals and fascists.

Another problem could be called the ‘ontological proof for American democracy’. Rather than argue and organise around a concept like popular will and the state as an outgrowth of it, meaning that it is the objectification of the dynamic by which popular will reconstitutes itself that gives a particular form to the polity, and then to ask questions about how the popular will emerges and finds expression – in my view a very practical and pragmatic way of deriving organised action from shared cognitive processes – there is a constant attempt to show that
the dogmatic constitution of the US is a given and citizens are
derivative of this definitive historical act in the process of
perfection. To admit and pay serious attention to elite and class
formation would contradict this principle. It would mean that
there are in fact competing ‘wills’ which do not necessarily meet,
or which do not even derive from the same first principles. If
that were the case, then almost all mainstream left and liberal
discourse in the US would collapse.

Bruce Cumings wrote a long history of the origins of the
Korean War\(^3\) in which he said clearly that there is no way to
answer the question ‘Who started it?’ In a way this is just as
irrelevant as ‘Who killed JFK?’ However, what makes Cumings’
book remarkable is that he not only does not reject out of hand
the idea that tight coincidence within a penumbra of strong
political action may warrant useful conclusions about the manner
and nature of decisions taken by people in power; he is careful
to make the distinction between what can be documented and
what can be concluded from a confluence of documentary and
non-documentary evidence. His second volume – which he
himself says is largely ignored by politics and scholarship –
traces the various levels of US Asia-Pacific imperial policy and
how it was interpreted and implemented by the main actors.
What is most striking is that he shows how much effort was
made by people like Dean Acheson to shape US domestic
discourse and distract from actions the US had been taking in
Korea. Then he shows that the reports of e.g. the North Koreans
in most cases identified the actions of the USG in Korea
correctly, while these were being successfully concealed by the
USG from almost everyone in the US. Even today, although
there is much hand-wringing about Vietnam, Korea is still a
secret in the US. Moreover nearly everyone accepts the official
US version of events. You will look very hard to find anyone on
the left or centre who discusses the role of the US military
government in Korea in suppressing Korean popular

government. The current Korean government was a relative successful example of what the USG then tried to do in Vietnam and Nicaragua. As a result of this kind of ignorance and the success of the USG in concealing its Asia-Pacific policy (one which essentially goes back to the Russo-Japanese War), the most idiotic alliances can be found in the US supporting the bullying of North Korea today.

**Phoenix**

Doug Valentine\(^4\) wrote a nice little book on the Phoenix program. In it he shows that a substantial success of the program was to mislead most people in the US about government policy and the nature of pacification. This very intense multi-agency programme, spearheaded by the CIA, produced a generation of professional assassins and colonial mandarins who have held power for the past 30-odd years: just to mention a couple, Negroponte and Holbrooke.\(^5\) Yet when the US describes its Central Asia policy and above all its war strategy and tactics, even the appointment of a Special Ops general does not raise an eyebrow.\(^6\) No one asks why the Panama invasion,

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\(^5\) John Negroponte (Foreign Service) and Richard Holbrooke (USAID) both began their ‘foreign service’ careers as members of the CIA-run, multi-agency Rural Pacification Program in Vietnam. The main participants were the USAID and the CIA although various units of the MACV were involved throughout the US war against the Vietnamese.

\(^6\) As of this writing the current commander of US forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal has spent the better part of his career commanding US special operations units.

There would appear to be even dynastic succession in US special operations and imperial rule. E.g. Douglas MacArthur and his father were both military governors of the Philippines and as such responsible for US counter-insurgency operations there. The William McCaffrey, father of Bill Clinton’s ‘drug czar’, Barry McCaffrey, was an important figure in US counter-insurgency operations in Korea and Vietnam. Much is made of a supposed meritocratic and elected elite in the US – as a contrast to the European dynastic systems. However, a geneology of US military-bureaucratic power would reveal not only old school ties but hundreds of legacies.

Continues at the foot of the next column.
the Afghan invasion and some less well-known operations were all implemented by Phoenix/Rural Pacification alumni. One well-known CIA critic wrote recently how surprised he had been that Colin Powell was either easily deceived or willing to deceive in his capacity as national security advisor. This same person said to me he was unaware of the role Powell played in attempts to cover up My Lai.7 Amidst the recent excited debate about the CIA’s actions over the past eight years, one could be forgiven for thinking that Philip Agee had never lived and that the Church and Pike Committees had never met. Even Mr Panetta, who is commonly depicted as a new broom at Langley, has been part of the so-called intelligence community for more than thirty years.

‘Witches’ and ‘miracles’

There is a very strong cognitive – I would say religious and dogmatic – construct shared throughout almost the entire US political spectrum (perhaps excluding the elites who often betray what appear to be a completely different set of paradigms) which excludes conspiracy, except in two forms. These are ‘witches’ and ‘miracles’. The foundation of this construct can be found in sexual prudery and policing both of which are taught and enforced at a very early age.

Footnote 6 continued

Election circuses and self-promotion by exclusive universities and corporations obscure the existence of close-knit family networks and rivalries at the highest level of political power. Thus Americans are reassured that there country is ‘too big’ to be ruled by small groups of conspirators. The ideology of plurality and the big ‘melting pot’ together with abject worship of corporations distorts the discussion of how decisions are actually made and who makes them. America’s melting pot myth denies the possibility of dynastic power, while the worship of corporations prevents its citizens from seriously examining personal power and its ruthless exercise, let alone demanding accountability.

7 Then a US Army major, Colin Powell was assistant chief of staff to the Americal Division (23rd Infantry), charged with responding to the first complaints that the My Lai massacre occurred. It has been strongly suggested that his role was to soften the impact of the report.
Sexual prudery, the result of non-existent education and fanatical policing of personal behaviour, conditions the way Americans respond to all other areas of social control: secretly, irrationally, and maliciously, without the least sense of irony and only rare critical distance. This is also the root of the obsession with so-called ‘political correctness’. Despite volumes which would otherwise be considered evidence – e.g. police, court, legislative, and scholarly reports – Americans will frequently insist that they cannot believe or, that it would be impossible for them to entertain, the possibility that these facts would be true; or even if they are, that they could point to different conclusions than those they learned as a child, the fundamental belief in America as such.

Within this framework there are the two above exceptions, either ‘witches’ are involved (these can be anything from ‘communists’ to ‘secret cabalistic government’). In this case the facts and fantasy are mixed to justify the accusation and condemnation of any number of ‘enemies’ whose goal is to ruin the pure American society.

The other exception is very much like the ‘miracle’ in Catholicism. Miracles in Catholic doctrine are divine interventions. They are often ascribed to people and it is this ascription which is a central requirement for canonisation as a saint. Of course the Catholic Church, like any corporation, now has a very complex and seemingly rationalised system for accrediting miracles and recognising saints as their agents. Yet miracles – since they are by definition not human but divine in origin – can occur without the Church and frequently did. The miraculous events often reinforced precisely those currents of paganism or apostasy that the Roman Church was struggling to destroy. Miracles often catalysed insurrections. In Mexico, the Virgin of Guadeloupe was considered to be a miraculous power on the side of the Mexican peasantry and preceded the communist icons as a banner for revolution. The sainthood
commissions of the Church had the task of integrating these ‘miracles’ and authorising limited veneration when belief in them could not be suppressed.

No doubt commissions and some limited disclosures by the military and scientific bureaucracy serve the same function in the US. Whatever UFOs might be, it is certainly absurd to discount them entirely. The assassination of the Kennedys (unlike the murders of black Americans such as King, Evers, Malcolm X et al) created a special category of sainthood. At the popular level the investigations are far more like exercises in veneration than concern with the implications of these murders for the religious belief in the USA and its corporate-political hierarchy. When concessions are made to those who argue for the existence and significance of UFOs, then it is in large part to satisfy the spiritual needs of a sect which is perceived as an annoyance. The sect’s members are satisfied by being included through revelations. In return the sect continues its marginal and for serious investigators highly distracting ‘research’. Attention is diverted from the covert activities of the military-scientific complex that despite the best efforts at secrecy still generates public emissions.

These are not necessarily mapped strategies of manipulation. Rather the institutions are shaped by the doctrine and ideology that retains the US as a belief system – not a rational system of government or social management by consent of the governed.

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The miners and the secret state

Robin Ramsay

In his 1987 book *Spycatcher* former MI5 officer Peter Wright revealed one of MI5’s biggest secrets; but focused as we were on his comments about the plotting against Harold Wilson, we didn’t initially notice the section on page 175 where he wrote that the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)’s ‘Reuben Falber……had recently been made cashier of the Russian funds.’ Wright tells us that MI5 planned to burgle Falber’s flat in search of the files detailing the payments but their plan failed – and he leaves it there. To MI5 in 1958 the proof of the ‘Moscow gold’ must have had something of the status of the Holy Grail and Wright apparently wanted us to believe that, aware that the CPGB were getting actual cash money from the Soviets, MI5 were either unable to detect the payoffs in London, or, having made one failed attempt, just gave up. This is simply not credible.¹ The point is that MI5 knew about the ‘Moscow gold’ and said nothing about it. Had the existence of Soviet funding been revealed in the late 1950s, the CPGB would have been irreparably damaged. But for MI5 this ‘secret’ link to the Soviet Union was too useful a tool for use against the left in the UK, particularly the Labour

¹ Falber admitted his role in 1991 after details of the Soviet payments were found in files in Moscow. There is new information on the ‘Moscow gold’ in Christopher Andrew’s new official history of MI5. See the review in ‘Books’ below.

* This appeared in Granville Williams (ed.) *Shafted: The Media, the Miners’ Strike and the Aftermath* (London: Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 2009)
Party. In effect MI5 let the CPGB run as a honeytrap for the British left: anyone who made contact with it, supported it, wrote for it, could be legitimately investigated as they were in touch with a body funded by an ‘enemy power’.2

In 1984, 36 years after MI5 first discovered the ‘Moscow gold’, this Soviet ‘trace’ provided the British secret state with the justification to undertake full-scale offensive operations against the leadership of the NUM. As NUM president Arthur Scargill had been a member of the Young Communist League, and was trying to set up an international mineworkers body with representatives of the mineworkers’ unions of the Soviet bloc; vice-president the late Mick McGahey, was a member of the CPGB; and general secretary Peter Heathfield’s then wife, the late Betty Heathfield, had been a member of the CPGB; it wasn’t hard for the secret state to present this as a communist conspiracy.

In charge of MI5’s operation against the NUM, then the head of its F2 branch, Stella Rimington, wrote later:

‘The 1984 miners’ strike was supported by a very large number of members of the National Union of Mineworkers, but it was directed by a triumvirate who had declared that they were using the strike to try to bring down the elected government of Margaret Thatcher and it was actively supported by the Communist party. What was it legitimate for us to do about that? We quickly decided that the

2 How did MI5 know about the Soviet funds to the CPGB? Perhaps through their penetration of the CPGB, though the knowledge of the money was held very closely within the Party. [For more on this see my review of Christopher Andrew’s The Defence of the Realm below.]

Perhaps through Morris Childs, the American Communist Party’s link with the Soviets, their bagman, who was an FBI agent. On Childs see, for example a summary of the major book on this subject at <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_n4_v48/ai_18111844> and see also <www.theatlantic.com/doc/200207/garrow>, an essay by David Garrow who first discovered Morris Childs’ role with the FBI.
activities of picket lines and miners’ wives’ support groups were not our concern, even though they were of great concern to the police who had to deal with the law-and-order aspects of the strike; accusations that we were running agents or telephone interceptions to get advance warning of picket movements are wrong. We in MI5 limited our investigations to the activities of those who were using the strike for subversive purposes.’

A year later she added to that account:

‘The leaders of the miners strike themselves had actually said that one of the purposes of the miners strike was to overthrow Mrs Thatcher who was the elected Prime Minister of the country and the industrial department of the Communist Party was very involved in all sorts of different ways in the strike and that was of concern to us, that’s what we were interested in.’

Rimington’s central proposition is false: the CPGB and its industrial department did not support the strike at all, much to the disgust of many of its members. In 2005 Arthur Scargill said:

‘We had a number of people and industries that deliberately betrayed the miners. For example, the Communist Party bears a heavy responsibility for what took place. They were pushing from day one for the strike to be called off.’

Rimington denies that MI5 was running agents, which may be technically true: police Special Branches ran the agents; but

4 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/spl/hi/programmes/true_spies/transcripts/truespies_prog2.txt>
5 <http://www.anphoblacht.com/news/detail/8342>  See also CBGP member Graham Stevenson’s account of the internal politics of the CPGB at the time of the strike at <http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/ archives/000047.html>
they reported to MI5. Rimington denies running telephone intercepts, which may also be true. Guardian journalists were told by employees of GCHQ that, with its larger partner the NSA, GCHQ was surveilling the NUM and its attempts to hide its resources from state sequestration. (Again the Soviet ‘trace’ would justify this.)

The role of encouraging strikebreaking was taken up by the private sector and the politicians: David Hart, residing in a suite at Claridge’s Hotel, backed by Mrs Thatcher and funded by persons unknown, spread money and personnel around the non-striking miners. Local police forces, supplemented by the Metropolitan Police, did the crowd control/strikebreaking duties among the pits.

The operations by the British secret state against the NUM in 1984/5 were the climax of almost two decades in which the growing presence of the left in politics and trade unions was met, investigated, surveilled and countered by an alliance of politicians, employers’ organisations, anti-communist and anti-socialist trade union officials, and state officials in what we might call an anti-subversion network. In 1964, when Labour won the general election, this network consisted of: the Economic League and the Aims of Industry; MI5 and local police Special Branches; the state’s anti-communist research/propaganda/psy-ops outfit, the Information Research Department (IRD); IRD’s media assets; anti-communist groups in the labour movement, most obviously Common Cause and its offshoot, Industrial Research and Information Services (IRIS); US London embassy employees, usually labour

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6 See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/true_spies/2351547.stm> for an account by former Special Branch officers of recruiting informants among the NUM and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2002/nov/01/uk.military> for an account of Special Branch’s agent in the NUM leadership.
8 There were many rumours at the time of soldiers being drafted in as civilians but none of these stories have been stood up.
attachés, and the CIA; and parts of the Labour Party’s organisation, the party agent network and the Organisation Subcommittee.9

In 1964 Labour was in office for the first time since Attlee. And the left grew and industrial conflict grew. Wilson and Barbara Castle tried to reduce the unions’ power with the ‘In Place of Strife’ proposals, but were seen off by the unions and the Parliamentary Labour left. Labour lost the election in 1970. In came Edward Heath who wanted to turn Britain into West Germany, with membership of the EEC, and a semi-corporate state in which the trade unions are embraced by the state in exchange for influence. (Essentially the same thing that Harold Wilson and Barbara Castle sought.) The trade unions resisted this embrace (registration under the Industrial Relations Act) and industrial conflict grew. The ‘flying pickets’ of the Yorkshire NUM famously prevented the police from keeping open the Saltley coke depot in 1972. In 1974 Heath called a ‘Who rules Britain?’ election and lost. Industrial militancy had apparently won a famous victory. But the NUM’s success at Saltley also produced a major expansion of MI5’s F branch, which monitored the left.

The wider public-private anti-subversion lobby believed (some members more seriously than others) that at the heart of the rising industrial militancy in Britain was the Communist Party of Great Britain, and particularly its industrial department, referred to by Stella Rimington above; and that the CPGB was an agent of the Soviet Union. To this theory of Soviet influence the Communist Party contributed by occasionally boasting of its influence on the Labour Party left;

9 On IRD see Paul Lasmar and James Oliver, Britain’s Secret Propaganda War 1948-77 (Stroud, Gloucester: Sutton, 1998). On some of the American influences see Hugh Wilford, The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War (London: Frank Cass, 2003). The only overview of the network still appears to be my 1996 The Clandestine Caucus which is available at the Lobster website (www.lobster-magazine.co.uk) though it needs updating in places.
and the Labour Party itself unwittingly added the final touch in 1973 by abolishing the Proscription List of organisations – mostly 1950s Soviet fronts of no political significance and what were then tiny Trotskyist groups – that Labour Party members could not join. Look, said the anti-subversion network, this shows that the communists are in control of the Labour Party!

Part of the anti-subversion network took seriously claims from MI5 and CIA counterintelligence officers that Harold Wilson might be a KGB agent (though they had no evidence for this other than the suspicion of a Soviet defector). Thus among the network’s members there was the picture of a trade union movement manipulated if not run by the Soviet-funded CPGB and a Labour Party, in turn funded largely by the trade unions, headed by someone who might be a Soviet stooge.\(^\text{10}\)

Labour took office again in 1974 and there followed two years of talks of coups, surveillance, disinformation and smears against members of the Labour government, climaxing with Wilson’s retirement.\(^\text{11}\) In the midst of this Mrs Thatcher became leader of the Conservative Party, was briefed by the anti-subversion network and apparently took on board the Soviet conspiracy theory. Her use of the expression ‘the enemy within’ about the NUM was a barely coded nod to the anti-subversion network.\(^\text{12}\) In the final paragraph of the thirty pages on the NUM strike in her bland memoir, *The Downing*

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10. This theory was articulated by journalists such as Chapman Pincher of the *Daily Express* and can be seen in his *Inside Story* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1977)


Street Years, she wrote: ‘What the strike’s defeat established was that Britain could not be made ungovernable by the Fascist Left.’ (p. 378) In his The Enemy Within (pp. 18/19), Seamus Milne quotes an unnamed chief constable as saying that he had been told by a Home Office official that Mrs Thatcher was ‘convinced that a secret communist cell around Scargill was orchestrating the strike in order to bring down the country.’

With ‘one of them’ now leading the Conservative Party, the anti-subversion lobby began operations against the trade unions – notably at Grunwick – and helped to set up the Freedom Association. Winning the election in 1979, the Thatcher faction of the Conservative Party began preparing for a showdown with what they saw as the heart of the communist conspiracy in Britain, the NUM. Thanks to the existence of the ‘Moscow gold’, kept secret by MI5, the secret state had the perfect pretext to use all its resources against the miners.

The end of the strike did not end the operations against the NUM’s leading officials. In 1990 an elaborate disinformation operation was mounted to portray Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield as personally corrupt. Two employees of the NUM at the time of the strike, Roger Windsor and Steve Hudson, and a Libyan living in England, were persuaded to state that Scargill and Heathfield had used funds from Libya – in cash – to pay the mortgages on their houses during the strike. This story was run initially in the Daily Mirror and on TV by The Cook Report. Neither bothered to check one basic fact: did Scargill and Heathfield actually have mortgages? They didn’t; and twelve years later, editor of the Mirror at the time, Roy Greenslade, apologised to Scargill and Heathfield for running the false story. In his account Greenslade describes how initially he wondered if the story was some kind of operation by the British state: the only witness the Mirror had to the transfer of the Libyan money
was Roger Windsor, NUM chief executive at the time. (The Libyan, Abassi, merely confirmed that Libyan money had been given to the NUM, not how it had been dispersed.) But Greenslade’s doubts disappeared when a second NUM employee, a former NUM finance officer, Steve Hudson, confirmed Windsor’s account of money being counted out and given to Scargill and Heathfield. Greenslade wrote:

‘Out of the blue, Steve Hudson, the finance officer whom Windsor had named as the other man in the room when the money was counted out, phoned one of our reporters. Hours later, he turned up in my office to give a taped interview in which he confirmed every word of Windsor’s account. He didn’t ask for payment and spoke under no duress.’

Ah, the logic of the tabloid journalist: he didn’t ask for money, so he must be telling the truth. (The fact that Roger Windsor was eventually paid a total of £80,000 by the Mirror does not seem to have raised a doubt about his veracity in Greenslade’s mind.)

Here we have a recognisable and quite elaborate disinformation operation. But by whom? We don’t know. Most suspect MI5. Stella Rimington was asked about Roger Windsor and MI5 and gave a very curious reply: ‘It would be correct to say that he, Roger Windsor, was never an agent in any sense of the word that you can possibly imagine.’

This baroque variation on the non-denial denial merely confirmed the suspicions. But like her specific denial that MI5 ran agents, quoted above, this might be technically true: Special Branch, who did run agents and reported to MI5, might have been running this (although it would be way off their normal range of known activities if they were). But it could be another agency. It might not even be a British one. Since the NUM leaders had been trying to form an international miners’ organisation with union leaders of the Soviet bloc, the CIA, for
example, which has tried to control European labour since 1945, would have been interested. We don’t know; and we may never know. But an operation it was and it conned the British media.¹³

¹³ The operation is the subject matter of Seamus Milne’s excellent *The Enemy Within* (London: Verso, 1994 and 1995)
**Laissez faire as religion**

Robert Henderson

The enemy of rationality is ideology. By an ideology I mean a mental construct which consists of a menu of tenets which the adherent applies without regard to their utility or truth. The observance of the ideology becomes an end in itself. All ideologies are inadequate to a lesser or greater extent, because they are menus of ideas which are variously (1) incompatible, (2) inadequate descriptions of reality and (3) based on premises which are objectively false or at least debatable.

*Laissez faire* followers are ideologues par excellence. They fancy themselves to be rational, calculating beasts. In reality, their adoration of the market is essentially religious. They believe that it will solve all economic ills, if not immediately, then in the medium to long term. Their attitude towards Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ is akin to the quasi-religious worship that intellectual Marxists accord to the dialectic.

If there was something akin to the Lord’s Prayer for the *laissez faire* congregation to chant it would runs along these lines:

Our Invisible Hand  
Which art in the Market,  
Hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy economic Kingdom come  
Thy will be done In Earth,
As it is in the Chicago School textbooks.
Give us this day our daily profit
And forgive us our losses,
But allow us to dun
Those who debt against us.
Lead us not into patriotic temptation
And deliver us from state intervention
For Thine is the economic kingdom
and the Market power and selfish glory
For ever and ever
Amen

Armed with this supposed objective truth, they
proselytise about the moral evils and inefficiencies of public
service and the wondrous efficiency and ethical outcomes of
private enterprise regardless of the practical effects of their
policies or the frequent misbehaviour of those in command of
large private companies

Like the majority of religious believers, they are none too
certain of the theology of their religion. (I am always struck by
how often advocates of laissez faire lack a grasp of even basic
economic theory and are almost invariably wholly ignorant of
economic history.) They recite their economic catechism
sublime in the concrete of their ignorance or vouchsafe their
fidelity with declarations such as this:

‘Those of us who believe with every fibre of our being in
the free market should not condemn anyone for
discovering a new commercial opportunity to fill in the
gap between the summer holidays and Christmas: but
that does seem to be what Hallowe'en is all about these
days.’ ¹

relationship with an economic theory is distinctly odd: Marxism was never just that because Marx loaded it with the revolutionary struggle and other such emotional excitements. Any normal person will address economic matters pragmatically and be concerned with ends not the means to ends.

Like all religious believers, the *laissez faire* adherents have to continually stretch their ideology to accommodate pesky facts that clash with it. They are in a particularly difficult position at present because the banking crisis is the child of an extreme *laissez faire* policy followed by politicians with a consequent lack of public control and oversight. They try to hide from the fact that their god has feet of clay in various ways. Let us have a glance at the most popular of these denials of reality.

Take this statement by Ambrose Evans-Pritchard of the *Telegraph*:

‘It is not a good moment for the poster-child of the flat-tax revolution, but those crowing the end of “Margaret Thatcher’s Baltic Model” neglect half the story. Estonia’s euro peg is anything but free-market. It makes Tallinn dance, awkwardly, to Frankfurt’s distant tune. It stoked the boom by enticing people to borrow cheap at eurozone rates: it is now prolonging the bust…’  

Here we have the *laissez faire* equivalent of communists saying communism never failed because it was never tried. Evans-Pritchard is, of course, correct when he says that Estonia is not a kosher *laissez faire* paradise. This is unsurprising because no country has ever been such an economic Eden and none ever will, because it would require an anarchic situation to achieve true *laissez faire* and that will never happen. Therefore, in the eyes of the likes of Evans-Pritchard

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Laissez faire will never fail.

Then there is the barefaced volte-face without any acknowledgement that there has been one: ‘City’s growing influence may have been a bad influence on Britain’. 3 This from the Telegraph which has lauded the City to the skies until the credit crunch arrived.

Next comes the outright refusal to acknowledge what has happened:

‘We had grown rather accustomed to singing the praises of free financial markets. The crisis threatens to discredit them. But this crisis was not the result of deregulation and market failure.’ 4

To this can be added the perversion of language to misdescribe that which does not fit the ideology. Here’s a prime example with someone trying to bring public and civil society behaviour within the laissez faire fold: ‘the non-market part of the free economy’. 5 ‘Non-market part of the free economy?’ As John Wayne remarked in one of his films to someone who styled him to a friendly fight: ‘I ain't ever heard of one o’ them...’

Finally there is that old favourite when all else fails, the argument from authority. Edmund Conway provides a first rate example.6 He enumerates the disadvantages of comparative advantage – an idea at the heart of laissez faire – such as reduced self-sufficiency and the dangers of a narrow economic base, but cannot bring himself to throw down his idol and concludes:

‘Nevertheless, most economists argue that comparative

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4 Niall Ferguson, ‘There’s no such thing as too big to fail in a free market’, Telegraph, 5 October 2009.
5 Philip Booth, ‘What this year’s Nobel Prize winners can teach the Conservatives’, Telegraph 18 October 2009.
advantage is still one of the most important and fundamental economic ideas of all, for it underlies world trade and globalisation, proving that nations can prosper even more by looking outwards rather than inwards.’

Comparative advantage is a good example of how wish-fulfilment trumps reality for the laissez faire believer. The iron logic of the idea is that each nation (or a region within a nation or even a supra-national region) becomes less self-sufficient because the notion demands that each region or nation concentrates on the economic activities at which it is most proficient and discards those at which it is inferior. That has the consequence of a nation or region being at the mercy of other nations or regions for essential goods and services. It is also liable for catastrophic structural unemployment because if the economic base is narrowed dramatically, changes in fashion or the emergence of a foreign competitor who takes your trade, the industry in which you have an advantage collapses. The narrowing of the economic base also reduces the opportunity of a society to advance. Look at much of the Third World.

In the 1840s and 1850s the likes of Ricardo, Bright and Cobden were urging Germany to forget about industrialising and concentrate on their ‘comparative advantage’ in agriculture. Does anyone honestly believe that would have been in Germany’s interest?

Comparative advantage is a prime example of an intellectual (David Ricardo) getting carried away with an idea whose simple economical beauty blinds him to the fact that it is based on a chain of absurdities, namely, that there will always be free trade between nations, that wars will not intervene, that all nations will play the non-protectionist game, that there will never be scarcity of food or raw materials, that demand for products will remain stable.

But the difficulty for the laissez faire worshipper is much
deeper than the absence of perfection or the failure of the real world to behave as \textit{laissez faire} economics says it should behave. The theory is being based upon a lie. The lie is that the markets they call free are actually free. The natural end of a truly free market is monopoly or at least greatly reduced competition. For this reason all advanced states have anti-monopoly laws which interfere with the natural workings of the market. The market created is consequently not a free market but a state controlled one, and one which is controlled in the most fundamental way.

To that gross interference with the market may be added state granted privileges of limited liability, patents, copyright and trademarks and the varying tax regimes, laws affecting economic activity such as health and safety legislation and state institutions such as the police, defence and justice.

The problem with \textit{laissez faire} as a modern economic theory is that its still holds firmly to classic economics. For example, it has long been howlingly clear that individuals do not act rationally in the sense that classical economists imagined and hence market efficiency as Adam Smith envisaged it – as the summation of rational individual decisions – does not exist. The existence of economic bubbles alone should have stopped it ever gaining credence. Yet the general thrust of \textit{laissez faire} economics tacitly at least still rests on the idea that drove Smith’s theory. Indeed, if this was not the case the \textit{laissez faire} advocates would be reduced to the absurdity of saying the market produces rational and beneficial outcomes from behaviour which is frequently (in economic terms) irrational and damaging to the individual who engages in it.

If you want an example of one of Richard Dawkins’ memes (mental viruses which capture the mind) at its most virulent, you cannot do better than the addiction to unbridled
laissez faire displayed in the face of all the overwhelming evidence that its overall effects are pernicious. This is an extract from a much bigger work, ‘The most dangerous people in the world’, which can be read at http://groups.google.com/group/alt.politics.usa.misc/browse_thread/thread/cdd8122fa018f85

Robert Henderson is a retired civil servant. His account of being harassed and smeared by the British state for the ‘offence’ of writing letters to Tony and Cherie Blair was in Lobster 45.
Whose Prospect?

Solomon Hughes

Prospect magazine have confirmed a series of connections to the British secret state, including dinner meetings, seminars and taking on the son of MI6 boss John Scarlett as an intern. The links with the security services are a potential embarrassment for the magazine, which has been compared to Encounter, a centre left journal which suffered a crisis in 1967 because of too close relations with the CIA.\(^1\) There is no suggestion here that Prospect has received money from the security services like Encounter, but Prospect editor David Goodhart accepted he met with secret state officials a number of times.

John Scarlett Junior, son of MI6 boss John Scarlett, worked as an intern at Prospect in late 2007. Goodhart told me: ‘There was no connection with his father over his appointment.’ However, Goodhart said that ‘I did subsequently meet his father at a seminar and he thanked me for giving his son some useful experience.’

Goodhart also told me about ‘meeting security service people at a couple of seminars’ and ‘one dinner’. Goodhart downplayed these meetings with MI5 officials, but added, ‘Yes I support the security services, don’t you?’

Prospect, founded in 1995, now has a healthy 28,000 circulation. Its generally centre left stance is punctuated by some surprising foreign policy positions: last year one Prospect

\(^1\) Indeed Prospect senior editor Susha Lee-Shothaman joked about being like Encounter on a Prospect blog which is no longer on-line but which was at <http://blog.prospectblogs.com/2009/03/16/3689/>
editor wrote a long piece suggesting that Saddam did have WMD after all, but they were mostly spirited out of Iraq into Syria in a convoy of lorries driven by Russian Spetsnaz commandos just before the American invasion.

Did Prospect’s security contacts steer the magazine towards Hassan Butt, the ‘reformed Jihadist’ who seems to have been nothing of the sort? Butt told the Manchester Police that he was actually a ‘professional liar’ who told journalist stories ‘the media wanted to hear’ and even stabbed himself to make it seem as if his former brothers were out to get him. One message Butt delivered was the claim that the Iraq war and foreign policy in general did not fuel British terrorist extremism.

Prospect carried a long interview with the ‘terrorist’ Butt and carried half a dozen pieces referring to the ‘reformed’ Butt. Editor Goodhart told me that there were ‘loose connections in your thesis’ and stated he has ‘never been briefed on security service views on Islamic terrorism.’ Journalist Shiv Malik interviewed Hassan Butt for a long Prospect piece on the 7/7 bombing and editor Goodhart said that, ‘I did once hear that the services regard the Shiv Malik piece on 7/7 as essential reading inside the “security state”’ and added: ‘a Pentagon official once said the same.’

Goodhart went on to say: ‘if Hassan Butt has now been "exposed" as a liar and fantasist we were certainly not the only ones taken in – there was a big Newsnight interview – and big pieces in several nationals.’

Prospect recently received a financial boost of around £500,000 over three years from three financiers. Goodhart’s senior editor is former Number 10 Downing Street official James Crabtree.

Solomon Hughes is a freelance writer. His book War on Terror Inc. is reviewed below.
The meaning of subservience to America

Robin Ramsay

Beyond hypocrisy

For me one of the key scenes in post-WW2 American movies is in Godfather 2. In the mid 1950s, Michael Corleone, the middle aged don, is sitting in his study, while in the grounds of his mansion beside Lake Tahoe the extended Corleone family are celebrating a wedding. The senator for Arizona comes in and gives Michael a load of abuse about incomers and how they aren’t wanted in his state. Corleone shows no emotion and just says, ‘Senator, we’re both part of the same hypocrisy’. Except ‘hypocrisy’ doesn’t do justice to the gulf between the words and the deeds. It is, in the title of the Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky book, beyond hypocrisy. Being subservient to the US means the British state and politicians can never publicly acknowledge anything which draws attention to that gulf.

Craig Murray

Ambassador Craig Murray hadn’t learned this when he began asking questions about the American and British use of information gathered in Uzbekistan by the regime there torturing its citizens. In America recently Murray talked again about the consequences he faced:1

\`.....even when I was only complaining internally, I was subjected to the most dreadful pattern of things which I

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1 <www.consortiumnews.com/2009/102409b.html>
still find it hard to believe happened.’

‘I was suddenly accused of issuing visas in return for sex, stealing money from the post account, of being an alcoholic, of driving an embassy vehicle down a flight of stairs, which is extraordinary because I can’t drive. I’ve never driven in my life. I don’t have a driving license. My eyesight is terrible. …’

‘But I was accused of all these unbelievable accusations, which were leaked to the tabloid media, and I spent a whole year of tabloid stories about sex-mad ambassador, blah-blah-blah. And I hadn’t even gone public. What I had done was write a couple of memos saying that this collusion with torture is illegal under a number of international conventions including the UN Convention Against Torture.’

‘I couldn’t believe [what was happening], I’d been a very successful foreign service officer for over 20 years. The British Foreign Service is small. Actual diplomats, as opposed to [support] staff, are only about 2,000 people, I worked there for over 20 years. I knew most of them by name. All the people involved in smearing me, trying to taint me on false charges, were people I thought were my friends. It’s really hard when people you think are your friends [lie about you].’

‘I’m writing memos saying it’s illegal to torture people, children are being tortured in front of their parents. And they’re writing memos back saying it depends on the definition of complicity under Article Four of the UN Convention.’

This is the sequence of events which led to Murray’s ouster. * The US was supporting the dictator in Uzbekistan initially in pursuit of a pipeline which Enron wanted to run through the country.
Lobster 58

* To justify US activities in Uzbekistan an al Qaeda ‘threat’ was invented by torturing Uzbeks until they ‘admitted’ being al Qaeda.
* Because the US was tolerating this, the UK government had to turn a blind eye to it.
* Because Murray would not drop the issue of torture in Uzbekistan, he had to be got rid of lest he embarrass the American ‘friends’.
* To get rid of Murray a smear campaign was generated against him.

I admire Murray but you have to wonder how he arrived at the age of 40 plus, after 20 years working for HMG’s foreign service, and had not realised what would happen if he tried to oppose American foreign policy.

Lockerbie

The recent events over Lockerbie illustrate the taboo status of anything which might point out the gulf between the fantasy and real American foreign policy. Even though hardly anyone believed the Libya-did-it story, even though creating and sustaining it involved corrupting the English and Scottish legal systems, the British state went along with the fairy story so crudely concocted by the Americans. And the state held the line until al-Megrahi’s lawyers began preparing another appeal which threatened to lift the lid on the frame-up.

The Sunday Times reported that al-Megrahi’s defence team had planned to produce:

2 One who does, apparently, is the one-time radical barrister Geoffrey Robertson, who wrote: ‘I have read the judgement of the Lockerbie court and the two appeal judgements upholding it and al-Megrahi’s guilt seems plain beyond reasonable doubt. In his ‘We should be ashamed that this has happened’, The Guardian, 22 August 2009.
3 Not that crudely concocted frame-ups haven’t worked in the past: think of Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray – or the Birmingham 6 et al.
‘...a memo from the DIA dated September 24, 1989. It states: “The bombing of the Pan Am flight was conceived, authorised and financed by Ali-Akbar (Mohtashemi-Pur), the former Iranian minister of interior.’

‘The execution of the operation was contracted to Ahmad (Jabril), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC) leader, for a sum of 1,000,000 US dollars.’

‘One hundred thousand dollars of this money was given to Jabril up front in Damascus by the Iranian ambassador to Sy [ie Syria], Muhammad Hussan (Akhari) for initial expenses. The remainder of the money was to be paid after successful completion of the mission.”’

After al-Megrahi had departed for Libya, Tam Dalyell made this comment:

‘The Iranian Minister of the interior at the time [of the shooting down of the Iranian airliner by the USS Vincennes], was Ali Akbar Mostashemi, who made a public statement that blood would rain down in the form of ten western airliners being blown out of the sky.....Washington was appalled. I believe so appalled and fearful that it entered a Faustian agreement that, tit-for-tat, one airliner should be sacrificed. This may seem a dreadful thing for me to say. But consider the facts. A notice went up in the US Embassy in Moscow advising diplomats not to travel with Pan Am back to America for Christmas. American military personnel were pulled off the plane. A delegation of South Africans, including foreign minister Pik Botha, were pulled off Pan Am Flight 103 at the last minute’.

Former CIA officer Robert Baer said:

‘Your justice secretary had two choices – sneak into Megrahi’s cell and smother him with his pillow or release him.... The end game came down to damage limitation because the evidence amassed by his appeal team is explosive and extremely damning to your system of justice.’

‘There is hard evidence of other nations – Iran particularly – being responsible for this atrocity.’

‘The CIA knew this almost from the moment the plane exploded. This decision to free Megrahi was about protecting the integrity of your justiciary because the appeal papers prove Iran was involved..... I knew this information back then so you can rest assured both MI5 and MI6 knew.’

Don’t you just love Baer’s notion that freeing al-Megrahi was about ‘protecting the integrity of [the British but primarily Scottish] judiciary’? As if it had any left!7

Subservience produces other effects. For example, it produces a civil service and ministers who just say ‘Yes’, to any American proposal; for example, the now notorious one-sided extradition treaty between the US and the UK in which the British state has to produce evidence but the Americans do not. This treaty wasn’t signed by mistake: the Home Office was warned about it six years ago by a committee of MPs who

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6 In ‘CIA spook says Megrahi was freed before appeal humiliated justice system’, <www.sundaymail.co.uk/news/scottish-news/2009/08/23/cia-spook-says-megrahi-was-freed-before-appeal-humiliated-justice-system-78057-21618329/>

7 For further reading, try Paul Foot’s 1994 essay, ‘Taking the blame’, in the London Review of Books, which reviewed the Lester Coleman book, Trail of the Octopus; John Pilger’s ‘Megrahi was framed’ in the New Statesman on 3 September 2009; and Gareth Pierce’s ‘The framing of al-Megrahi’ in the London Review of Books. All are excellent and on-line.
were considering the legislation.\textsuperscript{8}

Now we’ve reached the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, we can expect a round of reminders as the dwindling band of veterans gathers to mark the sacrifices their comrades made in the defeat of Nazi Germany. But is it too much to hope as The Very Best of Vera Lynn goes on sale that we might experience a little more than nostalgia for a lost sense of national purpose as we again watch The Dambusters, Cockleshell Heroes and The Longest Day?

An opportunity for learning something from the disastrous Arnhem campaign of 1944 came and very largely went with its 65th anniversary in September: few of its participants are likely to be alive come 2014. The limited media coverage of that event was largely devoted to an air drop near the Dutch city watched by a small number of British Airborne veterans. The only mildly controversial aspect focused on complaints about the absence on that occasion of the Prince of Wales, the colonel-in-chief of the Parachute Regiment.

This is a pity as, during a time when British troops in Afghanistan are let down by faulty and inadequate equipment and poor political direction, the Market Garden operation reminds us that this is nothing new. In failing to mark the occasion well – without even a TV showing of Richard Attenborough’s 1977 A Bridge Too Far – it denies the shrinking number of survivors some of the honour they are due and the rest of us access to a little of our history.
This lack of public awareness is not due to the absence of historical material. Attenborough’s film, with its fine script by William Goldman, was closely based on the 1974 book of the same title by Cornelius Ryan, a work that has drawn much praise from Arnhem veterans. The Pegasus Archive\(^1\) assembles a wide range of detailed official and unofficial accounts of the battle; the Hartenstein Airborne Museum in Oosterbeek\(^2\) adds a Dutch perspective on the events of September 1944; and, for English readers, Robert Kershaw’s *It Never Snows in September* brings together some of the many German views on what took place.\(^3\) For those keen to learn about Arnhem there are many other readily accessible sources and, if my experience is any guide, visitors are warmly welcomed by the Dutch whose children pay respectful homage each year at the well-maintained burial places of the British, Polish and other Allied dead.

**Urquhart**

My own interest was drawn in part by reading the memoirs of Brian Urquhart,\(^4\) who, after the Second World War, helped build the United Nations under Dag Hammarskjold and later headed its peacekeeping force. Urquhart, now 90, lives in the United States, still writes occasionally for *The New York Review of Books* and can be found talking about Arnhem, the United Nations and issues of peace and war.\(^5\) Urquhart was the chief intelligence officer of the British Airborne Division in 1944 under the command of Major General Frederick – ‘Boy’ – Browning.

The second stimulus came through a Polish friend who alerted me to the life of Stanislaw Sosabowski, who

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1. [www.pegasusarchive.org/arnhem/frames.htm](http://www.pegasusarchive.org/arnhem/frames.htm)
2. [www.airbornemuseum.nl/](http://www.airbornemuseum.nl/)
3. As does the [www.defendingarnhem.com/index.htm](http://www.defendingarnhem.com/index.htm) website.
commanded the 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade at Arnhem. Unlike the middle class Urquhart, (Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford), Sosabowski was the son of a poor railway worker who, after First World War service, rose rapidly through the ranks of the Polish Army. He fought and was captured by the Germans after the 1939 invasion, only to escape and, upon arriving in Britain, set up the Polish parachute brigade.

These men independently foresaw the problems with Field Marshal Montgomery’s Market Garden plan to seize from the air key river bridges in the Netherlands ahead of a ground operation that he believed would take the Allies into the Ruhr and thus end the war by Christmas 1944. Both, in different ways, paid a heavy price for their questioning foresight. It is through their eyes – Urquhart through his book and Sosabowski, who died in 1967, from interviews used by Cornelius Ryan – that I will briefly recount a little of what still largely remains to the British public a part of our hidden history.

Urquhart recounts that in 1941 ‘Boy’ Browning, the youthful, ambitious and well-connected husband of novelist Daphne du Maurier (their daughter was later to marry Montgomery’s son), asked him to join his newly conceived British Airborne Forces as intelligence officer. He served in that capacity until shortly before that force took off for Arnhem on Sunday 17 September 1944. Though pleased to join Browning and leave behind the ‘by now somewhat humdrum life of an infantry brigade’ he was aware, after the German airborne experience in Crete that same year, that while there was potential value in small-scale landings on specific targets, ‘organised in large fighting formations – brigades, divisions, and corps such as existed later in the war – airborne forces were a dubious military proposition.’

As the war progressed and after a discouraging big landing in Sicily, Urquhart’s doubts about operations with lots
of airborne troops grew:
‘To fly them to their targets took huge numbers of transport aircraft which, except at night, were slow and extremely vulnerable. The range of these aircraft was limited. The troops tended to be dispersed on the ground. Once on the ground a large formation of airborne troops, although of elite quality, was something of a white elephant. It had no heavy weapons, very little transport – and that only jeeps – and no logistical back-up. If in action, it was very likely very soon to run out of ammunition. It had to be sustained by air and defended until it was relieved by advancing ground troops. An airborne formation could not be manoeuvred and fought like an ordinary ground formation. It was essentially light and static.’

After D-Day the initial rapid Allied advance, particularly that of US General Patton, led to the repeated cancellation of planned Browning airborne operations, but, recounts Urquhart, ‘after the capture of Brussels there was a general slowing down’. At Airborne this ‘gave rise to all sorts of frenetic planning as we studied various operations to break the logjam.’

Urquhart recalls:
‘Nowhere did the desire for action burn more steadily than in the breast of Boy Browning, who had not yet commanded troops in battle in World War II. Holland was the limit of the range of transport aircraft stationed in Britain. The pressure to get into action intensified. Elsewhere similar sentiments were taking hold. Montgomery, chagrined by the spectacular successes of Patton, was seeking, contrary to his reputation for caution, a British masterstroke to end the war.’

Montgomery’s Market Garden plan was for British and Polish paratroops to capture the bridges at Arnhem and for the American 82nd and 101st to take the ones further south and
nearer to the then front line on the Dutch/Belgian border. When news of it reached the ears of Sosabowski, Ryan records him saying:

‘The British are not only grossly underestimating German strength in the Arnhem area, but they seem ignorant of the significance Arnhem has for the Fatherland.’

The Pole had much experience of fighting Germans and did not expect them, even if they were the low-calibre troops described by Browning, to leave open the gateway to their homeland. Then when Sosabowski discovered that the initial British paratroops were to land at least six miles from the objective – thus losing the key element of surprise – he became even more alarmed.

What neither Sosabowski nor Urquhart could have added to their fears for the operation would be the impact upon the Germans of the speech by US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau the day before Market Garden was launched. In it he threatened to reduce the postwar German economy to little more than pastoral agriculture. If the Nazi defenders of the Fatherland needed any further incentive to resist, Morgenthau’s Quebec speech duly supplied it.

But Urquhart’s general anxieties about large-scale airborne operations had already found sharp focus in the Montgomery plan to seize the great bridges across the Rhine delta. To his strategic concerns were added more personal ones:

‘I was also worried about the state of mind of General Browning and my brother officers. There seemed to be a general assumption that the war was virtually over and that one last dashing stroke would finish it. The possibility of German opposition was scarcely considered worthy of discussion. The Market Garden operation was constantly referred to as “the party”. It was said that
Colonel John Frost, the gallant commander of the 1st Parachute Battalion, was considering taking along his golf clubs and ceremonial mess uniform.

‘I do not know what the Americans thought of the plan, although I suspect that Generals Ridgeway and Gavin were less than enthusiastic, but on the British side I found few people to whom I could talk rationally.’

Sosabowski had a similar experience when he attended the briefing by the British commander, Major General Robert – ‘Roy’ – Urquhart [no relation to Brian Urquhart] five days before the attack. In it Urquhart spelled out the distance his paratroops would have to cover between the chosen dropping zones west of Arnhem and the objectives within the city. Ryan records Sosabowski:

‘I remember Urquhart asking for questions and nobody raised any. Everyone sat nonchalantly, legs crossed, looking bored. I wanted to say something about this impossible plan, but couldn’t. I was unpopular as it was, and anyway who would have listened?’

Urquhart found himself unable to hide his feelings

‘and became obsessed with the fate of Market Garden. I was desperately anxious to go on the operation, but I was even more anxious for it to be considered carefully.”

As chief intelligence officer he

‘had to drive incessantly between Moor Park, Allied Airborne Army Headquarters at Ascot, Medmenham Air Photo Centre, and the 1st Airborne division, collecting, analyzing and disseminating the latest intelligence. On these long drives I agonised over the situation, sometimes wishing the jeep would crash and take me out of it all. My short nights were sleepless.’

In the same final week in which Sosabowski had been appalled by the British briefing, Urquhart

‘noticed a more or less casual remark in a 21 Army
Group Intelligence Summary that elements of the Second SS Panzer Crops, the 9th (Hohenstaufen) and 10th (Frundsberg) SS Panzer divisions, were reported to be refitting in the Arnhem area. This was confirmed by the Dutch resistance. This was appalling news. Even if these formidable fighting units had been badly mauled in Normandy and were short of armoured vehicles, they were a deadly threat to lightly armed airborne troops landing in their vicinity.’

After unsuccessful efforts to persuade Browning and other senior officers of the enormous risk these battle-hardened troops presented to Market Garden, Urquhart arranged for low-level oblique photographs of the area to be taken by a special Spitfire squadron based at Benson in Oxfordshire.

‘These pictures when they arrived confirmed my worst fears. There were German tanks and armoured vehicles parked under the trees within easy reach of 1st Airborne’s main dropping zone. I rushed to General Browning with this new evidence, only to be treated once again as a nervous child suffering from a nightmare. Even in my overwrought state I got the message very clearly. I was a pain in the neck, and only our long association and his natural kindness prevented the general from saying so.’

Sidelined
Browning’s natural kindness or no, that was the end of Urquhart as chief intelligence officer and – as events were to prove – of his life in Britain. Later that same day:

‘Colonel Eggar, our chief doctor, came to visit me. He informed me that I was suffering from acute nervous strain and exhaustion and ordered me to go on sick leave. When I asked him what would happen if I refused, he said, in his kindly way, that I would be
arrested and court-martialed for disobeying orders. I begged him to let me go on the operation in any capacity. He refused. I tried to explain the cause of my anxiety and asked if there was no way of stopping, or at least reshaping, the operation. He again said no, but I had the feeling he understood me better than discipline allowed him to say.’

‘Thus at 5pm on September 15, two days before operation Market Garden, I handed over to my deputy, David Ballingall, and drove down to Amberley in Sussex where Alfreda, expecting our first child, was now living. She was surprised to see me and even more surprised at my gaunt and haunted appearance. Since I could not, for security reasons, explain what had happened, she very sensibly set about trying to cheer me up. Nonetheless it was a desolate and miserable time.’

Urquhart was in Sussex when Market Garden was launched on the morning of Sunday 17 September. Fog in England delayed the drop of Sosabowski and his Polish brigade until four days later, by which time the Arnhem part of the operation was in chaos. Speedy German reaction, the capture of Allied plans, faulty communications equipment, the difficulty of resupply, delays along the single-track road bringing ground forces north, plus mounting Airborne casualties both at Arnhem bridge and in the Oosterbeek pocket to the west meant the trumpeted headline success of Monday had quickly become muted.

Urquhart records:
‘At the end of the week I was called to the War Office and told to report at once to Northolt airfield outside London where arrangements would be made for me to rejoin Headquarters Airborne Corps in Nijmegen... I do not know why I was ordered to return at this juncture and can only assume in the debacle that Operation
Market Garden had become, it looked odd for the Airborne Corps chief intelligence officer to be absent on sick leave.’

By the time he arrived at Browning’s new HQ in Holland the confident and triumphant ‘party’ tone of the week before had evaporated.

‘The beleaguered 1st Airborne Division had held the Arnhem bridge against enormous odds for five excruciating days, but when it became clear that they were not going to be relieved, what was left of the division was ordered to get out across the river by night, leaving the wounded behind. Out of 10,005 men, only 2,163 were evacuated in this way, leaving the wounded behind. One thousand two hundred men were dead and 6,642 were missing, wounded or captured.’

Many of Sosabowski’s paratroops had been killed before they reached the ground, with others dying in vain attempts to relieve the British trapped on the other side of the river. The Polish commander himself was subsequently accused of criticising Montgomery and lost command of his brigade before the end of 1944. The memorial to General Sosabowski erected by British Arnhem veterans in Driel, where the Polish brigade landed, enshrines their admiration for ‘an inspiring commander and fearless fighter for freedom’ whose ‘outstanding career was ended in unfair dismissal’. When the Soviet Union occupied Poland after the war, Sosabowski brought his wife and child to Britain, spending his later life as an assembly-line worker in a West London factory.

After Arnhem Urquhart requested an immediate move out of Airborne and when the war ended leapt at the chance of working with the nascent United Nations.

His reflections on Market Garden still have the power to move.

‘The operation which was to end the war in Western
Europe had been an unmitigated disaster, almost certainly destroying all possibility of an early victory. It had diverted essential support from Patton when he was forging ahead, given the Germans a success on the eve of their total defeat, made a nightmare of the last months of the war for the Dutch, and landed the British Army in a riverine swamp for the winter.’

‘The casualties, both military and civilian, were appalling – more than 17,000 Allied soldiers, killed, wounded, or missing in nine days of fighting, no possible reckoning of civilian casualties, and all for nothing or worse than nothing. Much of the town of Arnhem was destroyed and after the battle, the Germans forcibly evacuated the entire population for the remainder of the war. Small wonder that Prince Bernhard remarked: “My country can never afford the luxury of another Montgomery success.”’

Urquhart says he only found out many years later – some of it through Ryan’s book – that none of his intelligence material about the waiting German Panzers had been passed to his brave comrades before they took off for Holland. These included the heroic John Frost after whom the postwar successor Arnhem bridge was named. He also recanted his earlier view that Browning was largely to blame, seeing Market Garden as ‘the offspring of the ambition of Montgomery, who desperately wanted a British success to end the war.’

Lessons learned
His wider reflections are also worth bearing in mind as, 65 years later, Britain continues to fight wars.

‘It was, of course, inconceivable that the opinion of one person, a young and inexperienced officer at that, could change a vast military plan approved by the President of
the United States, the Prime Minister of Britain, and all the military top brass, but it seemed to me that I could have gone about it more effectively. I believed then, as most conceited young people do, that a strong rational argument will carry the day if sufficiently well supported by substantiated facts.’

‘This, of course, is nonsense. Once a group of people have made up their minds on something, it develops a life and momentum of its own which is almost impervious to reason or argument. This is particularly true when personal ambition and bravado are involved. In this case even an appeal to fear of ridicule and historical condemnation would not have worked. The decision had been taken at the highest level, and a vast military machine had been set in motion. The opinions of a young intelligence officer were not going to stop it.’

The Arnhem tragedy, he reflects, made him deeply sceptical about the behaviour of leaders.

‘I never again could quite be convinced that great enterprises would go as planned or turn out well, or that wisdom and principle were a match for vanity and ambition.’

In the Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek is the grave of Corporal James Arthur Jones of the 21st Independent Parachute Company. He was killed on the first day of Operation Market Garden, aged 24. The inscription on his headstone reads: ‘I died to save my children. People of the world, see that they shall not die.’ They are words to ponder the next time we see the people of Wootton Bassett line their high street as the coffins of young British soldiers are brought home from Afghanistan.
The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

The Wilson ‘mystery’ again

The first section of this about The Times appeared in a slightly different form under my name in Fortean Times.

On 22 August The Times published the latest episode in the long-running saga of ‘Why did Harold Wilson resign as prime minister in 1976?’ The fascination this has for sections of the media is perverse as we have known for many years from his closest confidants that Wilson resigned because he was basically knackered; and specifically because his memory was deteriorating and he was afraid that he might have what we now call Alzheimer’s disease (from which his father had suffered).¹ This is too prosaic for some and they keep looking for the secret scandal which they know must be the real explanation for Wilson’s departure.

The Times gave us the reminiscences of a barrister, Sir Desmond de Silva, who, in 1976, was representing two men who were charged with the burglary of Wilson’s house in 1974. Among the items stolen were some personal papers. Preparing for the trial, de Silva read these papers and found a 1974 letter from a businessman called Eric Miller advising Wilson to sell shares in his (Miller’s) property company. De Silva comments:

‘Before the committal proceedings, when I could have revealed [under the law of the time] the contents of that

¹ The latest of those confidants to explain all this is Bernard Donoughue in his Downing Street Diary (London 2005). Donoughue gives a very interesting short summary of his memories of life at No 10 with Wilson at <www.labourhistory.org.uk/?p=21>
letter and other documents in the box of material
recovered by the police, Wilson resigned.’ 2
And that’s it. There was a letter, which might have been
embarrassing had it been made public, but Wilson resigned. The
Times wants us to think there might be a connection but a
clearer example of the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy is hard
to imagine.

The Times followed their tiny ‘scoop’ with a version of
three other familiar ‘British conspiracy theories’, as they put it,
about Wilson. The Times sections are italicised

A KGB plot

One conjecture connects Harold Wilson to the sudden death of
Hugh Gaitskell, his predecessor as leader of the Labour Party. It
claims that Gaitskell, a pro-American, had been assassinated by
the KGB in order to install a communist sympathiser as probable
future prime minister. Anatoly Golitsyn, a Soviet agent who had
defected to the West, claimed that Wilson had been acting as a
KGB informer after visiting Russia in the late 1940s as President
of the Board of Trade.

Ah, Golitsyn! And if he did claim this, who would take it
seriously? Some members of MI5 certainly speculated that
Wilson might have been recruited by the Soviets on his trips
behind the Iron Curtain – and had done so before Golitsyn’s
defection – but they never found any evidence.

This Golitsyn story raises the interesting question about
what counts as being an informer or an agent. Say that on one

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2 Miller was one of a number of dodgy businessmen who attached
themselves to Wilson and gave him money to run his private office. (There
was no state funding [‘Short’ money] in those days for politicians.) The other
famous one was Joseph Kagan. For a time Miller was stepping-out with
Wilson’s private secretary, Marcia Williams/Falkender. Miller committed
suicide (or was ‘suicided’) and Kagan went to prison. No-one ever accused
Harold Wilson of having good taste where his business friends were
concerned.
of his trips to the Soviet bloc during the Cold War Wilson did talk to someone who was a Soviet intelligence officer with some kind of cover – as a trade official, say. Perhaps Wilson had a few vodkas and talked about British politics. Our Soviet intelligence official would write it all up and file a report. Wilson might be given a code-name.\footnote{Golitsyn’s Wiki entry claims that this is what happened.} But does this make Wilson an ‘agent’?

Cecil King, the Rupert Murdoch of his day, spent the mid 1960s wining and dining with a large section of British political and economic life, at least part of the time searching for the heavyweight figure who would lead Britain out of its ‘crisis’ (only to come up with Lord Mountbatten). Peter Wright claimed in \textit{Spycatcher} that King was one of the MI5’s agents. Which means what? King had a controller, a case-officer? Or merely that King chatted to senior MI5 people in the same way he talked to other senior civil servants?

The same issues arises in spades with the various claims made by ex-KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky to Christopher Andrew about ‘agents’ in the Labour Party and trade unions: KGB officer under cover talks to this or that MP/union official and claims them as ‘agents’. This makes him (or her but usually him) look good, justifies his/her overseas posting and enables him/her to claim some more expenses.

\textbf{A right-wing coup}

\begin{quote}
A meeting held between Lord Mountbatten of Burma, several senior journalists and government advisers has long been the foundation for claims that a plot existed in 1968 to depose Wilson and to replace him with an interim government led by Mountbatten.

‘Senior journalists and government advisors?’ As far as we know the meeting in 1968 was actually between Mountbatten, \textit{Daily Mirror} owner Cecil King and Sir Solly Zuckerman, the government’s chief scientist (as a minute or less on Google
would show). King had been machinating against Wilson for years at this point.

A military take-over

A similar incident is said to have gone farther after Edward Heath, the Tory leader, narrowly lost the 1974 general election to Wilson. Conspiracy theorists say that the Army, mobilised at Heathrow apparently for anti-terrorism training, was preparing a military take-over under the command of Mountbatten and senior intelligence staff.

Wilson himself was suspicious of the Army display at Heathrow but to my knowledge no ‘conspiracy theorists’ have alleged that Mountbatten was involved in the events of that year. Us ‘conspiracy theorists’ know what Mountbatten’s role was in 1968.

Missing, of course, from The Times piece was any mention of that newspaper’s own role in all this. Times Home Affairs editor at the time, Peter Evans, tells us in his recent memoir that at least one senior Times executive was involved in the discussions in 1968 which centred round a regime headed by Lord Mountbatten and had used the paper to promote him.4

And The Times added to the paranoia of the period between the two general elections in 1974 by running articles discussing the conditions under which a military coup in Britain would be legitimate.5

As part of the marketing of his book Strange Days Indeed, about the 1970s, Francis Wheen was the subject of an interview by Ian Burrell in The Independent on 14 September. Wheen ran his usual – and now very tired – Private Eye, cynical hack shtick.

4 Peter Evans, Within the Secret State (Brighton, 2009) pp. 89-91. This was reviewed in Lobster 57.
At the centre was poor old Harold Wilson whose mind, according to Wheen’s diagnosis, was ‘a simmering goulash of half-remembered incidents and unexplained mysteries’. With Wilson in a folie à trois were Penrose and Courtiour, ‘poor old gumshoes [who] traipsed around the country and kept coming up with dead ends’.

Wheen just hasn’t kept up to date with the story and is apparently unaware that Wilson knew pretty well what was going on and gave Pencourt the lead to a press officer in Northern Ireland – this was Colin Wallace and Information Policy. (Who told Wilson?) Unfortunately Pencourt didn’t recognise the significance of this at the time and didn’t pursue the ‘press officer’ lead.6 Wheen’s book is reviewed below.

So why did they support the EU?

In The Sunday Times of 14 June 2009 Bojan Pancevski and Robert Watts had a story which began:

‘Glenys Kinnock, the new minister for Europe, has amassed six publicly funded pensions worth £185,000 per year with her husband Neil, the former leader of the Labour party.

They have already received up to £8m of taxpayers’ money in pay and allowances, he as a European commissioner and she as a member of the European parliament.’7

Greasing the wheels


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6 ‘Britain’s own Watergate scandal (shurely shome mishtake? Ed)’, The Independent, 14 September.
7 <www.openeurope.org.uk/media-centre/article.aspx?newsid=2485>
Department of Health has spent almost £500 million on management consultants, including deals with firms which have hired senior Labour figures and high ranking civil servants’.

Not unrelated to which is the report of a study by Professor David Miller of the true extent of the ‘old boys network’ between the British government (or, more accurately, the British state) and banks.\(^8\)

**Cat and mice**

While Gordon Brown was on holiday in the summer the shop was being minded first by Harriet Harman and then by Peter Mandelson. Mandy did his annual hanging-out in public with the seriously rich, which the *Telegraph* on 11 August celebrated with a piece wondering how he paid off the mortgage on his house on millionaires’ row at Regent’s Park.\(^9\)

Harman did a little campaigning for the leadership of the Labour Party (the rump that will be left after the party is wiped out at the next election). Someone – I presume one of her rivals for that job – bothered to dig up some copy from the late 1970s when Harman was one of the leaders of the NCCL which showed off her then ‘progressive’ views on child sexuality, and fed it to *The Daily Telegraph*.\(^10\)

**TB’s associates**

Meanwhile Tony Blair’s commercial activities are expanding rapidly. His ‘consultancy’, Tony Blair Associates, now employs 80 people, according to an article by Edward Heathcote-Amory

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(familiar surname!) in the Mail.\textsuperscript{11} Blair’s support for the Israeli cause was recognised in his being awarded the $1 million Dan David prize for ‘leadership’ at the University of Tel Aviv.\textsuperscript{12}

**Mind control**

A neuroscientist, Rebecca Saxe, has talked about her experiments using electromagnetics to change moral thinking and reported that the Pentagon is interested in it.\textsuperscript{13} The Times (and many other places) reported, in the words of The Times, that ‘Scientists have discovered how to “read” minds by scanning brain activity and reproducing images of what people are seeing — or even remembering. Researchers have been able to convert into crude video footage the brain activity stimulated by what a person is watching or recalling.’\textsuperscript{14}

Which raises this issue: if the mind control victims are reporting reality accurately, the US/Russian military are decades beyond these kind of experiments. So why are they bothering with this low-level, preliminary stuff? For example, there is a big new pull-together of known and half-known American and Russian/Soviet experiments in this field, ‘Means of information war threaten democracy and mankind’ by Mojmir Babacek (edited by John Allman).\textsuperscript{15} If only a fraction of this is real, neither the Russian nor US military have any need to be ringing Ms Saxe for details of her (by their standards) piffling experiments.

**Plus ça change**

‘Gordon Brown puts Israel lobbyist in charge of Britain’s Middle

\textsuperscript{11} ‘Inside Blair Inc’, 30 October 2009.
\textsuperscript{12} The Guardian 18 May 2009
\textsuperscript{13} At <http://blog.ted.com/2009/07/rebecca_saxe_at.php>
\textsuperscript{14} ‘Psychic computer shows your thoughts on screen <www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/science/living/article6898177.ece>
\textsuperscript{15} <http://nwoconspiracy.org/2009/08/10/means-of-information-war-threaten-democracy-and-mankind/>
East policy’ was the headline,16 in response to the news that appointed to be Britain’s Minister at the FCO with responsibility for Israel and the Middle East was Ivan Lewis, vice chair of Labour Friends of Israel. Lewis’s Wiki entry is worth a look.

Former Private Eye editor, Richard Ingrams, noted that of the five members of the Great and the Good who are going to inquire into the Anglo-American assault on Iraq, two of them, historians Professor Lawrence Freedman (whose salary comes, at least in part, from the Ministry of Defence via King’s College, London) and Sir Martin Gilbert are ‘committed Zionists’; and thus we are not likely to get an honest examination of the Israelis’ role in the disinformation leading up to the invasion.17

Kevin Blowe noted on his blog that of the five, three are involved with the Ditchley Foundation.18

The least surprising news of the last few months was the decision taken by the US government not to prosecute for espionage Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, who worked for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and were caught leaking classified information to the Israeli embassy. There cannot have been anyone with any knowledge of the role of the Israeli lobby in the US who believed this case would ever get to court.

The Israel lobby in Britain

And so Channel 4 finally broke one of the great taboos of British television with its documentary on the Israel lobby in Britain. I didn’t watch the documentary (TV is too slow for me: an hour’s documentary gives you about 6 paragraphs of information) but the accompanying booklet by the documentary’s authors, which I assume is similar to the broadcast programme, is seriously good and contains enough on the record comments to

16  At <www.redress.cc/stooges/redress20090611>
17  The Independent 20 June 2009
demonstrate to anyone that the British Israel lobby is real and rather significant.

There are downloadable versions of the booklet at <www.channel4.com/> and <www.opendemocracy.net/>.

Gog/Magog

‘Incredibly, President George W. Bush told French President Jacques Chirac in early 2003 that Iraq must be invaded to thwart Gog and Magog, the Bible’s satanic agents of the Apocalypse. Honest. This isn’t a joke. The president of the United States, in a top-secret phone call to a major European ally, asked for French troops to join American soldiers in attacking Iraq as a mission from God.’ 19

This is startling not so much because Bush believes this nonsense – we knew he believed similar nonsense – but because he and/or his advisors thought it a sensible approach to take with the president of France.

Political cross-dressing?

Who wrote this?

‘Readers may recall my previous tirades against the private finance initiative (PFI). Expensive and inefficient, PFI means taxpayers often shell out ridiculous amounts for substandard schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure.

‘Having been paid over the odds for the building, the private sector then adds insult to injury by providing sloppy, overpriced services, under 25-year contracts allowing them to do as little as possible while extracting

‘Why have Labour, and the Tories before them, signed PFI contracts worth hundreds of billions when the private sector could have been engaged on more flexible terms, providing far better taxpayer value?’

‘Because a succession of clever-clever civil servants, supposedly negotiating on our behalf, have cut deals stacked in the private sector’s favour. It is a complete coincidence some then went to work for the PFI industry.’

‘The main attraction, though, is that PFI allows ministers to park billions of pounds of debt off-balance-sheet – a public-sector Enron.’

No, not some lefty, but Liam Halligan in *The Sunday Telegraph* of 17 May 2009.

*And who wrote this?*

‘Amidst this worsening economic crisis, the House of Representatives just passed a $636 billion “defense” bill. Who is the United States defending against? Americans have no enemies except those that the US government goes out of its way to create by bombing and invading countries that comprise no threat whatsoever to the US and by encircling others – Russia for example – with threatening military bases.’

‘America’s wars are contrived affairs to serve the money laundering machine: from the taxpayers and money borrowed from foreign creditors to the armaments industry to the political contributions that ensure $636 billion “defense” bills.’

Not Greg Palast or John Pilger, but Paul Craig Roberts, briefly Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the first Reagan Administration.  

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‘DECLASSIFIED American government documents show that the US intelligence community ran a campaign in the Fifties and Sixties to build momentum for a united Europe. It funded and directed the European federalist move on firm suspicions voiced at the time that America was working aggressively behind the scenes to push Britain into a European state. One memorandum, dated July 26, 1950, gives instructions for a campaign to promote a fully fledged European parliament. It is signed by Gen William J Donovan, head of the American wartime Office of Strategic Services, precursor of the CIA.’

‘The documents were found by Joshua Paul, a researcher at Georgetown University in Washington. They include files released by the US National Archives. Washington's main tool for shaping the European agenda was the American Committee for a United Europe, created in 1948. The chairman was Donovan, ostensibly a private lawyer by then.’

‘The vice-chairman was Allen Dulles, the CIA director in the Fifties. The board included Walter Bedell Smith, the CIA's first director, and a roster of ex-OSS figures and officials who moved in and out of the CIA. The documents show that ACUE financed the European Movement, the most important federalist organisation in the post-war years. In 1958, for example, it provided 53.5 per cent of the movement's funds.’

‘The European Youth Campaign, an arm of the European Movement, was wholly funded and controlled by Washington. The Belgian director, Baron Boel, received monthly payments into a special account. When the head of the European Movement, Polish-born Joseph Retinger, bridled at this degree of American control and tried to raise money in Europe, he was quickly reprimanded.’
'The leaders of the European Movement - Retinger, the visionary Robert Schuman and the former Belgian prime minister Paul-Henri Spaak – were all treated as hired hands by their American sponsors. The US role was handled as a covert operation. ACUE’s funding came from the Ford and Rockefeller foundations as well as business groups with close ties to the US government.’

‘The head of the Ford Foundation, ex-OSS officer Paul Hoffman, doubled as head of ACUE in the late Fifties. The State Department also played a role. A memo from the European section, dated June 11, 1965, advises the vice-president of the European Economic Community, Robert Marjolin, to pursue monetary union by stealth. It recommends suppressing debate until the point at which "adoption of such proposals would become virtually inescapable." ’

Not Richard Fletcher, the late Philip Agee, Phil Kelly or Tom Easton, but Ambrose Evans-Pritchard in his ‘Euro-federalists financed by US spy chiefs’ in The Sunday Telegraph, 19 September 2009. I wonder if Evans-Pritchard is aware that this has been known by the spook-wise Anglo-American left for over 30 years?

And which British newspaper ran an article questioning the belief that Osama Bin Laden is still alive and speculating that his death was being kept from the British and American publics to keep the ‘War on Terror’ going? The Socialist Worker? Morning Star? No: the Daily Mail.21

9/11

A number of major stories have been illuminated by the events

21 <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1212851/Has-Osama-Bin-Laden-dead-seven-years-U-S-Britain-covering-continue-war-terror.html>
of 9/11. One of the big ones is the story of rival/competing intelligence and law enforcement agencies and the role of knowledge as scarce resource. This first long item is from Secrecy News, bulletin of the Federation of American Scientists Project on Government Secrecy, volume 2009, no. 53, June 17, 2009.

9/11, info sharing and “the wall”

‘The rise of “the wall” between intelligence and law enforcement personnel that impeded the sharing of information within the U.S. government prior to September 11, 2001 was critically examined in a detailed monograph that was prepared in 2004 for the 9/11 Commission. It is the only one of four staff monographs that had not previously been released. It was finally declassified and disclosed earlier this month.’

‘In April 2004, Attorney General John Ashcroft testified that the failure to properly share threat information in the summer of 2001 could be attributed to Justice Department policy memoranda that were issued in 1995 by the Clinton Administration. That is an erroneous oversimplification, the staff monograph contends: ‘A review of the facts.....demonstrates that the Attorney General’s testimony did not fairly and accurately reflect’ the meaning or relevance of those 1995 policy documents. For one thing, those policies did not even apply to CIA and NSA information, which could have been shared with law enforcement without any procedural obstacles.’

‘But if Attorney General Ashcroft was misinformed, he was not alone. The 1995 procedures governing information sharing between law enforcement and intelligence “were widely misunderstood and misapplied” resulting in “far less information sharing and coordination.....than was allowed.” In fact, “everyone was confused about the rules governing the sharing and use of information gathered in
intelligence channels.’”

“The information sharing failures in the summer of 2001 were not the result of legal barriers but of the failure of individuals to understand that the barriers did not apply to the facts at hand,” the 35-page monograph concludes. “Simply put, there was no legal reason why the information could not have been shared.”

‘The prevailing confusion was exacerbated by numerous complicating circumstances, the monograph explains. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court was growing impatient with the FBI because of repeated errors in applications for surveillance. Justice Department officials were uncomfortable requesting intelligence surveillance of persons and facilities related to Osama bin Laden since there was already a criminal investigation against bin Laden underway, which normally would have preempted FISA surveillance. Officials were reluctant to turn to the FISA Court of Review for clarification of their concerns since one of the judges on the court had expressed doubts about the constitutionality of FISA in the first place. And so on. Although not mentioned in the monograph, it probably didn’t help that public interest critics in the 1990s (myself included) were accusing the FISA Court of serving as a “rubber stamp” and indiscriminately approving requests for intelligence surveillance.’

‘In the end, the monograph implicitly suggests that if the law was not the problem, then changing the law may not be the solution. The document, which had been classified Secret, was released with some small though questionable redactions.’

In ‘Explosive Theory’, a long and detailed piece about the group,

Architects and Engineers for 911 Truth, Jay Levin and Tom McKenzie present the case that the WTC buildings were demolished.\textsuperscript{23} We’re back where I was in the previous issue of Lobster. If they were demolished, the buildings had to be wired in advance; and if we are going to argue that they were wired by the same group flying the planes, why did they wire WTC 7, which wasn’t a target of the planes and wasn’t hit by them? It is infinitely more likely that the explosives were there independent of the plane bombings. And if so, why and at the behest of whom?

Dean Farmer, Senior Counsel and Team Leader to the 9/11 Commission, Dean of Rutgers School of Law–Newark, and one of the principal authors of the 9/11 Commission Report, has a book out, The Ground Truth: The Untold Story of America Under Attack on 9/11. I haven’t read this yet but among the press releases promoting it in October was this: ‘At some level of government,’ says Dean Farmer, ‘at some point in time, a decision was made not to tell the truth about the national response to the attacks on the morning of 9/11.’

For someone my age there are tempting analogies between the 9/11 events and those of 22 November 1963. But while we eventually learned decades later from third parties that most members of the Warren Commission didn’t believe the report to which they had appended their names, no member of Warren, let alone a senior counsel, published something less than a decade after the event saying the report was false.

\textbf{As if!}

There appears to be little that you can’t persuade some journalists to write. Take The Independent’s David Usborne. On June 20 he wrote ‘US readies defences for North Korean missile...

\textsuperscript{23} At <www.metroactive.com/metro/09.09.09/cover-0936.html> the Website of the Metro newspaper in Silicone Valley in California. The group’s website is <www.ae911truth.org/>.
attack on Hawaii’ which began:

‘The United States military was yesterday reinforcing the
defences of Hawaii in response to increasing concern
that North Korea, stung by new United Nations
sanctions against it, may be preparing to launch a long-
range ballistic missile in the direction of the Pacific
archipelago.’

Yes, it’s those well known suicides in North Korea, planning to
lob a missile at Pearl Harbour! Except that the headline and the
text don’t quite agree: ‘in the direction of the Pacific archipelago’
 isn’t quite a ‘missile attack on Hawaii’, is it? And there’s the
universal qualifier beloved of journalists and politicians, ‘may
be’. Still, it’s all grist to the mill for the US military-industrial
complex in its constant search for new ‘threats’.24

Same old same old

Simon Matthews spotted this in the reviews section of The
Sunday Telegraph 18 June 2009 under the subhead ‘Four books
about Islamist terrorism’;25

‘Meanwhile, the founder of modern political Zionism,
the Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl, had earmarked a
site for the Jewish state. In June 1895, he wrote in his
diary: “We must expropriate gently the private property”
and “spirit the penniless population across the border”.’

Ethnic cleansing, in other words. Which is what the Israeli state
has been doing since it was founded; but doing it piecemeal,
slowly enough to avoid making too many waves in America.

24 Similar nonsense appeared in the Mail the day before. See ‘Japan warns
that North Korea may fire missile at U.S. on Independence Day’, 19 June
2009.
25 <www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5568411/Four-books-
about-Islamist-terrorism-review.html>
Its oor oil!

Way back in Lobster 9 in 1985 Steve Dorril and I wrote a piece on conspiracy theories about the Falklands War, some of which were speculating that the underlying reason for it was the prospect of oil around the Malvinas. And well, well, a piece in The Telegraph on 10 September 2009 under the subhead ‘Desire Petroleum tows rig to oil-rich Falklands’ began:

‘A British oil explorer is raising £20m-£30m from shareholders as it prepares to start drilling in the Falkland Islands, where it believes up to 3bn barrels of oil and gas may be recoverable.’

UFO tourists?

In 1993, an RAF Wing Commander lobbied MoD officials about the need for a properly funded study of UFOs. He told them:

‘The national security implications [of UFOs] are considerable. We have many reports of strange objects in the skies and have never investigated them.’ He added: ‘If the sightings are of devices not of earth then their purpose needs to be established as a matter of priority. There has been no apparently hostile intent and other possibilities are: (1) military reconnaissance, (2) scientific, (3) tourism.’ 26 (emphasis added)

About 20 years ago I remember reading (but now cannot locate) an analysis of UFO incidents by Martin Kottmeyer, one of the most interesting and amusing of the writers on UFOs, who concluded (semi-seriously) that the best explanation of the behaviour of UFOs (presuming that they really did exist) was that they were engaged in tourism.

RIP

There was a long obituary of Lord Peter Blaker in *The Daily Telegraph* on 7 July 2009. It detailed his long career as a professional anti-communist and listed some of his better known attempts to make trouble for Labour governments with information given him by the security and intelligence services. Somewhat to my surprise the obit also included this paragraph:

‘In March 1992 Granada TV claimed Blaker had paid a private detective £5,000 to investigate Owen Oyston, the Lancashire Labour millionaire, over links with a model agency and prostitution. Blaker admitted paying the money, but denied any political motivation. Oyston was subsequently tried, and jailed, for the rape of an 18-year-old model.’

Andrew Rosthorn commented to me that Blaker stated in a long letter to the private detective Michael Murrin and a taped telephone conversation that his payment to Murrin was for information for commercial rather than political ends. That was a rivalry over the Lancashire cable television franchise. Lord Blaker’s payment to Murrin was made in July 1986. The rape charges against Oyston were not laid until 1995.

For more details of the political conspiracy to destroy Owen Oyston, one of the great neglected scandals of British politics, see Andrew Rosthorn’s ‘Our friends in the North West’ in *Lobster 34*.

**Leggwork**

And so it was that the role of Sir Thomas Legg in further contributing to the misery of MPs by trimming their expenses provoked a *Mail on Sunday* journalist to contact me about the piece I had published by John Burnes, ‘Joseph K and the Spooky launderette’ in *Lobster 36*, which contained a good deal about Legg. Which I duly e-mailed to him. But where was Burnes? His phone and computer were not responding. Well, that’s nothing new: Burnes has had endless phone and computer problems,
presumably (but not provably) courtesy of the British secret state. Undeterred by their inability to talk to Burnes, the Mail wallahs filleted the Burnes’ piece for an article, ‘Revealed: How Sir Thomas Legg the exes axeman lost his wife to a guitar-playing “KGB suspect.”’

Amen to this

Chris Floyd on the news that President Obama had been awarded the Nobel peace prize.

‘To give a peace prize to the commander-in-chief of a war machine now churning its way through the populations of three countries (Iraq/Af-Pak), with innumerable black ops, lightning raids and drone shots on the side......to a man who even as we speak is deciding just how he wants to kill even more civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan...... a man who has enthusiastically embraced as "an extraordinary achievement" one of the most heinous and barbaric acts of military aggression since Hitler rolled across the border into Poland...... a man who blusters about leaving “all options on the table,” including the use of mass-murdering nuclear weapons, to bully other nations into compliance with American wishes...... to give a peace prize to such a man, while all over the world, there are men and women who have devoted their entire lives to non-violence and reconciliation, many of them suffering imprisonment, torture and ruin for their efforts ... well, like I said, it’s beyond words.’

From Floyd’s excellent *Empire Burlesque* at <http://chris-floyd.com/>
Roderick Russell

Russell, whose persecution at the hands of agents apparently working for Grosvenor International was described in Lobster 57, has updated the Wiki entry describing these events.28

In September I received this e-mail, apparently from Russell:

‘Hope you get this on time? Sorry I did not inform you about my trip to the UK for a program, I’m presently in COVENTRY CITY and am experiencing some difficulties because i lost my wallet on my way to the hotel where other valuable things were kept. presently my passport and other things are been held by the hotel management pending payment are being made. I will really appreciate if you can assist me with a loan of (4,550 USD) to sort-out my hotel bills and to get myself back home. I will be happy with whatever you can afford to loan me with, I'll make arrangements for refunds as soon i as i’m home,let me know if you can be of any help. Please this is very confidential,i’m urging you to let this be between us as it's a big shame to my personality.’

This is an obvious phoney and a few days later Russell’s daughter Amy sent this e-mail.

‘Please see the message below that my father sent on Saturday after I contacted him about this email that had been sent. His entire email account has been obliterated with 80% of his address book deleted as well. Everyone on his address list was sent the ridiculous email you received.’

This was Russell’s message:

‘Alert - At 3:25 AM on 9/12/09 all archived messages on my email account rtmrussell_ba_ca@yahoo.ca <mailto:rtmrussell_ba_ca@yahoo.ca> were obliterated and a completely false message sent to some of my contacts on my address list. I won’t repeat the message

28 <http://zerzetzen.wikispaces.com>
except to say that it was sent under the title “I’m screwed, please do something”. This is just another example of the extent to which the MI5, MI6, intelligence services in the UK and CSIS in Canada will go to muddy the waters and try and stop this story from being honestly investigated. The purpose of the intelligence services in sending these messages is to try and confuse the issue.’

Well, Russell might be right, and this is the work of some intelligence agency. But the message is so illiterate, so unlike Russell’s own writing, I do wonder about that. Would a state body not have managed a better fake? Or is is simply that the spooks (like other public bodies) are also now getting younger personnel, educated since the 1970s, many of whom cannot spell, punctuate or write coherently?

Cometh the hour cometh the man?

As a quick Google will show, there is quite a media band-wagon rolling now for Rory Stewart, prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate for the safe Tory seat of Penrith. By any standards Stewart is a striking man but to date none of the major media portraits have seen fit to include the interesting information that Stewart is not, as they all report, a former diplomat, but a former member of MI6. (Is the bandwagon the MI6 media unit at work?) Former diplomat Craig Murray named Stewart as a former MI6 officer in his ‘Iain Dale’s Bracknell Campaign’ on his website. Stewart has subsequently denied this to which Murray responded: ‘Let me be plain. Rory Stewart was an officer for Torturers’R'Us (formerly trading as MI6).’

Murray there described Stewart as a ‘crusading neo-conservative.’ I don’t know what Murray means by ‘neo-conservative’ but none of the senses of the term are obvious from Stewart’s piece in the London Review of Books on Afghanistan on 28 July which shows a seriously intelligent mind

29 <www.craigmurray.org.uk>.
at work. He now has a safe Tory seat, will be in parliament at the next election and, I would guess, in the Tory cabinet immediately afterwards. Could it be that MI6 are using Stewart as part of a plan to extricate this country from the Af-Pak quagmire?

**JFK**

Douglas Horne, formerly chief military analyst with the Assassination Archives Review Board:

‘A former editor of *LIFE* magazine has just provided explosive information, in November of 2009, that indicates the Attorney General of the United States, Robert F. Kennedy, was working with *LIFE* in November of 1963 to bring down Vice President Lyndon Johnson and ruin his political career, so that his brother, President Kennedy, could replace LBJ as his running mate in 1964. I include this information in my blog because it confirms a central thesis of my book, which is that LBJ willingly participated in a large domestic conspiracy to assassinate JFK *in order to avoid his own political ruin.*’

That LBJ was involved I believe to true. But this information hardly confirms that hypothesis, does it? It adds another piece to the fragments we knew already about the moves to oust LBJ from the presidential ticket. At least as significant to LBJ’s political career were congressional inquiries into the Bobby Baker affair which were proceeding when JFK was shot (and which LBJ ended as soon as he become president). And where is the evidence of the ‘large domestic conspiracy’?

**Defending whose realm?**

Jane Kelsey, author of *Economic Fundamentalism* (reviewed in

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30 On a blog, basically advertising Horne’s forthcoming book (or books: five volumes, apparently) on the assassination, due out in December 2009.  
<http://insidethearrb.livejournal.com/>
Lobster 31), a New Zealand academic critic of neo-liberalism, put out a press release in August on her discovery that New Zealand’s Security Intelligence Service (SIS) had a file on her. Professor of Law at the University of Auckland, Kelsey noted:

‘When the SIS got new powers in the 1990s I warned that they would be used against critics of the free market policies and free trade agreements. This has now proved true.’

In his review of Christopher Andrew’s In Defence of the Realm in The London Review of Books (19 November 2009) Bernard Porter commented that he had information (whose source he couldn’t reveal) that MI5 saw part of their role as defending the Anglo-American version of capitalism – i.e. the City and its largely American banks. Is MI5 keeping files on those of us who oppose Anglo-American capitalism?

Mythologies

Regular contributor to this journal, John Newsinger, has had a pamphlet, American Right Or Wrong: New Labour and Uncle Sam’s Wars (London: Bookmarks, £1.50) published by the SWP, of which he is a member. Very good it is, too. But in it Newsinger claims (p. 14) that the reason the Attlee Labour government was defeated in 1951 was the cuts in welfare spending made to pay for increased military expenditure. Not true. In 1951 the total Labour vote actually increased, Labour losing only because of the eccentricities of the first-past-the-post electoral system.

I learned of this autobiography through catching the husky tones of Baroness Williams reading from its closing chapter on Radio 4. She was warning of the dangers of being ruled by privileged young career politicians who ‘know no life outside politics’. Had I been too harsh in my earlier judgements of the female member of the Gang of Four, I wondered? Who could possibly quibble with that reasonable-sounding voice when the Foreign Secretary appears barely old enough to vote?

But then I read *Climbing the Bookshelves* by the former Labour Cabinet minister who helped launch the short-lived SDP in 1981. Sure enough the wise words I’d heard on the BBC were there. But so was her description of how as a 21-year-old Oxford student the then Shirley Catlin was funded by the US government to take the Young Atlantic Leaders trip around America. Then, while subsequently enjoying a Fulbright
Fellowship in the US, ‘I received a telegram summoning me back to England for a selection conference for the Harwich constituency,’ she recalls. Not only that, but when she stepped off the ship bringing her back to a British political career in November 1952 ‘a journalist from the Daily Mirror was waiting for me on the dock at Southampton, and he offered me a job on the spot for the sensational salary of £14 a week.’ Ah, nothing like ‘real life’ as an apprenticeship for government back in those good old days when broad experience counted for so much more than today.

Is it that she didn’t measure her own political beginnings against today’s bright young things who ‘know no life outside politics’ and reflect on the similarities? Or is it that she hopes her readers will forget her own well-lubricated passage into politics before reading the wise words of her concluding criticism? Reading the rest of the book the same question recurred. Who is she fooling – herself or her readers? I find it hard to tell: so much of it reads like Mary Poppins meets Adrian Mole.

For example, she describes how she travels with a largely American group of Aspen Institute people to meet the Shah of Iran whose ‘father had occupied the throne in a bloodless military coup’. Wasn’t there just a bit more to the CIA’s Operation Ajax than that, Shirley?

Or this. When arriving for the well-trailed and hugely publicised meeting with fellow Gang members Roy Jenkins and William Rodgers at David Owen’s Limehouse home in 1981 to publish their joint declaration, she says: ‘I had failed to appreciate the media interest in the latest phase of our venture.’

This, remember, is not some publicity naïf. She is the person who slipped straight back from America into a Mirror job, and then when she was asked to resign from that, promptly plopped into another one with the Financial Times. This is the woman who after losing her Labour seat in 1979 was gently interviewed by Robin Day, ‘an old friend from our Oxford
university days’, and had been interviewed regularly on radio and TV long before becoming an MP in 1964. Had she really ‘failed to appreciate the media interest in the latest phase’ of the setting up of a new party that would for two general elections split opposition to Margaret Thatcher’s Conservatives?

Evacuated by her parents to the United States in the Second World War, Williams has been criss-crossing the Atlantic ever since. Within days of her 1979 election defeat she was offered a Harvard fellowship; her second marriage was to the American political academic Richard Neustadt who had spent time discreetly monitoring Hugh Gaitskell’s Labour Party for the JFK White House; and even as an SDP politician briefly in the Commons and then in the Lords, she was regularly back among the liberal East Coast fraternity.

But readers looking for insight into the US/UK relationship from someone so well positioned will be disappointed, as they will be in seeking any sharp observations on British politics. Those who remember the Callaghan government and the rise of Thatcher may recall Williams and other Labour right-wing ministers vociferously rushing to the defence of one of their number, Reg Prentice, faced with deselection. Prentice subsequently switched parties – probably the highest ranking Labour figure ever to defect to the Tories – but he doesn’t rate a mention in these memoirs.

There are lots of similar gaps. There’s nothing, for instance on the union block vote that kept the Labour right in charge of the party for much of the Cold War, and only passing references to important figures. David Sainsbury, for example, was a key funder of the Fabian Society for which Williams worked as general secretary and was the SDP treasurer, but he merits only one passing reference.

She recounts the tensions between the Gang of Four and tells us that ‘the high tide of the SDP’ was reached inside its first year. But there is little to explain why she helped continue its life
for two subsequent general elections. If Williams shared the sharp perception of her old friend Brian Walden that the divisive power of the SDP was vital to the maintenance of NATO and the Atlantic relationship (*Lobster 31*), her memoirs reveal no such indication.

What we do get is a fair bit on her love life – Peter Parker, Bernard Williams, Anthony King and then Neustadt – and pen portraits of some of her contemporaries. If that’s what publishers of autobiographies of politicians think their readers want, it’d be unfair to be harsh on her. But one is still left disappointed. She was a key figure in the post-war British political world – perhaps the leading woman in a half-century of our history behind Thatcher and Barbara Castle. Was there no more to her than this?

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**Londongrad – From Russia with cash:**

*The inside story of the oligarchs*

Mark Hollingsworth and Stewart Lansley


**Tom Easton**

Journalists who try to tell us about powerful Russians plough a tough furrow. Some get killed, others are beaten up or threatened and, in the United Kingdom, all are subject to libel laws in which the billionaire oligarchs can put them and their publishers out of business by the mere spending of a little loose change. So almost any book going into this murky world is to be welcomed, and this one by two writers with a track record of courageously taking on the influential especially so.

Mark Hollingsworth and Stewart Lansley open by describing the 2004 death in a helicopter crash of lawyer
Stephen Curtis, ‘the man who knew too much’ about the oligarch world in which he had made a fortune. They follow it with pen portraits of the men who became very wealthy through shrewdly acquiring the assets of much of the Soviet Union and who then left their homeland to spend it. For some this meant buying football teams and property in London and the Home Counties, and yachts on which to entertain the likes of George Osborne and Lord Mandelson. Some continued to dabble in the politics of their motherland and others with that of other countries, including Israel, with many oligarchs possessing passports from that country.

The authors seek to measure the impact of their presence in Britain and list many ennobled Brits – from Lord Bell, whose PR empire represents many of them, to Lords Owen, Robertson, Goldsmith, Powell and Hurd who work for them in other ways. We learn that some of the think-tanks benefited from oligarch largesse long before Alexander Lebedev bought more direct public influence by acquiring the London Evening Standard.

The Rothschild family feature prominently in this story and the authors recount the warm welcome Ken Livingstone gave to the Russian influx in his days as Mayor of London. But Hollingsworth and Lansley conclude:

‘The tidal wave of Russian money into London helped inject new life into the luxury goods industries, fuelled a domestic wealth boom and contributed, along with other foreign money, to the creation of Britain’s plutonomy. But it also helped to distort the local and national property market, opened up new wealth gaps, and made the economy dangerously dependent on the huge vagaries of fugitive wealth.’

My guess is that the authors uncovered a lot more than Fourth Estate felt able to publish, but what has been printed is enough to spread lots of alarm and not a little despondency.
The new afterword John Ralston Saul had added since the recession is almost worth the price of his incisive and well-written *The Collapse of Globalism*, first published four years ago. Try this, for example, on the 2008 *mea culpa* of Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the US Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006:

‘If you believe that history has come to an end, you explicitly banish memory from your mind. Greenspan was “shocked”. Like a small child who had ventured into a world beyond his experience or imagination, he did “not fully understand why it had happened”. But he had been paid to be the world’s ultimate financial father and so there was no one to teach him or slap his hand.’

Saul is less severe on Greenspan and the financial sector as causes of our present troubles than on the ‘hypnotic effects’ induced by the pervasive ideology – ‘a world adrift in passive received wisdom’ – spread by ‘the sacred congregations of Globalization’ in the past 30 years. He blames much of that on what has happened to economics teaching since the widespread acceptance of Hayek, ‘the father of the new international economic Pentecostalism’. He says: ‘The failed ideologues of the past three decades remain in charge of what passes for economic thought in our universities.’

After that come the business schools, the management consultancies and then

‘the fourth group of propagandists: the many economic and business journalists who, on a daily basis, drove us on until it was too late. Now they are urgently raising red flags to warn us off protectionism and to praise, yet one more
time, free trade as the only, indeed the sacred way out of the crisis. And so they are busy reanimating their old Manichean proposition that all will stand or fall in this battle of opposites – walls up or walls down – as if there were no other more sophisticated approaches to prosperity than a continual growth of trade; as if our problems were not broader and more profound.’

Far from the ‘tsunami of modernisation driven by unleashed competition’ the world in recent decades, he says, experienced not capitalism, but 17th century mercantilism:

‘managing the market from production to consumption in order to avoid the dangers of competition. In other words, Globalization by the mid-1990s was becoming a contradiction between rhetoric and reality. And now it has collapsed. But it has collapsed without there being any attempt to understand the pattern that led us into crisis. What we are concentrating on are the superficial outcomes of something far more profound.’

Saul concludes:

‘The key to dealing with this crisis is not to rebuild the old structures based on the old assumptions. We have the opportunity to build a more sophisticated sort of wealth based upon a balancing of social, environmental and market needs. This could easily be the project of a century.’

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**Spookaroonie!**

*Inside British Intelligence
100 years of MI5 and MI6
Gordon Thomas
London: JR books, 2009, £20*
I haven’t properly read either of these books and cannot really review them. However, there are some things I can say about them.

I’m not quite sure why but I have never taken Gordon Thomas’s books on espionage and parapolitics seriously. Partly, it is just that he writes a lot, and I don’t trust people who are prolific in these fields because this material is so difficult to write about that it is impossible to be both prolific and reliable; and partly it is just that his documentation is so patchy. The last one of his I looked at, *The Assassination of Robert Maxwell, Israel’s Superspy*, was impossible to evaluate – all/some/none of it might have been true – and thus impossible to take seriously. So when I saw the news story about this book, claiming that the British government tried to stop it being published – what the publisher of every book about intelligence hopes for – I didn’t pay any attention: even if it contained something new it wouldn’t be reliable enough to be of use, so why bother? But there it was in my local library and as I flipped through the index I saw a name that surprised me, Fred Holroyd, to whom Thomas devotes a page. Alas, Thomas has confused Holroyd with someone else and the page is entirely false. (He has him as the MI6 no. 2 in the Republic of Ireland in the early 1970s at the time of the Littlejohn affair.) Thomas’s error is ironic as Fred is one of the tiny handful of British ex-intelligence whistle-blowers who will talk on the record. Thomas didn’t talk to Fred and presumably hasn’t read his memoir, the now hard to find *War Without Honour*. See what I mean about reliability?

I sent a copy of the page to Fred, who contacted the publisher. Eventually Fred met Thomas and the publisher’s md. *Inter alia*, Thomas told Fred that Steve Dorril, co-founder of this
magazine, pretended to be an academic at the University of Huddersfield but really was an MI6 officer. See what I mean about reliability? Donations to a couple of military charities will be made by the publisher and the offending material will removed from any further editions. Fred, the gent as always, let them off lightly.

The Hennessy and Thomas book on MI5 is enormous. It’s ‘only’ 660 pages but this has been achieved by dint of squeezing the margins and the line-spacing. Thus an 800-900 page book has been crammed into ‘only’ 660 pages. The result is a very ugly, uncomfortable read. (The text is so wide it requires the eyes to make at least five shifts across each line.) This would not matter if the content was interesting; but it isn’t. The authors have diligently worked their way through the official files that are available (with the occasional other book cited). So, of the 660 pages, the first 530 are devoted to MI5 up to Klaus Fuchs in 1950. After that, no official papers being available (except to the ‘official’ historian Andrew), the next 45 years are done in 130 pages. The first 33 chapters based on the official paper record are what they are and I am in no position to evaluate them (even if I was interested). The last 4 are based on the kinds of public sources available to all of us and they are poor; and in the case of the material covering the 1970s and 80s, very poor indeed. None of the insiders who have talked critically about MI5 in the post 1964 era – Massiter, Shayler, Machon, Holroyd, Wallace, to name just the obvious examples – are quoted or cited. The official version is always treated as if it were unchallenged. This is thus less an unofficial history of MI5 than an unauthorised official history of MI5.

The Defence of the Realm
The Authorised History of MI5
Christopher Andrew
Covering the same area as the Hennessy/Thomas book but with access to more recent MI5 documents, Andrew does at least refer to the dissenters named in the preceding paragraph. This is a thousand pages long and will be of major interest to academic students of British intelligence and political history for years to come. Discounted from sellers like Amazon, this is a seriously good buy. But I’m not an academic and my interests are political. I looked initially at two areas: what it said about MI5’s relationship with the British left since WW2, and particularly the role of the CPGB in British politics; and the so-called Wilson plots.

Let’s take the left first. Elsewhere in this issue is my contribution to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom’s book on the 1984 miners’ strike. In that I repeat for the umpteenth time Peter Wright’s story in *Spycatcher* that MI5 knew about the covert Soviet funding of the CPGB in the 1950s and neither exposed it nor tried to stop it. Wright is rubbished repeatedly by Andrew and he does not refer to this claim of Wright’s. However on p. 403 he writes this:

‘The Security Service had “good coverage” of the secret Soviet funding of the CPGB, monitoring by surveillance and telecheck the regular collection of Moscow’s cash subsidies by two members of the Party’s International Department, Eileen Palmer and Bob Stewart, from the north London address of two ex-trainees of the Moscow Radio School.’

This isn’t dated but from the context it is the early 1950s. Thus it can be restated: perhaps with the knowledge of the wider British security establishment, MI5 allowed the CPGB to be funded by that establishment’s apparent deadliest enemy, when it could have exposed the Soviet funding and dealt the CPGB a blow from which, in my estimation, it would never have recovered. In effect MI5 ran the CPGB as a honeytrap for the wider British left. Because of the Soviet link to the CPGB, anyone who made
contact with it became a legitimate target, the proper subject of investigation if required. The Soviet money contaminated the CPGB and by extension potentially contaminated everyone else who had contact with Party members; which, given the loose nature of the British left outside party/union branch meetings, meant a great many people. Given the importance of the CPGB on the British left, in the trade unions and as a source of both policy for the Labour Party and problems for Labour governments, it would be difficult to overstate the political significance of this. One of the reasons the UK did not become a European-style social democracy was the role of the CPGB on the British left.

As for the post 1964 sections – over 350 pages – on a first whizz through them I noticed the following:
* Events in Northern Ireland are strikingly under represented. The Stalker affair, for example, is dismissed in a few lines.
* Peter Wright is regularly rubbished; the only claim of his given any credence is his statement to the BBC’s John Ware that the so-called ‘plot’ against Wilson consisted of one person – himself.
* There are some spectacular omissions. Andrew quotes this from an MI5 assessment of the subversive influence in the media in the 1970s:

‘There have been virtually no instances of subversion in the presentation of new bulletins by the BBC or the I[ndependent] B[roadcasting] A[uthority] companies. The reasons no doubt lies in the careful selection of key personnel by management....’ (p. 663, emphasis added)

But he omits the fact that MI5 had an office in the BBC vetting its staff, helping with the ‘careful section of key personnel’. Did he think we wouldn’t remember?

Despite – or because of – Cecil King being referred to by Wright as an agent of MI5, he and the murky events of 1968 (Mountbatten, The Times et al) are missing.

As this book has taken five years to write and has been
vetted and edited by MI5, we may presume that the language used was chosen carefully. So what are we to make of the section about Roger Windsor, the NUM official widely accused of being an MI5 agent in the union during the 1984 miners’ strike? Andrew writes:

‘After the allegation had been denied by both Rimington and the Prime Minister, John Major, Windsor won substantial damages from the Sunday Express for repeating the claim that he had been an MI5 “mole” during the miners’ strike.’ (p. 678)

Yes, there is a denial implicit here but there is no actual denial. Major’s denial is worthless: he read someone else’s script. And the denial by Rimington was this:

‘It would be correct to say that he, Roger Windsor, was never an agent in any sense of the word that you can possibly imagine.’

Which is not a denial at all.

And what about the section on the late Jack Jones, qua KGB agent. Andrew writes:

‘Oleg Gordievsky later reported that Jones had been regarded by the KGB as an agent from 1964 to 1968.’ (p. 536)

‘Regarded as an agent?’ Is that the same as ‘was an agent’? Clearly not. What did the KGB get from their ‘agent’ Jack Jones?

‘Confidential Labour Party documents which he obtained as a member of the NEC and the Party’s international committee as well as information on colleagues and contacts.’ (p. 536)

Such documents, as well as being utterly uninformative for the most part, were about as confidential as the previous week’s Labour News. Indeed, if you look at the ‘agents’ the Soviet and Czech agencies had in the Labour Party in this period, discussed by Andrew, all they gave to their Soviet/Czech connections were Labour Party or parliamentary documents which were of no
consequence and not secret.¹

And what of the events of 1974-76, the so-called ‘Wilson plots’?
* The so-called private armies episode of 1974 and 1975 gets only a paragraph on George Young’s Unison.
* The BOSS operations against Peter Hain and Jeremy Thorpe are dismissed, as is Gordon Winter. Andrew describes him, on somebody else’s say-so, as unreliable, and quotes an MI5 assessment that the operation to get the Norman Scott-Jeremy Thorpe story into the media was a ‘private initiative’ (!) by Winter.
* Colin Wallace and Fred Holroyd get a sentence each. Wallace is described as a former information officer; his psy-ops role, admitted by HMG, is omitted. Their claims are not stated and Andrew merely quotes the then Director General of MI5, Sir Anthony Duff, who ‘assured staff in 1987 that Wallace’s and Holroyd’s allegations of dirty tricks were “equally baseless” ’.

Andrew tells us that Duff conducted a ‘stringent inquiry’ into the allegations about operations against the Labour governments of Harold Wilson. Said inquiry:

‘examined all relevant files and interviewed all relevant Security Service officers, both serving and retired’, and it ‘concluded unequivocally that no member of the Service had been involved in the surveillance of Wilson, still less in any attempt to destabilise the government.’ (p. 642)

¹ In November The Spectator tried again to revive the notion that the Labour Party had been manipulated by the KGB, quoting extracts from the previously untranslated diary of Anatoly Chernyaev, a deputy in the Soviet International Department. Once again Jack Jones is described as a KGB ‘agent’. See <www.spectator.co.uk/essays/5504183/reaching-through-the-iron-curtain.html>.

How seriously we should take this story of The Spectator’s can be judged by their attempt to show us how the Labour Party’s general secretary in the 1970s, Ron Hayward, backed (of course) by the KGB, tried to take over the party. Uh-huh.... Only a Soviet official, looking at the UK through his own society’s assumptions, could look at the Labour Party and seriously think the party’s general secretary could end up telling MPs what to do.
Well, at one level – gee, agency examines itself and finds itself innocent. Who would’ve thought it? An adaptation of Mandy Rice-Davis’s famous remark is apposite: well it would, wouldn’t it? But what precisely is being denied here? No MI5 people were involved in the surveillance of Wilson. OK, surveillance is not MI5’s job: electronically GCHQ or NSA would do that (almost certainly the latter). And no MI5 people had been involved in ‘any attempt to destabilise the government’. But burglary, leaking official material, planting disinformation and other conspiracy is not denied.

At another level, was there an inquiry at all? Wallace, Holroyd and Wright were not interviewed by the Duff inquiry.\(^2\) It apparently looked at the files and talked to the relevant officers. As if there would be files! As if such officers (and who would they be?) would tell the truth if asked!

In a review of Andrew in *The Guardian* (Saturday 10 October) David Leigh\(^3\) made the point (as Scott Newton did to me) that Andrew has ignored – or is unaware of; and let’s not rule this possibility out entirely; this is not Andrew’s field – former cabinet secretary Sir John Hunt’s comments on the existence of a small group of MI5 officers

> ‘like Peter Wright who were right-wing, malicious and had serious personal grudges – [who] gave vent to these and spread damaging malicious stories about that Labour government.’

But the point is not, as Leigh has it, that an MI5 file on Wilson existed, or that MI5 was interested in the fact that Wilson’s drinking buddy Joseph Kagan hung out with fellow Lithuanian, KGB officer Vaygauskas: both are easily defensible by MI5. The point is that this material – and much more besides – *was being*

\(^2\) When the existence of the Duff inquiry was made public Paul Foot had a piece in *Private Eye* titled ‘A duff inquiry’.

\(^3\) Neither the David Leigh book, *The Wilson Plots*, nor my book with Steve Dorril, *Smear!,* about these events, is mentioned. Leigh is miffed at his book being ignored. I assumed Andrew would ignore *Smear!.*
distributed. The plot lies in the distribution of the material and the evidence from its content that MI5 were trawling widely and deeply within the British political system, far beyond the remit of its charter (to which Andrew makes regular reference). Colin Wallace received some of it in Northern Ireland.\(^4\) Private Eye got some of it. In his book on the 1970s, *Strange Days Indeed* (London: 4th Estate, 2009; reviewed below), Francis Wheen, then at Private Eye, writes of the Eye receiving:

> large packages of anonymous documents... [which] would have tested the resources of a national newspaper [to check]............. Auberon Waugh sometimes dropped little hints in his Eye column’. (p. 264)

These ‘little hints’ were collected and discussed by Steve Dorril in ‘Five at Eye’ in Lobster 17 and examples of the anonymous documents were reproduced in Patrick Marnham’s *Trail of Havoc* (London: Viking, 1987) pp. 96 and 7. (Marnham was on Private Eye’s staff at the time.)

Andrew concludes that there was no plot, that Wilson imagined most of it because he was paranoid. Yes, Wilson attributed too much to MI5 when some of the briefings and smear stories were coming from other sources – for example former MI6 deputy chief G. K. Young (though from whom did Young get his information?). Some of those who came along a decade after Wilson had tried to get an investigation going with Penrose and Courtiour, also initially attributed too much to MI5, steered that way by Peter Wright.\(^5\) But Wilson was not ‘paranoid’ to suspect that there were plots against him: as was demonstrated in *Smear!*, there was constant plotting, not just from sections of British capital and society, influenced by the MI5

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\(^4\) The significance of Colin Wallace’s hand-written notes from the time is that they show that smear material about a wide range of British political figures in all three major parties had been collected and distributed. Which explains why the British state went to such great lengths to discredit Wallace.

\(^5\) Coming to the story through Colin Wallace and thence via some of the published material – Chapman Pincher, for example, and Winter’s *Inside BOSS* – Steve Dorril and I did not focus so much on MI5.
briefings against him, but also from the Gaitskellite wing of the Labour Party, which had never accepted him as leader of the party.

Andrew has adopted the fallback position of the British secret state circa 1990: ignore Wallace, Gordon Winter, the private armies episode, the Crozier operations, the forgeries and the psy-ops, and focus on the John Ware interview with Wright in which he implied that the ‘plot’ consisted only of himself. Thus there was no plot; thus Wilson was just a paranoid old fool, a conspiracy theorist.6

Andrew portrays MI5 in the post WW2 era as cautious, apolitical bureaucrats, defending democracy while trying to stay within their charter, and resisting the siren calls of ‘conspiracy theorists’.

In the early 1970’s MI5 had concluded that the ‘threat’ of the Communist Party had declined; and switched resources to what Peter Wright sneeringly called the ‘far and wide left’ – the Trotskyist fragments. MI5’s lack of interest in the ‘Soviet threat’ triggered the formation of the anti-subversion lobby which gathered round Brian Crozier in the early 1970s – CIA, MI6 and IRD personnel who were not persuaded of the decline of the ‘Soviet threat’. (This was part of the wider debate about the reality of détente between NATO and the Soviet bloc.) Crozier and his chums certainly did not think MI5 was on the ball where the perceived menace from the Soviets and the left was concerned; and they got access to Mrs Thatcher when she was leader of the Opposition after 1975. On p. 670 Andrew tells us that when William Whitelaw became Home Secretary in the first Thatcher administration,

‘he told [DG of MI5 Howard Smith] that he wished to be sufficiently well briefed to be able to counter “some of the rather extreme advice” Mrs Thatcher had received.’

6 One of the recurring themes of the book is Andrew’s portrayal of himself and MI5 as being in a struggle with conspiracy theories and conspiracy theorists of both left and right.
That advice had been coming from Crozier and his colleagues.\(^7\) A cautious, tiresomely bureaucratic MI5 is how David Shayler saw the organisation in the 1990s.

But even if we accept Andrew’s sanitised version of the story, that the events of the 1974-76 period – which might be summarised as Wallace, BOSS, Wright, the private armies episode, the Crozier operations, the burglaries, forgeries, smear operations and the other psy-ops – did not involve MI5 officers, on MI5’s criteria these activities were all subversive. And as far as we know – as far as Andrew tells us – apart from Young’s Unison\(^8\) and Gordon Winter’s ‘private initiative’ against Hain and Thorpe, MI5 took no interest in any of it. Either MI5 was part of the plot, or it tolerated the plot, or – the reality, in my view – was both.

Andrew does his best to fog the lens. But the fact remains that for a period, when Labour was in office in the sixties and seventies, parts of MI5 went off the reservation. Trying to deny this in the face of the evidence makes Andrew look incompetent, a hack, or a co-conspirator.

By the way, the index is incomplete. Somewhere Andrew refers to the forged bank statement in Edward Short’s name. When I tried to look up the reference to reread that section, I found Short not indexed. Neither are Unison and John Stalker. Given how long the book took to produce and how significant an event it is, not making sure the index is accurate is odd.

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**When the Lights Went Out**  
*Britain in the Seventies*  
Andy Beckett  
London: Faber and Faber, 2009, £20.00

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\(^8\) Andrew writes on p. 638 that MI5 was ‘becoming increasingly worried about…..Unison.’
Decadeitis, the division of history into decades for media marketing purposes – ‘roaring twenties’, ‘swinging sixties’ – irritates serious historians; but in the case of the 1970s it does make a a kind of sense, the decade being bookended in Britain by Conservative Party election victories in 1970 and 1979, heralding a return to the market: the half-hearted version under Heath, ‘Selsdon man’, and then the real thing with Mrs Thatcher.

As the delusions of the free marketeers crumble, so the history of the years in which these notions were dominant will be re-examined. And as the mainstream media’s view of the 1980s and 90s in Britain morphs from free market triumph to profligate idiocy, so their view of what preceded them will change: the 1970s are going to be reassessed. These two books are a sign of this, though only Beckett has anything to say.

Francis Wheen’s collection of essays on the 1970s is entertaining but of no consequence. Wheen has not reassessed much and this collection is mostly a rehash of previous thinking. You get the flavour of his methods on page 5 where, in a footnote attached to a comment on Australians in London in the early 1970s, Wheen has this:

‘Whitlam’s premiership was itself snuffed out by Her Majesty the Queen’s representative in Australia, Governor General Sir John Kerr, who sacked him in November 1975. In true Seventies fashion, some furious Whitlam supporters claimed that Kerr had acted on orders from the CIA.’

Wheen does not offer an opinion on whether the ‘furious Whitlam supporters’ were right or wrong (I don’t think he cares); he’s interested in the ‘true Seventies fashion’.

Once again we get the Private Eye-cynical hack view of Harold Wilson’s attempts to get an investigation of the security
services going: Wilson was paranoid and (using Bernard Donoughue’s diaries as evidence), Marcia Williams was dreadful.

‘The daily drama in Wilson’s kitchen cabinet was a Strindberg play with scenes from Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf.’ (p. 214)

We get another go round Watergate and Nixon without any of the more recent work on the story. He portrays all manner of potentially interesting material, and declines to draw any conclusions from it other than ‘Man, how weird were the 1970s?’ (and the default Private Eye position: how awful are politicians?). In other words, Wheen has (or here offers) no politics.

Beckett does have some politics but he mostly keeps them concealed enough not scare off the general reader. Beckett’s technique is part history and part journalism: he recounts episodes in the 1970s and then interviews one or two of the participants. He is trying to show how we got to Mrs Thatcher. It’s pretty much the conventional story but with some touches which suggest that, were he not trying to make a living among the major media and publishers, he might write a different version. He says of Harold Wilson’s claims that he he was being covertly undermined:

‘Yet since the seventies his claims have gained, not lost, credibility.’ (p. 168)

But while he gives a little detail of ‘the plots’ he omits of most of it.

After recounting the IMF incident in 1976, he goes to visit Dennis Healey who was Chancellor at the time. Healey describes, as others have before him, the way that during the 1976 IMF ‘crisis’, when Healey was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Treasury gave him false – inflated – figures for the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. Did he think the Treasury had duped him in 1976?

‘The big problem they always have in the Treasury is getting governments to control spending,’ he said calmly.
'So any excuse they can find for getting spending cut they will. It wasn’t so much a conspiracy against the government so much as an attempt to get the policies they believed in.’

Beckett comments:

'It seemed rather a fine distinction. Perhaps sensing this, Healey immediately changed the subject.’ (p. 356)

Beckett doesn’t do these parapolitical themes justice: but not because he is unaware of them, I suspect. He just isn’t willing to offer them to the general reader at whom his book is aimed.

It is mostly the familiar picture: Heath’s failure and the 3-day week. The Tory right gives us Thatcher and the arrival of the ideas of Institute for Economic Affairs at the door to No 10. Oil is on the horizon, feminism is growing, the eco movement begins; and there is the struggle between the left and right. There is a long account of the Grunwick strike, including an interview with John Gouriet, stalwart of the anti-left groups such as the Freedom Association, who talks at length about Operation Pony Express, the improvised private mail delivery system which helped to break the strike. But Beckett makes no attempt to show the links between the ‘anti subversive’ lobby and the Freedom Association.

But he also portrays Wilson and Callaghan creating a more equal Britain: ‘[Callaghan] presided over a Britain that was probably more equal than it had ever been before’ (p. 409). For all that the left hated and despised Wilson and Callaghan, they did deliver: not as much as the left wanted; but having received about 30% of the votes cast in the elections of 1974 and 76, they hardly had a mandate for revolution. But the little that Labour and the unions did deliver was too much for the middle and upper classes. A more equal society means the prosperous lose more via taxation.

He briefly notes that all three prime ministers before Thatcher were looking at the German model of social democracy:
the semi-corporate model with the unions, the state and capital working together. How this was frustrated by the activities of the left (in the unions and Labour Party\(^9\)) and the right (with the assistance of the spooks), is the real political story of the decade; the story which this magazine has been haphazardly and almost accidentally documenting for much of its existence.

Beckett is a good writer and interviewer. It is mostly the story we know already but approached from some interesting new angles. This is worth your attention.

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9 With the CPGB (courtesy of MI5: see the review of Christopher Andrew’s book above) playing a significant role in opposing attempts to bring the unions into the state apparatus and helping to prolong the delusions of the left.
I shouldn’t be reviewing this book: I am not qualified to do so. What do I know about international relations theory, which is what this book is about? And, in any case, its subject matter is really outside Lobster’s field. I asked for a copy after being sent a flyer from the publisher. It sounded interesting (I didn’t realise it was about IR theory until too late to get someone more qualified); and it is interesting in a way, though it is very difficult even to convey what it is about; not least because of my complete unfamiliarity with the subject and its vocabulary. What I shall do is reproduce some of the many sections I marked while reading it. This will probably convey a sense of it better than any clumsy attempt to précis it. These quotations are something like the author’s central theses.

‘the dynamic behind the security-development nexus is based not so much on the desire of leading western states, such as the United States, to regulate and control peripheral non-western states, but rather the desire to use the international sphere as an arena for grand policy statements of mission and purpose – from the global war on terror to the desire to “make Poverty History” – while simultaneously disengaging from long-term commitments in these regions and passing responsibility to other actors, particularly NGOs and international institutions.’ (p. 29)

‘Rather than a framework of coherent intervention, we are witnessing a framework of ad hoc intervention mixed with the limiting of expectations, more mediated political engagement and the disavowal of external or international responsibilities’. (p. 31)

‘The language of empowerment is used to mask the fact that western states and international institutions lack a
clear policy agenda, or lack the confidence openly to advocate and impose specific sets of policies, preferring instead to shift policy responsibility onto non-western actors.’ (p. 42)

‘It would appear that whereas the Cold War era marked the confluence of clear values and distinct interests, reflected in instrumental policy-making, the post-Cold War period has seen the collapse of a value/interest framework, leading increasingly to ad hoc, non-instrumentalist policy-making. International policy-making in the post-Cold War era would therefore seem to be an idealised projection of the western self, rather than the instrumental projection of strategic interests.’ (p. 204)

In the final pages he suggests that since international relations theory has become basically a load of vacuous, global-oriented guff (my words, not his), it would make more sense to think about – gasp! – things domestic. Or something like that.

‘....the shift towards the global is a retreat from social engagement and political struggle. The freedom of action provided by escaping the frameworks of representation and the demands of territorial control is the freedom of disengagement.’ (p. 207)

If ‘frameworks of representation’ does mean politics and ‘the demands of territorial control’ does mean the nation state, as I think they do, then amen to that. The idea that we will get global agreements on climate change and subsidiary issues, leading to some kind of more just, co-operative world, strikes me as at least as silly as the belief in world revolution held by some of the left until recently (some of whom, I notice, are now ‘global’ international relations theorists).

Actual foreign policy events figure not all in these discussions and it seems almost vulgar to ask how international relations theory deals with events such as the creation of the
Pentagon’s Africa Command (AFRICOM)? 10 If ‘international policy-making in the post-Cold War era [is] an idealised projection of the western self’, how does the Predator drone firing the Hellfire missile into a wedding party in Afghanistan fit into this? Nothing the author discusses seems to me to deal with the reality of the greatest and most destructive military force ever assembled being let loose on the world.

War on Terror Inc.
Corporate Profiteering from the Politics of Fear
Solomon Hughes

When the historians of the future come to write the story of the last years of the 20th century in the UK and the USA, one of the bits they will have the most trouble getting their heads round will be the decision by the American state – with its British chum tagging along behind, as per usual – to privatise much of its military and intelligence services; essentially to surrender its monopoly on the use of violence for political ends. Why did the US and UK military and intelligence agencies, qua agencies, go along with it? Why were so little resistance, so few resignations and so little political heat, generated by proposals which would have seemed preposterous – treasonous – a generation or two earlier? (That whirring noise is Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ernest Bevin rotating in their graves.)

Hughes has done us a big favour in pulling together the entire shabby story: this is one of those subjects which we all ought to understand but which has been scattered so far. This account does include the American experience but it is the British

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10 On AFRICOM see <www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid =15788> This is by Rick Rozoff who is running a kind of one-man NATO-watch operation. Try his pieces at <www.globalresearch.ca> which can be searched for by his name there. Or look at some of the postings at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/messages>.
events which interest me and have been less well reported.

This takes us to the core of the NuLab story, for it shows that the Blair-Brown administrations really did believe that private is always better than public. (How they must have hated the Labour Party!) Yet it still astounds me to read an account of a (nominally) Labour government casually handing over chunks of the British defence structure to American and British business; just giving away part of the power of the state which NuLab were supposed to be trying to articulate in the interests of the British people (never mind the less well off/disadvantage/deprived/poor/working class – pick a term). Such privatisation speaks of extremely low self-esteem: for we – the state and politicians – are useless, is what it says; we need some ‘experts’ from the private sector run to things.

Hughes tells the British end of this grubby story as a straightforward chronology, from the early days of Group 4 getting their mitts on some bits of the prison service, through the fire sale of British Army accommodation (which set the benchmark for the state getting screwed by private capital) and thence on through Aldermaston and the naval dockyards.

But these were the foothills. The big steps were taken after a meeting at Ditchley Park in 2000 at which American and British civil servants, politicians and corporate leaders (and people like Dick Cheney, who was both; Hughes names the names) met and worked out how to divvy-up their states’ military assets. The rationale for this? Nothing more sophisticated than the usual belief that the private is better than the public; in this case, that the private sector could implement change faster than the state, could shake-up the rigid bureaucracies of the Pentagon and MOD to create the new, dynamic forces for the rapidly changing strategic environments (etc. etc., boilerplate, boilerplate). And hey, if we make a load of money in the process, so much the better.

So began a series of deals in which the taxpayer got
screwed, some companies made hundreds of millions, some Labour MPs got nice payoffs, and NuLab stayed onside with their American buddies. And yes, Cheney’s Haliburton got its hands on some British assets.

We get a separate chapter on British mercenaries and the rationale for their use. Jack Straw, who as Home Secretary had signed off on private prison guards, now signed off on private soldiers. Hughes quotes from a Green Paper produced while Straw was at the head of this particular dung heap. The new private military companies (n.b. not mercenaries) would need little regulation:

‘private military companies are different from freelance mercenaries since they have a continuing corporate existence and will wish to maintain a reputation as respectable organisations.’ (p. 108)

Yes, it’s the ‘light touch’ again.

And then a long came 9/11 and the whole ramshackle wagon-train of crooks, conmen, dumb or careerist politicians, broke into a gallop as a new ‘enemy’ announced himself and the ‘war on terror’ replaced the cold war as the rationale for military spending. It makes billions for the corporations who pay for the politicians’ election campaigns, and the new mercenaries enable the politicians to fight unpopular wars without having to worry so much about the negative PR associated with body-bags: mercenaries don’t arrive back in flag-draped coffins.

This disgusting story climaxes with the arrival in Iraq of maybe 100,000 mercenaries, all getting paid many times more than their state-employed equivalents (as usual privatisation means paying a great deal more for a worse service), with hardly any controls over their behaviour; 100,000 mercenaries, an army of (mostly) American gunslingers, ‘to build a nation’. Altogether now: you couldn’t make this shit up.
This is a second edition and the first received some glowing reviews from the major media. I read only the second half of this nicely produced, thoroughly bound 260 page paperback: the essays on the New Statesman under Kingsley Martin; Encounter, the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the CIA; and Karl Miller and the London Review of Books. These essays are very good, very well informed and a pleasure to read (and reread). I would think that anyone who enjoys reading Lobster will enjoy this. A keeper.
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