

Holding Pattern

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Mrs Mopp and the 'wet jobs'

The 'review' of the Freedom of Information Act is in the news as I write and I don't think anyone who cares passionately about the Act can be under any illusions about the result this review is expected to produce. (In his autobiography Tony Blair disowned it as the worst mistake he made as Prime Minister, which is surely both unexpectedly honest and *chutzpah* on a scale so gobsmacking that it could eclipse a galaxy.)

Less discussed is FOI's little sister, the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), which are far narrower in scope but much much wider in reach: EIR essentially entitle you to any information you want from just about anyone, so long as it has an environmental connection.

Not even the spooks are exempt from EIR and the dear old BBC, whose investigative journalism knows no depths, recently used the regulations to gain information about the energy efficiency of the headquarters of MI5 and MI6, vital information which the public no doubt lapped up hungrily.

I decided to use the 'catchall' net of the EIR to wrinkle out some rather more interesting information from MI6.

The disposal of human remains is considered an environmental issue by central Government (and what else could it possibly be?) and since MI6 has the 'class 7' power to use lethal force,¹ I thought I'd find out how MI6 gets rid of those inconvenient stiffs. Accordingly, I submitted an EIR request to MI6 asking how many corpses had been disposed of since the turn of the century.

The in-house legal team obviously found my reasoning irrefutable because a short while later I received a reply (on

¹ See <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/13/section/7>>.

plain A4 paper, signed with a wiggly line with no name beneath it) informing me that the Secret Intelligence Service has not disposed of human remains in the last 15 years.

Encouraged, I wrote again, this time asking for the release of the Service's internal codes/regulations/whatever concerning the disposal of human remains.

The Service's next letter thanked me for my supplemental question and informed me that no such framework exists.

No doubt, MI6 was entirely honest and forthright in its responses.

I was understandably puzzled by such a glaring omission in such a strictly regulated environmental area of law and so I wrote to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ask how the Government ensured MI6 wasn't polluting the planet with lead-overdose patients.

There was a pause of a week or two and then the Department's press office wrote back telling me the whole thing was nothing to do with them and that I should approach the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice instead – neither of which, of course, has the slightest oversight of MI6.

I think I recognise a wild goose chase when I'm being led on one, so I left the matter there.

Crozier's cronies

Among the recent revelations from Consortium News concerning Keith Rupert Murdoch's clandestine relationship with the CIA (see *Lobster* 69) was the fact that in 1984 Mr Murdoch had funded a European 'fact finding' mission by that noted spook-cum-hack the late Brian Crozier. Consortium's piece did not explore what Crozier did to earn his keep, but a little niggle at the back of my head told me that this news wasn't entirely a surprise.

When I finally got round to buying a second-hand copy of the book to refresh my memory, the answer was indeed staring me in the face from the pages of the first volume of the

diaries of Woodrow Wyatt, AKA Baron Wyatt of Weeford, AKA 'The Voice of Reason'.² Wyatt's entry for Monday 2 June 1986 begins:

'To the Stafford Hotel, 11 am. Meeting with conspirators. Brian Crozier,³ Julian Lewis,⁴ a man from Aims of Industry whose name I've forgotten and another man who I never identified.⁵ How to make the public realise that Labour is still dominated by Militants, Communists and Marxists.'

Wyatt of course was a close friend of Mr Murdoch (until the 1990s, when the tycoon decided that the Vox Rationis was no more use and dumped him, leaving Wyatt to lament into his tape-recorder that Murdoch 'has behaved like a swine and a pig') and so to my mind the look of this 'meeting with conspirators' is that the whole thing was orchestrated by Mr Murdoch himself. It's the simplest explanation.

It's clear from this entry that the Stafford Hotel meeting wasn't the start of a plan but a continuation of something already in motion. Wyatt recorded: 'A lot of work has been done on bias in the media and there will be a report coming to me soon I hope. It covers BBC and Independent TV.'

At this stage, it's not clear to me what came of this plotting, if anything.

But there is a lovely coda in Wyatt's entry for 12 November 1987, which records a lunch with David Hart,

² Of this *News of the World* editor, Derek Jameson, said in 2008: 'True, Murdoch did foist Woodrow Wyatt on me at the NoW. I got my own back by putting this subhead under his by-line: The voice of reason. I reckon the whole world with the exception of Wyatt and Murdoch knew I was taking the piss.' <<http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/node/41321>>

³ Crozier is referred to in a footnote by Wyatt's editor Sarah Curtis as: 'Journalist and author, in the Guinness Book of Records as the writer who has interviewed the most heads of state and government', which is true as far as it goes.

⁴ Sarah Curtis notes simply that Mr Lewis was: 'Conservative MP, elected 1997' – which again, is true as far as it goes but does not reflect Mr Lewis' status at the time or, for example, his intriguing exploits with The Freedom Association during the 1970s.

⁵ I feel sure that we glimpse here the fleeting shadow of an MI5 officer.

alumnus of the far-right Murdoch-funded Campaign for a Free Britain, in which Hart tried to cajole Wyatt (a friend of Mrs Thatcher and the Queen Mother) into recommending Crozier to Thatcher for a knighthood.

It really is a small world in the British Establishment. Speaking of which.....

Coulson and co

Now that the Tommy Sheridan perjury trial has acquitted former Murdoch employee Andy Coulson, there's no risk of contempt of court and so I am free to explore a matter that has interested me for some time.

Throughout the byzantine and years-long unfolding of the News International hacking scandal, there have been a few glimpses of what might have been peripheral involvement by the Security Service, MI5. I have only been keeping half an eye on the entire affair so the one that sticks in my mind is the 2011 revelation that News Int's semi-detached private investigator Glenn Mulcaire had somehow got access to an MI5 file on a friend of Princes William and Harry.⁶ Since the friend in question was not suspected of any wrongdoing, the look of this disclosure is that MI5 routinely keep tabs on those close to Royalty – although they seem to have missed Jimmy Savile for some reason.

Anyway, the Mulcaire/MI5 connection was never explored or brought before Lord Leveson and died amid the long grass of official silence. Earlier this year it was revealed that former *News of the World* high-flier (and recently theatre critic for the *Surrey Comet*) Neville Thurlbeck was an MI5 informant.⁷ Mr Thurlbeck has stated that the flow of information was 'strictly one way' – no doubt, Mr Thurlbeck was motivated purely by patriotic national security concerns – and that moving from journalism to work for MI5 would have

6 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/world/europe/mi5-references-emerge-in-britain-phone-hacking-suit.html?_r=3&>

7 <<http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/former-news-world-reporter-neville-thurlbeck-reveals-25-years-tabloid-secrets-exclusive-extracts>>

entailed a drastic pay cut (a claim that I find wholly believable).

Later, Mr Thurlbeck would find himself the cellmate of Andy Coulson during the thirty seven days Mr Thurlbeck was imprisoned, a situation that it is hard to believe was coincidental, although what might have motivated it remains unclear (there is material for a playwright here, I think).

Mr Coulson of course had taken Mr Thurlbeck's dreaded pay cut in order to become David Cameron's communications chief, in which position it was later revealed he was not vetted. The emergence of this fact is said to have 'shocked Whitehall', and not without reason: allowing someone to get to the centre of government without proper background checks is like handing your bank card and PIN to a stranger on the street. Marcia Faulkender's supposed 'non-vetting' was enough to inspire a smear campaign involving compromised national security during Harold Wilson's term in office.

Number 10 itself argued....well, it's not entirely clear what Number 10 argued.⁸ First of all, Coulson was said to have undergone basic vetting and not to have had access to top secret material. Then the line was that Coulson would have been subject to developed vetting⁹ but it would have been too expensive. Then the claim was that Coulson was being subjected to developed vetting but it was never completed. Finally, Number 10 declared that 'No information is held that shows Andy Coulson was sent information incorrectly or for which he was not authorised', a statement that deserves very careful reading indeed.

When Coulson finally appeared before Lord Leveson's inquiry (the second act of which is now well overdue) he cautiously said that he 'may have' had unsupervised access to material classified top secret and above. Obviously, he couldn't be sure about that.

It is very, very hard indeed to accept, per Number 10's protean statements, that there was somehow an absolutely

⁸ <<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/may/10/andy-coulson-security-vetting-timeline>>

⁹ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61938/NSV002-Active-2-8.pdf>.

unprecedented vetting failure in Coulson's case and that this failure was repeated several times for different reasons and that no-one realised at any stage. In Whitehall terms, this is quite literally unthinkable. It would crease the brow of even the average *Daily Star* reader. But it would make perfect sense if Coulson had already been thoroughly checked out by MI5 and so – not expecting it ever to come to light – no-one at Number 10 bothered to go through the redundant procedural rigmarole of vetting him again.

Tory Party like it's 1992

And so the Miliband rocket proved to be a damp squib at the ballot booth and now the brothers (and sisters) are at each other's throats providing a neat distraction from all that boring post-election analysis that no-one cares about. Which is a pity, because on the face of it 2015's General Election result was every bit as scepticism-worthy as 1992's. In 1992 it will be recalled, the Tories won by a margin of 11 seats, involving an average victory margin of 119 votes in each – and four of those seats reported signs of election-rigging.

This time round the Tory win was dependent on just six seats, all with wafer-thin margins of victory.

- * In Wales, the Tories took the historic Labour seat of Gower by a margin of 27 votes and the Vale of Clwyd (also taken from Labour) by 237 votes.
- * Derby North was taken from Labour by a margin of 41 votes.
- * The Tories held Croydon Central by 165 votes.
- * Tories held Bury North by 378.
- * Thurrock stayed Tory by a margin of 537 votes.

All of these margins are well within the capabilities of a team of determined local riggers, fiddlers and fixers. But since all the parties play the game, it's unlikely that anyone will officially complain, meaning that for the second time in a generation, a 'squeaker' of a poll might have been corrupted and invalid..... and with only a year and a day until the ballots are destroyed by incinerator, we may never know the truth.

Bogles

The SNP's endless denunciation of treacherous spies in their midst, plotting against Scottish nationalism, has generated a lot more heat than light. It was interesting, however, that Baroness Meta Ramsay, who will need no reintroduction, was the key figure in the Lords who allowed Jim Murphy to triumph over the motion of No Confidence tabled against him and thereby quit with honour. What a semi-detached 'ex'-MI6 officer was doing helping out a key New Labour figure is somewhat obscure but my hunch is that it was a case of 'my enemy's enemy' aimed at depriving the SNP of a symbolic scalp.

I'm not going to list all the allegations of spook involvement in the ScotNat political scene that have been made since the referendum campaign period: it would take too long and anyone who's been following the saga already knows at least some of this. My opinion is that MI5 wouldn't be doing its job if it wasn't working, on some levels, to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom, a position with which I have no small amount of sympathy, the unquestionable romance of the Scottish independence narrative to one side.

What has escaped attention so far is the fact that in 2010 a British diplomat cabled a Belfast colleague about Holyrood's state of mind and reported insights attributed to 'well-placed sources' – those sources being clearly, from the context, within the SNP.¹⁰

So it appears that the SNP has been comprehensively infiltrated years ago. Perhaps private knowledge of this is why SNP figures have been so jumpy about possible security service interventions.

I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the CIA around the time of the referendum, asking them for any and all available material relating to the Scottish independence movement since 1979, figuring that would catch everything in modern times and could be winnowed down to

10 <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10LONDON126_a.html>

the releasable few pages by declassification staff. Instead, the CIA declined to confirm or deny that it held any such material concerning a force that threatened the constitutional composition of a key strategic ally nation.

Make of that what you will.

The SNP's 'oil field cover-up'

When the discovery of the new North Sea oil field referred to as Vorlich/Marconi was announced shortly after the Scottish referendum last year, many immediately cried smelled a rat. It had been a major plank of the SNP's campaign that major new North Sea discoveries lay ahead and/or were being hushed up in order to promote uncertainty over the SNP's bold claim that a seceded Scotland could run on oil money.¹¹

I can't say either way whether the SNP is 'onto something' in the most general terms, although it would appear that North Sea extraction has certainly peaked and is on the decline; but in the case of the Vorlich/Marconi oil field I can say that it appears they are barking up the wrong tree. I applied under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain e-mails sent between site discoverers BP and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills concerning the oil field's discovery. The exchanges captured by my request aren't interesting enough to bother reproducing here; however while the e-mails don't absolutely rule out some kind of underhandedness (it being impossible to prove a negative, of course), I can say that it appears that BP caught the Department on the hop with its announcement and that I'm satisfied (any new information notwithstanding) that the SNP's concerns appear to be groundless. (I'll be glad to forward the e-mails on to anyone who fancies a brief but boring read).

¹¹ This claim ricocheted back and forth from October to December 2014 and a chronological list of pro- and anti- sources would be boring and confusing. There is a sceptical and closely detailed summary here: <<https://mercinon.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/the-snps-deceit-or-naivety-about-the-uk-oil-and-gas-industry/>>.

Not in the Albert Hall

30 April marked the anniversary of the suicide of Adolf Hitler and also – allegedly – that of Eva Braun, his lover. ‘Allegedly’ because Hugh Thomas, in his book *Doppelgangers: The Truth About the Bodies in the Berlin Bunker* (1996), proved that Eva escaped from the fuhrerbunker and for all intents and purposes disappeared, leaving behind a corpse doctored to look superficially like hers but with completely different teeth.

Mr Thomas’s work on Nazi body-doubles of the Second World War has proved contentious over the years but the Eva Braun case is the one in which there is absolutely no room for doubt. Unless one imagines that Thomas invented his book from whole cloth, the evidence he cites makes it absolutely impossible for the female body found at the site of the attempted cremation of Hitler to be Eva’s.

This gives me the chance to set out a little theory I have nurtured for many years.

It’s well known that when autopsied, Hitler’s charred corpse was found to only have one testicle. The Russian autopsists even examined the abdominal cavity to see if it had ‘ascended’. Nope, it wasn’t there. What’s less well-known is that all Hitler’s medical records from his lifetime recorded no such abnormality.

So there are two options: either every medical examination that included details of Hitler’s genitals has been doctored or forged on this one detail, or.....one of his testicles went missing after his death. If you add in certain other details, a strange solution to this little set of mysteries starts to come into focus.

Why, for example, did Hitler marry Eva shortly before committing suicide? (She even wrote her surname as ‘Hitler’ on their marriage certificate). Could it be that the last-minute marriage was to ensure that any child borne by Eva would be legitimate? Artificial insemination was not then a new procedure by any means and if Eva escaped and some medically-minded Nazi took one of Hitler’s testicles for the

sperm it contained.... In this theory, Eva escaped (perhaps to Argentina) where she gave birth to Hitler's child.

Yes, it would have been a cockamamie procedure to attempt; but let's face it the Nazis had some very odd ideas indeed about science and biology. It's exactly the sort of thing you can easily imagine them doing.

So that explains the lot: Mr and Mrs Hitler's legitimate child, conceived by artificial insemination, to be born in exile – one day to return. Whether or not it would have worked is another matter altogether. If it was ever tried, no heir to the Reich has ever appeared.

Of course, all this is pure speculation (one might even be forgiven for calling it 'a load of balls') but I find the possibility beguiling. And even though it's only a game of 'what if?', it explains a lot of things in one go, so it has the virtue of simplicity on its side.

The 'vast right-wing conspiracy' redux

Curious that Monica Lewinsky reappeared in the news earlier this year, as the guest speaker at a TED talk, nearly 20 years after her moment of fame, just as Bill Clinton's long-suffering wife Hillary was preparing her run for the US presidency. Even more curious, it turns out that TED has been co-operating with the CIA.¹² As far as we know TED has been brought in to provide private 'corporate' events for the Agency but still.....curious.

12 <<http://www.theverge.com/2015/4/27/8503821/cia-ted-talk-tedxcia-false-flag>>