

Tittle-tattle

Tom Easton

Friends of 'the Friends' in the North

Watching the coverage of the Scottish referendum campaign from south of the Border made me wonder if this is what it must have felt like during the EEC vote in 1975 – the privately-owned media majority marching in one direction alongside the BBC and the big noises of politics, capital and the state.

In this case it wasn't fearful warnings about 'missing the European boat', but other terrors – including more real terrorism to come, according to Lord Robertson of Port Ellen – if the Scots voted to let go of nanny London and inch towards the removal of Trident from Holy Loch.¹

The ex-NATO Secretary General, UK Defence Secretary and founding figure of the British American Project (*Lobsters passim*) chose to issue his warning to referendum voters not from his home country, but just down the road from the offices of the William Cohen Group in Washington DC where he works as 'senior counsellor' to the weapons and security consultants. Cohen was Robertson's opposite number at the Pentagon during the Clinton administration.²

Reporting on the referendum for the BBC from Glasgow was Sarah Smith, the former Channel 4 News Washington correspondent, who is the sister-in-law of Robertson's son Malcolm. Sarah is the oldest daughter of former Labour leader John Smith.

The Robertson family were out in force with leading Labour lights in Scotland for Sarah's own wedding in 2007 to US-born former soldier and novelist Simon Conway.³ The ceremony was conducted by the father of Labour Shadow

1 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scottish-independence/10751728/Scottish-independence-would-be-cataclysmic-for-the-world-ex-Nato-head-warns.html>>

2 <<http://www.cohengroup.net/about/teammember.cfm?id=9>>

3 <<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/19933/My-Father-s-Day>>

Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander and attended by, among others, Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale, the former senior MI6 figure who advised John Smith. Smith's widow was for a time on the board of Hakluyt, run by several ex-MI6 people (*Lobsters passim*).⁴

When I read about this tight political network I begin to understand why so many Scots seemed keen to shake off the influence of Whitehall and the British state.⁵

Friends in the North

There seems to have been another influential network running Rotherham where revelations of widespread child abuse eventually led to the resignation of a number of senior public employees, including the elected South Yorkshire Crime and Police Commissioner Shaun Wright.⁶

Silence seems to have been the main response from the Labour Party, still seeking to recover from UKIP May local election successes following the jailing of the town's former MP Denis MacShane. Ahead of his sentence for fraud at the Old Bailey, Labour deputy leader Harriet Harman was one of a cavalcade of friends attesting to MacShane's good character. Another old pal of the fraudster, former *Observer* man Martin Bright, wrote a panegyric in the *Jewish Chronicle* under the headline, 'Why we should mourn Denis MacShane's fall from grace'.

After the ex-Rotherham MP was jailed, former New Labour minister Chris Mullin rushed to his former colleague's defence in language and sentiment far from the man many remember for his work on behalf of the Birmingham Six. His days of devotion to Tony Benn are long gone, but both are still in demand at the BBC, where, in the offices of the World

4 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1508561/MI6s-ladies-in-the-Lords-set-their-sights-on-beefing-up-anti-terror-law.html>>

5 <http://www.halotrust.org/sites/default/files/Signed%20accounts_31%20March%202014%20a.pdf>

6 <<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/sep/19/rotherham-director-children-services-quits-abuse-scandal>>

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-29220535>>

Service, Mullin first encountered MacShane many moons ago.⁷

Friends of America

Back in the old world of the MSM, the announcement that Evan Davis is to take over from Jeremy Paxman as *Newsnight* presenter was probably rather welcome in the US London embassy. For the 52-year-old who is stepping into the shoes of the now-retired BBC TV veteran also followed him into membership of the British American Project (BAP), the informal network of aspiring Brits and Americans set up during the Reagan-Thatcher years to revive what the White House and No. 10 feared was a weakening 'special relationship' between the two countries. Paxman was recruited into the BAP in 1990.

Davis will be leaving behind at the BBC Radio 4 Today programme one of the BAP's UK advisory committee for many years, James Naughtie. BBC TV reporter and newsreader Jane Hill, who, with Naughtie, was based in Scotland for part of the referendum campaign, is a long-standing BAP member. The current BAP treasurer is senior BBC producer Murphy Cobbing.

The acting chair of the BBC Trust this year was Diane Coyle, an early recruit to the BAP at the same time as Naughtie and Peter (now Lord) Mandelson.⁸ The new BBC trust chair, Rona Fairhead, is a close Tory friend of Chancellor George Osborne. Lord Stevenson, a key figure in the BAP network and in the 2008 banking collapse, appointed Fairhead to her first senior position at Pearson Publishing.⁹

More American friends

Fresh from controversy in the United States arrives David

⁷ Previously ignored by the mainstream press, regular news of dirty doings in Rotherham – a community largely stripped of its mining, steel and engineering economy since Margaret Thatcher – has come from websites, particularly Rotherham Politics at <http://rotherhampolitics.wordpress.com/>.

⁸ http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/who_we_are/trustees/

⁹ <http://pinkindustry.wordpress.com/lord-stevenson/>

Frum, a former speechwriter for George W Bush, as chairman of what is said to be the Prime Minister's favourite think-tank, Policy Exchange.¹⁰ Senior editor at *The Atlantic* magazine, credited with inventing the phrase 'axis of evil' during his time in the White House, Frum had to apologise in July after claiming that press photographs of blood-soaked men in a Gaza hospital were fakes.¹¹

The images, used by AP, Reuters and *The New York Times*, were genuine and Frum later said: 'These images do appear authentic, and I should not have cast doubt on them. I apologize especially to Sergey Ponomarev of *The New York Times*, whose work I impugned.'¹²

In London, Frum will be meeting up with his old friend and director of Policy Exchange, Dean Godson.¹³ Godson was a member of the Reagan Administration for which Frum campaigned as a volunteer in 1980.

Godson, the son of former US labour attaché in London Joe Godson,¹⁴ was himself memorably caught in controversy on BBC Newsnight in 2007. He was fiercely questioned by Jeremy Paxman when Policy Exchange was found to have used receipts of doubtful authenticity to 'prove' the purchase of radical Muslim literature at mosques.¹⁵

More friends of America

When Sir Harold Evans was honoured by the Media Society (MS) at its last annual dinner, *The Guardian* praised the

10 <<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/peteroborne/100287025/david-camersons-favourite-think-tank-has-a-new-chairman-george-w-bushs-former-speechwriter/>>

<<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/>>

11 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/personal/archive/2014/07/an-apology-on-the-images-emerging-from-gaza/375324/>>

12 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2014/07/30/the-difficulty-with-david-frums-apology-for-bogus-photo-fakery-allegations/>>

13 <http://powerbase.info/index.php/Dean_Godson>

14 <<http://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/12/obituaries/joseph-godson.html>>

15 See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXqWIJSIPRs>>.

veteran journalist 'for taking on "big targets"'.

At the Mayfair event hosted by the Today programme's James Naughtie, *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger and former *Times* editor and now BBC 'director of news and current affairs' James Harding were among those to laud the former editor of *The Sunday Times* and *The Times*. This was all under the watchful eye of the American president of 'the insiders' forum for debate and networking', Geraldine Sharpe-Newton (ex-CBS, ITN, CNN and WWF), and MS council member Margaret Hill, an early member of the BAP Project (*Lobsters passim*) and now 'chief adviser, editorial policy' at the BBC.

With the publication of the Richard Crossman diaries, the exposure of Kim Philby and the campaign for thalidomide victims to his name, the plaudits for Evans were undoubtedly earned, even if he was a founding member of the Media Society himself.

But one 'big target' the 86-year-old was conspicuously reluctant to go for during his editorship of *The Sunday Times* was the Cold War influence of the United States on the Labour Party, the European Movement and British trade unions.

In 1972 Richard Fletcher was commissioned by *The Sunday Times Magazine* to investigate US intelligence activities at the time of Hugh Gaitskell, and when many questioned the funding source, among other things, of *Encounter* magazine which much favoured the Labour leader's Cold War stance. The article was meant to complete the then impressive and innovative Sunday magazine's unofficial history of the 20th century series.

The 5,000-word piece which named prominent Labour figures was set to go to print – edited, legalled, graphics and text produced on proofs – when Evans spiked it, reportedly with the words: 'These are the people we support.'

Fletcher gamely reproduced the piece in a mock 'Not The Sunday Times' format under the title 'The Labour Party and the CIA: Who are They Travelling With?', and sold it to political activists around the country.¹⁶ The piece was republished in

16 The text can be read at <<http://tinyurl.com/lfsb546>>.

1977 by Spokesman Books along with another essay by Fred Hirsch under the title *CIA and the Labour Movement*. It is still available.

Mayfair dinner host Naughtie, like Evans, was the beneficiary of a US scholarship early in his journalistic career. Naughtie's took him to Syracuse, followed by a fellowship to the *Washington Post*. Evans's took him to Stanford, Chicago and visits to US newspapers between 1956 and 1957.

Naughtie maintains his transatlantic interest through active membership of the BAP (see above and *Lobsters passim*), Evans, who for many years has lived in New York, continues to be protective of US security interests. In a *Guardian* article in 2012, he described NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden as 'narcissistic'.

Friends of Israel

Media Society joint host James Harding was soon joined in the upper reaches of the BBC as 'director of strategy and digital' by former Labour Cabinet minister James Purnell. Purnell made his first career move in politics by becoming an Islington councillor, alongside fellow Blairite praetorian guards Stephen Twigg and Tal Michael.

On one occasion in the 1990s the trio attempted an inept NUS-type putsch to remove the long-standing MP Jeremy Corbyn. They were more successful in smearing fellow councillor Liz Davies, preventing her attempt to become a Labour MP.

The New Labour machine quickly found winnable seats for Purnell and Twigg, and both quickly became active in the Labour Friends of Israel (LFI). Purnell succeeded Twigg as LFI chair in 2002. The latter, replaced last year as Shadow Education Secretary by Tristram Hunt, is now an MP in Liverpool, along with leading LFI lights Louise Ellman and Luciana Berger. (*Lobsters passim*)

Harding, now alongside Purnell at the Beeb, is also a strong supporter of Israel. A *Guardian* profile on his BBC

appointment reported:

‘Harding, who is Jewish, will also have to leave behind the pro-Israeli line of *The Times*. In a debate at the Jewish Community Centre For London in 2011, he said: “I am pro-Israel” and that in reporting on the Middle East, “I haven’t found it too hard” because “*The Times* has been pro-Israel for a long time.”’

More friends of Israel

Campaigning vigourously against UKIP in the local and European elections was HOPE not hate (HNN), a group backed by the *Daily Mirror* and the Unison trade union. It was also given positive publicity in *The Observer* ahead of the May poll by Nick Cohen, a friend of its chief executive Nick Lowles. Formerly editor of *Searchlight* magazine, Lowles parted company with *Searchlight* founder Gerry Gable in 2011, taking HNN from under Gable’s wing.

HNN deputy director Ruth Smeeth is now Labour parliamentary candidate for Stoke-upon-Trent North. A member of the Lord Sainsbury-funded Progress network, Smeeth is a former director of public affairs of BICOM, the Israel lobby group. Ms Smeeth is one to watch, given her US embassy ‘strictly protect’ status revealed by Wikileaks.¹⁷

But with her leader, Ed Miliband ‘warming the hearts of the Labour Friends [of Israel]’, who’s to blame a healthily ambitious young politico for swimming with the tide?¹⁸

On the other hand

One of the most encouraging developments since the ‘war on terror’ replaced the Cold War as the principal fear factor in

17 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/wikileaks/8304495/WikiLeaks-cables-Gordon-Brown-forced-to-scrap-plan-for-snap-election.html>>

18 <<http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/119916/miliband-warms-hearts-labour-friends>>

Western political life has been the distancing of ever more Jews from the policies of Israel. This may partly be generational: younger, internet-savvy Jews not seeing themselves quite so identified with the state created soon after the Second World War.

But one reason must be the forceful and courageous actions of thoughtful Jews who risk the 'self-hating Jew' smears of Zionists. One Briton who found himself facing that line of attack was the late Tony Judt.¹⁹

Another who has experienced that and career damage is Norman Finkelstein, the New Yorker son of Holocaust survivors whose latest book, *Old Wine, Broken Bottle: Ari Shavit's Promised Land*, was launched in London earlier this year. More than 200 attended a very lively Saturday night question and answer for the event hosted by Jews for Justice for Palestinians.²⁰

Finkelstein's presence at the Oxford Union shortly before was not welcomed by Baroness Ruth Deech, the former president of St Anne's College, more widely known for chairing the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority until 2002, and now doing the same job with the Bar Standards Board after a spell as a BBC trustee. Baroness Deech was a member of Jewish Leadership Council until 2010 and a Rhodes Trustee.²¹

The *Jewish Chronicle* reported her saying that although 'the university would say that the Union is independent, this activity is in the heart of the "campus". It is in my view a breach of the university's statutory public-sector duty to promote good relations,' she said. 'By renting out its hall, the Union is in breach of charity law.'²²

Greville Janner

19 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Judt>

20 <<http://www.orbooks.com/catalog/old-wine-broken-bottle/>>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Finkelstein>

21 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_Deech,_Baroness_Deech>

22 <<http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/119149/finkelstein's-oxford-storm>>

The October Commons vote recognising the state of Palestine may be another small sign that the influence of the Israeli lobby is on the wane. The motion was proposed by Labour MP Grahame Morris, who represents Easington, the Co. Durham seat for one of Labour's longest serving MPs and most forceful Zionists, Emanuel Shinwell.²³

Active in the Commons and then the Lords until his death in 1986, Shinwell's advocacy of the cause of Israel on the Labour benches then largely fell to Leicester West MP Greville (now Lord) Janner, one of the public figures repeatedly mentioned this year in relation to historic child abuse. Janner's seat was previously held by his father, Sir Barnett Janner, a former chairman of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain.

In September, the Chief Constable of Derbyshire, Mick Creedon, was reported as saying his 1989 inquiries as a detective sergeant into 'credible evidence' of child abuse by Janner were blocked by superiors.²⁴ Janner had been named in open court as an abuser during the 1991 trial of Leicester children's home manager Frank Beck. MPs, including the current chair of the Commons Home Affairs Committee, Keith Vaz, rallied around Janner following trial reports. In December 1991 some called for a review of the law of contempt following what fellow Leicester MP Vaz called a 'cowardly attack' on Janner's character.

The *Guardian* reported on 4 December 1991:

'The Solicitor-General last night rejected calls from MPs from all sides of the Commons for a review of the law of contempt of court to prevent allegations against innocent third parties such as those made against the MP Greville Janner in the Frank Beck case.

Sir Nicholas Lyell angered MPs with his sterling defence of the freedom of the press and the rights of a defendant to a fair trial. "I suggest we interfere with this at our genuine peril," he said, acknowledging the ordeal

23 <<http://www.jta.org/1986/05/09/archive/lord-shinwelldead-at-101>>

24 <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2770235/Police-told-limit-abuse-probe-MP.html>>

Mr Janner had been through. The ultimate principle had to be that of open justice.

Mr Janner, Labour MP for Leicester West, again rejected allegations made against him during the child abuse, saying they were “disgraceful, contemptible and totally untrue”.

His family were in the public gallery to hear MPs denounce the claims made by Mr Beck, the former head of three children’s homes who was sentenced to five life sentences last Friday for sexual assaults on inmates in his care.

MPs expressed admiration for Mr Janner’s courage and urged a change in the law. Patrick Cormack, Tory MP for Staffordshire South, said such a change would “prevent this sort of vile calumny being perpetrated again”.

Others expressed concern for those who did not have recourse to Parliament to clear their names, and criticised the press for the way the trial was reported.’

Janner was not charged following Beck’s conviction. He received generally positive media coverage when he suggested that he had been framed, including from Ian Katz, then of *The Guardian* and now editor of *BBC Newsnight*. The Crown Prosecution Service is now reported to be considering evidence against Janner as part of an inquiry into historical child abuse.²⁵

Janner took ermine when he retired from the Commons in 1979. He was succeeded in his Leicester West seat by Patricia Hewitt, a former aide to Neil Kinnock who became a New Labour Cabinet minister under Tony Blair. Several stories have appeared suggesting that the former president of the Jewish Board of Deputies, vice-president of the Jewish Leadership Council and the World Jewish Congress is now suffering dementia. The *Daily Mirror* reported, however, that

25 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/10529864/Lord-Greville-Janners-home-searched-as-part-of-child-sex-investigations-say-police.html>>

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-27225553>>

this had not prevented Janner claiming House of Lords' attendance expenses until just before the current police investigations began.²⁶

Whether or not Janner faces trial, and whether Ian Katz will devote any *Newsnight* resources to telling us more about the former member of the Magic Circle, we can be sure two other prominent public figures of his generation accused of child abuse – Sir Cyril Smith and Sir Jimmy Savile – will not. But for those who forget – or never knew – of their celebrity value to the Liberal Party of yesteryear, their juxtaposition on this February 1974 party election broadcast will fill in a little history.²⁷

Useful to whom?

The withdrawal of the LibDem whip from Portsmouth South MP Michael Hancock for an 'inappropriate relationship' with a vulnerable female constituent continues the long history of strange behaviour by leading LibDems and members of its pre-1988 Liberal Party.²⁸

After the bizarre Liberal Party world was revealed by the 1979 Jeremy Thorpe murder trial – the activities of Peter Bessell and the hired gunman among others – the Liberals relied heavily on Cyril Smith as the party's popular public face.²⁹

When new leader David Steel failed to make much public impact, ex-MI6 man Paddy – 'Pantsdown' – Ashdown took the reins of the newly formed LibDems.³⁰

He was succeeded by former SDP MP Charles Kennedy, a man obviously afflicted by serious drink problems long before

26 <<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/peer-underinvestigation-over-sex-3845293>>

27 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UVAvgN_38g>

28 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-29625967>>

29 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Bessell>

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4705221/Murder-most-Liberal.html>>

30 <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1363112/Paddy-Ashdowns-mistress-behaved-like-real-trouper--threwdogs.html>>

he admitted them, who stood down in 2006. Kennedy had been studying on a Fulbright scholarship in the United States when he received the SDP nomination that allowed him to become the youngest MP at 23. His close SDP colleague Shirley (now Baroness) Williams had likewise been summoned from a US-funded scholarship when she launched her parliamentary career (*Lobsters passim*).³¹

A key former Liberal figure behind the scenes during the SDP/LibDem years was Richard (later Lord) Holme, an early member of the British American Project (*Lobsters passim*). His chairmanship of the Broadcasting Standards Commission was quickly ended following allegations of multiple adultery.³²

A candidate to succeed Kennedy as leader was Mark Oaten, another former SDP member, but the married MP had to withdraw in disgrace when colourful male prostitute stories emerged.

One-time deputy LibDem leader and current Justice minister in the Coalition Simon Hughes had won his Bermondsey seat in a 1983 contest marked by its homophobic attacks upon Labour's Peter Tatchell. The Liberal campaign leaflet described the election as 'a straight choice' between Simon Hughes and the Labour candidate.

Hughes apologised for the campaign in 2006 when revealing his own homosexual experiences. He told BBC's Newsnight: 'I hope that there will never be that sort of campaign again.'

Soon after the formation of the Coalition government in 2010 former banker David Laws was forced to stand down following revelation of expenses fraud. He was not prosecuted and is now Schools minister. Ministerial colleague Chris Huhne and his LibDem ex-wife Vicky Pryce were convicted and jailed for perverting the course of justice in 2013.

The man credited with being the brains behind LibDem electoral success in the 21st century Chris (now Lord) Rennard, was accused of sexual harassment by female

³¹ <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-517736/Howdrink-destroyed-Charles-Kennedy-Menzies-Campbell.html>>

³² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Holme,_Baron_Holme_of_Cheltenham>

LibDems. His suspension from the party was lifted in August after an internal inquiry.

Rennard's legal adviser was Alex (now Lord) Carlile, a former LibDem MP chosen by Prime Minister Tony Blair as independent reviewer of the anti-terrorist laws. Carlile was appointed CBE in the 2012 New Year Honours for services to national security.³³ Carlile was reappointed independent reviewer for Northern Ireland security in 2013.³⁴ He is a patron of UK Lawyers for Israel and a vice-president of Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel. In 1991 Carlisle was one of the MPs supporting Greville Janner following the Frank Beck trial. Hansard records him saying of Janner:

'He is a man of determination and enthusiasm whose integrity and will power have crossed party lines.'³⁵

All political parties have their odd characters and scandals. But for a small party – both in its Liberal and successor LibDem forms – this seems a high proportion of both. This has not prevented a hefty number of its members gaining rewards from the state in terms of quango appointments, knighthoods and peerages. And, given how long some of this strange behaviour went unreported, many of these figures seem to have enjoyed a high degree of media and, in some cases, legal immunity.

Has anyone done a serious study of the utility to the UK state and, perhaps, those of other powerful interests, of a small but electorally influential third party in post-war UK history?

Philip Willan, Calvi and Ledeen

Could he be persuaded to switch his focus from Italy, Philip Willan might do a good job of teasing answers out some of

33 <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2644121/Furyfriends-sex-pest-Lib-Dem-peer-Lord-Rennard-call-Cleggjob-back.html>>

34 <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-carlile-reappointed-as-independent-reviewer>>

35 <http://powerbase.info/index.php/UK_Lawyers_for_Israel>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Democrat_Friends_of_Israel>

these puzzling questions. Rereading his excellent *The Vatican at War: From Blackfriars Bridge to Buenos Aires* this summer reminded me just how good some persistent and intelligent writers can be.³⁶

He is not alone, of course, and many younger journalists³⁷ are bringing a much wider and often deeper awareness to bear when they find resources and outlets for their work. Willan represents the best of the older generation of specialists who read and research widely in more than one language and, in his case, have the courage to dig in dangerous places.

Fewer locations in Western Europe come with more bodies – not all of them buried – than Italy, and in *The Vatican at War* Willan points to a few casualties in the English-speaking world too. My limited knowledge of Italy and Italian doesn't permit me to review Willan's latest work on the world of Roberto Calvi, the Vatican, the strategy of tension, Propaganda Due, Archbishop Marcinkus, Operation Gladio, the funding of the Italian Christian Democrats, Socialists, Polish Solidarity, the Mafia, freemasonry and the rest. But beyond a general endorsement of a fine work of scholarship and investigation into this complexity, there are a few matters that would repay British inquiry into events nearer home.

Willan records the total failure of the City of London Police to deal professionally with the death of Banco Ambrosiano chairman Roberto Calvi when his body was found hanging below Blackfriars bridge in June 1982. An assumption that this was the suicide, initially of a tramp, took two inquests and a private inquiry by Calvi's relatives to expose for the nonsense that it was. Thirty-two years later no one has been convicted of his murder, which an Italian court found to be the cause of his death. (Willan remarks in passing that police officers are often reluctant to pursue inquiries which may have an intelligence services dimension for fear of losing their own security clearance status.)

There has been a distinct lack of press and political

³⁶ <<http://www.philipwillan.com/>>

³⁷ See my review of Owen Jones's *The Establishment* in this issue for an example.

curiosity about how a man at the centre of big-time arms dealing – including with Britain’s then Falklands War enemy, Argentina – money laundering, freemasonry and Cold War political intriguing could have met his end in the Square Mile carrying the business card of the senior partner of a City law firm with strong intelligence links.

The light-touch curiosity of police, press and politicians in Calvi’s fate mirrors that shown for the fate of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, with which the bank chairman and P2 member was involved. Willan confirms my own impression of the lengthy, expensive and futile High Court case brought against the Bank of England for its failure to regulate a clearly errant and failing bank: everyone seemed to dance around the elephants in the room that were the intelligence operations – US and UK, and probably those of other countries too – which BCCI facilitated.

Willan’s references to Calvi associate Francesco Pazienza, the businessman and former SISMI officer, often bring Michael Ledeen (*Lobsters passim*) back to our attention. His political intriguing and efforts on behalf of Israel to promote terror scares, violence and wars extend from his early efforts to capitalise on the Pope’s shooting in 1981, through Billygate, the Grenada invasion ‘files’, the October Surprise, the yellowcake uranium invention that contributed to the Iraq War right up to his present-day warmongering Foundation for Defense of Democracy outpourings.³⁸

There’s are lots more UK strands to the Calvi story. For those new to it, the link on Willan’s website to the documentary, *The Pope and the Mafia Millions*, is a good introduction.³⁹

For those who want to seek serious insights into the workings of the Cold War and its use of political terror and media manipulation in Italy and beyond en route to today’s

38 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_Pazienza>
<<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2006/07/yellowcake200607>>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_for_Defense_of_Democracies>

39 <<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/03/16/18081091.php>>

'war on terror', read Willan's fine book and reflect on its British implications.

9/11, 7/7

The Best Evidence Panel seems a useful vehicle for keeping updated on substantiated 9/11 material and can be found at <http://www.consensus911.org/>. For those wanting a useful primer on 9/11, David Hooper's *The Anatomy of a Great Deception* is well worth a look.⁴⁰

Nearer home, the ninth anniversary of UK's little 9/11 – the London bus and Tube bombings known as 7/7 – passed largely unremarked. The lack of interest by politicians and press is almost as great as that shown in the murder of Robert Calvi almost a quarter of a century earlier. Not quite the suicide of a tramp as City of London police saw it, but surely an open-and-shut case of four disaffected young men who had fallen under the evil influence of mad Muslims?

That was pretty much my uninformed view when I started reading *Secrets, Spies and 7/7* by Tom Secker. Yet it didn't take many pages into this impressive book before I realised I was wrong: there's far more to those London events on July 7 2005 than we have been told. Secker steers a thoughtful and prodigiously conscientious course through the differing accounts coming to us from the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police, the reports of the Commons Intelligence and Security Committee, the intelligence services and the inquest evidence. He also looks critically at some of the published challenges to those 'official' accounts. He takes apart piece by piece the accepted version of the bombings and identifies the roles played in the lives of the four alleged bombers by those close to different agencies of British and American states and examines the so-called 'intelligence failures' which permitted the deaths and injuries to London travellers. Secker writes:

⁴⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3q8zYRypoY> The five-minute summary by James Corbett is good too, and rather more fun at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgrunnLcG9Q>.

'In the years prior to 7/7 the four alleged bombers only did things that made them look like possible bombers with.....[these] likely spies, or in the case of Junaid Babar, through contact with a known American spy. At each point they connected to something that might be called Al Qaeda, they connected through likely spies and at each point that this happened there were significant and inexplicable "intelligence failures". Information wasn't shared, or wasn't explored or exploited with any degree of haste or sense of urgency.

Officially these "failures" had the effect of concealing the identity of the alleged bombers from the security services in the years before 7/7. However, they still had half a dozen instances where they had Mohammad Siddique Khan identified with his name, phone numbers, vehicles and addresses. Nonetheless, MI5 maintain that they never had any idea that he was going to become a suicide bomber.

This is a fine example of doublethink because in excusing themselves for failing to stop Siddique Khan before 7/7 they are also admitting that they have no evidence that he was actually a suicide bomber. Despite their many hours of surveillance of Khan they never came across anything suggesting he was preparing to kill himself or anyone else.

Thus, in slowly revealing tidbit-by-tidbit what information they did have on Khan before 7/7, it is only if you believe that he was a suicide bomber that any of it looks convincing. Khan's visits to Pakistan, his contact with subsequently convicted "terror suspects", his involvement at a radical bookshop are all presented by MI5 as reasons why they didn't find Khan suspicious, all the while telling us that these are reasons why we should find him suspicious....

So were these "failures" really failures, or were they the result of compartmentalizing intelligence to facilitate secret operations? In particular, were they the result of compartmentizing intelligence to facilitate a

black, false flag operation? The pattern suggests that this is true, but the available information is partial in the extreme.'

Secker seems to me a younger Philip Willan in that he has thoroughly immersed himself in the material and yet not been drowned by it. He retains throughout a calm, balanced approach to an issue about which he clearly feels deeply – that the public, including the families of the victims of 7/7, have not been told the truth about what happened.⁴¹

Ways of remembering

Writing ahead of the UK Remembrance Day, I was glad to stumble on a lecture on the subject of remembrance by Keith Lowe, the author of *Savage Continent*, the hugely impressive account of the aftermath of the Second World War.⁴² In his talk given in Berlin last year he reflects on the way the people of the countries participating in the Second World War choose to view it. As an invitation to consider many 'truths', it may appeal, much like Lowe's fine book, to *Lobster* readers.⁴³

Open justice

In the week in which arguably the most secret trial in British history opened at the Old Bailey, the words of campaigning solicitor Gareth Peirce at the Spirit of Mother Jones Festival earlier this summer ring heavy bells.⁴⁴ In talking about the 'lynch mob' mentality against Muslims that was being

⁴¹ Tom Secker's work can be seen and the book obtained through <<http://www.investigatingtheterror.com/>> and he is in conversation on the book with James Corbett at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHiQxpEn8vo>>.

Secker explores his ideas on 'predictive programming' in more detail at <<http://www.spyculture.com/>>.

⁴² <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fqvDvP3WR4>>

⁴³ <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/9200649/Savage-Continent-Europe-in-the-Aftermath-of-World-War-Two-by-Keith-Lowe-review.html>>

⁴⁴ <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29599563>>
<<http://motherjonescork.com/>>

encouraged in the UK, she warned that the big battle was 'to defend the rule of law. The rights of minorities are fundamental: we could all become the underdogs, the enemy within.'

When MPs urged a change in the contempt of court laws after Greville Janner was named in the 1991 child abuse trial I mention above, it was the Solicitor-General, Sir Nicholas Lyell, who resisted the call in the name of open justice.⁴⁵ Peirce told her Cork audience:

'There are laws that bind us – sound principles that should hold good for all time. These principles are there. There is no need to amend them – just apply them.'

45 One of Janner's supporters in 1991 was the man who, as Lord Carlile, became the 'terrorism legislation reviewer'. Here is the former Liberal MP speaking in support of secret courts
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgwoJ569sPc>>