

*Gladio*  
*NATO's dagger at the Heart of Europe;*  
*the Pentagon-Nazi-Mafia Terror Axis*

Richard Cottrell

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The e-mail pitch was intriguing: a former Conservative MEP and journalist has written a big book about the Gladio network with

'....entirely new accounts on the assassination of the ex Italian PM Aldo Moro, the Swedish premier Olof Palme and his star pupil Anna Lindh, and the real motives behind the attack on Pope John Paul II. I also expose the myths behind the killing in London of the Bulgarian émigré Georgi Markov, another fabulous media fest. In the chapter devoted to Belgium I advance evidence that the Heysel football stadium disaster in May 1985 was politically orchestrated .....For the first time anywhere in print, I point to General Lyman Lemnitzer, ex US Chief of the General Staff, later NATO supremo, as a key figure involved in the assassination of JFK.'

The reality is a disappointment, to say the least. There is almost no documentation. We have hundreds of pages of unsupported assertion; and if you are going to offer a sweeping new narrative it has to be solid, well documented. And this just isn't. It's full of speculation and assertion supported by..... Well, take this, for example: discussing the idea that Francesco Gullino and Michael Townley had been responsible for the Olof Palme shooting, he writes (p. 63):

'The *possibility* that Townley was the set designer in Stockholm and Gullino the imported stage technician, is *persuasive*.'

'Persuasive possibility'? I prefer evidence.

On page 12 he writes:

[Mrs Thatcher's] famous stock market "Big Bang" deregulation exercise in 1986 introduced the corrosive forces of rampant corporatism at the expense of old

fashioned outmoded manufacturing.'

It wasn't corporatism: it was the opposite of corporatism. Nor did the 'Big Bang' have much to do with manufacturing, pro or con. It was about the stock market. It's not that he's got this wrong, that makes me nervous, but his assurance.

Most of this book is about events in Europe about which I know little and would have difficulty checking. In this situation the reviewer heads for familiar territory and Cottrell has included the anti-Labour events of the 1960s and 70s which I know pretty well; and his account is error-strewn and fanciful. In the first two pages of that section he conflates events of the 1960s with the 1970s. He has a coup being plotted by David Stirling's GB75 in 1974. For this there is no evidence and he offers none. Stirling was preoccupied by the 'left threat' in the trade unions; and GB75, if it ever really existed – it might just been a psy-ops job; all we saw were some bits of paper – was talking of stepping into the breach and keeping the UK power generation industry going in the event of a left shutdown. To this non-existent 'coup' plan of 1974 Cottrell has added the Cecil King-Lord Mountbatten meeting of 1968. (pp. 236/7)

He has Sir Maurice Oldfield, a career-long SIS officer, as 'MI5's director of counter-intelligence and deputy controller'.

He tells us (p. 240) that Peter Wright's book 'gave credence to [Harold] Wilson's persistent claims that he was the target of a conspiracy against him by a cabal consisting of at least 30 extremist MI5 officers.' Wilson didn't claim that. The 30 figure came from Wright who said that 'up to 30' MI5 officers were involved in or cognisant of the attempts to unseat Wilson.

As for Gladio being behind the Wilson plots, of that there is no evidence at all. But apparently he doesn't need evidence: mere assertion will suffice. For example he says of Mrs Thatcher's defeat of Edward Heath for the leadership of the Tory Party in 1975:

'Behind the scenes, it was Gladio's triumph. Heath was destroyed by the libels revolving around his sexuality

and his own loftiness, rooted in insecurity, which rendered him easy prey to ruthless secret service gossip mongers.' (p. 248)

Which is nonsense. The stories about Heath's sexuality had no coverage and almost no impact. Heath was defeated by Thatcher because he lost the two elections of 1974 and caused the great inflation of the period. He might have he got away with what Mrs Thatcher and the late Sir Rhodes Boyson described as his 'monetary incontinence' but losing the elections as well – of course he would be challenged. Sometimes politics is just politics.

Wilson's surprise resignation in 1976 provides Cottrell with scope for more vivid imaginings. 'The most likely explanation is that Wilson received visitors and, left in a room with a loaded pistol, pulled the metaphorical trigger.' (p. 248) And he quotes a Dutch MEP as saying:

'It was quite [well?] known in Dutch intelligence circles why Wilson really went in that sudden and abrupt fashion. It was because he had some relationship, I think it was supposed to be when he was a younger man, of a highly personal and secretive nature with one of his ministers, and the CIA were threatening to fish it out.' (p. 252)

Which rumour is about par for the course in all this. In fact we don't need to speculate because we know what happened; and Cottrell could have found out had he wanted to. Wilson told his inner circle and his senior colleagues that he was retiring at 60 years of age and they didn't leak it. He was tired, rather bored, drinking too much and worried that he would get what was then known as senile dementia which had afflicted his mother. So he got out while the going was good.

As for the role of NATO's General Lemnitzer in any of this, the author has nothing at all. His comment in his e-mail that he 'point[s] to General Lyman Lemnitzer, ex US Chief of the General Staff, later NATO supremo, as a key figure involved in the assassination of JFK' is accurate: he *points* but

he has no evidence.

He thinks the 7/7 London Tube-bus bombings was a phoney (though isn't sure if it was Gladio or not) and offers some of the usual critique of the official version.<sup>10</sup> As others have before him, Cottrell makes much of the Peter Power story. Former Met officer Power had been running a desk-based terrorism exercise on 7/7 which eerily echoed the events of that day, notably that the Tube stations in his exercise were those chosen for the real explosions. Cottrell spends almost two pages trying to portray this as something sinister. But the problem with all attempts to make something of this is that Power was a volunteer; he rang BBC Radio 5 Live on the afternoon of 7/7 to report this creepy coincidence. I was listening at the time.

The author is offering a 'hidden hand' conspiracy theory about post-war European history. He has history X-ray specs on which enable him to see through the veil of falsehoods. The hidden hand was Gladio. In some areas it has been documented as true; in some of those he discusses here there is little or no evidence; and in the British section, about which I know enough to comment, he has neither the evidence to sustain his thesis nor the basic attention to detail required to do so even if he had it.

*Robin Ramsay*