

Swedish echoes

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The recent pieces in *Lobster* by Bernard Porter on the Swedish criminal justice system as it relates to Julian Assange, struck a chord with me. About ten years ago I read a book by a British soldier who claimed that he had suffered an injustice via the Swedish courts. This was *Under Fire: My Own Story* (London: W. H. Allen, 1989), an account by Captain Simon Hayward, late of Her Majesty's Life Guards, of being caught up in a drugs bust in the city of Linköping in southern Sweden.

In March of 1987 Captain Hayward was arrested when he was found to be driving a car which contained just over 50kg – value at the time approximately £500k – of cannabis. In his testimony and in his book Captain Hayward claimed it was a set-up. He had been completely unaware of the cannabis. He further said that he had been asked by his brother to drive the car from Ibiza to England but took a detour via Sweden to do some skiing. Hayward's brother soon disappeared and all of the other people involved in the smuggling were arrested and convicted. Think of that what you will.

John Gorst (Conservative MP for Hendon North), who had previously met Captain Hayward in the early 80s, made a statement in the House of Commons regarding the situation.¹ In doing so, he laid out much the same kind of things as Bernard Porter has been noting about how the Swedish justice system treats those – both the innocent and the guilty – who are caught up in it.

To me, however, the most interesting part of John Gorst's statement was this:

'Captain Hayward is not a constituent of mine, but, as a serving officer in the Life Guards who has been on

¹ Hansard 15 May 1987 vol 116 cc488-99. See <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1987/may/15/captain-simon-hayward>.

classified duty in Northern Ireland for the past two years, I do not think that he is a constituent of any hon. Member.’ (emphasis added)

This surprising titbit of information seemed to go unnoticed by The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar) who, in replying on behalf of the Government, somehow failed to provide the usual ‘refuse to confirm or deny’ blanket that is usually parroted where there is the potential identification of special forces personnel.

The final twist in the tale that really appeals to my warped sense of humour is that, during my research to compile this short note, I came across an archived article from the *Glasgow Herald* of 14 September 1989,² which states that Captain Hayward had been scheduled to appear on the Terry Wogan chat show as part of the publicity for his book! This appearance had, however, been cancelled at short notice as it was deemed too serious a topic for the ‘family friendly’ Wogan.

Captain Hayward’s book mentioned nothing at all about his service in 14 Intelligence Company. No doubt, rightly or wrongly, he felt abandoned by the British state (which he had protected by sanitising what could have been a much juicier tale). Perhaps this is the motivation behind his (alleged) involvement in leaks to the press regarding the more nefarious activities by HM undercover Forces in Northern Ireland.

² See <<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2507&dat=19890914&id=VINDAAAIBAJ&sjid=P1kMAAAAIBAJ&pg=1636,4596868&hl=en>>