

# The View from the Bridge

Robin Ramsay

## Even Wikipedia.....

In August much of the major media, including the BBC, ran a story about the late Cedric Belfrage, claiming he was a Soviet spy, 'the sixth man'. Christopher Andrew was among those prominently quoted supporting this thesis. The estimable John Simkins published a devastating rebuttal of this, pointing out that Belfrage has been leaking material to the Soviets on instruction from BSC (British Security Co-ordination).<sup>1</sup> Simkins included this killer paragraph:

'If Gordon Corea [of the BBC] and the other journalists working on this story had carried out a simple search for "Cedric Belfrage" on the Net they would have arrived at my fully documented page on Cedric Belfrage and would have found evidence that contradicted the SIS press release. Even the much criticised Wikipedia had a far more accurate account of Belfrage than supplied by Andrew and his media stooges.'

This was punted at various major media outlets but there were no takers.

## JFK and the unthinkable

I finally read David Talbot's *Brothers* (2007), about JFK and RFK. Talbot did something interesting: he contacted all the surviving members of the Kennedy network of the sixties – pals of one sort or another, speechwriters, drivers etc., or their wives, ex-wives and children, and asked them: what did you – and what did Robert Kennedy – really think at the time of JFK's assassination? Almost universally they thought that the Warren Commission was bullshit.

<sup>1</sup> <<http://spartacus-educational.com/spartacus-blogURL57.htm>>

On *whodunit* they were uncertain but looked mostly at the anti-Castro Cubans. No-one seems to have thought it might be Johnson behind it, not-a-one. Johnson is entirely missing from this account. Which is odd considering that the Kennedys were trying to destroy Johnson's career. Intent on generating enough scandal to get Johnson 'off the ticket' for the 1964 election, Attorney General Robert had sent a team down to Texas to investigate Billie Sol Estes (one of the Johnson network and a major financial contributor) and his Justice Department was leaking dirt on Johnson's right-hand man, Bobby Baker, to *Life* magazine. Yet when JFK was killed in Johnson's home state and was the obvious beneficiary of the event, not one of them thought that these facts might be connected.

My guess would be that Texas was a long way away from Washington in the sixties and while the East Coasters round the Kennedys knew that LBJ was a vulgarian and a boor, definitely not their kind of person – this is the Yankees versus Cowboys thesis in a sense – it just never occurred to anyone that messing with LBJ could have such serious consequences; and it still hadn't by the time Talbot got round to talking to them in the 2000s.<sup>2</sup>

## **The political economy**

The most surprising thing I have read recently was a talk, 'Who owns a company?', given by the Bank of England's chief economist, Andrew Haldane. In this he compares corporate culture in the Anglo-American world with that of continental Europe and concludes that we should be more like Sweden or Germany where the interests of shareholders are not the only thing of importance. This is his conclusion:

'Challenges to the shareholder-centric company model are rising, both from within and outside the corporate sector. These criticisms have deep micro-economic roots

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<sup>2</sup> The one Texan politician who wrote about Johnson in the 1960s, J. Evetts Haley, dropped broad hints that the Johnson network had killed several witnesses in the Billie Sol Estes affair in his *A Texan Looks at Lyndon* (1964), still available.

and thick macro-economic branches. Some incremental change is occurring to trim these branches. But it may be time for *a more fundamental re-rooting of company law* if we are to tackle these problems at source. The stakes – for companies, the economy and wider society – could scarcely be higher.<sup>3</sup> (emphasis added)

But none of our major political parties is anywhere near suggesting something as radical as this.

The Conservative Party annual conference was noteworthy for a striking piece of nonsense from Prime Minister Cameron claiming that the Conservatives were the now the party of 'working people'. Many commentators, who really ought to know better by now, took this seriously. The claim is true in one profound but unstated sense: the Conservatives will continue to harass those who are not employed. Thirty years of propaganda against those dependent upon the state has resulted in a public climate hostile to almost all those claiming benefits: the 'deserving poor' category has now shrunk enormously.

There is a kind of logic behind all this which Cabinet member Jeremy Hunt expressed in his comments during the conference that cuts in tax credits would force the British to work as hard as the Chinese. Or: in a globalised world there is no alternative to the race to the bottom, and the Brits are going to be forced to take shitty, badly paid jobs, just like much of the rest of the world. It remains to be seen how the Conservative government reconciles this with their plans for a minimum 'living wage'.

## **Keeping on keeping on**

Jonathan Marshall was first sighted by me in the early 1980s when he published a newsletter called *Parapolitics USA*.<sup>4</sup> A series of books followed, some co-authored with Peter Dale

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<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/speeches/2015/833.aspx>>

<sup>4</sup> The first issue of this can be seen at <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/63837535/Parapolitics-USA-no-1>>

Scott. He's still writing. A piece of his, on the barely reported US-sponsored coup in Honduras, appeared recently on the Consortium site.<sup>5</sup>

Bill Blum has been at it nearly as long and recently he announced in his e-mail bulletin, *Anti-Empire Report*,<sup>6</sup> that he was suspending publication because he was 'burnt out'. He explained:

'After more than a dozen years of putting out the report, because US foreign policy keeps repeating itself, with the same lies, I too often find myself repeating the same ideas I've expressed before, often in more or less the same words.

I also feel the effect of day after day, year after year, intensively reading and seeing images of the human horrors; not just the horrors, but the lies and the stupidity.'

I empathise with some of that. I gave up my column in the *Fortean Times* precisely because I had begun repeating myself.

Occasional contributor to these columns, Bernard Porter, currently has three books out. One is a reissue in the Routledge Revivals series<sup>7</sup> of his 1989 *Plots and Paranoia*. The two new ones are *British Imperial: What the Empire Wasn't* and *Empire Ways: aspects of British Imperialism*, both from I.B. Tauris. The latter is a collection of essays, some of which appeared originally in the *London Review of Books*.

## **Mike Peters RIP**

**M**ike Peters died in June. Mike was a sociologist and a lefty, though of what particular stripe I'm not sure (*tendance* Groucho, perhaps.) We only met a handful of times.<sup>8</sup> He wrote *the* seminal article about Bilderberg for *Lobster* 32. Nothing

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5 <<https://consortiumnews.com/2015/08/19/the-honduran-coups-ugly-aftermath/>>

6 <<http://williamblum.org/aer>>

7 <<https://www.routledge.com/series/REVIVALS>>

8 A photo and brief biog, from the perspective of a group in Leeds to which he belonged, is at <<https://leedssurrealistgroup.wordpress.com/2015/06/11/mike-peters/>>.

better has appeared since. That essay is behind our tiny pay wall (which pays for this site) but a version is on-line at <[www.bilderberg.org/bblob.rtf](http://www.bilderberg.org/bblob.rtf)>.

## **City politics**

**R**emember 'rebalancing the economy'? After the great crash/taxpayer rip-off of 2008 it dawned on some of our politicians that it might be a good thing if the economy's dependence on the financial sector was reduced; which meant, in effect, expanding the manufacturing sector. Prime minister Cameron talked of this in 2010,<sup>9</sup> was still talking about in 2015,<sup>10</sup> but nothing happened. Tony Burke, assistant general secretary of Unite, wrote in January 2015 that 'Osborne and Cameron's promised rebalancing of the economy in favour of manufacturing has long disappeared in the rear view mirror.'

The appointment of Sajid Javid as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in May 2015 tells us all we need to know about the government's intentions. For Javid was one of the architects of the 2008 crash, one of the clever people creating 'financial products' – packaging debt for sale by banks – which caused the problems.<sup>11</sup>

Given the consequences of 2008, you might think that the politics of the City would be front page news. But it's still regarded as esoteric for the most part, and confined to the business pages. But the game goes on.

Martin Wheatley quit as head of the Financial Conduct Authority<sup>12</sup> at the beginning of August. The report of this in the *Financial Times* noted that he resigned

9 <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/article-for-the-yorkshire-post>>

10 <<https://www.politicshome.com/economy-and-work/articles/news/david-cameron-speech-rebalancing-economy>>

11 <<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/15/sajid-javid-what-thatcherite-union-buster-learned-from-wall-street>>

12 <<http://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/city-shocked-as-watchdog-martin-wheatley-quits-financial-conduct-authority-10396711.html>>

'after being told by George Osborne that he would not renew his contract when it expires in March....The move comes a month after Mr Osborne, the chancellor, unveiled a "new settlement" with the City of London..... ....[Wheatley] did not always have the confidence of government officials, who have privately urged regulators to take a lighter approach as the economy improves and banker-bashing falls out of favour. Some industry executives, meanwhile, viewed him as remote and unhelpful and complained to senior Conservative politicians about his consumer-champion agenda.' <sup>13</sup>

The FT could hardly be plainer: the financial crisis is over, so its back to business as usual; Wheatley was taking his job too seriously and had to go.

But what's this 'new settlement' between the City and the government referred to by Osborne? It comes from his Mansion House speech this year. Each year at the Mansion House Chancellors give a speech in which they tell the City what they're going to do for them. The key paragraphs from Osborne were these:

'We have been seeking to resolve that British dilemma of being a host for global finance without exposing our taxpayers again to the calamitous cost of financial firms failing.

I believe that in restoring the Bank of England's role in the heart of supervision, in ring-fencing retail banking and insisting on much better capitalised firms, we have made enormous progress in solving that dilemma.....Yet one of the greatest threats to our international competitiveness comes from ill-designed and misguided European legislation imposed not just on our financial services industry, but many other industries too.' <sup>14</sup>

For which read: regulators from the European Union are a

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<sup>13</sup> <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/61f867fa-2c76-11e5-8613-e7aedbb7bdb7.html#axzz3i0K9RHjD>>

<sup>14</sup> <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/mansion-house-2015-speech-by-the-chancellor-of-the-exchequer>>

threat to the City. Bottom line: to preserve the City as a world centre of money-laundering, gambling and financial fraud the UK may have to leave the Union.

## Huh?

Did someone say the world of politics is getting complicated? This appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>15</sup>

'Iraq.....The most disgusting abuse of power in a generation and a moral quagmire that never ends. America is attacked by terrorists and so, declares war on a country that had nothing whatsoever to do with the attacks, while ignoring an oil rich ally which had everything to do with them. The justification for war is based on some witches' brew of faulty intelligence, concocted intelligence and ignored good intelligence. Decent people are forced to lie on an international stage. All sensible advice is ignored and rabid neo-con draft dodgers hold sway on military matters. The UK joins this fool's errand for no good reason. Blood is spilled and treasure is spent.

The result is a disaster that was predicted only by Middle Eastern experts, post-conflict planners and several million members of the public.....

The banking crisis.....A nice financial counterpoint to Iraq. Virtually destroy the western financial system in the name of greed. Get bailed out by the taxpayers who you've been ripping off. And then carry on as if nothing whatsoever has happened. No jail, no meaningful extra regulation, the idea of being too big to fail as much of a joke as it was in 2005. Not even an apology.....

But actually what we should be thinking is that a lot of this is what happens what you dismantle regulatory frameworks. This is what happens when you

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<sup>15</sup> <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/11671617/Perhaps-the-worlds-conspiracy-theorists-have-been-right-all-along.html>>

let money run riot and you allow industries to police themselves. This is what happens when the rich and powerful are endlessly granted special privileges, celebrated and permitted or even encouraged to place themselves above the law. And this is what happens when ordinary people feel bored by and excluded from politics, largely because their voices matter so little for the reasons above. Effectively, we are all living in Italy under Silvio Berlusconi.'

## **W[h]ither Labour?**

**I** wasn't going to bother adding my 5p's worth to the discussion about the Labour Party's future but then I saw the following quote from Ken Livingstone in a 'what's on' free sheet in Hull.

'[Thatcher] created today's housing crisis, she produced the banking crisis, she created the benefits crisis. It was her government that started putting people on incapacity benefits rather than register them as unemployed because the Britain she inherited was broadly at full employment. She decided when she wrote off our manufacturing industry that she could live with two or three million unemployed and the legacy of that, the benefits bill that we are still struggling with today. In actual fact, every real problem we face today is the legacy of the fact she was fundamentally wrong.'<sup>16</sup>

This is true now and was true in 2008 when Ken said it. Ken may have come from the world of the Trot *groupescules*<sup>17</sup> but he understood British political economy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> They had seen it on the Net, of course. See <<http://www.itv.com/news/update/2013-04-08/livingstone-thatchers-policies-fundamentally-wrong/>>.

<sup>17</sup> On which see Simon Matthews, 'The once and future king?' in *Lobster* 56.

<sup>18</sup> And the fact that he did so is one of the reasons the NuLab faction – Brown, Blair *et al* – detested him: he knew more than they did, knew they were talking shit and told them so.

For a political leader, like Mrs Thatcher, acknowledging error and changing minds is a peculiar problem. A leader attracts followers, or builds a coalition of support, based on two things: policies and prospects of winning. Blair's coalition of support was based on his prospects of winning: the core group of 'Blairites', neo-cons within the parliamentary Labour Party, was never very big.<sup>19</sup> Mrs Thatcher's coalition was based very largely on policies defined by the failure of Edward Heath between 1970 and 74. To her supporters Thatcher promised to attack the British labour movement – 'the enemy within' – who had defeated Heath, and 'cure' inflation, partly caused by Heath's attempt to generate growth in the UK economy. When she announced at the annual Conservative Party conference in 1980, 'You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning'<sup>20</sup> – it was a promise to maintain the ideological coalition which supported her and not imitate Heath's 'u-turn' in 1972. Since her economic policies were having serious unforeseen negative consequences, rationally she should have been changing her mind; politically she could not do so.

Of the Thatcherites, the key group around her in the late 1970s, only Nigel Lawson could be said to have had any economic knowledge. His view of the political economy was that of a former City journalist; and the City was doing splendidly under Thatcher: it was their agenda of deregulation which was being implemented under the rhetoric of 'freedom'.<sup>21</sup>

In this country our leading politicians are not required to understand economics, let alone political economy. Polly Toynbee made this comment on the current Labour leadership campaign.

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<sup>19</sup> It was not as big as the left-wing Campaign group, for example.

<sup>20</sup> In a speech written for her by playwright Ronald Miller. Thatcher had no interest in nor knowledge of Britain's literary culture and did not get the reference to the Christopher Fry play, *The Lady's Not For Burning*.

<sup>21</sup> A member of Thatcher's inner policy group, John Hoskyns, is scathing about the economic ignorance at the top of the Tory Party in his *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution* (London: Aurum Press, 2000).

'[Yvette] Cooper is on the up, her every outing leaving audiences thinking better of her. She even impressed the press gallery last week, the toughest gig of all. This question killed Miliband: did Labour overspending leave Britain vulnerable in the crash? Unlike Kendall, Cooper refuses to concede. It's not true, she won't say it and she can say why with a punchy economic explanation poor Miliband never learned.'<sup>22</sup>

Two things struck me about this. Firstly, Toynbee is impressed that Yvette Cooper can actually muster a response to the question, 'Did Labour overspending leave it vulnerable in the crash?' I don't know what Cooper's 'punchy economic explanation' was<sup>23</sup> but the fact that something as banal as this is praiseworthy speaks volumes. The Greek finance minister until recently, the economist Yanis Varoufakis, commented that it took 'the mathematical expertise of a smart eight-year-old' to work out that imposing austerity on Greece, and thus diminishing further its economy and thus government revenues, was not the way to get it to pay its creditors.<sup>24</sup> Dealing with the notion that Labour's borrowing handicapped it when it came to the great bank bail-out is no more intellectually taxing.

On the other hand Labour did borrow too much, and borrowed it expensively – just think of the stupid PFI deals: £54 billion borrowed will become £300 billion repaid by the time they are paid off.<sup>25</sup> They also spent lots of the borrowing on dumb computer projects which came to nothing (which, with hindsight, look more like frauds by the computer companies<sup>26</sup>) and cheap and nasty public buildings (notably

<sup>22</sup> <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/23/labour-leadership-race-yvette-cooper-andy-burnham>>

<sup>23</sup> Presumably something along the lines suggested at <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/11606876/Yvette-Cooper-Labour-didnt-spend-too-much-before-the-crash.html>>

<sup>24</sup> See <<http://yanisvaroufakis.eu/2015/07/11/behind-germanys-refusal-to-grant-greece-debt-relief-op-ed-in-the-guardian/#more-8970>>.

<sup>25</sup> See <<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jul/05/pfi-cost-300bn>>.

<sup>26</sup> See for example David Craig and Richard Brooks, *Plundering the Public Sector* (London: Constable, 2006).

schools) which will only last 20 years, if that. Blair and Brown should have put up taxes but flunked it; and instead of curtailing public spending moved from tax and spend to borrow and spend. But this was small beer compared to the costs of bailing-out the banks.

The second point Toynbee made was that journalists are 'the toughest gig of all'. Labour politicians of an earlier generation – Healey, Jenkins, Crossman, Crossland; or Livingstone and Benn – had no fear of journalists. That being interviewed by an intellectual lightweight like Jeremy Paxman is regarded as some kind of ordeal says much about the decline in the quality of politicians. But it also reflects the difficulty suggested by the title of one of William Goldman's memoirs about Hollywood, *Which lie did I tell?*. Today's mainstream Labour politicians are not just explaining what they believe, they are also trying to remember the line generated by the most recent focus groups. If they look inauthentic it is because they are – deliberately – inauthentic.

Labour went down the wrong road when it chose John Smith as leader of the party in 1992. Smith had been on the steering committee of the Bilderberg group, one of the leading promoters of globalisation. From there we got the careerists, Blair, Brown and their initial followers, of whom Yvette Cooper is the last survivor, who were captured by the Americans and who thought the way to get into office was to copy Bill Clinton's style – New Democrats, New Labour – and his policies: financialisation and immigration. Essentially, give the bankers their heads and get immigrants in to do the shit-work the white working class won't do.

I hear people say 'Politics is getting so complicated'. Well yes and no. Marine Le Pen, leader of the French *Front National*, said a while back that the issue today wasn't left or right but nationalism or globalisation. Of course left or right is still an issue; but is the world safe in the hands of the global corporations and the 1% who own them? Obviously it isn't: they will destroy the planet. On a smaller scale everything the Labour Party used to believe in is incompatible with globalisation. So politics is simple in the first instance: see

what the global corporations want and support the opposite. You may have to hold your nose sometimes while you do so, given the company from the far right on some issues, but nevertheless I'm with Madame Le Pen and *la belle France* at that first crucial divide. And so should be the Labour Party.

### **Nixon's treason: still officially unspeakable**

**I**n 1968, as that year's presidential election came into view, President Johnson and those around him learned that Richard Nixon was doing his best to frustrate the Vietnam peace talks then underway in Paris. Nixon was afraid that a peace deal would enable the Democrats to win the presidential election. Never mind thousands of people dying a week: his chances of becoming president were at stake, ffs. So he had Anna Chennault, one of the key members of the 'China lobby', talking to the South Vietnamese delegation at the peace talks, promising them a better deal if they dragged their feet during the talks until after the election. Which they duly did. Chennault's role became known in the Johnson White House – presumably the NSA or CIA had the conference wired for sound – but Johnson did nothing, said nothing.<sup>27</sup>

And these events are still being suppressed on the Democratic side of American politics. In the LBJ library's oral history section there is an interview with Cartha DeLoach, a senior FBI man of the period, who was that agency's liaison with President Johnson, in which this exchange takes place.

*Question:* 'There was evidence, though, that Anna Chennault had been urging the South Vietnamese government to balk at coming to the table in Paris. Did you have any insight on that from--?'

*DeLoach:* Well, I did not specifically mention those facts in my previous remarks. You have brought it up and I will say that the President told me, or Walter Jenkins told

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<sup>27</sup> See Robert Parry's account at <<https://consortiumnews.com/2015/03/13/lbjs-x-file-on-nixons-treason-2/>>. As Parry commented, the threatened peace deal was the original 'October surprise'.

me, I don't know which one, that

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## **Gemstones are forever**

The first thing I wrote was a critique of an American conspiracy theory called the Skeleton Key to the Gemstone File which was circulating in pamphlet form in the UK in 1976/7.<sup>28</sup> Gemstone was the first conspiracy theory I can remember coming across and may mark the beginning of the current age of conspiracy theories. Like all good conspiracy theories, Gemstone is impossible to kill off and interest in Gemstone continues. Shawn Hamilton, for example, has an essay, 'A Skeleton Key to the Gemstone File turns 40', in which he discusses the background to its appearance.<sup>29</sup> Gemstone's claims were nonsense or uncheckable but exploring them led me into the American studies section of the university library where I began the reading which led eventually to the creation of *Lobster*.

## **Cold War 3**

Russian forces 'practised invasion of Norway, Finland, Denmark and Sweden' was the headline in the *Telegraph* on 26

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<sup>28</sup> My article is now on-line in the *International Times* archive at <[http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1978&volume=IT-Volume-4&issue=11&item=IT\\_1978-11-01\\_H-IT-Volume-4\\_Iss-11\\_012-013](http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1978&volume=IT-Volume-4&issue=11&item=IT_1978-11-01_H-IT-Volume-4_Iss-11_012-013)>.

<sup>29</sup> At <<http://theswillbucket.com/>>.

June.<sup>30</sup> The Americans are a step ahead: they have been conducting anti-Russian manoeuvres in Poland and Bulgaria and running amphibious landings in the Baltic.<sup>31</sup> There have even been reports of American troops in the Ukraine.<sup>32</sup> All of which is profoundly depressing but which might just have an upside. If the Cold War – with Russia instead of the Soviet Union – is re-established, the American arms companies, who are driving this, will have less need of the ‘terrorist threat’ their political fronts in America cobbled together in the early 1980s with Israel to justify their huge share of the US tax take; and just maybe the American presence in the Middle East and Africa will diminish.

### **Bin Laden’s bookcase**

**O**n 20 May the CIA issued what it claims was a list of the books found in the house in which Osama Bin Laden was killed.<sup>33</sup> Assuming the list to be genuine, it is a curious collection, with a couple of conspiracy theorist classics – John Coleman and Eustace Mullins – Noam Chomsky, a couple by William Blum and *The Taking of America 1-2-3* by Richard Sprague. This last is the weird one, for Sprague’s book, a copy of which I used to own before the last weeding of my shelves, is seriously obscure. Self-published in the late 1970s, this was

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<sup>30</sup> It might even be true, even though the author of the report on which the headline was based is an old cold warrior named Edward Lucas, now senior vice-president of the Centre for European Policy Analysis. CEPA is part of the current attempt by the Americans to rekindle the Cold War and thus, by amplifying the Russian ‘threat’, sell US weapons to the Central and Eastern European nations which are CEPA’s field of interest. Its website shows that its funding comes mainly from American arms corporations. See <http://www.cepa.org/content/about-cepa>.

<sup>31</sup> For details of NATO’s current operations see the excellent Rick Rozoff at <https://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.salon.com/2015/05/07/the\\_new\\_york\\_times\\_does\\_its\\_governments\\_bidding\\_heres\\_what\\_youre\\_not\\_being\\_told\\_about\\_u\\_s\\_troops\\_in\\_ukraine/](http://www.salon.com/2015/05/07/the_new_york_times_does_its_governments_bidding_heres_what_youre_not_being_told_about_u_s_troops_in_ukraine/)

<sup>33</sup> The list can be seen at <http://blackbag.gawker.com/was-osama-a-9-11-truther-and-also-a-gamepro-reader-1705770658>.

\$115 on Amazon when I checked recently.<sup>34</sup> How did Bin Laden ever come across it? And why that book about the Kennedy assassination? The answer may be that Sprague was one of the few JFK theorists to argue that there was a central body – the power control group he called it – responsible for the deaths of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King as well as JFK. As the fundamentalist Islamic mind seems to have difficulty with pluralism, let alone the byzantine complexity of the politics (and parapolitics) of the United States, Bin Laden may have found congenial the thesis that there is a central controlling group beneath the surface chaos.

## **War war**

**L**obster contributor T. J. Coles has put together an anthology of essays about American imperialism and related subjects, *Voices for Peace: Leading Scholars and Activists Examine America's Modern Wars*. As well as Messers Chomsky (who is interviewed), Blum and Pilger there are several names I haven't come across before, several short essays by editor Coles and one by former US Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney on 'truth movements' from JFK's assassination onwards.

Details at <[www.pipr.co.uk/ebooks](http://www.pipr.co.uk/ebooks)>.

## **Zersetzen**

**R**oderick Russell is one of the victims of persecution among the Western 'democracies'; in his case not by the state but by employees of a company. He calls this persecution/harassment *zersetzen*, after the Stasi name for it.<sup>35</sup> He has now made a video and you can see him and his wife – the faces which go

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<sup>34</sup> But is free on-line at <<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/JFK/ToA/ToA.html#TOC>>.

<sup>35</sup> See his <<http://zersetzen.wikispaces.com>>. This story has been appearing in *Lobster* since issue 56 but see in particular <<http://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster65/lob65-canadian-spy-agency.pdf>>.

with the story.<sup>36</sup>

Also on video, from another point on the same spectrum, is the Swede Robert Naeslund who had the misfortune to be given a brain implant in still officially-denied mind control experiments in the early 1970s.<sup>37</sup> A lecture of his – in Swedish with English subtitles – on his experiences and thinking on the subject is now on-line.<sup>38</sup> Naeslund has had no more success in persuading the political system and the major media in Sweden to deal with his story than mind control victims (or *zersetzen* victims) have had here and in the USA.

## **Kincora**

The Kincora story featured on Channel 4 News on 1 June, Colin Wallace was interviewed at length and a decent selection of photographs from his days in Northern Ireland were shown. Most of the information used and the photographs shown were in Channel 4 News' office in 1987, when that programme did several pieces on Wallace and his allegations about MI5's psy-ops projects against British politicians on the centre and left. But in 1987, with Thatcher in her pomp, C4N didn't feel able to do Wallace's I-have-told-Mrs Thatcher-all-about-Kincora story at the time.

## **NATO**

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36 At <<https://vimeo.com/125412279>> and <<https://youtu.be/xYblQGrGWpU>> (part 1) and <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_epvKEq-eo&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_epvKEq-eo&feature=youtu.be)> (part 2).

37 For some of his original story see <[http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/esp\\_sociopol\\_mindcon29.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/esp_sociopol_mindcon29.htm)>

38 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ei3zla5hS9o&list=UUvaAu9cZ7WH8uQSmAUC9Low&index=1&feature=plcp>>

If you are wondering why I am using these long URLs and not the TinyURL programme, on a couple of occasions the TinyURL programme didn't work and the abbreviated URL it produced didn't open.

**W**hat is NATO for these days? It has two obvious functions: it provides nice jobs, careers, and perks for a slice of the military of its member states; and it generates weapons sales for (mostly American) weapons corporations. Reuters reported recently that NATO member Poland was about buy the Patriot missiles: 'Poland strike deals for US Patriot missile systems that could be worth up to \$8 billion' was the subheading to the story.<sup>39</sup> To sell weapons, 'threats' need to be created and thus the recent and current amplification of the 'threat from Russia'.

## **Who owes who?**

**J**ohn Ward's blog, *The Slog*, is consistently interesting and he recently posted a very good short summary of the mire that the British economy is in.<sup>40</sup> *Inter alia* he wrote:

'When the Conservatives came to power in 2010, the national debt was £900bn. It's closer to £1.6trillion today.....80% higher in five years.

No matter what any politician tries to tell you, our current woefully negative trading account means that the UK National Debt is as unrepayable as that of Greece. The big difference being that we have far, far more to lose than they do.

There is no way further spending cuts can have any effect on that, because the welfare and health bills for government aren't the real problem. The real problem is an unreformed economy ludicrously over dependent on financial services, and a Conservative administration with almost no commercial experience in its ranks to switch to high-margin manufacturing and retraining of the workforce to make stuff.

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39 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/11553975/Poland-to-buy-US-Patriot-missiles-as-it-keeps-wary-eye-on-Russian-expansion.html>>

40 <<https://hat4uk.wordpress.com/2015/05/18/heading-for-disaster-a-failing-british-economy-an-unrepayable-debt-an-unrepentant-political-class/>>

The money saved by Osborne was a minute part of even the deficit reduction. In relation to the debt, the best analogy I can offer you is that more expenditure cuts now would be like putting one pipette into the Pacific in an effort to stem rising sea levels. The idea that austerity on the one hand is part of the cure for long-term British commercial and business failure is obscenely infantile.'

Good stuff: but how dependent upon financial services *is* the British economy? As I have been arguing in these columns since 2008/9, the contribution of the City to the UK economy is difficult to quantify precisely and usually exaggerated. The UK financial sector is apparently (best guesses) 10-12% of the economy; and about half of that is the domestic retail banking/insurance fields. What we think of as 'the City', the global financial hub, is about 6% of the GDP. Which is to say about half the size of the British manufacturing sector.

It's less that the UK economy is 'ludicrously over dependent on financial services' and more that its politicians have been persuaded that this is true and thus doing something about 'the City' is beyond their ambitions. The Green Party, on the other hand, is not intimidated by the gleaming towers of central London and in its manifesto for the 2015 general election offered a selection of proposals, central to which is idea that the creation of money (debt) should become a state function:

'Move towards creating all national currency through a national monetary authority, answerable to Parliament. The power to create money must be taken out of the hands of private banks.'<sup>41</sup>

As I mentioned in the previous issue, this is being considered by the Icelandic government.<sup>42</sup>

Debt levels are beginning to worry global capitalism's

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<sup>41</sup> The financial journalist Ian Fraser discusses these on his blog at <<http://www.ianfraser.org/greens-the-only-party-contemplating-financial-reform/>>.

<sup>42</sup> See <<http://icelandreview.com/news/2015/03/31/pm-calls-reform-icelands-monetary-system>> and <<http://www.positivemoney.org/2015/04/economists-saying-icelands-sovereign-money-proposal/>>.

managers. The McKinsey Global Institute recently reported on the rising tide of debt,<sup>43</sup> as did one of the arms of Goldman Sachs.<sup>44</sup> Many voices warning that we are heading for another great financial crunch.

Some banks (and quasi banks such as hedge funds<sup>45</sup>) with operations in London are becoming apprehensive about the regulations that are being introduced by the European Union; and they are the source of some of the impetus behind the campaign for a British exit from the EU and the talk of London becoming a city-state and detaching itself from the rest of the UK. (Other sections of the City are determined that we should stay in the EU.)

### **The post Snowden world**

On his website Duncan Campbell tells us something of a big powwow held in May by the Ditchley Foundation on the post-Snowden world:

'The audience and participants at Ditchley Park, a conference centre near Oxford, included intelligence regulators and human rights specialists from Europe and English speaking countries. They were mixed in with twelve current or past directors or senior staff of Five Eyes intelligence and security agencies, including the German BND, France's DGSE, Sweden's sigint agency FRA, Australia's ASIO and ASIS, Canada's CSIS and a former Director and a former Director of Intelligence of the CIA, as well as GCHQ and SIS.'<sup>46</sup>

One of the sessions was co-hosted by Campbell. I wonder how many of those present knew that Duncan Campbell was the Julian Assange and Edward Snowden of the late 1970s and 80s, and that the British state tried (and failed) to convict

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43 *Debt and (not much) deleveraging* at <[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/economic\\_studies/debt\\_and\\_not\\_much\\_deleveraging](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/economic_studies/debt_and_not_much_deleveraging)>

44 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11625406/The-world-is-drowning-in-debt-warns-Goldman-Sachs.html>>

45 Who are among the Tory Party's biggest financial donors. See <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/how-hedge-fund-superrich-donated-19m-to-tory-party-10024548.html>>.

46 <<http://www.duncancampbell.org/content/talking-gchq-interception-not-required>>

and imprison him.<sup>47</sup>

An article on *The Intercept* <sup>48</sup> listed UK attendees:

`Robert Hannigan, current chief of British surveillance agency GCHQ; Sir David Omand, former GCHQ chief; Sir Malcolm Rifkind, former head of the British parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee; Lord Butler of Brockwell, member of the Intelligence and Security Committee; Dr. Jamie Saunders, director of the National Cybercrime Unit at the National Crime Agency; Sir Mark Waller, Intelligence Services Commissioner; Peter Clarke, former head of Counter Terrorism Command at London's Metropolitan Police; Baroness Neville-Jones, House of Lords special representative to business on cyber security and member of the joint parliamentary committee on national security strategy; John Spellar, member of parliament; Duncan Campbell, investigative journalist; Gordon Corera, BBC security correspondent; and Professor Timothy Garton Ash, historian and author.

Only one MP, and a Labour one at that, John Spellar. But Spellar has always been 'on-side' with the Americans, NATO and the British military. Spellar was a member of the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding which, if it wasn't one of the CIA's wedges into the Labour Party, certainly looked like one.<sup>49</sup>

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47 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ABC\\_trial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ABC_trial)>

48 <<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/05/22/apple-google-spy-summit-cia-gchq-ditchley-surveillance/>>

49 See <[http://powerbase.info/index.php/Trade\\_Union\\_Committee\\_for\\_European\\_and\\_Transatlantic\\_Understanding](http://powerbase.info/index.php/Trade_Union_Committee_for_European_and_Transatlantic_Understanding)>.