

The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

My thanks to Nick Must and Garrick Alder for editorial and proof-reading assistance in this edition of Lobster.

The long URL in the footnotes problem

There is a problem with long URLs in the footnotes. When a URL runs beyond a single line our computers sometimes read the line-break as being a gap, giving us incomplete URLs which fail. I did try getting round this a while back by using the TinyURL.com program, which produces shortened URLs, but abandoned that after two it created simply didn't work. The solution – as I am sure you know already – is to copy the footnote URL, create a new tab in your web browser, paste the URL into the destination box and close the gap where the line-break seems to be. However, from now on I will add the TinyURL version of the URL in the footnote to the original long one.

Fake news? Fake something...

I have commented before on the lack of quality control – editing – which afflicts the site <globalresearch.ca> where I noticed this recently there:

‘But during this US presidential election year, largely due to WikiLeaks, social media and alternative and independent news, citizens of the world have discovered how corrosively evil in its criminality this existing crime cabal is, personified by the Clintons, Obama and their minions in Washington, Wall Street and the corporate

media. Over the last couple of months the Clinton-Podesta connection has been directly tied to a global child sex trafficking ring operating from the “life insurance” laptop of Hillary’s closest, 20-year aide-Saudi operative Huma Abedin’s husband, disgraced former congressman Anthony Weiner. But the pedophilia network has more recently expanded to include an infamous block of sinister pizza parlors and front offices in upscale Northwest Washington operating eerily close to the White House (perhaps even closer through DC’s network of underground tunnels). Enter #Pizzagate.

And through thousands of internet sleuths working together online 24/7, the crumbling, gaping cracks of this crime cabal wall have been exposed like never before, threatening to bring down the most powerful Luciferian worshipping pedophiles at the top of this planet’s demonic food chain. And this raw naked exposure of the diabolical matrix has the guilty party – the Obamas, Bushes and Clintons panicking and resorting to extreme desperate measures to hide and conceal the filthy truth of who and what they are.’¹

Did anybody at Global Research even read this before it was posted?

Brexit and all that

Most of the groups in this society who have power, the EU itself, of course, and the Euro-establishment here, are opposed to Brexit. Consequently I do not believe it will happen.² As the ‘negotiations’ proceed, a negative feedback

1 <<http://tinyurl.com/l8l2h9h>> or <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/blame-the-russian-game-and-the-information-war-mainstream-media-fake-news-vs-truth-from-alternative-news/5563534>>.

2 I voted ‘leave’ in the referendum. Never mind the destruction of Greece by the EU, described in detail in the new book by Yanis Varoufakis; a union based on the free movement of capital is incompatible with social democracy, let alone any notion of socialism.

Continues at the foot of the next page.

loop will be created: as more details emerge, criticism will increase; as the negative consequences of Brexit become clearer, public support for it will decline; as support declines, MPs who are fearful of opposing their constituents' wishes will grow emboldened and political opposition to Brexit will grow; as the political tide begins to turn, opposition from within the British economy will become more vocal. And so on.

But this doesn't make discerning what is going on politically any easier. Do PM May, David Davis *et al* know what they are doing? The evidence from the leaks after the initial meeting between the British side and the EU at the end of April suggest that they don't – or didn't then. The EU side gave their version of the talks to a German newspaper and the Berlin correspondent of the *Economist* used Twitter to convey them to the Anglosphere.³ At face value, the account is damning in the extreme. May and the EU officials were on entirely different pages, with May living in a kind of fantasy world, apparently unbriefed about the reality of what she was embarking. Worse, she appeared not to have grasped that the EU has nothing to gain by the Brexit negotiations' success and everything to gain from their failure. (In reaction to the leak Mrs May stamped her expensively-shod foot outside No 10 Downing Street.)⁴

In this context, why did PM May decide to call an early election? One hypothesis was suggested by Ivan Horrocks: May wants a large majority to have 'all the power required to take whatever steps necessary to control and contain the many negative outcomes and consequence of a hard (or

Footnote 2 continued

For Varoufakis see, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/kppabt7>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/15/adults-in-room-battle-europes-deep-establishment-yanis-varoufakis-review>>.

To Mr Varoufakis' important book I shall return.

3 See the summary of this at

<<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2017/05/01/ex-brit-shambles/>>.

4 Yanis Varoufakis would tell her, if asked, that from his experience of the EU, she has years of this – and worse – to come.

indeed any kind of) Brexit.’⁵

Another was from Kevin Ovenden:

‘. . . big business remains of the view it had overwhelmingly this time last year when it campaigned hard for Remain.

It would much prefer Brexit to mean not Brexit. That has been politically impossible in the wake of the referendum.

With a majority of just 13 MPs in the Commons, the May government has been susceptible to the threat of revolt from two minority wings...

May.... is now hoping for a big majority through which to assert some control, not to pursue some hard Brexit, but to bury the referendum and return the Tory Party in government to close alignment with the City of London and big business. That centres upon something she has been trailing for some weeks, to the alarm of the Tory Brexiteers.

It is to seek a long transitional arrangement with the EU in which all the strictures of the single market — which is not a trading relationship, but a legal enforcement of big business’s rights — are maintained, possibly renewed every year by vote of Parliament.’⁶

Ovenden’s analysis is the more plausible to me and may explain why ‘fund manager’ Jeremy Hosking is preparing to spend getting on for a £1 million of his money trying to unseat pro-Remain Labour MPs in the election, to prevent ‘backsliding on Brexit’. Hosking said ‘that new Tory MPs from traditionally Labour-held seats would help safeguard a “full, national

⁵ <<http://tinyurl.com/n3rykqr>> or <<http://www.progressivepulse.org/general-election-2017/setting-out-to-fail-and-controlling-the-consequences-the-real-purpose-of-the-2017-general-election/>>

⁶ Kevin Ovenden at <<http://tinyurl.com/lxrwhux>> or <<https://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-7509-Absurdities-abound-in-the-May-Juncker-Brexit-spat#.WRVv7VKZOi4>>.

Brexit”, rather than a “City of London Brexit”.⁷

A City of London Brexit? An interesting phrase that, for most of the City, notably the hedge funds, is deeply unhappy at the idea of Brexit. It will make their current operations in the EU more difficult if not impossible.⁸ There have been many reports of the large multinational companies in the City making plans to move some, or all of, their operations out of the UK.⁹ Since the Tory Party has always been the party of the City, can we really envisage a Conservative prime minister doing a deal with the EU which damages it?

The narrative

There is the concept of ‘the narrative’ in politics and the media. The best short account I know of this is by the American crime writer Stephen Hunter, who has a character say this:

⁷ Hosking’s open letter on this is at <<http://tinyurl.com/l2qu4yb>> or <<https://inews.co.uk/essentials/news/politics/brexit-donor-jeremy-hoskings-open-letter-funding-tory-candidates/>>.

The words of his I quote – ‘full, national Brexit’ and ‘City of London Brexit’ – are not in that open letter. They are in article in *The Observer*. See <<http://tinyurl.com/lakxu77>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/may/13/millionaire-brexit-donor-targets-remain-mps>>.

⁸ See ‘UK hedge funds need a hard-Brexit contingency plan; UK alternative managers will lose access to the AIFMD passport’ at <<http://tinyurl.com/kkh9jvb>> or <<https://www.ft.com/content/e95c560e-a4f5-11e6-8b69-02899e8bd9d1>>;

‘Hedge fund lobby groups outline Brexit wishlist’ at <<http://tinyurl.com/lur3pf6>> or <<https://www.ft.com/content/61906d54-c517-11e6-9043-7e34c07b46ef>>;

and ‘Brexit position paper – The path of least upheaval’ at <<https://www.aima.org/article/brexit-position-paper-blog.html>>.

This last is the position paper of the Alternative Investment Management Industry (AIMA) – i.e. hedge funds based in London.

For an academic analysis of the impact of Brexit on the City see ‘The City of London after Brexit’ by Simeon Djankov at <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/fmg/dp/discussionPapers/fmgdps/DP762.pdf>>.

⁹ See, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/mtloppt>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/mar/30/jp-morgan-dublin-office-building-1000-jobs-city-london>>

'The narrative is the set of assumptions the press believes in, possibly without even knowing that it believes in them. It's so powerful because it's unconscious. It's not like they get together every morning and decide "These are the lies we tell today." No, that would be too crude and honest. Rather, it's a set of casual, nonrigorous assumptions about a reality they've never really experienced that's arranged in such a way as to reinforce their best and most ideal presumptions about themselves and their importance to the system and the way that they have chosen to live their lives. It's a way of arranging things a certain way they all believe in without ever really addressing carefully. It permeates their whole culture [. . .] And the narrative is the bedrock of their culture, the keystone of their faith, the alter of their church. They don't even know they're true believers, because in theory they despise the true believer in anything.'¹⁰

A key feature of the British political 'narrative', transmitted by most of the major media, is that Labour is extravagant when in government, spending and borrowing too much. This is a subsection of the wider British political narrative. This dates back to the mid-1970s and the great inflation – caused by Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath's 'dash for growth' and the rise in the price of crude oil – which Labour inherited when they took office in 1974. That narrative says that Labour politicians don't understand the economy and can't be trusted with it. This narrative had such power over Gordon Brown and Tony Blair that they spent the period in opposition from 1994-97 endlessly endorsing it and promising not to challenge its perceived prescriptions. When he was finally Prime Minister, Gordon Brown found himself (in keeping with the narrative) portrayed as profligate and economically incompetent for massively expanding public debt to bail out the banks in 2008.

There is a neat little graph which shows that UK national

¹⁰ From pp. 183/4 of Stephen Hunter's *I, Sniper* (London: Pocket Books, 2009). Hunter is a journalist who writes thrillers. And very good some of them are, too, though perhaps not for those of a delicate left/pc disposition.

debt as a percentage of GDP in 2007 (after 10 years of Labour government) was slightly lower than it was in 1996 under Conservative PM John Major.¹¹ At the Tax Justice site Richard Murphy shows that 'The Conservatives have out-borrowed Labour for a century'.¹² But none of this dents the reinstated 'narrative' of Labour economic profligacy. This is mainly because Labour politicians have apparently never thought it a priority to challenge it; or think it impossible to do so.

Whether we like it or not, to some extent we are dependent on what is in our politicians' heads. Which is why I found myself flicking through a long interview with Tony Blair in a November 2016 edition of *Esquire* that I found in my dentist's waiting-room. Blair said:

'... in time people will understand this [radical Islam] is not a problem we have caused, it's a problem we have got caught up in....The reasons [Western intervention, in 1999, in] Kosovo worked and in Iraq and Afghanistan it was really difficult was because of the intervention of radical Islam....'¹³

Never mind the Anglo-American support during the last half century for the Saudi regime, which is the major funder of radical Islam; never mind that Al Qaeda was created and funded by the USA (with minor British assistance); and never mind that, as Mark Curtis shows,¹⁴ the British encouraged/funded radical Islam whenever their Middle Eastern colonial subjects showed signs of interest in nation and statehood.

On the subject of Iraq, Blair said:

'OK, you completely disagree with what we did in Afghanistan and Iraq, but how does removing a brutal

11 At <http://tinyurl.com/6jl7b7w> or <http://www.economicshelp.org/blog/334/uk-economy/uk-national-debt/>.

12 <http://tinyurl.com/lb7tusy> or <http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2016/12/28/the-conservatives-have-out-borrowed-labour-for-a-century/>

13 On-line at <http://tinyurl.com/lxu962r> or www.esquire.co.uk/culture/longform/a10954/tony-blair-interview/.

14 In his *Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012).

dictatorship that the people of that country most certainly did not support, giving them a United Nations-led process of election and unlimited amounts of development aid, how is that oppressing them?’

Nothing about the war, the half a million casualties,¹⁵ the refugee crisis and the destruction of Iraq’s infrastructure.

Astonishing stuff, really, even for him.

The devil rides out?

A couple of correspondents have drawn my attention to a striking interview on Youtube with a retired Dutch banker, Ronald Bernard, which is being widely disseminated on the Net. He describes some of his activities as a currency trader and then tells us that he was invited to take part in Satanic child sacrifice rituals by his elite banking buddies.¹⁶

Why don’t I believe this? Because he advises us to read the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Bernard: Yes. Much later in all those studies and discoveries I found a document, which they are claiming is bullshit of course, the Protocols of Zion. And nowadays I recommend everyone to read the whole of that incredibly boring document. Just work through it, read it through.

Interviewer: We are also talking about Zionism.

Bernard: Yes, of course. If you read the Protocols of Zion, and really study them and understand, then it is like reading the newspaper of the daily life. How from their position of ultimate power, and ultimate it has literally become, but that is only because the people don’t stand up for themselves. They don’t realize what

15 ‘About half a million people died in Iraq as a result of war-related causes between the US-led invasion in 2003 and mid-2011, an academic study suggests. University researchers from the US, Canada and Iraq based their estimate on randomised surveys of 2,000 households.’

At <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24547256>>.
16 <<https://vimeo.com/212237317>>

reality is.’¹⁷

So, forgive me, but I am not going to take seriously tales of Satanic child sacrifice rituals by our financial masters from someone who recommends the Protocols.

Laugh?

Another in the long line of recent things you couldn’t make up is the news that Alex Jones of Infowars is getting a White House press pass.¹⁸ Who’s next? David Icke?

Spooks ahoy!

And there is the delicious if faintly ridiculous story of the Cambridge University Intelligence Seminar, one of whose convenors was Professor Christopher Andrew, the British spooks’ favourite tame academic. One of the commercial sponsors – to the tune of about £1,000 – of said seminar was a new academic publishing outfit, Veruscript, whose founders are Russian.¹⁹ Is it a front for Russian intelligence? Not that anyone can demonstrate; but that didn’t prevent people – including former SIS chief Richard Dearlove – resigning from the forum because... well, just in case, I suppose.²⁰ And Professor Andrew resigned from the board of the publishing venture, despite describing the allegations of Russian influence as ridiculous.²¹

Turns out the money was coming from a Russian

17 Transcript at <<http://tinyurl.com/k7uv35v>> or <<http://theolivebranchreport.com/dutch-banker-ronald-bernard-blows-the-whistle-on-worlds-satanic-elite/>>

18 <<http://tinyurl.com/l6g37gq>> or <<http://www.alternet.org/media/infowars-gets-white-house-press-pass>>

19 <<https://www.veruscript.com/about/publishing-process>> For £1,000 Veruscript will have your academic essay edited, peer reviewed and published on-line.

20 Best account I have seen thus far is ‘Cambridge forum severs ties with publisher amid Russian spying allegations’ at <<https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/11605>>.

21 Formal response from Andrew at <<http://www.cubitt.com/pdf/Cambridge.pdf>>.

oligarch; and as is well known, they are all agents of Putin, right?

Another beautiful game

I'm not a fan of the novel as *roman à clef*. Unless you already know the material which is being used, or at the very least can identify the characters, the form doesn't work. And if you know the material, why read a fictional version of it? Nonetheless Edward Wilson's *A Very British Ending* (London: Arcadia, 2015) – brought to my attention by John Newsinger – is worth a look. Wilson has written a kind of parapolitical novel about post-war British history, turning parts of the book I co-wrote, *Smear! Wilson and the Secret State*, into a novel. Harold Wilson's career from the late 1940s onwards, the American influence on the Gaitskellites, and the attempts by the British and American spooks to manipulate British political life, climaxing in the events between 1972-76, are here.

As is one belter of a conspiracy theory which I hadn't come across before. The author has a character suggest that two of the misfortunes which befell the England football team at the 1970 World Cup were organised by the faction in the CIA which was anti-Labour. The thinking was that England not doing well at the World Cup would affect the General Election of 1970 by encouraging working-class Labour supporters, who were grumbling any way, to disaffect or simply not vote. Thus the food poisoning which prevented England's goalkeeper, Gordon Banks, from playing in the crucial game against West Germany, and the shoplifting charge laid against England's captain, Bobby Moore, before the game, were done at the behest of the CIA.

A cursory glance at Google produced the following:

'Declassified documents examined by The Sunday Times Magazine at the National Archives reveal that, with a tricky general election looming, the prime minister, Harold Wilson, had been banking on an impressive World Cup performance from England to provide a "feel-good

factor” for voters.’²²

‘Banks... is still mystified by the illness which kept him out of the quarterfinal against West Germany, which England lost 3-2 after extra-time. Banks added: “I still wonder how I got food poisoning and missed it. We all sat down to eat at the same time, we all ate the same food. Why was I the only one who ended up with severe food poisoning? I find that all very strange.”’²³

And this:

‘Just weeks before England mounted their unsuccessful defence of the World Cup in Mexico, talismanic captain Bobby Moore was arrested and charged in Colombia, accused of stealing an emerald bracelet from a hotel shop. All charges were dropped but files released two years later suggest the incident was a deliberate sting on the part of the Colombian secret services.’²⁴

Trump

Well, it’s getting complicated, isn’t it?

I saw former MI5 officer, whistle-blower and privacy campaigner Annie Machon speaking just after Donald Trump was sworn in. She was very good, confident and fluent until she was asked a question about Trump. Then she was awkward and said almost nothing, ending with ‘He may surprise us’. And no wonder she said so little. As her website (anniemachon.com) shows, she gets much attention from Russia Today and she had hoped the new president would wind down the new cold war which the American military-intelligence-industrial complex has generated. But, like many on the liberal-left, she is apparently disconcerted to find

²² <<http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/Magazine/Features/article279687.ece>>

²³ <<https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/football/1524779/englands-1966-world-cup-winning-keeper-gordon-banks-insists-he-would-not-swap-the-memories-all-locked-in-his-mind-for-the-riches-of-todays-stars/>>

²⁴ <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/competitions/champions-league/5292028/Footballs-great-conspiracy-theories.html>>

herself sharing views with some of her political opponents. One of whom, presumably, would be the Republican congressman Rep. Dana Rohrabacher of California, who was quoted as saying:

'Remember what Dwight Eisenhower told us: There is a military-industrial complex. That complex still exists and has a lot of power,' he said. 'It's everywhere, and it doesn't like how Trump is handling Russia. Over and over again, in article after article, it rears its head.'²⁵

Rohrabacher is describing the deep state whose opposition to some of Trump's apparent intentions towards America's role as the global enforcer has produced a striking burst of interest in a concept hitherto only the concern of some of the spook-wise left.²⁶ With Republicans talking about the deep state and the Democrats cheer-leading for the new cold war, we are in uncharted territory.

I have nothing to say about Trump that hasn't been said elsewhere but there are a couple of items you may have missed. Veteran investigative journalist Howard Blum²⁷ has done a very detailed analysis of the origins of the notorious Christopher Steele dossier on Trump in Russia which makes it seem less flaky than it did initially.²⁸

The first of a group of editorials in the *LA Times* on Trump

²⁵ <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/inside-trumps-fury-the-president-rages-at-leaks-setbacks-and-accusations-a7613141.html>>

²⁶ This has produced some good articles about it.

<<http://whowhatwhy.org/category/threats-to-democracy/deep-politics/>>

<<http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2017/02/term-deep-state-focus-usage-examplesdefinition-phrasebook.html>>

Peter Dale Scott on deep state history and meaning

<<http://whowhatwhy.org/2017/02/06/donald-j-trump-deep-state-part-1/>>

<<https://www.thenation.com/article/what-is-the-deep-state/>>

<<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/how-the-trump-regime-was-manufactured-by-a-war-inside-the-deep-state-f9e757071c70#.lmdzinl34>>

²⁷ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Blum>.

²⁸ <<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/03/how-the-explosive-russian-dossier-was-compiled-christopher-steele>>

was a remarkable event for a mainstream newspaper. It included this:

'What is most worrisome about Trump is Trump himself. He is a man so unpredictable, so reckless, so petulant, so full of blind self-regard, so untethered to reality that it is impossible to know where his presidency will lead or how much damage he will do to our nation. His obsession with his own fame, wealth and success, his determination to vanquish enemies real and imagined, his craving for adulation — these traits were, of course, at the very heart of his scorched-earth outsider campaign; indeed, some of them helped get him elected. But in a real presidency in which he wields unimaginable power, they are nothing short of disastrous.'²⁹

On one hand some of the American media – CNN, MSNBC, *Vanity Fair* and *GQ* for example – have become what the *GQ* columnist Keith Olbermann calls 'The Resistance'. On the other hand, some of the liberal-left, like Annie Machon, hoping that Trump might end the new cold war, are in danger of sounding like the left during the early years of the Cold War. Then the left was unable to acknowledge the reality of Stalinism. Now some of the left have been trying to denying the reality of the Trump administration in the hope that it might wind down the cold war and/or reduce America's imperial role.

Such hopes were apparently dashed when Trump was 'bounced' by the military and the neo-cons after the alleged Sarin gas attack in Syria.³⁰ In power for 100 days and the administration had already bombed two countries: American foreign policy under Trump thus far looks just like it did under anybody else in the last 40 years.

Aaronovitch

²⁹ <<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-our-dishonest-president/>>

Also worth a look is the full transcript of a rambling and unfocused interview Trump did with AP at <<https://apnews.com/c810d7de280a47e88848b0ac74690c83>>. He really is a dummy.

³⁰ On that attack the Corbett Report is amusing. See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkj9UCHO0Tc&feature=youtu.be>>.

I rarely see *The Times* these days but in the issue of 9 March David Aaronovitch had a column, 'Give thanks that you've got spies in your TV', welcoming the news that GCHQ are monitoring all our electronic devices and that 19th century notions of individual privacy are dead and buried. He concluded with this:

'It's based on a hunch that Putinisation will never happen here. Even though I think that's just what Mr Assange wants.'

Even for Mr Aaronovitch that is ridiculous.

Algorithms are go!

A friend of mine posted a link to Robert Parry's excellent The Consortium on Facebook to be told by that site that this was a 'fake news' source. Add that to the US government's Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act and we can see the totalitarian, information-management future. That act:

'.... mandates the U.S. Secretary of State to collaborate with the Secretary of Defense, Director of National Intelligence and other federal agencies to create a Global Engagement Center "to lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining United States national security interests."'³¹

The final steps will be to compel Facebook, Google *et al* to incorporate a US state-determined list of 'fake news' sites into their systems and then, using those programmes, to refuse access to sites on that list.

Holt again

³¹ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2017/01/01/the-war-against-alternative-information/>>

My attempt to kindle interest in Chauncey Holt among the JFK buffs has thus far produced no results. I have yet to see an explanation of why the buffs – and ‘buffs’ isn’t derogatory in my book; I’m a JFK buff – have not taken Holt seriously but I would guess it includes the following.

1. Timing. Holt appeared in 1991: there had already been a number of false ‘confessions’, some of the researchers had wasted a lot of time and energy on them and were leery about another confession.³²

2. Centrally, he claimed to have been one of the ‘tramps’ arrested on Dealey Plaza; but (a) he didn’t look that much like the ‘tramp’ he claimed to be and (b) shortly after he made his claim the Dallas Police opened their archives and revealed the arrest records of the three ‘tramps’, Doyle, Gender and Abrams. At first glance this seemed conclusive: so Holt was lying.³³

3. Doyle’s case has been promoted by Wim Dankbar who is widely disliked and distrusted among the research community.

Of those three points only no. 2 should be significant – hence my attempts to make sense of the ‘tramps’ issue.³⁴ But this is probably a dead horse I am flogging. Something more significant than some bloke in the UK writing an essay is going to have to happen to persuade the research community to take the late Mr Holt seriously.³⁵

32 In a ‘REPORT FROM DALLAS: THE ASK SYMPOSIUM, NOVEMBER 14-16, 1991’ by Martin Shackelford, Holt is mentioned:

‘When the shots were fired, Holt said he was behind the pergola, but declined to identify the shooters. Craig noted that Holt becomes vague about anything on which there is no statute of limitations.’

See <<http://jfk.hood.edu/Collection/Weisberg%20Subject%20Index%20Files/A%20Disk/Assassination%20Symposium%2011-91/Item%2014.pdf>>.

That conference report by Shackelford vividly conveys the breadth of the JFK researchers’ interests at that time.

33 This, indeed, was my conclusion the first time I looked at the question.

34 <<http://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster71/lob71-jfk-three-tramps.pdf>>

35 Holt’s frustration at not being taken seriously is expressed in a long unpublished letter he wrote, part review of Posner’s *Case Closed*, part account of some of his experiences at <<http://www.assassinationresearch.com/v3n2/v3n2holt.pdf>>.

The telling little details

In this great soup of information and counter-information, facts and factoids in which we are now swimming (or drowning), sometimes it's the almost incidental details which ring the bell.

Take the late Anthony Verney's story of being caught in the middle of some kind of electronic military experiment.³⁶ Yes, he had a tape-recording of a peculiar, unpleasant grinding noise which filled his house night after night. But what struck me was something else: in an attempt to get his experiences into court, as a self-employed individual he had refused to pay his taxes, assuming the then Inland Revenue would prosecute him. But the Revenue did nothing. Oh, really? If you are self-employed in the UK, I invite you to try this with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs these days.

Which brings me to Kieron Lee Perrin. Perrin is a targeted individual (TI). There are quite a few of them on the Internet and I've met some, starting in 1989 with the late Harlan Girard. Some are fantasists; some are not. Perrin is not. He has a blog on which are scans which show some things – let's just call them foreign bodies – in his head.³⁷ But what rang my bell as much as the scans is the fact that he's been living on invalidity benefits for eight years. Even though he cannot persuade the medical people to do anything about his implants, the state is apparently not insisting that he seek work. Next time you sign on, try the TI line with the Department for Work and Pensions and see how far that gets

³⁶ Armen Victorian's account of this is at
<http://www.whale.to/b/victorian_ch_7.htm>.

³⁷ <<https://chroniclesofamindcontroltarget.blogspot.co.uk/>>

you.³⁸ As evidence of something weird going on this is as convincing as the scans and the letter on his blog from his dentist attesting to the presence of the foreign bodies.³⁹

After Perrin, have a look at Katherine Horton PhD, another apparent TI, who actually got a legal case against MI6, GCHQ *et al*, to court. She didn't win but the transcripts of the proceedings are on-line and illustrate the difficulties such cases present, even with what appears to me to be a sympathetic (at least not prejudiced) judge.

Horton has a PhD in physics and worked at the CERN facility in Switzerland.⁴⁰

By their redactions shall ye know them

In the 45 page essay on his case and matters relating to Kincora which Colin Wallace submitted to the Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) inquiry, only two sections were redacted before the material was placed on the HIA site. They are in italics below.

Colin Wallace: As the Inquiry is aware, some of the allegations made by [Robin] Bryans, and which the Sussex Police were presumably aware of from the documents Bryans circulated, involved some of the most prominent people in the country at that time.

In particular, he claimed that a former British ambassador to the Irish Republic had sexually abused boys from a Dublin school. The ambassador, he claimed, also had a lengthy

³⁸ In an e-mail he wrote to me: 'the DWP also wrote to my GP explaining that he would never have to present sick notes for me again. They've also declined to interview me again even though I've requested they do so on a couple more occasions since. I didn't even have to fill forms in and was asked never to approach them with my case again - they really wanted nothing to do with it. Yet, yes, the medical establishments official line is still that there are no abnormalities showing on my scans!?'

³⁹ Perrin can be seen giving talk on his experiences at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMMY2-Y9vvo>>. His section starts at 15 minutes into the video.

⁴⁰ <<https://www.gangstalking.eu/court/KatherineHorton.htm>>

homosexual relationship with Peter Montgomery's brother, and later, as Chairman of the Travellers Club in London, he had introduced Peter Montgomery and his brother, Anthony Blunt and Peter Hayman to the Club. Peter Hayman, is now known to have been a serial paedophile. From this we can see that not only were there links between McGrath, Knox Cunningham and Peter Montgomery, but also that Cunningham and Montgomery were linked with homosexual activities involving prominent people in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and London.

When Fred Holroyd and I interviewed Robin Bryans he told us about a Belfast artist/painter called Sidney Smith who was allegedly a close friend of Sir Knox Cunningham and who was one of a group of paedophiles who frequented the Ormeau Park area of the city. Bryans had apparently known Mrs Smith's family for years and she had admitted to him that her husband had sexually abused their daughter when she was a child. According to Bryans, the Smith family moved from Belfast to London where Smith became an active member of a paedophile group made up of very well known personalities. He also said that Mrs Smith had told him about some of the very famous people who visited their home in London prior to the break-up of their marriage. I am not going to refer in this submission to some of the names mentioned to me by Bryans because the Inquiry is already aware of who they are and I have no way of knowing if the allegations made by Bryans are correct.

In his book, *Let The Petals Fall* (published in July 1993) he [Bryans] says:

'The Jewish artist best-known to Knox Cunningham was Sidney Smith of Belfast who took part for years in a child sex abuse ring on both sides of the Border. John McKeague never faced prosecution for his sexual activities with consenting teenager boys and British Intelligence monitored every devious move made by Knox Cunningham to cover up the criminal tracks of fellow Orangemen. Knox never hesitated to flex his legal muscles for illegal purposes as a Queen's Counsel. Knox could also cite chapter and verse about Sidney Smith's similar immunity from prosecution over his years of sex with unconsenting

children as young as three years. Smith's protection by famous people applied not only on both sides of the Border in Ireland but on both sides of the Atlantic.'

Although the sexual abuse allegations relating to Sidney Smith pre-date the Kincora sexual abuse allegations, the links between McGrath, Knox Cunningham, and Peter Montgomery and others make them relevant to the HIA Inquiry.

The second redacted section is on pp. 49/50 and concerns a British agent – i.e. a civilian volunteer, not an intelligence officer – in Northern Ireland, James Miller.

Miller gave evidence to the Saville Inquiry but was identified only as 'Observer B'. His MI5 handler 'Julian' described him as 'perfectly reliable and truthful' and 'an extremely brave fellow'. Julian also reported in that in 1971, when Miller infiltrated Tara, an extract from an intelligence assessment of him described him as 'very tough, physically and mentally. A most trustworthy and enthusiastic agent, whose enthusiasm sometimes leads to incaution'.

'Julian' told the Saville Inquiry that a report on Miller in November 1972 described him as 'a reliable agent whose reports are essentially detailed, providing, I would think, valuable "op int" [operational intelligence] for the security forces'. The fact that his reports are described as 'essentially detailed' is important as the more detail an agent gives the easier it is to check its reliability.

So there is the HIA strategy laid bare. Three witnesses, Colin Wallace, James Miller and Roy Garland, said that the security services knew about McGrath's abuse of the boys in his care and did nothing. The inquiry's report claims that Wallace fabricated his 1974 memorandum which shows this; Roy Garland is falsely described in the report as a sex partner of McGrath and is thus (sort of) discredited;⁴¹ and material showing Miller's reliability as a British agent in Northern Ireland is redacted. Also suppressed are suggestions that the McGrath trail leads out into the wider homosexual subculture in Northern Ireland among the Protestant social elite.

⁴¹ These are discussed in 'Colin Wallace and the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry' in this issue.

Grauniadia

Well, the *Guardian* has run another story about Julian Assange, this time attributing to him things he hasn't said.⁴² More grist to the mill for those who suspect the *Guardian* of being an American asset. Or is it just sloppy work at the type-face?

Israeli influence in British politics

The readers of this journal will hardly have been surprised by the revelations by Al Jazeera about Israeli operations within the UK.⁴³ The best summary of the affair I saw was by Daniel Margrain,⁴⁴ who concluded:

'Politically, the purpose of the misuse of antisemitism by Zionists is to quash all legitimate criticisms of Israel, its oppression of the Palestinian people and, by extension, Muslim/Arab nationalist aspirations more generally. The media attacks on Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone and others are political and represent a determined effort by the Israel lobby to make Britain's Labour Party "a safe pair of hands" for Israel and Zionism.'

Thus far two things have struck me. The first is the paucity of comment by the mainstream printed and broadcast media on the story. For most of the media the story seemed – to quote Billy Connolly – to be as welcome as a fart in a space suit.⁴⁵ The second is the fact that the money for these UK operations comes from the United States: without the billions of dollars of

42 <<https://theintercept.com/2016/12/29/the-guardians-summary-of-julian-assanges-interview-went-viral-and-was-completely-false/>>.

43 Jonathan Cook is worth reading on this and links to the four Al Jazeera reports are on his site at <<http://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/2017-01-08/how-many-british-mps-are-working-for-israel/>>.

44 <<https://cultureandpolitics.org/2017/01/11/what-shai-masot-richard-brooks-reveal-about-uk-israel-relations/>>

45 The clip of him saying this is on Youtube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DcDzJmW6Qg>>. Watch as the very stoned Angie Dickinson eventually understands what he has said.

US subsidies, Israel, in its present form, would not exist.⁴⁶ American tax dollars are being used to manipulate British political life.

The coming inquiry by a Parliamentary committee may be interesting.⁴⁷

Hacking American politics

In the context of the alleged Russian hacking of the presidential election, the American website Politico ran a story about the large operation run in the United States by MI6 during WW2. Under the light cover of British Security Co-ordination, with the permission of the then President Roosevelt, they attacked the isolationist opposition to America's entry into the war.⁴⁸ Pity the article didn't credit Thomas Mahl, the man who originally researched the story.⁴⁹

Virtually the last connection to the old isolationist wing of the Republican Party is former Nixon speechwriter Pat Buchanan. In one of his recent columns, about the Putin-hacked-the-election story, he wrote the following:⁵⁰

'The top officials of the CIA and Carl Gershman, president of the National Endowment for Democracy, should be called to testify under oath. Were they behind anti-Putin demonstrations during the Russian elections of 2011?

Did the CIA or NED have a role in the "color-coded" revolutions to dump over pro-Russian governments in Moscow's "near abroad"?

If Russia did intrude in our election, was it payback

46 Details at <<http://www.wrmea.org/congress-u.s.-aid-to-israel/u.s.-financial-aid-to-israel-figures-facts-and-impact.html>>.

47 See <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4167320/MPs-inquiry-Israeli-diplomat-plot-scandal.html>>.

48 <<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/01/when-a-foreign-government-interfered-in-a-us-election-to-reelect-fdr-214634>>

49 Thomas E. Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States 1939-44* (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey's, 1999)

50 <<http://buchanan.org/blog/real-saboteurs-trump-foreign-policy-126270>>

for our intrusions to bring about regime change in its neighborhood?

What role did the CIA, the NED and John McCain play in the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Ukraine in 2014? McCain was seen cheering on the crowds in Independence Square in Kiev.'

The fact that William Blum or John Pilger might have written those paragraphs, and that Pat Buchanan is a Trump fan (so far, any way), is a clue as to the interesting direction American foreign policy may take – if Trump survives in office long enough to have 'a foreign policy'.

CIA on-line

About 12 million pages of CIA files have recently been put on-line.⁵¹ The collection can be searched in 8 languages, one of them Russian. This is a both a striking demonstration of openness by the CIA – a complex beast is the Agency – and, I presume, a guarantee that the collection has been very carefully weeded. No doubt over the next few months researchers will be reporting what is there and – more interestingly – what isn't.

No kidding

Let me add my voice to the chorus of guffaws coming from the left at all this talk of 'post truth politics'.⁵² When did we have truth politics? Unless it serves some political purpose, politicians generally aren't interested in the truth. In this country and particularly in America, the truth and politics are only congruous by accident.

The recent Republican campaign against Hillary Clinton was just more of the same. Similar – and more serious –

51 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/>>

52 Just one example: <<http://www.salon.com/2016/11/25/a-short-history-of-fake-news-conservatives-believed-all-sorts-of-crap-long-before-facebook/>>.

charges were made against Bill Clinton.

That Clinton was a communist. In fact there are reasonably good reports that he was recruited by the CIA, while a Rhodes Scholar in Oxford, to report on American students in the UK who opposed the Vietnam War.⁵³

That Clinton was corrupt. The Whitewater scandal: never proven, despite 50 million dollars spent by the Republicans investigating it.

That Clinton allowed the cocaine trade with South America to use airports in Arkansas while he was governor of the state. This is unproven; but if he was doing it he might claim to have been doing his patriotic duty; that the drug-running operation had been sanctioned by the US attorney general so long as the traffickers contributed to the war against Nicaragua. And given CIA involvement in this cocaine traffic, Clinton's earlier connection with the Agency while a student may be relevant.

That Clinton's people killed those who might embarrass them. Clinton death lists were circulated: one I remember ran to more than 20 names. On the Net such lists now go as high as 90.⁵⁴

These conspiracy theories about Clinton were created and distributed by the Republican right and its media. The creators were professionals, paid to do the job. Their output was then circulated using the print/broadcasting media of the day by credulous believers. We have an insider's account of these operations by a member of one of them, David Brock.⁵⁵ These psy-ops were being tracked for the Clinton White House by Sydney Blumenthal.⁵⁶ Hillary Clinton referred to them when she spoke of a 'vast right-wing conspiracy' against her

53 See, for example, <http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/hardtruth/clinton_spied_students.htm>.

54 See, for example, <<http://www.freewebs.com/jeffhead/liberty/liberty/bdycount.txt>>.

55 David Brock, *Blinded by the Right* (New York: Three Rivers Press [Random House], 2002)

56 Who got his grounding in Republican political warfare while writing his book *The Rise of the Counter Establishment* (New York: Times Books, 1986). Like Brock's book, this is an essential piece of the picture. Blumenthal subsequently wrote up the story of these psy-ops in his *The Clinton Wars* (London, Viking [Penguin], 2003).

husband.⁵⁷

This was the first occasion in the post-war era when one of the major political parties in the US used conspiracy theories against a sitting president. And it failed: Clinton was re-elected.

More or less the same people did the same thing to Obama: Obama is a Muslim; Obama is a communist; Obama is a homosexual; Obama is not an American. And that failed too. The difference with the Obama version was the prominent role of the Net. I Googled 'Obama is a Muslim' in 2014 and got 224 million hits. After the recent American presidential election, it is down to 55 million.

The anti-Clinton and anti-Obama conspiracy theories reflect a climate on the American Right in which the truth is no longer even a consideration. An anonymous member of George Bush Jr's regime – probably Karl Rove – spoke in 2004 about 'the reality-based community' and how the world wasn't like that any more. America was the sole superpower, he said, and could make its own reality. This is what the Republican Right and their corporate backers have been trying to do in domestic politics: create their own version of reality. The Trump campaign was unusual only in having the presidential candidate *openly* espousing some of the conspiracy theories.

Trump

If you are curious about Trump, John K Wilson's *Trump unveiled: exposing the bigoted billionaire* is the place to start.⁵⁸ Wilson has apparently read everything about or by Donald Trump and has produced both a critical biography and a collection of the jaw-dropping nonsense the man has spoken over the years. Wilson shows in great detail that today's Trump is the same psychopath he was 40, 50 years ago. He

⁵⁷ In this country the *Sunday Telegraph* recycled much of this from their then American correspondent Ambrose Evans-Pritchard.

⁵⁸ O/R Books, London and New York, 2016, 245 pages, p/b.
<www.orbooks.com>

always was an ignorant, unselfconscious *schmuck* – but a rich one, with lawyers to intimidate people.⁵⁹ He is also – the author’s central thesis – the narcissist’s narcissist. Initially Trump’s idiocies are amusing but rapidly become tiresome, like being stuck on a plane next to a garrulous bore. But if you want the details of who he is, his business dealings and his opinions, here they are.

How any of this will play out, your guess is as good as mine;⁶⁰ but the fact that three serving or former senior Goldman Sachs employees are joining the Trump administration might be a clue.⁶¹ Matt Taibbi commented:

‘Goldman deserves its villainous reputation. The bank symbolizes all the worst aspects of the modern “financialized” economy. The crash era was the ultimate example.

Banks like Goldman mostly didn’t create anything of value during this time. Mostly what they did was engineer new ways to create credit that led to millions of people buying homes they couldn’t afford, creating the mother of all financial bubbles.

When it all went bust, as it necessarily had to, they scrambled by hook or crook to dump the damage on other people. Clients ate their losses and they ran weeping to the taxpayer for rescue – Goldman got \$12.9 billion alone just from the AIG bailout, which of course was engineered by former Goldman chief Hank Paulson.

⁵⁹ Some of the details are at <<http://www.salon.com/2016/12/18/donald-trumps-questionable-intelligence-all-those-false-claims-about-his-academic-record-and-derision-of-others-bespeak-profound-insecurity/>>.

⁶⁰ The US political system has a low tolerance of mavericks and if Trump looks like endangering the interests of the major powers within US society, especially the military-intelligence-industrial complex, which has now another highly profitable Cold War going, he will be got rid of. My guess is that another Lee Harvey Oswald is being prepared to carry the can for Trump’s assassination, just in case.

⁶¹ Goldman Sach’s no. 2, Gary Cohn, will be director of the National Economic Council and an assistant to the President for economic policy; former Goldman partner and mortgage trader, Steven Mnuchin, will be Secretary of Treasury; and Steve Bannon, Trump’s chief strategist, is a former Goldman banker.

In the middle of all of this, people like Blankfein and Cohn paid themselves record amounts of compensation. They are scum, and it's absolutely fitting that so many of them will end up serving the Trump administration.'⁶²

Chilcot

Like most people, I haven't read Sir John Chilcot's report. My impression from the extensive press accounts of it was that Chilcot told us, in great detail, what we had known almost from the outset. But there was something in his statement to the media on 6 July, introducing the report, which is worthy of note. He said:

'The UK's relationship with the US has proved strong enough over time to bear the weight of honest disagreement. It does not require unconditional support where our interests or judgements differ.'⁶³

Chilcot has been around the upper reaches of the British state for over 30 years – a classic mandarin – and had I been at that press conference I would have tried to ask him to name one occasion, in this country's foreign policy dealings in the past 30 years, when 'honest disagreement' was expressed by the UK and tolerated by the US.

An apology...to Joel Whitney. In my review of his book *Finks*, in the previous issue, I wrote that he had given the wrong page reference in Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes*. He hadn't: he was using the paperback edition and I the hardback, with different pagination. This has now been corrected.

62 <<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/the-vampire-squid-occupies-trumps-white-house-w456225>>

63 <<http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/247010/2016-09-06-sir-john-chilcots-public-statement.pdf>>

The boys done well

Lobster contributor for many years, Simon Matthews, has a book out: *Psychedelic Celluloid: British pop music in film and TV 1965-74* (Oldcastle Books).⁶⁴ The book's genesis, he tells us, lies in the two essays he wrote in these columns on so-called pirate radio.

Another regular contributor, Anthony Frewin, is the co-author of the script of a new feature film, *Anthropoid*.⁶⁵

Oh, really?

I watch our politicians and, even though I know that as politicians they're interested in power first and the truth second (or fifth, or not at all⁶⁶), and have been conditioned to listen to polls and focus groups for their professed views, I find myself unable to suppress the thought: I wonder what they are really thinking? Take Margaret Thatcher: what did she really think she was doing when she fronted the creation of the grossly unequal society we now have? Frank Field MP gave us a striking insight into her thinking recently. Just after she retired she was asked,

"What was your greatest disappointment in government?"

Back shot Mrs T: "I cut taxes because I thought we would get a giving society. And we haven't."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See <<http://www.oldcastlebooks.co.uk/psycell>>. It is reviewed in *The Independent* at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/psychedelic-celluloid-british-pop-music-in-film-and-tv-1965-1974-simon-matthews-sixties-john-lennon-a7357786.html>>.

⁶⁵ *Anthropoid* is on IMDB at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4190530/?ref_=nv_sr_1>. Frewin's IMDB entry is at <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0294522/>>.

⁶⁶ The obvious current examples are a British prime minister who is a 'remainer' apparently leading the charge towards Brexit, with an Opposition leader, who is a 'leaver', professing the importance of remaining.

⁶⁷ The opening lines of a lecture given by Frank Field MP at the Charity Commission on 16 September 2016. Text is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461674/frankfield160915.pdf>.

If we take this seriously, she apparently thought charitable giving would replace some of the state's functions. This is consistent with the anti-state prejudices of the group with which she was allied in the 1970s – Keith Joseph, Alfred Sherman, the Institute for Economic Affairs *et al.* Another interpretation would be that, having decided to cut taxes to win elections, she rationalised the reduction in state spending with the thought. 'Oh, well, people will give more to charity.' Either way, it shows that Mrs T had no understanding of the society in which she lived and the great tide of possessive individualism⁶⁸ she was encouraging. But we knew that already, I guess.

Pathologising the conspirasphere

On Google News' main UK site on 7 December the following two headlines were next to each other for a few hours.

'HSBC among three banks fined £413m for Euribor rigging'

'Pfizer fined record £84.2m for overcharging NHS 2600%'

On 20 December these two were next to each other.

'Ex-Deutsche Bank Russia Trader Accused of Stock Manipulation'

'Italy court acquits four former JPMorgan execs in Parmalat case'

I expect there would be similar stories every week if I kept track. They are further illustrations that, as the aftermath of the crash of 2007-8 has shown in great detail, criminal conspiracy is a normal business method among the world's corporations. I googled 'Banks + fined' and got 22 million hits. There is so much of this it has almost become background noise. Yet nothing has changed in the way the major media perceive 'conspiracy'. Those who talk or write about it remain 'conspiracy theorists,' with all pejorative connotations intact.

68 The term is C. B. Macpherson's. See <<https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/download/14155/4931>>.

Another group of psychologists has been studying such 'conspiracy theorists'. Although the study is behind a paywall, the abstract is available. To wit:

'Across three studies, we examined the role of self-evaluation in predicting conspiracy beliefs. Previous research linked the endorsement of conspiracy theories to low self-esteem. We propose that conspiracy theories should rather be appealing to individuals with exaggerated feelings of self-love, such as narcissists, due to their paranoid tendencies. In Study 1, general conspiracist beliefs were predicted by high individual narcissism but low self-esteem. Study 2 demonstrated that these effects were differentially mediated by paranoid thoughts, and independent of the effects of collective narcissism. Individual narcissism predicted generalized conspiracist beliefs, regardless of the conspiracy theories implicating in-group or out-group members, while collective narcissism predicted belief in out-group but not in-group conspiracies. Study 3 replicated the effects of individual narcissism and self-esteem on the endorsement of various specific conspiracy theories and demonstrated that the negative effect of self-esteem was largely accounted for by the general negativity toward humans associated with low self-esteem.'⁶⁹

Puzzled? Me, too.

Notes from the Borderland

Dr Larry O'Hara sent me a copy of the latest issue (no. 11) of his magazine, *Notes from the Borderland* (NFB). This is 80 A-4 pages, with the text in three columns per page. So that's about 60,000 words, maybe more. The following description is from the NFB Website <<http://www.borderland.co.uk>>:

⁶⁹ 'Does Self-Love or Self-Hate Predict Conspiracy Beliefs? Narcissism, Self-Esteem, and the Endorsement of Conspiracy Theories'. The abstract is at <<http://spp.sagepub.com/content/7/2/157.abstract>>.

'Welcome to Britain's premier parapolitical investigative magazine *Notes from the Borderland (NFB)*. We have been producing the magazine since 1997 but some published material before then.

Our political perspective is Left/Green, but we welcome truth-tellers, whatever their affiliation. Research interests include the secret state (MI5/MI6/Special Branch, now SO15) & their assets, including those in the media. We are resolutely anti-fascist, and to that end investigate the far right and state infiltration of various milieus. In a shallow age where many TV programmes and print/internet stories are spoon-fed to servile journalists/bloggers by shadowy interests, *NFB* stands out as genuine investigative research.'

Although the Website is basically a come-on for the hard copy, you will get a sense there of what NFB is about, as well as a contents list for this current issue.

Much of this was interesting to me. For one thing, NFB has continued doing what *Lobster* used to do: surveying published material on the intelligence and security services and producing synopses of it. There is a long essay about Lockerbie; and, while I am no expert on this subject, I didn't see anything that surprised me. The best piece is a 15-page account by O'Hara of the assault on Julian Assange by some of the *Guardian's* journalists.⁷⁰ But the material is all worthwhile – even the page in which Robin Whittaker presents Chapman Pincher's case that Roger Hollis was a Soviet agent. I don't agree with the thesis but it is interesting to meet it again.

On the down side, there's a jokey tone to some of it I find irritating (not least because the jokes aren't funny or clever). The front cover, for example, has the famous picture of Obama, Hillary Clinton and assorted military and spooks apparently watching the live feed of the American assault on

⁷⁰ The way the *Guardian* and the *London Review of Books* trashed Assange suggests that both are assets of the United States. In the *Guardian's* case, the way it recently handled comments by Craig Murray on the Russia-hacked-the-presidential-election claims is further evidence. See his 'The CIA's Absence of Conviction', 11 December 2016 at <www.craigmurray.org.uk>.

the compound in which Osama Bin Laden was living. Coming from the mouth of one anonymous figure are the words, 'ASSANGE HAS EVADED THE DRONE STRIKE MR PRESIDENT. From another, 'THAT'S DONE IT. WE HAVE TO SEND IN NICK DAVIES.' (Caps in the original.)

In contrast, in their introduction to a piece continuing NFB's coverage of the politics of anti-fascism (*Searchlight* et al),⁷¹ authors Heidi Svenson and Dr Paul Stott are stern:

'The current article is not stand alone, we constantly refer to the previous one. If that inconveniences, tough: this magazine is for grown-ups, not people who get facts from You-Tube [sic] and Wikipedia.'

For my taste the magazine needs more rigorous editing to improve the punctuation, reduce or remove the speculation and jokey asides and tighten-up the writing. For example, what does this, from the opening paragraph of the introduction quoted above, actually mean?

'We have been producing the magazine since 1997 but some published material before then.'

Does the 'some' refer to material or does it mean 'some of us'?

There are also a couple of simple technical changes I would make. If you've got lots of source notes (and I like notes), make them legible. In the O'Hara piece on Assange, to accommodate two not funny illustrations, the notes are tiny. And why are the footnote numbers in the text in bold?

Finally: while keeping this going is an impressive achievement, why produce a hard copy at all? Put on-line with free access, the material would reach infinitely more people than the relative few who are going to spend £4.75 on a hard copy and would save all concerned in the magazine's production and distribution a deal of work.

Megalomania

Thierry Meyssan, of Voltaire Net, has produced some

⁷¹ O'Hara has been pursuing this since his essays in *Lobster* in the early 1990s.

interesting but never wholly convincing material over the years. I always read what he's writing when I come across it, but rarely if ever cite it. In a recent piece,⁷² as well as writing about NATO plans to assassinate him, which drove him into exile – NATO is killing its critics? There's a long list! – he writes:

'It so happens that I opened the debate on 9/11 to the world.....Cass Sunstein (husband of US ambassador to the UNO, Samantha Power) wrote a mémoire with Adrian Vermeule for the universities of Chicago and Harvard concerning the struggle against "conspiracy theories" - the name they gave to the movement I had initiated.'

This is nonsense. While Meyssan was a significant figure in the early days of 9/11 theorising,⁷³ he hardly 'opened the debate on 9/11 to the world'. There was a torrent of sceptical comment on-line immediately after the event.⁷⁴ The debate was 'opened to the world' by the Net. As for him creating a movement called 'conspiracy theories'....

The big blind spot

I like George Monbiot's writing. His column is one of the few must-reads in the *Guardian* these days. And I agree with most of it. But he has a big blind spot, one that is common with the British greens and left. This was illustrated in his column of 6 December, 'No country with a McDonald's can remain a democracy'.⁷⁵

'....under the onslaught of the placeless, transnational capital that McDonald's exemplifies, democracy as a living system withers and dies. The old forms and forums still exist – parliaments and congresses remain standing

72 'The NATO campaign against freedom of expression' at <<http://www.voltairenet.org/article194344.html>>.

73 He published the first (not very good) book on the subject, *9/11 the Big Lie*, in 2002.

74 I began saving this material but gave up when it became clear that there was going to be far too much to handle. I've still got it on a disc somewhere.

75 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/06/mcdonalds-democracy-corporate-globalisation-trump-le-pen-farage>>

– but the power they once contained seeps away, re-emerging where we can no longer reach it.

The political power that should belong to us has flitted into confidential meetings with the lobbyists and donors who establish the limits of debate and action. It has slipped into the diktats of the IMF and the European Central Bank, which respond not to the people but to the financial sector. It has been transported, under armed guard, into the icy fastness of Davos...'

And so on. Of course, it's all true. And does Monbiot have a solution? He does. This is his second last paragraph and his answer is the last word in it.

'One of the answers to Trump, Putin, Orbán, Erdogan, Salvini, Duterte, Le Pen, Farage and the politics they represent is to rescue democracy from transnational corporations. It is to defend the crucial political unit that is under assault by banks, monopolies and chainstores: community.'

Community? Whatever that means! Can you think of anything more vague or more useless?

Surely 'the crucial political unit that is under assault' is the nation state. That is the only potentially serious opposition to the multinational corporations. The EU won't do it: it's been bought by the corporations, as its behaviour towards Greece since 2008 has demonstrated. And yes, an activist nation state will require a change in thinking of the politicians who have all been persuaded that it is outmoded, useless and powerless (or, for some on the libertarian right and the Marxist left, a source of evil and tyranny).

This wasn't how things looked before the Reagan and Thatcher-led counterrevolution. Yes, the world has changed since then. But if it came to a serious conflict between a major multinational and the UK government, who would win? If the UK government – say – banned the import of products for Amazon into the UK until it registered here for taxation purposes, what could Amazon actually do? It could complain to the WTO; and then?

The nation state is our best, perhaps our only hope. The problem for Monbiot (and many of the greens and left) is that for them the word 'nation' is contaminated by its association with the political right and nationalism and is thus unusable.⁷⁶ Somehow he and they have to find a way round or through this. Because as the chaos created by globalisation grows, we're going to get nationalism whether we like it or not and a left/green version would be infinitely preferable to that offered by the populist right.

Credit where credit is due

'For years, violent Islamist groups were allowed to settle in Britain, using the country as a base to carry out attacks abroad. This was tolerated in the belief that they would not bomb the country where they lived and that, as long as they are here, the security service would be able to infiltrate them. At the same time mosque after mosque was taken over through intimidation by the fundamentalists. Police and others in authority refused pleas from moderate Muslims with the excuse that they did not want to interfere.'

Thus the opening paragraph by Kim Sengupta in his review of the Mark Curtis book, *Secret Affairs*.⁷⁷

If that sounds familiar, it's because it was the thesis of Melanie Phillips – 'Mad Mel' to many on the left – in many articles in the early 2000s, culminating in her 2006 book *Londonistan* (London: Gibson Square).

⁷⁶ I wrote about political contamination in 'Contamination, the Labour Party, nationalism and the Blairites' in *Lobster* 33.

⁷⁷ <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/secret-affairs-by-mark-curtis-2038691.html>>