

## Too Stoned

*The Atlantic and its Enemies: a personal history of the Cold War*

Norman Stone

London: Allen Lane, 2010, £30, h/b

**Y**ou remember Norman Stone: one of Mrs Thatcher's favourite historians and occasional speechwriter for her. I had not read any of his books but I picked up a copy of this in my local library (it still has a few books among the computers and DVDs). What is a 'personal history' you ask? Well, it seems to mean one in which no documentation is required. That would be OK; but it also seems to mean one in which the author's text is not edited. In his lengthy introduction Stone credits no editor and it shows.

On page 54, discussing the early years of the Cold War, Stone describes the 1948 death of the Czech politician Jan Masaryk, who was found lying on the pavement beneath the small bathroom window of his flat. Murder? Suicide? Stone offers this explanation of the still unexplained death:

'Perhaps the affair can be explained by drugs. LSD, which had been discovered in Switzerland at the end of the 1930s, can cause a sort of birth trauma: a foetus, struggling inside the womb, then making, head-first, for a small opening through which it has to fight its way....Masaryk...probably used the then fashionable drugs of high society and....this time overdid the dose.'

I don't know that I have read a more ridiculous paragraph in a would-be serious book. He might as well speculate that Masaryk was killed in a failed abduction attempt by aliens – you know: they got him on their blue beam through the bathroom window but dropped him.... At this point I stopped reading the book and just began flipping through it.

On page 64 Stone tells us that in Italy in 1948 the Communists lost the election. About that election,

'There were (and are) cries of "foul", because of covert activity by CIA men such as Michael Ledeen or Edward Luttwak, who knew the country well.'

If he isn't claiming that Ledeen (born 1942) and Luttwak (born 1941) were involved in Italy in 1948, what *is* he claiming? Are Luttwak and Ledeen CIA? Nothing on the record tells us this. Does he know something we don't?

Continuing on the Italy theme I looked for 'strategy of tension' – nothing in the index. But there was a reference to Bologna. On page 336 he tells us that a bomb on a train at Bologna killed 12 people in 1974. But on the 1980 bombing of Bologna station by neo-fascists (probably, but not quite provably, run by the Italian agency SISMI) which killed 85 and wounded hundreds, there is nothing. He also writes on page 336 of the Red Brigades: 'For Moscow, Italy was therefore a soft target.' Meaning what? That the KGB were running the Red Brigades? Has anyone *seriously* tried to claim this?

I looked for other 'hot buttons'. On Allende:

'Pinochet was said [sic] to have overthrown Chilean democracy....there were voluble exiles with tales of "disappearances", of mass executions in football stadiums, of torture in dank basements or freezing, sub-Antarctic camps.' (p. 438)

Did any of these 'voluble exiles' claim 'mass executions in football stadiums'? Not that I remember or can find. Has anyone *seriously* tried to dispute the disappearance of left and trade union people during Pinochet's years?

And, finally before giving up entirely, I checked his account of JFK's assassination. This is his Oswald on page 207.

'....failed volunteer for the military and the CIA and the KGB.'

Huh?

*Robin Ramsay*