

The View from the Bridge

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Thanks to Nick Must and Garrick Alder for editorial and proof-reading help.

In the air

I am not on Facebook and have never visited it except by accident. (My brother calls me a Facebook refusenik.) But two *billion* other people are – including most of those reading this column, I expect. Which means that two billion people are providing data about their lives, friends, tastes and opinions to an unaccountable organisation which is doing who-knows-what with it (mostly selling us things, of course, including US presidential candidates).¹

Julian Assange said of Facebook:

'Facebook in particular is the most appalling spying machine that has ever been invented. Here we have the world's most comprehensive database about people, their relationships, their names, their addresses, their locations and the communications with each other, their relatives, all sitting within the United States, all accessible to U.S. intelligence.'²

A sense of what Facebook and the other mega-corporations now running the Internet are doing and are capable of is given in a very good essay by John Lanchester, 'You are the product', in a recent issue of the *London Review of*

¹ See, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/ydaa2pyz>> or <<https://www.facebook.com/bbcnewsnight/videos/10154695768566200/>>. Or check the sources in note 73 below.

Nick Must commented: Carole Cadwalladr, the journalist who made this piece, says that military 'hearts and minds' operations in countries like Afghanistan are purely psychological operations. She is somewhat mistaken here, as the original hearts and minds process was established by the SAS in conflicts such as those in Oman and Borneo. This included sending medics to treat the local populations with antibiotics, etc, that were not available to the 'enemy'. So, there was more of a physical-action aspect to a 'hearts and minds' campaign than Ms Cadwalladr seems to understand.

² This quote is originally from an interview he gave to Russia Today in 2011 (see <<https://www.rt.com/news/wikileaks-revelations-assange-interview/>>) but it has been more recently referred to this summer in a profile of him, his activities, Trump and the Russia connections in *The New Yorker* at <<http://tinyurl.com/y7pygthg>> or <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/08/21/julian-assange-a-man-without-a-country?mbid=synd_digg>. This *New Yorker* article is very good (but very long – more than 20,000 words) and strikingly sympathetic when compared to other articles on Assange in the major media.

Books.³ There is also the prospect of Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg running as a Democratic presidential candidate for 2020.⁴ With his immense personal wealth and Facebook to promote him, who would bet against him becoming the candidate?

Grauniadia

As the *Guardian* slides slowly down the pan there have been odd signs of intelligent life there beyond the economics pages. There was Owen Jones on the prospect that the British (secret) state might not take too kindly to a Corbyn-led Labour government. Invoking Chris Mullins' *A Very British Coup* and Peter Wright in a jumbled account of anti-Wilson coup talk and planning, which conflated events in the 1960s and 70s, Jones prefaced it all with the obligatory 'What, me paranoid?' reference:

'You are probably imagining me hunched over my computer with a tinfoil hat. So consider this: there is a precedent for conspiracies against an elected British government, it is not so long ago, and it was waged against an administration that represented a significantly smaller threat to the existing order than that offered by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour.'⁵

As usual, Colin Wallace, by far the most significant source on all this, was not mentioned.

In the midst of a long essay on the innocence of middle-class white Americans (like herself),⁶ Suzy Hansen noted:

'The sheer number of international interventions the US launched in those decades is astonishing, especially those during years [post 1945] when American power was considered comparatively innocent. There were the successful assassinations: Patrice Lumumba, prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 1961; General Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, also in 1961; Ngo Dinh Diem, president of South Vietnam, in 1963. There were the unsuccessful assassinations: Castro,

³ <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v39/n16/john-lanchester/you-are-the-product>>. Lanchester may think of himself primarily as a novelist but what he's really good at is taking big complex issues, like this one, and making them intelligible. His book on the banking crisis a decade ago, for example, *Whoops! Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (Penguin, 2010), was very good indeed.

An example of Google suppressing information it didn't like is given at <<https://gizmodo.com/yes-google-uses-its-power-to-quash-ideas-it-doesn-t-li-1798646437>>.

⁴ See for example <<http://tinyurl.com/yb7bxbgn>> or <<https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/15/mark-zuckerberg-could-be-running-for-president-in-2020.html>>

⁵ <<http://tinyurl.com/y7leh23v>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/09/prime-minister-corbyn-very-british-coup-establishment-backlash>>

⁶ <<http://tinyurl.com/y7nc8fak>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/08/unlearning-the-myth-of-american-innocence>>

Castro, and Castro. There were the much hoped-for assassinations: Nasser, Nasser, Nasser. And, of course, US-sponsored, -supported or -staged regime changes: Iran, Guatemala, Iraq, Congo, Syria, Dominican Republic, South Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay and Argentina. The Americans trained or supported secret police forces everywhere from Cambodia to Colombia, the Philippines to Peru, Iran to Vietnam. Many Turks believed that the US at least encouraged the 1971 and 1980 military coups in Turkey, though I could find little about these events in any conventional histories anywhere.'

Welcome to the world of Philip Agee, *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, Herman and Chomsky and Bill Blum, circa 1980 – where I came in (but the *Guardian* didn't).

Bill Blum is still issuing his Anti-Empire Reports. In his most recent, number 150,⁷ he notes

'I still get emails criticizing me for the stand I took against Islamic terrorists earlier this year. Almost every one feels obliged to remind me that the terrorists are acting in revenge for decades of US/Western bombing of Muslim populations and assorted other atrocities. And I then have to inform each one of them that they've chosen the wrong person for such a lecture. I, it happens, wrote the fucking book on the subject!

In the first edition of my book *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, published in 2001, before September 11, the first chapter was "Why do terrorists keep picking on The United States?" It includes a long list of hostile US military and political actions against the Islamic world during the previous 20 years.'

Lockerbie: a new thesis?

Occasional contributor to these columns, Dr. Roger Cottrell, recently sent me the text of his new book on Lockerbie, *Ashes in the Fall: Iran-Contra, the godfather of terror and the bombing of Pan Am 103* (forthcoming from Red Door).⁸ The paragraphs below are from the introduction. I have not been following Lockerbie and this was new to me and thus, perhaps, new to some *Lobster* readers.

Motive and Target: Chuck McKee and his Team

In all previous books and documentaries on the Lockerbie bombing, one of two scenarios is pursued. The first, and official, view that Abdelbaset al Megrahi and the Libyan regime bombed the plane is based (as we shall

⁷ <<https://williamblum.org/aer/read/150>>

⁸ See <<http://www.reddoorvision.co.uk/rogercottrell.htm>> for a brief biog.

see) on tissue thin and often fabricated evidence and has all but been discredited by everybody who has examined the bombing in a serious way. But there are also problems with the "default position," particularly identified with Allan Frankovich's important (but ultimately flawed) documentary, *The Maltese Double Cross*, in 1994. Here, and in subsequent documentaries both for *Al Jazeera* and ZDF TV, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC) is assumed to have carried out the bombing as a "contract killing" for the governments in Damascus and Tehran. Specifically, the bombing of Pan Am 103 is seen, in this scenario, as revenge for the shooting down of Iran Airbus 655 by the *USS Vincennes*, in the Gulf of Hormuz on July 3, 1988. Among the 290 passengers and crew killed on the routine commercial flight from Mehrabad Airport in Tehran to Dubai were pilgrims to Mecca, participating in the annual *Haj* and 66 children. The subsequent failure of the US administration even to apologise for this incident led to understandable fury in Iran on the part both of the regime and population but is not, in my view, the reason why Pan Am 103 was bombed.

That there is a *connection*, between the existence of the PFLP-GC cell in Germany, and Sweden, led by Hafez Dalkamini and mostly operating in Dusseldorf, and Neuss, and the bombing of Pan Am 103 is not disputed in this book. In particular, Jordanian double agent Marwan Khreesat is identified as having made a number of barometric Toshiba cassette bombs for the Dusseldorf cell, containing military grade Semtex H, one of which undoubtedly destroyed Pan Am 103 (*The Maid of the Seas*) over Lockerbie, Scotland. But as a Jordanian GID agent involved in a sting operation, set up by the recently formed Counter Intelligence Centre of the CIA's Directorate of Operations, it is doubtful that Khreesat (who was quietly released from police custody and allowed to return to Amman) ever intended his bombs to be used. Rather, it seems that an asset of the CIA, deeply involved in Iran Contra and with consequent connections to the 200 strong force of Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Lebanon, drew these forces into a bogus plot to bomb several western civilian aircraft in revenge for Iran Airbus 655. With its origins in October Surprise in 1980 (see text) the Revolutionary Guards were pursuing their own clandestine Foreign Policy independent of the Tehran government by this time.

Such was the BKA-CIA sting operation that led to the *Operation Herbstlaub* (Operation Autumn Leaves) bust on October 30, 1988. Thereafter, the PFLP-GC was a spent force in continental Europe. But we believe that this CIA asset, who helped the CIA's Duane Clarridge (himself an Iran Contra insider and veteran) and Vincent Cannistraro (later notorious in the Lockerbie cover up) to facilitate the sting had his own reasons for wanting Pan Am 103 destroyed. Thanks to the aforementioned CIA sting and complicity of a CIA asset called Abu Elias, he also

had access to the bomb that was later placed on board the plane at Heathrow.

In this book, we set out to prove that the actual target of the bombing was Green Beret Captain Charles "Chuck" McKee (attached to the Pentagon's Defence Intelligence Agency), Martin Gannon, the Deputy Head of CIA Station in Beirut and a young Lebanese man called Khaled Jaafar, whom they had accompanied from Frankfurt on Pan Am 103A to place into witness protection in the United States. Two Security Officers from the US Embassy in Beirut were also part of the group. Jaafar, aged just 22, was a member of a powerful drug producing clan in the Be'eqa Valley, who wanted to be free to marry his cousin. He could provide supportive testimony to the 200 page dossier that McKee was also taking back to the US to present as testimony to the Kerry Commission. This was why he was killed. The second purpose of the Lockerbie bombing was to destroy or recover McKee's file.

Brexit is dead

In 'A big business Brexit for a bargain basement Britain', Nick Dearden complained that:

'An analysis of official statistics on lobby meetings with ministers from the UK's Department for Exiting the EU (DExEU) and members of the EU's Brexit Task Force reveals a common willingness to privilege the representatives of corporate interests above all others. The analysis shows:

- Between October 2016 and March 2017, DExEU staff had six meetings with big business representatives for every one meeting with an NGO, a trade union or a think tank. This figure may even just be the tip of the iceberg, as Brexit lobby meetings are also likely to take place with DExEU officials not required to disclose meetings.
- The team of Chief EU Brexit Negotiator Michel Barnier had ten meetings with corporate lobbyists for every one NGO they met between October 2016 and May 2017.⁹

This is hardly a surprise and – for those against Brexit, such as Dearden – is good news, surely, because those corporate lobbyists will all be opposed to it.

The Labour Party's new policy on Brexit, announced on 28 August, shows the way out for the British political system: remaining in the EU while pretending to leave; a.k.a. 'transition'. The trick is going to be selling this to the Brexit supporters, whose leaders are already crying 'Sell-out! Betrayal!'.

⁹ <<http://tinyurl.com/ycxl3ua3>> or <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/big-business-brexit-bargain-basement-britain-170827080555325.html>>. In this he cites information from <<http://tinyurl.com/yd526js6>> or <<http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/2017/aug/25/big-business-dominates-lobby-meetings-uk-and-eu-brexit-negotiators>>.

Bringing it all back home

In May, after briefings from 'Whitehall sources', the British media reported:

'Intelligence officers have identified 23,000 jihadist extremists living in Britain as potential terrorist attackers, it emerged yesterday.

The scale of the challenge facing the police and security services was disclosed by Whitehall sources after criticism that multiple opportunities to stop the Manchester bomber had been missed.

About 3,000 people from the total group are judged to pose a threat and are under investigation or active monitoring in 500 operations being run by police and intelligence services. The 20,000 others have featured in previous inquiries and are categorised as posing a "residual risk".¹⁰

Fast forward three months and EU counter-terrorism coordinator Gilles de Kerchove stated that 'Britain is home to up to 35,000 fanatical Islamists of whom 3,000 are "worrying" for the security service MI5.'¹¹ The gross totals differ but the core group remains the same. 500 is a lot of operations to be running.

A measure of how the world has changed is the fact that in the mid 90s MI5 had so little to do, it was scuffling around Whitehall trying to find/generate roles for itself. I wrote this in *Lobster* 28 (1994).

'The available fragments of evidence suggest that MI5 will continue on its present course, dealing with a mixed bag of domestic threats and various promising, new subjects. ("Promising" in the budget-sustaining sense.) There are the "foreign terrorists in Britain", and a variety of new, post Cold War themes emerging out of the general "turbulence" of the New World Disorder. (London's role as one of the world centres for flight capital is attracting some of the world's major scumbags.) Some of it even has reassuring Eastern European labels on it. If the former Soviet bloc can no longer be plausibly portrayed as exporting revolution, terrorism, subversion and espionage to Britain, the remnants of the Soviet empire are now (we are told) engaged in money laundering, drug-running, gun-running and – the holy grail – nuclear material smuggling. A "senior police officer" was quoted in the *Observer*, 6 November 1994: "It's very easy to present drugs and organised crime as a threat to national security particularly because of Eastern Europe. There the threat of armoured divisions has been replaced by the threat of the Russian mafia."

Then there is the ever-expanding new European Union super state to be policed. The *Independent* of 9 November 1994, reported that "MI5. . . and Special Branch are vying to take the lead in representing Britain at

¹⁰ <<http://tinyurl.com/yarfud2u>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/huge-scale-of-terror-threat-revealed-uk-home-to-23-000-jihadists-3zvn58mhq>>

¹¹ <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4840604/Britain-home-35-000-Islamic-fanatics.html>

Europol's headquarters in The Hague. MI5 is making an aggressive bid to takeover the European Liaison Unit of the Metropolitan Special Branch. . ."; and the front page of *Computer Weekly* of 10 November, 1994, reported that "The security service MI5 is to offer advice to government IT managers on nearly all computer security issues further diluting the role of Whitehall's dedicated computer agency the CCTA."

This was before the UK joined the Israeli-American plans to smash most of the states of the Middle East into ethnic and religious fragments. So, since the current domestic jihadism problem is part of the price of supporting US foreign policy in the Middle East, is there anyone left in Whitehall who thinks that policy was a good idea? Apparently so: token British forces are currently working with the US in at least four wars in the region.¹² Or is that taking the British presence too seriously? In a review of a new account of the war in Afghanistan, former British ambassador there, Sherard Cowper-Coles, says that the British Army was there:

'Mainly, of course, to please the Americans, or, more precisely, the American military. To show them after Basra what good allies and brave soldier the Brits really were. But there was another, less honourable, reason, one that led me to wonder if the British Army had deployed to Helmand to fight not the Taliban but the Treasury, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. As one general put it to me: "If I don't use the battle groups coming out of Iraq in Afghanistan, Sherard, I will lose them in a defence review."¹³

Economic bits and pieces

There is quite a chorus of voices now warning that we are heading for another financial crash. One such, and he's worth taking seriously, is Professor Frank Portnoy, who wrote in the *Financial Times*, 'The sequel to the global financial crisis is here'.¹⁴ It's the same formula as last time: vast personal debt is being created and bundled up into interest-bearing instruments (derivatives). The difference this time is that, if things go kablooeey again, governments are too indebted from the last bail-out to rescue the banks a second time.

¹² <<http://tinyurl.com/ybonr65f>> or <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/mark-curtis/britains-seven-covert-war_b_12332368.html> On the war in the Yemen, in particular, see <<http://tinyurl.com/y6w2bdal>> or <<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/culture-concealment-uk-governments-brazen-duplicity-yemen-1005387832>>.

¹³ 'So what the hell were we doing in Afghanistan (and why did we stay?)', *The Times* (books) 19 August 2017.

¹⁴ <<https://www.ft.com/content/95808118-662e-11e7-9a66-93fb352ba1fe>> Portnoy wrote *Fiasco: blood in the water on Wall Street* (London: Profile, 1997) about the financial derivatives business and the men (almost entirely men) engaged in it. This anticipated the financial crash a decade later.

The *Guardian's* Larry Elliot had a piece, 'While Hammond looks for a magic money tree, Labour has found one', about an idea from Professor Avinash Persaud, which would involve removing some of the exceptions from stamp duty charged on share purchases.¹⁵ This might raise over £4 billion a year, which would just about cover the annual NHS deficit. But the *annual* UK government deficit for 2016-17 was £52 billion. Labour needs a magic money *forest*, not a tree, if its economic policies are to be taken seriously without there being talk of raising taxation on the general population.

Meanwhile, down under in New Zealand, Bryan Gould – to my knowledge the last significant British Labour politician who understood macroeconomics – got into an exchange with Don Brash about the creation of money.¹⁶ Brash, who is a sometime leader of the New Zealand equivalent of the Conservative Party and Governor of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, would not accept that banks created money for themselves by lending to other people. Gould's article includes this:

'My own efforts to clear up the confusion concluded with the *New Zealand Herald's* disappointing decision to decline to publish my rebuttal of Don Brash's repeated attempts to deny the truth about money creation. . . In his various contributions, Don Brash chose repeatedly, on the central issue as to how money is created, to deny (without any evidence or countervailing argument) what is now almost universally accepted – that an individual bank, in the act of placing a credit entry in a borrower's account, creates new money.'

What goes around. . .

Tony Gosling, this country's leading Bilderberg-watcher,¹⁷ drew his subscribers' attention to an essay, 'Meet "Le Cercle" – Making Bilderberg Look Like Amateurs' by Graham Vanbergen.¹⁸ This is a decent introduction to the role of Le Cercle in the past 30 years or so but the best study of Le Cercle remains David Teacher's massive *Rogue Agents: Hapsburg, Pinay and the Private Cold War 1951-1991*,¹⁹ which I noted in *Lobster* 71 when this latest edition appeared. This summary is from Teacher's introduction.

'This study is an attempt at a preliminary transnational investigation of the Paneuropean Right and particularly of the covert forum, the Cercle Pinay

¹⁵ <<http://tinyurl.com/yazl6jmv>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/jul/23/while-hammond-looks-for-a-magic-money-tree-labour-has-found-one>>

¹⁶ Bryan Gould, 'Banks Create Billions Out Of Thin Air Every Day For Their Own Profit-Making Purposes' at <<http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/45/04.html>>.

¹⁷ See <<http://www.bilderberg.org>>.

¹⁸ <www.globalresearch.ca/meet-le-cercle-making-bilderberg-look-like-amateurs/5606887>

¹⁹ <<http://www.cryptome.org/2012/01/cercle-pinay-6i.pdf>>

and its complex of groups. Amongst Cercle intelligence contacts are former operatives from the American CIA, DIA and INR, Britain's MI5, MI6 and IRD, France's SDECE, Germany's BND, BfV and MAD, Holland's BVD, Belgium's Sûreté de l'Etat, SDRA and PIO, apartheid South Africa's BOSS, and the Swiss and Saudi intelligence services.

Politically, the Cercle complex has interlocked with the whole panoply of international right-wing groups: the Paneuropean Union, the European Movement, CEDI, the Bilderberg Group, WACL, Opus Dei, the Moonies, Western Goals and the Heritage Foundation. Amongst the prominent politicians associated with the Cercle Pinay were Antoine Pinay, Konrad Adenauer, Archduke Otto von Habsburg, Franz Josef Strauss, Giulio Andreotti, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Paul Vanden Boeynants, John Vorster, General Antonio de Spínola, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.'

This parapolitical monument began with Teacher's essay in *Lobster 17* on what was then known as the Pinay Circle. The group's name changed with the death of its founder, Antoine Pinay.

The problem is evaluating such a group. What, if anything, did it achieve?

. . . comes around

At the beginning of September Spinwatch issued a long document – 35 pages of text and supporting material – by Niall Meehan on the case of Dr Morris Fraser, the child psychiatrist who worked in Northern Ireland in the 1970s despite being convicted of the sexual assault of a 13 year-old boy. Fraser should have been but wasn't prominent in the recent Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.²⁰ (At time of writing the document had not been posted on the Spinwatch site.)

Spinwatch last year published Meehan's 'Morris Fraser, child abuse, corruption and collusion in Britain and Northern Ireland'²¹ and the *Guardian* ran a profile of Meehan and the story at the same time.²²

Things Russian

A little while ago I met a woman who told me her daughter was an investigative journalist for BuzzFeed. To which I said something like this: 'Buzzfeed? Really? I thought that was just click-bait stuff.' Well, it turns out I

²⁰ My critique of a part of which is in *Lobster 73* at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster73/lob73-colin-wallace.pdf>>.

²¹ <<http://tinyurl.com/ybdl3zsh>> or <<http://www.spinwatch.org/index.php/issues/northern-ireland/item/5850-morris-fraser-child-abuse-corruption-and-collusion-in-britain-and-northern-ireland>>

²² <<http://tinyurl.com/hfd4tzj>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2016/jun/16/journalism-academic-castigates-media-over-paedophile-doctor>>

was quite wrong about that: BuzzFeed does indeed do investigative journalism and there is some worth your attention. For example there is a four part account of the deaths of fourteen people in the UK, mostly Russian, linked to UK-resident Russian oligarchs and gangsters.²³ The authors show that the deaths are all suspicious and suggest that they are the result of either Russian state or Russian mafia activity. But this they can't *demonstrate*. What they do show is that the British state and the police have apparently little interest in investigating these deaths too closely. This may not be unconnected to the fact that the City of London and all its associated activities – lawyers, accountants, estate agents and insurance companies for example – are currently awash with all that dirty Russian money. One part of the series is the spy-in-the-bag story, the death of the MI6 officer, Gareth Williams, which also suggests but cannot quite demonstrate Russian state involvement.

A theme running through much of the current speculation about Russia is the putative wealth of President Putin. The American businessman William Browder, whose father had been head of the Communist Party in the USA, did a lot of business in Russia in the early years after the Berlin Wall came down and got ripped-off there. Browder offers his opinion of Putin's personal wealth.

'Putin is a different type of leader than any other head of state in that Putin has been stealing money hand over fist to the tune of 200 billion dollars for himself in his presidency. Russia is effectively a mafia organization in which he's the capo and the only difference between this mafia organization and the Colombian mafia or the Italian mafia is that Vladimir Putin controls thousands of nuclear warheads.'²⁴

Others have made similar claims about Putin's wealth²⁵ but, like Browder, have no direct evidence. Like so many of the contemporary claims about Russian hacking of US politics, these are plausible but not verifiable.

Back at the did-the-Russians-hack-the-US-presidential-election story, the dividing lines remain as before. On one side:

'Daniel Coats, the director of national intelligence, said Friday there is no dissent inside U.S. intelligence agencies about the conclusion that Russia used hacking and fake news to interfere in the 2016 presidential election. . . .'²⁶

²³ The first of the 4 parts is at <<http://tinyurl.com/yaoq5mbt>> or <https://www.buzzfeed.com/heidiblake/poison-in-the-system?utm_term=.jjlPM6RoO#.huaL9ykDp>.

²⁴ <<http://tinyurl.com/y99l5s5z>> or <<http://extragoodshit.phlap.net/index.php/whowhatwhy-investigated-russias-actions-long-before-the-mainstream-media/>>. See also <<http://tinyurl.com/yagtadwh>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/07/bill-browders-testimony-to-the-senate-judiciary-committee/534864/>>.

²⁵ See, for example, <<http://time.com/money/4641093/vladimir-putin-net-worth/>> and <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4242718/Vladimir-Putin-200-billion-fortune.html>>. Both articles use many of the same speculative estimates.

²⁶ <<http://tinyurl.com/ycm7589x>> or <<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/intelligence-director-says-agencies-agree-russian-meddling-n785481>>

On the other side a group of retired American intelligence personnel put their names to an essay on Consortiumnews which began:

'Forensic studies of "Russian hacking" into Democratic National Committee computers last year reveal that on July 5, 2016, data was **leaked (not hacked)** by a person with physical access to DNC computers, and then doctored to incriminate Russia.'²⁷ (emphasis in the original)

Former UK ambassador Craig Murray also received a copy of the DNC files and has repeatedly said that he *knows* the material didn't come from the Russians.²⁸

So what is the basis of the current hostility to Russia? Here's Trump-supporter Pat Buchanan on that question:

' "Is Russia an enemy of the United States?" NBC's Kasie Hunt demanded of Ted Cruz. Replied the runner-up for the GOP nomination, "Russia is a significant adversary. Putin is a KGB thug."

To Hillary Clinton running mate Tim Kaine, the revelation that Donald Trump Jr., entertained an offer from the Russians for dirt on Clinton could be considered "treason".

Treason is giving aid and comfort to an enemy in a time of war.

Are we really at war with Russia? Is Russia really our enemy?

"Why Russia is a Hostile Power" is the title of today's editorial in *The Washington Post* that seeks to explain why Middle America should embrace the Russophobia of our capital city:

"Vladimir Putin adheres to a set of values that are antithetical to bedrock American values. He favors spheres of influence over self-determination; corruption over transparency; and repression over democracy."

Yet, accommodating a sphere of influence for a great power is exactly what FDR and Churchill did with Stalin, and every president from Truman to George H. W. Bush did with the Soviet Union.

When East Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles rose up against Communist regimes, no U.S. president intervened. For those nations were on the other side of the Yalta line agreed to in 1945.

Bush I and James Baker even accused Ukrainians of "suicidal nationalism" for contemplating independence from Russia.

When did support for spheres of influence become un-American?²⁹

Buchanan has put his finger on it: Trump believes in spheres of influence, as does Putin. Trump has apparently understood (actually, it's more likely to be those around him who have understood) that the US can no longer be the sole

²⁷ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2017/07/24/intel-vets-challenge-russia-hack-evidence/>>

²⁸ See <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2017/07/stink-without-secret/>>.

²⁹ <<https://www.creators.com/read/pat-buchanan/07/17/russia-baiters-and-putin-haters>>

global power; its economy is too weak and too indebted. For obvious reasons of self-interest, despite Trump's increase in the military budget, the American military-industrial-intelligence complex is unhappy with this and the Democrats are using all available sticks with which to beat Trump, whether true or not. Hence their mutual interest in 'Russiagate'.

Brexitteering

In *Lobster* 73 after the election in May, I declared that 'Brexit is dead'. Discussing this below I added that I could not see how this would play out. Peter Kellner has made an attempt at this in his article 'When Brexit Meets Logic' for Carnegie Europe, a foreign policy analysis site based in Brussels.³⁰ The article's subhead is his conclusion: 'It is increasingly likely that Britain will either stay in the EU or reach a transitional arrangement very similar to full membership.' (A.k.a. staying in while pretending to leave.)

Since I wrote that Brexit is dead there has been a steady trickle of stories suggesting that the government's position is changing as the reality of Brexit impinges on it and Nigel Farage, the perfect bellwether on this issue, has begun charging the Conservatives with betraying the Brexit voters.³¹ Most interesting to me was the language used by hitherto ardent Brexitteer, Michael Gove:

'I think that when it comes to an implementation period, it should be driven by a pragmatic judgment, a shared pragmatic judgment, about what we need in the best interests of our economy and guaranteeing a smooth exit from the European Union, in line with the result that the British people voted for just over a year ago,' he said.³²

Perhaps I am over-reading this but 'pragmatic judgment' and 'in line with the result' seems to leave lots of wiggle room, especially for someone who probably still wants to become leader of the Conservative Party.

Sailing

On 27 June the new British aircraft carrier HM Queen Elizabeth left port for the first time to much celebration. The decision to build two planned carriers was announced in 2008, just before the world banking system went into

³⁰ <<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/71558>>

³¹ 'The great Brexit betrayal has begun. The Tories have sold out the British people - now even Jeremy Corbyn has a tougher stance' at <<http://tinyurl.com/y7blvlco>> or <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/25/great-brexit-betrayal-has-begun-tories-have-sold-british-people/>>.

³² <<http://tinyurl.com/yb4mf88r>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jul/21/michael-gove-says-cabinet-is-united-on-brexit-transition-period>>

meltdown.³³ But the planning went much further back: the website of the Aircraft Carrier Alliance³⁴ tells us 'The design process began in 1999'. Politicians were barely involved in the decision to spend all those billions; Hansard records little debate on this. In 2010 Gordon Brown, then recently deposed as prime minister, gave the House of Commons the rationale for the carriers commissioned while he was PM and explained why so little parliamentary time was spent on such a large spending project:

'These are military decisions, made on military advice for military reasons. The reason the decisions have been made is that if we are to retain a global presence as a Navy, as armed forces and as a country, we will need these aircraft carriers in the years to come. We will need them not only because they are important to the defence of the Falklands, but because they are important for maintaining the 500-year role of the Royal Navy in being available to assist in any part of the world.'³⁵

There you go: a lifetime in the British labour movement and he offers us Britain's world role, about which the military knows best.

However *The Times* (11 July) – in '£3bn warship is vulnerable to low-cost missiles' – reported on a sceptical paper from the Royal United Services Institute pointing out that (expensive) carriers are vulnerable to attack by (cheap) missiles. (Remember the French Exocet missiles which almost won the Malvinas war for Argentina?) Others have noted that the ship is run by the venerable and vulnerable Windows XP³⁶ and the construction costs are going to rise – as they always do, once they've got the initial fake price past the Treasury – probably to double the initial estimate.³⁷

And which planes are going to be using this floating runway? The American F35, in many reports one of the worst planes ever built: designed to do everything for everybody and failing to do almost all of it. In other words, it's business as usual: to continue Britain's role as the cheer-leader for American military power, a British aircraft carrier is going to be parked somewhere – probably in the Middle East – flying expensive but dodgy³⁸ American planes on operations approved by America.

With rather less media attention, a campaign was launched a couple of

³³ The second carrier is HM Prince of Wales, due to be launched from Rosyth later this year.

³⁴ <<http://www.aircraftcarrieralliance.co.uk>> Worth a look at this. The 'alliance' is a cosy little cartel whose aim is getting its hands on tax income.

³⁵ <<http://tinyurl.com/ycqe6m3c>> or <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2010-11-01/debates/1011025000002/AircraftCarriers>>

³⁶ See, for example, <https://www.theregister.co.uk/2017/06/27/hms_queen_elizabeth_running_windows_xp/>.

³⁷ <<http://tinyurl.com/64y8e27>> or <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/robertpeston/2011/04/aircraft_carrier_costs_to_rise.html>

³⁸ See, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/musjrb6b>> or <<http://www.dote.osd.mil/pub/reports/FY2016/pdf/dod/2016f35jsf.pdf>>

months before this to provide free tampons to schoolgirls who receive free school meals because poor parents can't afford to buy them and girls are skipping school every month.³⁹ Welcome to Blighty 2017!

Illumination

Will Banyan, who wrote 'The "Rothschild connection": the House of Rothschild and the invasion of Iraq' in *Lobster* 63,⁴⁰ has written a very interesting account of the relationship between the media and the Bilderberg group, 'Bilderberg Myths: "Fake News" from *Infowars* and Friends'.⁴¹

Arguing against some of those on the American paranoid fringe who still cling to the idea that Bilderberg is a big secret (and secret society), Banyan shows in great detail that the group has been reported on or written about quite a lot in the last 40 years. This is the best article I have seen on Bilderberg since the late Mike Peters' seminal piece in *Lobster* 32.

Spooky

On Jefferson Morley's site about the Kennedy assassination, jfkfacts.org, Morley writes: 'One of the stories I will tell in *The Ghost: The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton* is how the British secret intelligence services pressured Harold Wilson, the leftist Labour leader, into retiring early.' In support of this he offers an article by Alexander Cockburn.⁴² Cockburn quotes fragments from David Leigh's *The Wilson Plot* and asserts: '...unending smears about his personal life, certainly contributed to his sudden resignation as prime minister in the spring of 1976. There had indeed been a "very British coup".'

Well, no, actually, there hadn't been (not that some people hadn't tried).

Angleton got the fantasy about Wilson-as-Soviet stooge from the KGB defector Golitsyn. Golitsyn was either simply playing defector games – singing for his supper and telling Angleton the things he thought Angleton wanted to hear – or was part of a KGB operation to mess with Angleton's head. While a section of MI5, fronted by Peter Wright, believed this nonsense from Angleton, most of the British intelligence-security establishment didn't.

Wilson had told his confidants within the Labour Party that he would retire at 60. During his final period in office 1974-76 he was visibly tiring, his

³⁹ <<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/poorest-pupils-free-tampons-sanitary-towels-girls-stop-missing-schools-uk-education-department-a7641056.html>>

⁴⁰ <<http://tinyurl.com/ydba39hw>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster63/lob63-rothschild.pdf>>

⁴¹ <<http://tinyurl.com/y9yqsrpb>> or <<http://www.conspiracyarchive.com/2017/06/29/bilderberg-myths-fake-news-from-infowars-and-friends/>>.

⁴² 'Ashes and Diamonds' from *In These Times*, 1 February 1, 1989, p. 17.

alcohol consumption was increasing and his once formidable memory was declining. His father had suffered from Alzheimers and Wilson was afraid it would afflict him, too. Which it did.⁴³

Trump, Russia, hacking and all that

Things we definitely know: Trump wanted to lift the sanctions on Russia which had been imposed by the Obama government in 2014.⁴⁴ His Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, was CEO of an American oil company which did a deal with the Russian state allowing it to drill there.⁴⁵ Tillerson also opposed the sanctions.⁴⁶ Trump has had relationships with Russian banks.⁴⁷ In short, some of the Trump regime's leading figures did not share the belief in the new 'Russian threat' which was generated during the Obama years; and it is not surprising that some of them had meetings with Russian officials.

After which it starts to get fuzzy. We have had a series of reports suggesting that Russians – hackers? spooks? military? – intervened during the recent presidential election and have been hacking American data bases.

There are three drivers of this. Electoral politics: the Democrats are using it to attack Trump. Internal Democratic Party politics: explaining why Hillary Clinton lost will influence the direction of the Democratic Party. The neo-conservative, corporate-oriented wing of that party wants to establish that Clinton's loss was the result of external factors, not a bad candidate with policies the electorate don't want. Russian hacking is a scapegoat for the Democrats' defeat. If they fail to make that stick, the more radical wing of the Democrats may triumph. (There is an obvious comparison with New Labour and the Labour Party led by Corbyn.) The third factor is what we might as well call the military-industrial-intelligence complex, which wants the new cold war to continue (good for careers and profits).

The Russia-gate thesis wasn't helped by the publication in January of an official account of allegations about Russian actions (and a great deal about the

⁴³ Kevin McNamara, MP for Hull North for many years, told me that quite soon after Wilson's resignation he had been at a meeting at which Wilson spoke and Wilson read the same paragraph twice without noticing. Wilson's speech patterns in his later years have been analysed and appear to show signs of Alzheimers. See <<http://tinyurl.com/ycykjg2p>> or <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1084534/Former-British-Prime-Minister-Wilson-suffering-Alzheimers-resigned.html>>.

⁴⁴ See, for example <<http://tinyurl.com/y9yr3w8f>> or <<http://uk.businessinsider.com/trump-wanted-to-lift-russia-sanctions-days-after-taking-office-2017-6?r=US&IR=T>>

⁴⁵ Tillerson has been awarded the Russian Order of Friendship by President Putin for his contribution to developing cooperation in the energy sector.

⁴⁶ See, for example, <<https://350.org/oil-russia-and-trump/>>.

⁴⁷ See, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/yc2esllt>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/05/trump-lawyers-up-conflicts-of-interest/526185/>>.

TV station Russia Today) which was received with wide-spread derision.⁴⁸ People on the left (who hope for an end to the new cold war or want to change the orientation of the Democratic Party), and the right (supporters of Trump) are resisting the Russia-gate narrative. There's Pat Buchanan, for example, still best remembered as a Nixon speech-writer, who recently wrote this:

'We are approaching something of a civil war where the capital city seeks the overthrow of the sovereign and its own restoration..... That the objective of this city is to bring Trump down via a deep state-media coup is no secret. Few deny it.'⁴⁹

This is the view of some on the American left, for example those writing at the Consortiumnews website, where Mark Ames upbraided another left-leaning magazine, *Mother Jones*, for its reporting on so-called Russia-gate:

'What passes for "Russia reporting" at *Mother Jones* is mostly just glorified InfoWars paranoia for progressive marks — a cataract of xenophobic conspiracy theories about inscrutable Russian barbarians hellbent on subverting our way of life, spreading chaos, destroying freedom & democracy & tolerance wherever they once flourished. . . . because they hate us, because we're free.'⁵⁰

Larry Hancock, one of the best of the Kennedy assassination researchers, recently recommended that anyone who doubted Russia-gate should read four stories.⁵¹ I did; and while it is true, as Hancock writes, that there are 'clues', there is no evidence. A number of these hacker stories⁵² claim highly-placed but unnamed sources; but until recently there was no (public) evidence showing Russian, let alone Russian *state* involvement.⁵³ The closest we have got to evidence is a piece at The Intercept, 'Top-secret NSA report details Russian hacking effort days before 2016 election' and a report in the *Washington Post* recounting the Obama administration's response to receiving

⁴⁸ See, for example, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/h4amzgg>> or <<http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-01-06/here-us-intelligence-report-accusing-putin-ordering-campaign-influence-us-election>>.

⁴⁹ <<http://buchanan.org/blog/nearing-civil-war-127177>>. Sean Hannity, a loopy conservative broadcaster, said something very similar. See <<http://tinyurl.com/yawrf7co>> or <<http://www.salon.com/2017/06/21/sean-hannity-sounds-the-alarm-says-there-is-a-soft-coup-to-overturn-novembers-election-results/>>.

⁵⁰ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2017/06/11/when-mother-jones-wasnt-russia-bashing/>>

⁵¹ The stories are listed at <<https://larryhancock.wordpress.com/2017/06/05/patriotic-russian-hackers/>>

⁵² For example <<http://tinyurl.com/ybquwdql>> or <<https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-06-13/russian-breach-of-39-states-threatens-future-u-s-elections>>.

⁵³ If you're not as picky about evidence as I am, Russia-gate looks impressive. See, for example, <<http://tinyurl.com/y9dfg5jz>> or <<http://www.theweeklings.com/golear/2017/04/05/how-deep-is-your-treason-the-three-tiers-of-trumprussia/>>.

a CIA report on Russian hacking in late 2016.⁵⁴ To my untrained eye these look like the real deal; but as McGovern and Binney have reported recently, the CIA has the technology to 'break into computers and servers and make it look like others did it'.⁵⁵ Which makes things difficult. At the very least it provides a get-out clause for those who don't want to believe that Russia has been hacking. On the other hand, the Ukraine has experienced years of hacking of the computers running its infrastructure,⁵⁶ and who can be responsible for that if not the Russian state? Or would McGovern and Binney want to claim that it's the CIA pretending to be the Russians?

Following the money

What does this recent headline say about current American diplomacy? 'Qatar signs a \$12 billion arms deal with Defense Department after being labeled a state sponsor of terror by Donald Trump'.⁵⁷

The new anti-semitism

Or, more accurately, the new definition of anti-semitism. The definition has been changed: if you criticise Israel, says the Israeli state and its supporters, it is now *true by definition* that you are anti-semitic. Hence all the charges of anti-semitism in the Labour Party in the last couple of years. How this has been done, in a long march through international institutions, is discussed in a very interesting article by Alison Weir (who is, by this definition, an anti-semite).⁵⁸ To this issue these columns will return.

Two thoughts on the General Election

In the week preceding the election I was wondering what the big, last minute bombshell about Corbyn would be and who would run it. In the event we had the now notorious 13 pages in the *Mail* denigrating him but the new claim was in the *Daily Telegraph*:

'Jeremy Corbyn was monitored by undercover officers for two decades amid fears that he was attempting to undermine democracy, the *Telegraph* can disclose.

⁵⁴ <<http://tinyurl.com/y6u283qk>> or <<https://theintercept.com/2017/06/05/top-secret-nsa-report-details-russian-hacking-effort-days-before-2016-election/>>

⁵⁵ See below, under subhead 'Trump'.

⁵⁶ <https://www.wired.com/story/russian-hackers-attack-ukraine/?mbid=synd_digg>

⁵⁷ <<http://tinyurl.com/y7ferzth>> or <<http://www.salon.com/2017/06/15/qatar-signs-12-billion-arms-deal-with-defense-department-after-being-labeled-a-state-sponsor-of-terror-by-donald-trump/>>

⁵⁸ <<http://ifamericaknew.org/history/antisemitism.html>>

A former Special Branch officer, who does not wish to be named, said that the Labour leader was monitored because he was “deemed to be a subversive.”⁵⁹

In a follow-up the *Daily Mail* reported

‘Corbyn’s file was kept open by six commanders of the branch over the course of 20 years amid fears he was attempting to undermine democracy.’

Normally this would be a big story/scandal but in the present climate it may simply be ignored.

My second thought is about Brexit. In this column in the previous issue of *Lobster*, no. 73, I commented:

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

The loss of Conservative Party seats in the House of Commons is the beginning of that negative feedback loop. There is now a substantial majority in the House of Commons opposed to Brexit (as there is in the Lords) and Mrs May failed in her attempt to get a resounding public vote in support of her Brexit plans. I don’t see how this will unfold but I think Brexit is dead.

All the president’s sex slaves

In the piece in the previous issue of *Lobster* headed ‘Fake news? Fake something...’ I noted that the site globalresearch.ca had run a piece about the so-called Pizzagate story in the US. This is a fantasy about the upper echelons of US politics and pedophilia which is circulating on the Net. The origins of this can be traced back to an earlier fantasy about the CIA and mind-controlled sex slaves which goes under the name of Project Monarch.⁶⁰ All one can say about Project Monarch is that apart from the testimony of putative victims of said

⁵⁹ <<http://tinyurl.com/yc5svrl3>> or <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/06/exclusive-special-branch-monitored-jeremy-corbyn-20-years-amid/>>

⁶⁰ Anthony Frewin spotted a new book about Monarch by Tracy Twyman. See <<http://tracytwyman.com/books/mind-controlled-sex-slaves-and-the-cia/>>. An earlier version of her ideas can be seen in a 2001 article she wrote about Monarch, Satanic child abuse *et al.* See <<http://tinyurl.com/y974cmds>> or <<https://homelessholocaust.wordpress.com/2012/08/12/the-stepford-whores-project-monarch-and-mind-controlled-sex-slaves/>>.

program – basically Cathy O’Brien – there is no evidence that Monarch existed at all. And O’Brien’s claims are laughable, as even the most cursory look at them shows.⁶¹

Manchester

To my knowledge it was [voltaire.net.org](http://voltaire.net) which first suggested that the bombing of the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester was blowback from MI6 operations in Libya.⁶² When I checked I discovered that the *Daily Telegraph* had run essentially the same story – bar the reference to MI6, of course – the day before.⁶³ A couple of days later Peter Osborne in the *Mail*⁶⁴ and Max Blumenthal in *Salon.com*,⁶⁵ placed the Manchester-Libya events in the wider picture of American (and British) intervention in the Middle East and North Africa.

Blumenthal referred to the MI5 officer David Shayler, who had been on that agency’s Libya desk, and who spoke of the use by MI6 of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in an assassination attempt on Libya’s Prime Minister Muammar Gaddafi. The father of the Manchester bomber was a member of LIFG.⁶⁶ So, yes, the Manchester bombing is almost literal blowback from the British state (and secret state’s) dickering with Libya in the 1990-2005 period.⁶⁷ Shayler’s knowledge of MI6’s funding of LIFG may explain

⁶¹ As a CIA mind-controlled sex slave O’Brien claims to have had sex with, *inter alia*: Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Ford; CIA Director Bill Casey; Madeleine Albright and Dick Cheney; Senators Byrd and Specter, Congressmen Traffican and VanderJagt, and Governors Thornburgh, Blanchard, and Alexander; Prime Minister of Canada Mulroney, President of Mexico de la Madrid, and Saudi Arabian King Fahd; and Bill and Hillary Clinton. See <<http://tinyurl.com/y974cmds>>.

⁶² <<http://www.voltaire.net/article196455.htm>>

⁶³ <<http://tinyurl.com/l8h2hbj>> or <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/24/renegade-libyan-faction-accuses-britain-nurturing-manchester/>>

⁶⁴ ‘Why MI6 must share the blame for the jihadis in our midst’ at <<http://tinyurl.com/yctehkpa>> or <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4546934/PETER-OBORNE-MI6-share-blame-jihadis.html>>

⁶⁵ ‘The Manchester bombing is blowback from the West’s disastrous interventions and covert proxy wars’ at <<http://tinyurl.com/ybd5s6fh>> or <http://www.salon.com/2017/05/27/the-manchester-bombing-is-blowback-from-the-wests-disastrous-interventions-and-covert-proxy-wars_partner/>

⁶⁶ What’s the likelihood that Ramadan Abedi (the Manchester bomber’s father) was one of the dozen LIFG members resident in the UK that were affected by this: ‘Libyan dissidents put under house arrest following Tony Blair’s “deal in the desert”?’ (*Daily Mail* 11 September 2011). See <<http://tinyurl.com/646bl8j>> or <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2036049/Libyan-dissidents-house-arrest-following-Tony-Blairs-deal-desert.html>>

⁶⁷ Discussed in Mark Curtis’ *Secret Affairs: Britain’s Collusion with Radical Islam* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2010). On LIFG see <<http://tinyurl.com/ydza5ebo>> or <https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Document:Manchester_Alleged_Suicide_Bomber_Linked_to_Libya_Islamic_Fighting_Group>

why the British state pursued him so hard.

The presence of a reported 10,000 Libyans in Manchester, an unknown number of whom are sympathetic to radical Islam, is a consequence of the pretensions of empire among our leaders, both elected and unelected.

9/11 and the left

There is an interesting essay, 'Beyond their wildest dreams: 9/11 and the American Left', by Dr Graeme MacQueen, former co-editor of the *Journal of 9/11 Studies*.⁶⁸ MacQueen lists all the American left websites which have declined to take the 9/11 researchers seriously and tells us that this allergy to what we might call deep political research goes back to the Kennedy assassination. He notes that some prominent American leftists – he cites Noam Chomsky and Alexander Cockburn – dismissed JFK's assassination.⁶⁹ I think that some of the reluctance shown by Chomsky, Cockburn and others is a fear of being tarred with the conspiracy theory brush. This fear of guilt by association with certain sections of the extreme right-wing has been discussed in *Lobster* before. Some of the reluctance also comes from a sense that we shouldn't be distracted from the more important areas of history – imperialism, capitalism, and now the environmental crisis – by individual incidents such as assassinations that are of little consequence by comparison.

MacQueen's essay appeared on a site I had not come across before, Truth and Shadows, devoted to 9/11. I glanced at the other essays listed on the site's home page. One caught my eye: 'How we KNOW an airliner did NOT hit the Pentagon'. This is one of the most striking of the 'truther' claims. If true it means that the eye-witnesses who say they saw an airliner flying into the Pentagon are lying.⁷⁰ Were they part of the plot? Or were they warned off immediately after the event? Both propositions seem vanishingly implausible to me. The essay contained this assertion:

'There is NOT ONE piece of wreckage that has been positively tied to Flight 77. The engines, virtually indestructible, were not recovered, although it is claimed that an engine "core" was from one of the 757 engines. There were no bodies, no seats, no pieces of luggage. There were a couple of pieces of fuselage but they were big enough that one person could pick them up. There's no proof it came from that plane.'

It's been a while since I looked at 9/11 but I thought I remembered quite a lot of photographs of debris inside and outside the Pentagon. So I went to Google Images and asked for '9/11, Pentagon, debris' and yes, there are now

⁶⁸ <<https://truthandshadows.wordpress.com/2017/03/14/911-and-american-left/>>

⁶⁹ He tells us that Cockburn endorsed the Warren Commission verdict.

⁷⁰ See <<http://911research.wtc7.net/pentagon/evidence/witnesses/bart.html>> and <<https://ratical.org/ratville/CAH/F77pentagon.pdf>> for witness statements.

hundreds if not thousands of such images.

As for the claim that 'There is NOT ONE piece of wreckage that has been positively tied to Flight 77' – why would anyone seek to do that? It's only some of the 9/11 'truthers' who ask for that level of proof (knowing they won't get it). Everyone else takes it for granted that the debris – yes, including engine and fuselage parts – in and around the Pentagon is from the missing Flight 77.

In the comments below this essay 'Tamera' writes:

'I was on the phone with my hubby when I heard a whirring noise. I thought the web server I was working on was acting up. After that I woke up on my back on the 1st floor. I didn't know it was the 1st floor yet, that realization would come later when we were trying to get out of the pitch black office with wires hanging down and zapping everything they touched. Once we were able to crawl from floor 1 up to floor 2 using fallen computer equipment, the first thing we smelled was fuel. One of our group, a hobby pilot, new [sic] it was jet fuel. As we got out onto the corridor we weren't able to see through the black wall of smoke leading to the E ring. Bloody bodies full of glass from the windows were making their way out, soldiers trying to go back in to help others but couldn't see. Long story short... saw the bits of plane parts all over the parking lot when we got out. Those who were there... know... those who talk nonsense like this blogger know nothing of what they speak. Many years later... I can still remember the smell, see the bodies and hear the cries of my dead comrades.'

After which the 'truthers' try to explain away 'Tamera's' comments, concluding that she's a troll (and, by inference, that they are being monitored by the American state).

Dr MacQueen wonders why the America Left doesn't take the 9/11 'truthers' seriously. This essay, and the comments below it, suggest why.⁷¹

Trump

Hillary Clinton is still thinking about how she lost the election. She claims there was a big Russian-directed social media conspiracy to defeat her,⁷² using the data-mining of Cambridge Analytica and the money of American billionaire

⁷¹ A recent more detailed account of the evidence showing that it was a plane which struck the Pentagon is at <<http://tinyurl.com/yb7p9dcz>> or <<https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2016/10/07/bringing-closure-to-the-911-pentagon-debate/>>.

⁷² See <<http://tinyurl.com/y6vg7lvf>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/05/hillary-clinton-information-wars/528765/>>.

'hedgy' Robert Mercer which paid for it.⁷³ *The Atlantic*, which published Clinton's comments, sources this Russian conspiracy claim to two members of the Senate Intelligence Committee who referred to '*some reports....* that there were upwards of a thousand internet trolls working out of a facility in Russia, in effect taking over a series of computers which are then called botnets, that can then generate news down to specific areas.' (emphasis added) The reality is more complex.⁷⁴

As yet there is no *evidence* that all this social media wizardry had any effect. There are lots of other possible explanations of why Clinton lost the election: a poor campaign on behalf of a poor candidate, offering the same old pro-corporate, neo-con lines as her husband; voter suppression techniques and gerrymandering by the Republicans; and disenchanted supporters of Bernie Sanders not voting for her.

Without suggesting that I have any idea what is going on, let me draw your attention to three striking essays. The first, by the excellent Russ Baker and two others, is a long analysis of Trump and his links to the Russian Mob. It seems to explain why the FBI appears to be foot-dragging in its inquiries: they're trying to protect an older operation of theirs which penetrated the Russian Mob in the USA.⁷⁵

The second, 'Tainted Leaks: Disinformation and Phishing With a Russian Nexus', shows how complex the analysis of data disinformation campaigns is becoming. It's summary is this:

'This report describes an extensive Russia-linked phishing and disinformation campaign. It provides evidence of how documents stolen from a prominent journalist and critic of Russia was tampered with and then "leaked" to achieve specific propaganda aims. We name this technique "tainted leaks." The report illustrates how the twin strategies of phishing and tainted leaks are sometimes used in combination to infiltrate civil society targets, and to seed mistrust and disinformation. It also illustrates how domestic considerations, specifically concerns about regime security, can motivate espionage operations, particularly those targeting civil society.'⁷⁶

⁷³ On Mercer and Cambridge Analytica see <<http://tinyurl.com/lkhgkdk>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexite-robbery-hijacked-democracy>>; and <<http://tinyurl.com/zcokxl8>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/04/google-democracy-truth-internet-search-facebook>>; and <<http://tinyurl.com/jd4fluh>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/26/robert-mercer-breitbart-war-on-media-steve-bannon-donald-trump-nigel-farage>>.

⁷⁴ See <<http://observer.com/2017/04/russia-bots-bernie-sanders-progressives/>> and the detailed chronology of events at <<http://tinyurl.com/yahoqk6o>> or <<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/05/trump-putin-russia-leaks-hacks-tweets-2016-election-timeline>>.

⁷⁵ <<https://whowhatwhy.org/2017/05/17/fbi-cant-tell-trump-russia-2/>>

⁷⁶ <<https://citizenlab.org/2017/05/tainted-leaks-disinformation-phish/>>

The third, by Ray McGovern (ex-CIA) and William Binney (ex-NSA), suggests that we are well and truly through the looking-glass. They tell us:

'On March 31, 2017, WikiLeaks released original CIA documents — almost completely ignored by the mainstream media — showing that the agency had *created a program allowing it to break into computers and servers and make it look like others did it* by leaving telltale signs (like Cyrillic markings, for example). The capabilities shown in what WikiLeaks calls the "Vault 7" trove of CIA documents required the creation of hundreds of millions of lines of source code. At \$25 per line of code, that amounts to about \$2.5 billion for each 100 million code lines. But the Deep State has that kind of money and would probably consider the expenditure a good return on investment for "proving" the Russians hacked into Democratic Party emails.

'In other words, it is altogether possible that the hacking attributed to Russia was actually one of several "active measures" undertaken by a cabal consisting of the CIA, FBI, NSA and Clapper — the same agencies responsible for the lame, evidence-free report of Jan. 6.'⁷⁷ (emphasis added)⁷⁸

True or what?

The first three of what will be many books about the 'post truth' era we are now apparently living in were reviewed in the *Guardian* on 23 May.⁷⁹ I am uncertain about how seriously we should take all this. This is not an entirely new phenomenon. There was a 2001 anthology, for example, *YOU ARE BEING LIED TO: the Disinformation Guide to Media Distortion, Historical Whitewashes and Cultural Myths* (New York: the Disinformation Company). The authors who contributed to this covered the spectrum from the sober and academic like Howard Zinn to the conspiratorially-minded Alex Constantine.⁸⁰ What is new is that it used to be only the left which complained about the lies of the mainstream media (MSM) and used MSM as a term of abuse. Now it's the left *and* the right. All my life the British Left has assumed that the MSM would tell lies, to conceal the embarrassing truth, to denigrate the left, support the Conservative Party and to express the opinions of the owners of the media. Rupert Murdoch's set of newspapers and the Rothermere family's *Daily Mail* have been around a long time; and their predecessors were not markedly different.

⁷⁷ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2017/05/20/the-gaping-holes-of-russia-gate/>>

⁷⁸ For an explanation of how Google is gamed to spread fake news, see <<http://tinyurl.com/ycmahxdl>> or <<https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/06/how-the-trump-russia-data-machine-games-google-to.html>>.

⁷⁹ <<http://tinyurl.com/kz863rd>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/21/post-truth-evan-davis-matthew-dancona-james-ball-fake-news-nick-cohen-review>>

⁸⁰ It included a version of my writing on New Labour as the American tendency.

The origin of this 'post truth' world in politics lies in changes to broadcasting regulations made in 1987 by the Federal Communications Commission. American broadcasters were then freed from the so-called Fairness Doctrine – the legal requirement to present multiple viewpoints on political issues.⁸¹ This opened the door to 'shock jocks' and political attack radio – Rush Limbaugh etc. – lying, in short. A decade later the Internet developed, without state regulation, and with it the growth of the conspiracy theory culture we now live in and the rise to prominence of shysters like Alex Jones.

Marshall

Jonathan Marshall, who has two excellent essays in the previous edition of *Lobster*, has three more important pieces of work on the Consortiumnews website about political lobbies in the US political system: the China lobby of the 1950s and today's Saudi and Israeli lobbies.⁸² Marshall is about as good as it gets these days.

London calling

And then there was the story claiming that 'London economy subsidises rest of UK region bar London, the south-east and the east of England in 2015/16'.⁸³

This is a classic case of blaming the victims. The economic policies of the Thatcher governments were designed to benefit the City of London, which largely funds the travel-to-London work region. The victims of those policies were British manufacturing which contracted under the pressure of the highly-valued pound and the abolition of exchange controls. The City of London (and thus the wider greater London area) boomed but much of the rest of the UK was depressed. Since when little has been done to rebuild those depressed areas except pour public spending (dole money) into them.

I am suspicious of the Conservative Party's recent enthusiasm for regional autonomy – city mayors, for example. I suspect the long-range plan is to create fiscally autonomous regions in England which would have to raise their own taxes. This would free London from the 'burden' of the rest of the UK and effectively create the city-state which some in the City of London have been dreaming of since the expansion of the City in the late 1980s after 'big bang'.

⁸¹ See <<http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1880786,00.html>>

⁸² See <<https://consortiumnews.com/tag/jonathan-marshall/>> where you will find a list of the essays by Marshall on the Consortiumnews site.

⁸³ <<http://tinyurl.com/lud7vh8>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/may/23/uk-budget-deficit-grows-to-more-than-10bn-as-people-spend-less>>

