

The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

*Thanks to Nick Must (in particular) and Garrick Alder
for editorial and proofreading assistance.*

new

Baseless

Below, under subheading **Ah yes: the USA as moral leader**, I mentioned the allegations made in 1951 by North Korea and China that the US had dropped insects and bacteria on North Korea. In 'Inside the Quest for Documents That Could Resolve a Cold War Mystery', the American novelist Nicholson Baker¹ describes his pursuit of some still classified documents from the early 1950s. His essay begins with this paragraph:

'In 2012, when I was hopeful and curious and middle-aged and eager for Cold War truth, I sent a letter to the National Archives, requesting, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, copies of 21 still-classified Air Force memos from the early 1950s. Some of the memos had to do with a Pentagon program that aimed to achieve "an Air Force-wide combat capability in biological and chemical warfare at the earliest possible date." This program, which began and ended during the Korean War, was given a code name: Project Baseless. It was assigned priority category I, as high as atomic weapons.'²

As well as describing his now eight years of trying to get these documents, Baker's essay includes a useful summary of the 1951 incident. The refusal of the US Air Force to release these documents suggests to Baker that there is probably some truth to the Chinese/North Korean claims.

¹ Perhaps best known for his 1992 novel *Vox*.

² <<https://tinyurl.com/y62dczbz>> or <<https://lithub.com/inside-the-quest-for-documents-that-could-resolve-a-cold-war-mystery/>>

new

Denial is not a river in Egypt

You may be all 'Trumped-out', tired of endless demonstrations of the obvious: the man is an obnoxious dummy.³ I've been keeping only half an eye on the subject, largely relying on John Newsinger's series of essays which have covered the torrent of books about him.⁴ If you aren't 'Trumped-out', the long essay, 'Unwanted Truths: Inside Trump's Battles With U.S. Intelligence Agencies', in the *New York Times Magazine*, is for you.⁵ In that piece there is one very striking paragraph:

'Trump's hostility [to the intelligence agencies] was not purely a matter of self-interest. As a candidate, he often railed against the foreign policies of his predecessors, Democrat and Republican alike — in particular the Iraq war, a debacle that was inseparable from the failures of the intelligence community. After it was reported in December 2016 that the C.I.A. had concluded that Russia interfered with the 2016 election on Trump's behalf, his transition team released a press statement declaring, "These are the same people that said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction." Once Trump was in the White House, a former Trump-administration official recalls: "I cannot tell you how many times he randomly raised the Iraq war. Like it morally offended him. He believed the intelligence community purposely made it all up.'"

But they did, didn't they? They 'cooked' and, where necessary, fabricated the intelligence to provide the pretext for the invasion of Iraq. This is simply – demonstrably – an historical fact. Yet as evidenced by the way this quote above is presented, the NYT – 'the newspaper of record' – as it is often described, still can't handle the truth, twenty years later.⁶

³ His inner circle are reported to have created a 'positive feedback loop' around him – his very own Potemkin village experience – feeding him good news. See <https://tinyurl.com/yyy2gcqm> or https://www.salon.com/2020/08/09/white-house-concocted-a-positive-feedback-loop-to-trick-trump-into-thinking-hes-doing-a-good-job_partner/.

⁴ <https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster79/lob79-reporting-trump.pdf>
<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster78/lob78-making-america-great.pdf>
<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster77/lob77-republican-party-end.pdf>
<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster76/lob76-donald-trump.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/08/magazine/us-russia-intelligence.html>

⁶ The closest they came appears to be a 'mea culpa' editorial in May 2004. This acknowledges errors, believing unreliable sources etc., but falls short of admitting that the US fabricated the case for war.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/world/from-the-editors-the-times-and-iraq.html>

The difficulty the NYT has with acknowledging the fact that the US fabricated intelligence on Iraq is connected to the notion of the US as a moral leader.⁷ A stunning example of this has recently come from one Simon Rosenberg, president of the New Democrats Network and the New Policy Institute, a liberal think tank based in Washington.⁸ *Inter alia* he said this:

'What we were witnessing at the time was the early stage of this ongoing operation to separate the United States from its allies and to weaken the West. In 2016, the American intelligence community warned this was happening, with their report stating that as part of its ongoing historic efforts to weaken the American-led global order, Russia launched a campaign to help Donald Trump get elected. And then the report went on to call it an insurgency against the West, and that it had to be seen that way. Trump and his campaign were mimicking Russian arguments that *America was not a truly virtuous power.*'⁹ (emphasis added)

America is 'a truly virtuous power'? How does an intelligent, articulate person manage to look at post-WW2 history and say that with a straight face?

new

Russian money talking?

In 2012 a proposal was launched to connect the British and French electricity grids via a cable through the Channel Tunnel. The company at the centre of this, ElectLink, describes the process thus:

'Labelled as "European Project of Common Interest" by the European Commission, the project has already obtained support from both countries when launched in 2012 [. . .]

Following a tender process, the Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) contracts were awarded to partners with an international reputation: Siemens has built the converter stations, Balfour Beatty/Prysmian are responsible for the manufacturing and installation of

⁷ I discuss the persistence of this ridiculous belief below, under subheading **Ah yes: the USA as moral leader.**

⁸ We are told that Rosenberg 'has served as a senior adviser to the Democratic Party at the highest levels and has worked in two presidential campaigns, including a senior role in Bill Clinton's 1992 "war room". In 2018, Rosenberg was a senior adviser to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and helped to craft the strategy which resulted in the Democrats gaining 41 seats and the House majority.' See note 5.

⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y5n9urpp>> or <<https://www.salon.com/2020/08/18/democratic-insider-simon-rosenberg-trump-is-being-coached-by-putin-to-seize-power/>>

the DC cables in the Tunnel and the underground AC cable system in the UK.¹⁰

The company website shows that much of the construction work on both sides of the Channel has been done.¹¹

Then a rival project appeared. From that project's Website:

'AQUIND Limited ("AQUIND") is developing proposals to build a new High Voltage Direct Current ("HVDC") marine and underground electric power transmission link between the south of England and Normandy in France – AQUIND Interconnector [. . . .]

In July 2018 the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy directed that AQUIND Interconnector should be treated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP"). This means that the construction and operation of AQUIND Interconnector can only be consented by a Development Consent Order ("DCO") made by the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008.

Dec 2019: AQUIND Interconnector Development Consent Order application accepted for examination

Following two rounds of consultation undertaken between January – February 2018 and February – April 2019, AQUIND submitted its DCO application for AQUIND Interconnector to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 14th November 2019. The DCO application was subsequently accepted for examination by PINS on 12th December 2019.¹²

Currently, despite all the expenditure incurred, the original plan to use the Channel Tunnel for the cable is on hold. On 7 August *The Times* reported 'a Whitehall source' saying: 'They're ready to go and no one knows what the hold-up is.'¹³ The suspicion is that the government now favours the AQUIND proposal. And who is AQUIND? Its owner is a former Russian oil executive and one of its directors is Alexander Temerko, another Russian, who has given the

¹⁰ <<https://www.getlinkgroup.com/en/our-group/eleclink/>>

¹¹ They have a YouTube channel but the contents are slight. There's really only one video on the project – available in English and French language versions. Current viewing figures are 5.4k for the English one and less than 1k for the French one. See <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKnbvZIYgpSfLMAUMY-s6Nw/videos>>.

¹² <<https://aquindconsultation.co.uk>>

¹³ 'Eurotunnel rival to energy project is left in limbo' at <<https://tinyurl.com/yxx4bx2u>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/eurotunnel-rival-to-aquind-energy-project-is-left-in-limbo-9nx9svswc>>

Tory Party £1.3 million.¹⁴

There was a time when a million pound donation to a British political party would buy a policy.¹⁵ We're about to see if the price has gone up.

At the *Guardian*, Jonathan Freedland had as the title of an essay of his, 'It's taken just 12 months for Boris Johnson to create a government of sleaze'.¹⁶ But sleaze really isn't apt. Like New Labour before them, Johnson's Tories are just copying America. And, like New Labour before them, they haven't grasped that if you copy America, *you get America*.

One of the baffling issues of the last thirty years to me is: why do they want to copy the failed state that is America? Is it just personal greed?

new

See no evil

On a single day in mid August I found the following stories on dailymaverick.co.za:

'Revealed: MI5 and MI6 are training senior spies from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt'

'"Paralysing a nation": Evidence emerges of Royal Navy's complicity in Saudi-led sea blockade of Yemen'

'Revealed: Hundreds of Saudi and Gulf military personnel trained in Britain as Yemen war continues'

'Exclusive: British government breaks inspection rules at Scottish missile factory supplying Saudi air war in Yemen – its fourth breach'

'Exclusive: Why Britain wanted to "kill" a United Nations ban on mercenaries'

'Revealed: UK government broke inspection rules at arms factory supplying Saudis in Yemen war'.¹⁷

Two things are going on here. The obvious one is the British state clinging

¹⁴ There is a profile of Temerko and more details about his donations to the Conservative Party at <https://tinyurl.com/y4ovyms2> or <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/22/enemy-of-democracy-oligarch-says-putin-wants-to-harm-uk>.

¹⁵ For example, the Labour Party was given a million pounds by an anti-hunting coalition, before the election in 1997 and then introduced its partial ban on fox-hunting. Any link between the two events was denied, of course.

See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/391831.stm.

¹⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/y6tlzxhl> or <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/07/its-taken-just-12-months-for-boris-johnson-to-create-a-government-of-sleaze>

¹⁷ Phil Miller was involved in writing all of them.

to what's left of its influence in the Middle East. These days that amounts to little more than providing money-laundering and tax-evasion services in London, private education for the (male) children of rich Arabs, and competing with the Americans to supply them with weapons and training in how to keep the natives down. The less obvious one is this: when you allow two thirds of your manufacturing base to die, as Britain has done, you can't afford to be picky about where you find contracts and work. But since this means dealing with obnoxious regimes, you want to conceal the government's role in it. Thus the headline from the end of last year at the *dailymaverick*: 'UK censors all Saudi Arabia conversations from latest release of cabinet minutes'.¹⁸

new

Lockerbie

I am not a Lockerbie expert. I've read (and forgotten) a couple of the books. If asked about it, the best I could manage would be that the Libya-dunit story was obvious and demonstrable baloney. Beyond that . . .

Which is a necessary preamble to recommending the Lockerbie writing of Ludwig De Braeckeleeer at Intel Today. De Braeckeleeer is a Professor of Physics who has been working on Lockerbie for a long time and he has concluded:

'New Evidence and Logic have led me to rewrite 30 years of History. Pan Am Flight 103 disintegrated in flight over Lockerbie on December 21 1988 because of a massive structural failure due to well-known issues of metal fatigue in section 41 and 42 of the Boeing 747 (Series 100 & 200), not because of an explosive device.'

He has laid it all out in a book which he has put on-line.¹⁹ The little I have read of it is excellent.

Do we need this?

The *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories* (eds. Michael Butter and Peter Knight) is £152 for the hardback and £32 for the ebook. Which makes it by far the most expensive book I have ever handled. For that ridiculous sum you get 48 essays, 650 pages of text (albeit nicely printed and bound) and

¹⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/y5vedujx>> or <<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-12-31-uk-censors-all-saudi-arabia-conversations-from-latest-release-of-cabinet-minutes/>> Also written by Phil Miller.

¹⁹ The book is at <<https://gosint.wordpress.com/lockerbie/>>.

another 40 or so of notes and index. I didn't ask for this book and I haven't read much of it. Conspiracy theories were mildly interesting 25 years or so ago, in the period after the TV programme *The X-Files* presented a selection of American conspiracy theories to a world-wide audience. Since when their growth through social media used by the intellectually incompetent has been depressing and boring. But then people believe all kinds of stupid stuff. Nearly half the US population apparently believes the Bible is the word of God. That people are extending their capacity for irrational belief into new areas may be of interest to sociologists, social psychologists and historians of ideas, but it isn't to me. However, you may find this enormous collection of essays more appealing than I do. See for yourself: some of the book can be read on-line.²⁰

Co-editor Peter Knight's name may be familiar. I wrote this 17 years ago.

Grooves of academe

Here come the academics, homing in on conspiracy theories. As well as the Peter Knight book reviewed in this issue by Tony Frewin, we have had recently his [Knight's] collection *Conspiracy Nation: the politics of paranoia in post-war America* (London: New York University Press, 2002) and Michael Barkun's *A Culture of Conspiracy: apocalyptic visions in contemporary America* (London: University of California Press, 2003); and all three are full of references to other academic work in this field.

Why are academics now attracted to this hitherto intellectually disreputable field? The answer is that it is only certain kinds of academics who are attracted, historians and social theorists who are influenced by postmodernism. Loosely, postmodernists have given up on true or false because it is too difficult, or because they regard the concepts as ridiculous, unintelligible or unattainable. Conspiracy theories are appealing because the subject matter, the content of said theories, is presumed to be so absurd that the true/false question can simply be ignored and their theoretical concepts can have the field. This is more difficult to do in academic subjects in which fuddy-duddy historians interested in 'What happened?' are still encamped.²¹

But if post-modernists were the first to embrace conspiracy theories as a subject, this collection shows that interest is booming in a great many other fields. The book's contributors include a research fellow in folklore in the

²⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/ybvz38j6>> or <https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Routledge_Handbook_of_Conspiracy_Theorie.html?id=8DjSDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false>

²¹ <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/online/issue46/lob46-24.htm>>

University of Tartu (Estonia), a professor at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, a professor of Classics at the University of Florida and 'a Marie Curie Fellow . . . at the University of Turin . . . [Who] deals mainly with food and cultural semiotics'.²²

The semiotics of food? I'm not even curious.

The colour of money

So now we're getting to it. Within the space of two days it was reported on salon.com that Republican candidates had darkened the skin colour of an Afro-American Democratic candidate in one advert²³ and lengthened the nose of a Jewish Democratic candidate in another.²⁴ And Republican pols are working to put Kanye West's name on the ballot in several states.²⁵ West's presence on the ballot as a third candidate, to take black votes, may be the Republicans' best hope of re-electing Trump.²⁶

Dallas again

Joe Rogan did an interview recently with the film director Oliver Stone.²⁷ Stone has a memoir out and has made an as yet unreleased documentary series about the Kennedy assassination,²⁸ based on the new information which has emerged since the Assassination Records Review Board, if I understood him correctly.²⁹ Jim DiEugenio is involved in this, Stone said.

Initially Rogan and he talked about *Platoon* – Stone's Vietnam War movie,

²² Nick Must pointed out this list of contributors to me. I hadn't bothered to read it. The list, with short biographies, runs to eleven pages and can be found at the very beginning of the book.

²³ <<https://tinyurl.com/yyfmv452>> or <<https://www.salon.com/2020/07/29/lindsey-graham-ad-shows-democratic-opponent-jaime-harrison-with-digitally-darkened-skin-tone/>>

²⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/y3edrl2x>> or <<https://www.salon.com/2020/07/28/gop-sen-david-perdues-campaign-takes-down-anti-semitic-ad-that-enlarged-jewish-opponents-nose/>>

²⁵ <<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/05/politics/kanye-west-ballot/>>

²⁶ This is, apparently, West's intention. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y65c7bpe>> or <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/randalllane/2020/08/06/exclusive-kanye-west-indicates-that-his-spoiler-campaign-is-indeed-designed-to-hurt-biden/>>.

²⁷ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOrOYUxzX3o>>

²⁸ See <<https://tinyurl.com/y3v62ztn>> or <<https://variety.com/2019/tv/global/agc-television-picks-up-worldwide-oliver-stones-jfk-destiny-betrayed-1203368818>>.

²⁹ See <<https://twitter.com/theoliverstone/status/1184528170701197316?lang=en>>.

based on his experiences there as an infantry private. Then they moved to the Kennedy assassination, the subject of Stone's *JFK*. Rogan is a hunter and knows about rifles. Like other shooters who have looked at the case, Rogan focused on CE399, the so-called 'magic bullet'. Rogan said, 'This is horseshit.' Indeed: hi-velocity rounds don't strike several bones and emerge undamaged, as CE399 is supposed to have done. But let's think beyond the ballistic absurdities. How did CE399 end up in the Parkland hospital? Most assume it was planted. But if you are going to go to the trouble of planting a bullet to link the shooting to Oswald's rifle, would you use an apparently pristine round? Surely not: you would take a bullet and, fire it through the rifle – which would place some markings on it. You would plant *that* bullet at the hospital.

How then did CE399 get there?

The late Chauncey Holt has explained this best; and his explanation incorporates another odd aspect of JFK's wounds: the shallow back wound. This is almost as peculiar as CE399. How did JFK get a back wound, about an inch deep, which contained no bullet?

Holt told us that in the months before the assassination his CIA unit was modifying Mannlicher-Carcano rounds.

'John Masen sent us several hundred bullets to be reloaded, according to very unusual specifications, which, at first glance, appeared to be pristine 163 grain bullets that had never been fired. On closer examination, it was apparent that these bullets had been fired, although there had not been the slightest deformation. The master reloader, working for us, theorised that these bullets had been fired in what is called a "cold shot"; that is fired using only a very strong primer, without powder.

We then loaded the pristine 6.5 bullets, in Wetherby .263 cases.

Furthermore, we machined out the lands and grooves in a Wetherby rifle chambered for the .263, which is equivalent to the 6.5. It was apparent to us that if the pristine 6.5 bullet, which had previously been fired from a Carcano, was fired from a Wetherby .263 rifle, without lands and grooves, the bullet, upon examination, would appear to have been fired from a Carcano. I can think of no other reason for making these modifications. Of course, the Wetherby would not be terribly accurate and the velocity would be reduced considerably [. . .]

The Wetherby rifle, absent the lands and grooves in the barrel, had been, in my opinion, designed to deliver one round, which would tie it to the rifle, planted on the sixth floor of the book depository The "pristine" 6.5 mm. bullet, discovered at Parkland Hospital, was, in my opinion, delivered by a specially modified Wetherby .263 [. . .]

This was the first shot that was heard; the very weak shot, which, I believe, was fired from the Dal-Tex building³⁰

This bullet, suggests Holt, duly fell out of the shallow wound when Kennedy's body was being handled at the hospital.

But if this is true – and we will never know for sure – one obvious question then arises: in the midst of an assassination attempt, why go to all the bother of preparing the Wetherby rifle and the doctored bullet? And at the point we step off the mainstream narrative altogether into the notion that a phoney assassination attempt on JFK, to pressure him into attacking Cuba,³¹ was piggybacked by a real assassination conspiracy.

This elegant explanation is a virtual non-starter with most of the JFK research community because, in so far as they have read Holt at all, they still regard him as a charlatan – despite my best efforts in these columns to persuade them otherwise.

No cigar, not even close

Misha Glenny has an interesting piece on bylinetimes, 'Why Would Russia Want to Interfere in British politics?'³² In that Glenny states:

'The [ISC] Russia report makes clear two things – the Tories got a lot of money from Russian oligarchs and the Intelligence and Security Committee believes there should be an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 Brexit referendum.'

I read that and thought: the Tories getting money from Russian oligarchs is the one thing conspicuously *missing* from the report. I mean, come on: from a committee with a Tory majority? Indeed, I commented on this below.³³ But still, I thought, maybe I missed something. So I went back to the report³⁴ and searched for 'Conservative' and there was one hit, in footnote 28, a reference

³⁰ Chauncey Holt, *Self-Portrait of a Scoundrel* (Oregon: TrineDay, 2013) pp. 160, 183

³¹ Holt denies advance knowledge of a phoney assassination attempt. He concluded it was that after the events. He's probably lying about that.

³² <<https://tinyurl.com/y3fqfd53>> or <<https://bylinetimes.com/2020/08/05/why-would-russia-want-to-interfere-in-british-politics/>>

³³ Under subhead **The ISC Russia report.**

³⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/yy3nc6el>> or <<https://docs.google.com/a/independent.gov.uk/viewer? a=v&pid=sites&srcid=aW5kZXBlbnRlbnQuZ292LnVrfGlzY3xneDo1Y2RhMGEyN2Y3NjM0OWFI>>

to 'socially liberal and socially conservative camps'. Did Misha Glenny read the report?

Scheuer-nuff

Michael Scheuer was leader of the team within the CIA tracking Bin Laden in the years before 9/11.³⁵ Since leaving the Agency, Scheuer has made a number of very sharp comments on the role of the Israel and Saudi lobbies in US politics. This, for example from 2009, is the kind of thing hardly anyone dares to say in political circles in the US:

'Because both U.S. political parties are wholly owned subsidiaries of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Israeli government' ³⁶

And this, from 2020, about the US military:

'The time has come to see these generals and admirals for what they are: time-serving, uniformed bureaucrats, men and women who live like kings while serving, and strut into corporation-provided fortunes after they retire. Americans have been propagandized into believing that these flag officers are nearly gods, and so applaud them for their service to the country and treat their words as if they were the product of savants.'³⁷

But then there's things like this:

'Barack Obama: Kenya-born: Iran's "man of the century": insurrectionist in the shadows; lover of Ayatollahs; collector of pallets of cash; leading Climate Change hoaxer; and, not a crime, just fact: another typical Rahm Emmanuel-like, Chicago-based, shit-bird loser [. . . .]

Hillary Clinton: All-time-champion foundation felon; inept but dedicated election-rigger; partner in husband-wife firm associated with several dozen mysterious murders; champion of the mass-murder of American babies, as well that of the Haitians abandoned by her charity; too many

³⁵ This is described at <<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2004/11/path-to-9-11-200411>>.

³⁶ Michael Scheuer, *Marching Towards Hell: America and Islam After Iraq* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009) p. xiv.

³⁷ 'Some U.S. generals and admirals are trying to destroy the republic' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y2fz9tkj>> or <<http://www.non-intervention2.com/2020/06/09/some-u-s-generals-and-admirals-are-trying-to-destroy-the-republic/>>.

more items to count.’³⁸

Scheuer has become a supporter of QAnon, the ramshackle collection of conspiracy theories which is being circulated on-line. (Doing a summary of QAnon is beyond my patience.³⁹) Jefferson Morley has written a very good analysis of Scheuer’s journey from sharp critic of the insanities of American foreign policy to his present embrace of conspiratorial idiocy.⁴⁰ And all this with a wife who remains a serving CIA officer

Things ain’t what they used to be

‘Freemasons vow to help protect the elderly during the Covid-19 crisis’ was the headline in *Freemasonry Today*, 15 April 2020.⁴¹ When I downloaded the article a large quantity of other material about the Freemasons came with it, including the striking information that there are 85 University Scheme Lodges for students.⁴² Student Freemasons?

The ISC Russia report

It is not difficult to see why the government wanted the ISC report, titled ‘*Russia*’, suppressed.⁴³ At its core is the fact that the City of London is one of the world centres for laundering dirty money. Never mind Gordon Brown’s ‘light touch’ regulation: the City offers almost zero regulation. From the report:

³⁸ ‘Those who do not believe QAnon will be mighty surprised’, <<https://tinyurl.com/yyh3rjgt>> or <<http://www.non-intervention2.com/2019/12/07/those-who-do-not-believe-qanon-will-be-mighty-surprised/>> 7 December 2019.

³⁹ The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has tried at <<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/qanon>>, as has *The Atlantic* at <<https://tinyurl.com/ybuv4wwk>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/06/qanon-nothing-can-stop-what-is-coming/610567/>>.

⁴⁰ ‘The Pro-Trump CIA Man: QAnon Madness and Upward Failure’ at <<https://tinyurl.com/y49a6l6o>> or <<https://deepstateblog.org/2020/07/17/the-pro-trump-cia-man-qanon-madness-and-upward-failure/>>. This is Morley’s new blog. Recommended.

⁴¹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y6sy8ozr>> or <<https://www.freemasonrytoday.com/ugle-sgc/ugle/freemasons-vow-to-help-protect-the-elderly-during-the-covid-19-crisis>>

⁴² Nick Must added: Using the interactive map <<https://www.universitiesscheme.com/scheme-lodges>> on their website, if you scroll out to a worldwide view it shows there are 84 university lodges – 80 in the UK, 3 in South Africa and 1 in the Caribbean.

⁴³ <<https://www.scribd.com/document/469886680/Russia-Report>>

para 49 'The UK welcomed Russian money, and few questions – if any – were asked about the provenance of this considerable wealth. It appears that the UK Government at the time held the belief (more perhaps in hope than expectation) that developing links with major Russian companies would promote good governance by encouraging ethical and transparent practices, and the adoption of a law-based commercial environment.

para 50 What is now clear is that it was in fact counter-productive, in that it offered ideal mechanisms by which illicit finance could be recycled through what has been referred to as the London "laundromat". The money was also invested in extending patronage and building influence across a wide sphere of the British establishment – PR firms, charities, political interests, academia and cultural institutions were all willing beneficiaries of Russian money, contributing to a "reputation laundering" process. In brief, Russian influence in the UK is "the new normal", and there are a lot of Russians with very close links to Putin who are well integrated into the UK business and social scene, and accepted because of their wealth. This level of integration – in "Londongrad" in particular – means that any measures now being taken by the Government are not preventative but rather constitute damage limitation.'

Apart from state employees, the ISC heard from Anne Applebaum, William Browder, Christopher Donnelly, Edward Lucas and Christopher Steele. Applebaum I have written about below; the American Bill Browder is well known as a major Putin critic; ex-SIS officer and Russia specialist Steele wrote the notorious dossier on Donald Trump; and Lucas currently writes for *The Times* and the *Mail*.⁴⁴ Christopher Donnelly I had to look up. He is deeply involved in both the Integrity Initiative and its parent body the Institute for Statecraft,⁴⁵ and he spent fourteen years of his career as a 'Special Adviser for Central and Eastern European Affairs to the Secretary General of NATO'.⁴⁶

I agree with the report's view of Russia: as well as being a 'conventional' great power, with the usual problems and attitudes that come with that, it's a totalitarian kleptocracy which is trying to do to the Western democracies what it has done to its own population: create confusion and cynicism about the political system. Here's Anne Applebaum on the Russia of today:

⁴⁴ Here is his comment in the *Mail* the morning after the report was published.
<<https://tinyurl.com/y49sed2a>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-8546559/Scalding-rebuke-years-naivety-EDWARD-LUCAS-presents-damning-verdict-Kremlin-interference.html>>

⁴⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/yy2pv3zx>> or <<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/derelict-crumbling-scots-mill-shadowy-13674992>>

⁴⁶ <<https://www.nato.int/cv/is/sp-adv/donnelly.htm>>

'It is incredible, but a group of cynical, corrupt ex-KGB officers with access to vast quantities of illegal money—operating in a country with religious discrimination, extremely low church attendance, and a large Muslim minority—have somehow made themselves into the world's biggest promoters of "Christian values," opposing feminism, gay rights, and laws against domestic violence, and supporting "white" identity politics.'⁴⁷

This is true, isn't it?

The one thing in the report which surprised me was the reference to the piece in BuzzFeed to which I referred in *Lobster* 74.⁴⁸ BuzzFeed cited in a parliamentary report?

Some of the report is redacted, of course, and there's a game to be played guessing what is missing. Take this paragraph. What do you suppose was removed from it?

para 12 [. . . .] 'Most surprising, perhaps, was the extent to which much of the work of the Intelligence Community is focused on ***. We had, at the outset of our Inquiry, believed they would be taking a rather broader view, given that it is clearly acknowledged that the Russians use a whole-of-state approach.'

I wrote the above paras about the Russia report the day it was published and concluded with this para:

But the *really* conspicuous absence from the report – written by a committee with a Conservative majority – was any reference to Russian donations to the Conservative Party. These now run into the millions.⁴⁹

However, the next day *The Times* had as its lead story the fact that two of the Conservative members of the committee had received money from Russian citizens who were/are based in the UK and *Daily Mail* published a list of other Conservative MPs who have taken money from Russians.⁵⁰ This data had first been published in 2019 by Open Democracy. Some of these rich Russians have bought British citizenship under the Investor Visa (Tier 1) scheme (the Rules

⁴⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/y2vmmg7c>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/catherine-belton-putins-people/614212/>>

⁴⁸ <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster74/lob74-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>> under subhead **Things Russian**, starting on p. 32.

⁴⁹ See, for example, from 2019 <<https://tinyurl.com/yxtorgxl>> or <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/revealed-russian-donors-have-stepped-tory-funding/>>, wherein it states 'The Conservatives have received more than £3.5 million from Russian funders since 2010.'

⁵⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/y3gb7r2e>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8551715/The-14-Tory-ministers-two-intelligence-committee-MPs-taken-Russian-linked-donations.html>>

Don't Apply to the Rich Who Bring Money to London scheme).⁵¹

Dr. Julian Lewis MP

This is former Labour MP Denis MacShane on the new chair of the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee:

'Julian Lewis first entered politics in the 1970s, when he secretly pretended to be a Labour activist in order to infiltrate the Newham Labour Party. He was acting as a secret agent of the well-financed Freedom Association, which funded strike-breakers and clandestine operations against the Labour left and communist [sic] Party.

Newham militants were getting rid of a rightwing Labour MP called Reg Prentice and the young Lewis, then a graduate student at St Antony's Oxford, decided to save Prentice. He failed in that task, but a taste for conspiracy and secrecy entered his soul.'⁵²

St Antony's College, Oxford again.⁵³

It was presumably during Lewis' attempt to take control of Newham Labour Party that he met Brian Crozier. Crozier was a founder member of the Freedom Association and in his memoir, *Free Agent* (London: HarperCollins, 1993)⁵⁴ he writes of that period:

'To avoid the delays implicit in formal [Freedom Association] Council meetings, a small group of us decided to function as an informal action committee, without reporting to the Council.' (p. 118)

The members of the 'action committee' were Winston Churchill MP, John Gouriet (who later headed the Freedom Association) and the writer Robert

⁵¹ On the day the report appeared, Paul Lashmar sent out this email:

'While the "Russia Report" rightly condemns government and the intelligence agencies for not investigating malign online influences on the Brexit referendum, some experts did, including my City colleagues Dan Mercea and Marco Bastos. See their 2017 report:
<https://www.city.ac.uk/news/2017/october/13,500-strong-twitterbot-army-disappeared-shortly-after-eu-referendum,-research-reveals>

See interview in my film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijZdKck0s7U>.'

⁵² <<https://tinyurl.com/y3cntj3n>> or <<https://www.thearticle.com/julian-and-john-two-working-class-jewish-tories-the-old-etonians-dislike>>

⁵³ Anne Applebaum also went there. See below under subheading **Ah yes: the USA as moral leader**. The 'Alumni news' section of the College's website provides some names at <<https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/alumni-development/news>>.

⁵⁴ Reviewed in *Lobster* 26.

Moss.⁵⁵ Using 'action committee' is a wink to the spook-wise, for that term is used by intelligence officers to describe the planning of covert ops. What this 'action committee' did is not known. Crozier, who is quite open about some of his career, says nothing about its activities.

Crozier and Lewis went on to work together in the 1980s, in the Coalition for Peace Though Security, most famous for its various stunts against CND.⁵⁶

In all this the question arises: for whom was Crozier working? And I can do no better than quote my review of Crozier's memoir, *Free Agent in Lobster* 26.

'Crozier would deny that he worked for anybody: ". . . at all times I remained independent, executing only tasks that were in line with my own objectives." (pp. xii, xiii) But on p. xii of the preface he tells us he "worked with" the CIA, MI6 and IRD; on p. 20 he tells us that briefings he had been getting from an MI6 officer secured for him the job as editor of the *Economist's* Foreign Report; on p. 51 he writes of a "part-time consultancy for IRD"; and on p. 86 that IRD "put an office at [his] disposal". He also boasts of "dealings with the secret services of many other countries including France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Israel, Morocco, Iran, Argentina, Chile and Taiwan". As early as p. 20 it is hard to avoid concluding that Crozier is describing how he was recruited by MI6; and his "independence" is finally revealed as simply a cover story on p. 92 when he writes of contacting his main "case officer" in the CIA.

Independents or genuine free-lance journalists don't have case officers.'

Back to the future

The ransomware attack on Garmin reported in late July,⁵⁷ and the related reports of other ransomware attacks, lead to one obvious conclusion: as much as possible of society's critical infrastructure – health, power generation and

⁵⁵ Nick Must added: An interesting article comparing Moss's current career as a new age dream coach with his previous incarnation as a right-wing propagandist can be found at <<https://tinyurl.com/y572yklo>> or <<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/09/21/weaponized-dreams-the-curious-case-of-robert-moss/>>.

⁵⁶ See <https://powerbase.info/index.php/Coalition_for_Peace_through_Security>. Nick Must added: On the early history of the Coalition for Peace Though Security see Duncan Campbell's 'The Fruitcake Right' from *New Statesman* 12 March 1982 (archived on Campbell's website at <<https://tinyurl.com/y3u3dtjf>> or <<https://www.duncancampbell.org/menu/journalism/newstatesman/newstatesman-1982/the%20fruitcake%20right.pdf>>).

⁵⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/y5rb5pgn>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8562805/Will-Garmin-pay-10-Million-ransom-order-bring-end-ransomware-attack-three-days.html>>

travel, for starters – should go off-line. It all used to be off-line and could return to its previous status. Chances of anything so sensible happening? Zero, in my estimation.

The DNC data: was it a hack or a leak?

I keep running into the issue of Did the Russians hack the Democratic National Committee? This question appeared to have been answered years ago. Craig Murray was quoted in 2016:

'I know who leaked them. I've met the person who leaked them, and they are certainly not Russian and it's an insider. It's a leak, not a hack; the two are different things.'⁵⁸

A year later, asked about the 'hack', Murray replied differently:

'Well, through my association with WikiLeaks, I know for sure that it was a leak and not a hack. As Bill Binney, former technical director of the NSA, has pointed out, were it actually a hack the NSA would be able to pinpoint it. In fact, there is no such evidence. This is not something WikiLeaks got from a foreign state or from hackers. No, there is no doubt at all that this was an internal leak. Besides which, we are talking about two separate things in the DNC emails and the Podesta emails, so it would be wrong to presume that there is only one leaker.'⁵⁹ (emphasis added)

This, you might think, would be enough. Not among computer/internet experts it isn't. Duncan Campbell⁶⁰ published an essay in 2018⁶¹ in which he claimed to show that Binney's belief that the DNC data had been *leaked* was wrong. However, Binney and Campbell met to discuss the issue – they are pictured together in the article – and Binney is quoted as being convinced by Campbell's analysis and now believes the DNC data was *hacked*. Campbell's essay was followed by long essays by others supporting and elaborating his central

⁵⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/jz4s3wv>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/10/cia-concludes-russia-interfered-to-help-trump-win-election-report>>

⁵⁹ <http://russiahouse.org/current_news.php?language=eng&id_current=2251>

⁶⁰ The Duncan Campbell who first appeared in the late 1970s with ground-breaking stories about the British secret state; not the *Guardian's* Duncan Campbell, notably involved in the Murdoch-*News of the World*-phone-hacking story.

⁶¹ 'Briton ran pro-Kremlin disinformation campaign that helped Trump deny Russian links' at <<https://tinyurl.com/ybhcxqxp>> or <<https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252445769/Briton-ran-pro-Kremlin-disinformation-campaign-that-helped-Trump-deny-Russian-links>>

conclusions.⁶²

And yet: in an on-line conference in July this year,⁶³ William Binney restated that, having examined the DNC emails posted by Wikileaks, it was clear to him that the computer files were loaded onto some kind of storage device.⁶⁴ And Murray is still quoting Binney:

' . . . who told me that it was impossible that any large amount of data should be moved across the internet from the USA, without the NSA both seeing it happen in real time and recording it. If there really had been a Russian hack, the NSA would have been able to give the time of it to a millisecond. That the NSA did not have that information was proof the transfer had never happened, according to Binney. What had happened, Binney deduced, was that the files had been downloaded locally, probably to a thumb drive.'⁶⁵

Meanwhile, back at the story of the unsolved murder of DNC employee Seth Rich, argued by some to have been the leaker in the DNC:

'Mr. [Edward] Butowsky stumbled into the RCH [Russia collusion hoax] crosshairs after Ellen Ratner, a news analyst for Fox News and the White House correspondent for Talk Media News, contacted him in the Fall of 2016 about a meeting she had with Mr. Assange. Ms. Ratner's brother, the late Michael Ratner, was an attorney who had represented Mr. Assange. According to Ms. Ratner, she made a stop in London during a return flight from Berlin, and she met with Mr. Assange for approximately six hours in the Ecuadorean embassy. **Ms. Ratner said Mr. Assange told her that Seth Rich and his brother, Aaron, were responsible for releasing the DNC emails to Wikileaks.** Ms. Ratner said Mr. Assange wanted the information relayed to Seth's parents, as it might explain the motive for

⁶² 'Without integrity: the debunking of the metadata debunkers' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y6q57flw>> or <<https://www.emptywheel.net/2018/07/31/without-integrity-the-debunking-of-the-metadata-debunkers/>> and 'As "DNC hacked itself" conspiracy theory collapses, key backer of claim exposed as UK troll' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y3yt9wsa>> or <<https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20180802/07182740351/as-dnc-hacked-itself-conspiracy-theory-collapses-key-backer-claim-exposed-as-uk-troll.shtml>>.

⁶³ Commented on by Murray on his blog:

'Despite the fact that \$32 million Mueller Inquiry could find "no concrete evidence" of the hack and CrowdStrike, the source of the original allegation, have admitted there is "no evidence of exfiltration", the media and establishment persists in the "Russian hacking" narrative. It is stated as accepted fact in the Russophobic report of the Intelligence and Security Committee in the UK. Yet it is simply untrue, and can be proven to be untrue.'

⁶⁴ See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t4m7VZOFMc>>. Watch from 4.30 onwards.

⁶⁵ <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/07/cold-wars-and-profit/>>

Seth's murder.

Upon her return to the United States, Ms. Ratner asked Mr. Butowsky to contact the Rich family and relay the information from Mr. Assange, apparently because Ms. Ratner did not want her involvement to be made public. In the two months that followed, Mr. Butowsky did not attempt to contact the Rich family, but he grew increasingly frustrated as the DNC and #Resistance "journalists" blamed the Russian government for the email leak.'⁶⁶ (emphasis added)

Ellen Ratner has not commented recently. But in 2016 she said that Assange told her that the leak of DNC files had been internal and not a hack by the Russians. With the exception of writers at consortiumnews.com,⁶⁷ everybody and their cousin in the American centrist media has denounced the Rich story as nonsense.⁶⁸ However in 2016 Julian Assange dropped a large hint that Rich was the source. He said:

' "Whistleblowers often take very significant efforts to bring us material and often at very significant risks. There's a 27-year-old who works for the DNC and who was shot in the back, murdered, just a few weeks ago, for unknown reasons as he was walking down the streets in Washington."

When asked if Rich was a WikiLeaks source, Assange refused to comment, saying the organisation does not reveal sources. Assange was then asked why he was commenting on Rich's murder. He said:

"We have to understand how high the stakes are in the US, and that our sources face serious risks. That's why they come to us, so we can protect their anonymity." '⁶⁹

Thanks to the Butowsky lawsuit, this one might just have acquired 'legs'.

⁶⁶ This is quoting from the papers of a lawsuit brought by Edward Butowski which are at <<https://tinyurl.com/y3jnu5ww>> or <https://ncn5qbovydygets7y5knmrtmrl5y3ldfph4vgr3nxzapga4fwrq.arweave.net/aJvYBdXA8GJOT_46prIzZFfcbWMrz8qaO23yB5gcLaM>.

⁶⁷ See <<https://consortiumnews.com/tag/seth-rich/>>.

⁶⁸ Detailed at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Seth_Rich>.

⁶⁹ 'Seth Rich murder: Julian Assange suggests link to DNC emails leak, WikiLeaks offers reward for information about staffer's death' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y3l7nn8r>> or <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/seth-rich-murder-julian-assange-suggests-link-to-dnc-emails-leak-wikileaks-offers-reward-for-information-about-staffers-death-34955137.html>>.

5G

Advocates of 5G always fall back on the same position: the radiation from 5G is safe by official standards. But how did those standards come to be set where they are? It may not come as much of a shock to learn that they seem to have been set low courtesy of the US military. A declassified 1976 US Army document, R. L. Adams, and R. A. Williams, *Biological Effects of Electromagnetic Radiation (Radiowaves and Microwaves) – Eurasian Communist Countries*,⁷⁰ includes these two paragraphs:

'If the more advanced nations of the West are strict in the enforcement of stringent exposure standards, there could be unfavorable effects on industrial output and military function. The Eurasian Communist countries could, on the other hand, give lip service to strict standards, but allow their military to operate without restriction and thereby gain the advantage in electronic warfare techniques and the development of antipersonnel applications. [page vii]

– and –

Should subsequent research result in adoption of the Soviet standard by other countries, industries whose practices are based on less stringent safety regulations, could be required to make costly modifications in order to protect workers. Recognition of the 0.01 mW/cm² standard could also limit the application of new technology by making the commercial exploitation of some products unattractive because of increased costs imposed by the need for additional safeguards.' [page 24]

Ware's comeuppance?

There is a very striking piece on *Middle East Eye* by Peter Osborne and David Hearst, 'The killing of Jeremy Corbyn',⁷¹ in which the authors detail some of the smear campaign run in the British media against Corbyn.⁷² The essay's

⁷⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/tueuash>> or <https://www.magdahavas.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/BIOLOGICAL_EFFECTS_OF_ELECTROMAGNETIC_RADIATION-RADIOWAVES_AND_MICROWAVES-EURASIAN_COMMUNIST_COUNTRIES.pdf>

⁷¹ <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/killing-jeremy-corbyn>>

⁷² Osborne was the author of a detailed critique of the Tom Bower biography of Corbyn. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y4bsmrmv>> or <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/tom-bower-book-dangerous-hero-jeremy-corbyn-labour-leader-truth>>. In that he said he had a longer list of errors Bower had made, available on request. That list was printed in *Lobster* 77 at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster77/lob77-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>> under subhead **Bower on Corbyn**.

subtitle is 'The former Labour leader was the victim of a carefully planned and brutally executed political assassination'; but the authors don't name the assassins. Of course they know who they are: the Israel lobby in this country. But in the current climate even messers Osborne and Hearst can't write this.

This climate may change when (if) John Ware's libel suit against Jeremy Corbyn gets to court.⁷³ I say 'if' because Corbyn has crowd-funded £300,000 to fight the case. This offers the delicious prospect not only of Ware's notorious Panorama piece about anti-semitism in the Labour Party being picked through, but of the whole conspiracy against Corbyn being revealed in court. And – who knows? – maybe some of Ware's earlier journalism will be examined. Two examples of this have been covered in *Lobster*: his recycling of the MoD lies about Colin Wallace and his portrait of the politics of Brent described in Simon Matthews' 'Baa baa white sheep'.⁷⁴

My guess is that, faced with the prospect of being examined under oath, Ware will find some way of backing out and the case against Corbyn will not proceed. In which case Jeremy Corbyn will have £300,000 to do something with. The obvious thing would be to use it to fight other legal actions against the British media. It came across loud and clear in the recent BBC documentary series about the Rupert Murdoch dynasty that the only reason the phone-hacking incident of 2010/11 ended in victory for the hackers' victims was the financial backing of the law suits provided by Max Mosley. Without that money – £3 million Mosley claimed in the programme – little or none of it could have happened.

Same old

In the *Telegraph* one Bryan Young reviewed the newly published *The China Journals* by Hugh Trevor-Roper.⁷⁵ This is a diary of the historian's 1965 trip to China as a member of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU). Trevor-Roper returned and wrote an exposé of the SACU as a Communist front organisation. To do this he had help from Dick White, former head of MI6. He gave the piece to *Encounter* but libel issues prevented its publication. It is published in this new book. Does Young mention that *Encounter* was CIA front

⁷³ Ware is also suing Press-gang.org and Jewish Voice for Labour (see <<https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/statement/jvl-is-defending-a-libel-action/>>). But the Corbyn one is going to get the attention.

⁷⁴ See 'Where's Ware?' at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/issue39.php>>.

⁷⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/y8yknay>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/mad-rich-british-left-wingers-became-chinas-useful-idiot/>>

organisation? No. Communist fronts the *Telegraph* will expose; CIA fronts are, apparently, still unmentionable.

Friedman

In a very good essay on the failing economies and societies of America and the UK,⁷⁶ Pankaj Mishra wrote that the late Milton Friedman, Nobel prize winner for economics and one of the fathers of what is called monetarism, 'claimed that postwar Japan and South Korea were exemplars of open, competitive markets'. He did indeed. I commented on that fact in *Lobster 72*.⁷⁷

I am still astonished that Friedman was taken seriously – but also that he (a) didn't know anything about Japan's post-war economic development; (b) knew something and chose to lie about it; or (c) was simply unable to bear the cognitive dissonance involved in acknowledging the reality of the Japanese economy.

COVID

I don't buy any of the conspiracy theories about COVID-19. However there are scientific papers from 2015 which suggest (to this non-scientist) that the virus might have been man-made. Check these out:

* <<https://tinyurl.com/varz3un>>⁷⁸

* <<https://www.nature.com/articles/nm.3985>>

To date there has been one post-COVID paper denying the man-made thesis apparently inferable from those papers:

* <<https://tinyurl.com/wcxeg8c>>.⁷⁹

Five months of lockdown etc. later, why have these papers received no attention from the major media?

⁷⁶ 16 July 2020

<<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n14/pankaj-mishra/flailing-states>>

⁷⁷ Under subhead **How the chips fall** at

<<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster72/lob72-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>>.

⁷⁸ <<https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/lab-made-coronavirus-triggers-debate-34502>>

⁷⁹ <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/22221751.2020.1733440>>

Conspiracist ramblings

'Conspiracy theory' has long been useful as a means of dismissing something as intellectual junk without the need to examine it. This, indeed, was the objective of the notorious 1967 CIA memo which instructed its personnel to refer to criticism of the Warren Commission as conspiracy theories – the event from which the current use of the term really dates.⁸⁰ The related term 'conspiracist' – someone who believes in or promotes a conspiracy theory – is not nearly so ubiquitous but I noticed it used to diss the investigative journalist Carole Cadwalladr on Guido Fawkes.⁸¹

Those of us interested in theories about conspiracies rather than conspiracy theories (to use Anthony Summers' distinction) aren't helped by the sloppy stuff done on our side of the debate. Take 'President Kennedy's Assassination: Reporter Killed'.⁸² The author writes:

'Jack Ruby said, "Take me to Washington and I'll talk. If I stay in Dallas, I'm dead man." He said that to Earl Warren, Gerald Ford and Leon Jaworski of the Warren Commission.'

No he didn't. The closest he got to it this was:

'I want to tell the truth, and I can't tell it here. I can't tell it here. Does that make sense to you? . . . Gentlemen, my life is in danger here.'⁸³

Which comes to the same thing but still: since the testimony is available on-line, why not use it?

Later in the piece he states 'We are headed to an inflationary Depression far worse than the 1930s when 3 million Americans starved to death.' *They did?*

An inquiry we won't see

Apropos the 'suppressed' report by the House of Commons Intelligence and

⁸⁰ Text at <<https://tinyurl.com/ydgd3pph>> or <<https://steemit.com/history/@thelastheretik/cia-coined-and-weaponized-the-label-conspiracy-theory>>.

You might think that this memorandum would be fairly central to any discussion of the current prevalence of conspiracy theories, yet is not indexed in the new *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories* (briefly reviewed in this issue). Which says quite a lot about said *Handbook*.

⁸¹ <<https://order-order.com/2020/07/13/political-activist-group-behind-independent-sage/>>

⁸² <<https://tinyurl.com/y6je6qtc>> or <<https://vidrebel.wordpress.com/2020/07/15/president-kennedys-assassination-reporter-killed/>>

⁸³ <https://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/russ/testimony/ruby_j1.htm>

Security Committee into Russian interference in the last British general election, Tony Frewin made the point to me that there has been – and will be – no inquiry into Israeli interference in the same election: viz the antisemitism-in-Labour-campaign they ran in the months – no, years – leading up to it.

Money talking

'Exclusive: Property tycoons gave Tories more than £11m in less than a year: Conservatives accused of being "in hock" to developers as donations from property and construction soars amid "cash for access" accusations against housing secretary Robert Jenrick.'

Thus the headline of the latest research by Peter Geoghegan and Jenna Corderoy in the 'Dark Money' series on Open Democracy.⁸⁴

As far as I can see, this £11 million worth of donations has not been thought worthy of mention by the *Telegraph*,⁸⁵ *The Times*, or even the *Guardian*. It did, however, make it into the *Independent*.⁸⁶ Those donations explain a good deal about the current Conservative Party – particularly Boris Johnson's enthusiasm for reducing planning controls on building.

I used to think that there was only one meaningful political dictum: my enemy's enemy is my friend. But this latest report reminds me that there is another: money talks and bullshit walks – memorably caught on videotape being said by one of the Congressmen entrapped by John DeLorean when he became an informant for the FBI.⁸⁷

Skripal

There is lots of critical analysis of the Skripal affair – ranging from doubt cast

⁸⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/y757rx2g>> or <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/exclusive-property-tycoons-gave-tories-more-than-11m-in-less-than-a-year/>>

⁸⁵ It did carry a similar story in 2011. See <<https://tinyurl.com/ya654wng>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/hands-off-our-land/8754027/Conservatives-given-millions-by-property-developers.html>>.

⁸⁶ <<https://tinyurl.com/y7rudsk3>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tory-party-property-developer-boris-johnson-conservative-donors-a9588381.html>>

⁸⁷ Or so my memory says. However I can't find the source on that and Google tells me that it – or something very like it – was said by a Congressman during the Abscam affair. See Robert Blecker, 'Beyond 1984: Undercover in America–Serpico to Abscam', p. 884 at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7m2c6lq>> or <https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1462&context=fac_articles_chapters>.

on the official British version, to flat out denial that the Russians had anything to do with this and the claim that the whole thing was a false flag operation. Craig Murray has written a fair bit on this, there is lots of discussion at Moon of Alabama,⁸⁸ Blogmire⁸⁹ and documents with links to the major themes of the dissenters are at Wikispooks.⁹⁰ There are apparent anomalies and oddities in the official story. Here's one of the latter described by Craig Murray.

'The very first person to discover the Skripals ill on a park bench in Salisbury just happened to be the Chief Nurse of the British Army, who chanced to be walking past them on her way back from a birthday party. How lucky was that? The odds are about the same as the chance of my vacuum cleaner breaking down just before James Dyson knocks at my door to ask for directions. There are very few people indeed in the UK trained to give nursing care to victims of chemical weapon attack, and of all the people who might have walked past, it just happened to be the most senior of them!'⁹¹

Two things about this. The small thing is that the Chief Nurse wasn't the first person to discover the Skripals: it was the Chief Nurse's daughter, who noticed them collapsed on a park bench and alerted her mother, the nurse.⁹² The bigger thing is this: if it was a British provocation, a false flag, why would its authors include having the Chief Nurse of the British Army on the scene? How did that idea get through the planning meeting when it was mooted?

Which leads to a bigger thing: if it was a British false flag, how did it work? To start with the basics: how did its planners know the GRU men would be in Salisbury?⁹³ Do they have the kind of penetration of the GRU that would give them knowledge of GRU officers' travel intentions? That seems profoundly unlikely (not least because, had they this knowledge, the British spooks would not have had to wait for Bellingcat to identify the two GRU officers⁹⁴). So what did the British spooks do in this alternative version? Follow the GRU men

⁸⁸ <<https://www.moonofalabama.org/>>

⁸⁹ <<https://www.theblogmire.com/category/skripal-case/>>

⁹⁰ <https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Skripal_Affair#Related_Documents>

⁹¹ <<https://tinyurl.com/yah8h7v6>> or <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2019/03/pure-ten-points-i-just-cant-believe-about-the-official-skripal-narrative/comment-page-4/>>

⁹² <<https://tinyurl.com/yazu865k>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jan/20/novichok-poisoning-victims-sergei-skripal-first-helped-by-teenage-girl>>

⁹³ Some of the sceptics dispute that it was the two named GRU men. But they were interviewed and acknowledged being at Salisbury – on a tourist trip, they said.

⁹⁴ See – one of many – <<https://tinyurl.com/yyoeunub>> or <<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2019/10/14/averyanov-chepiga/>>.

around the UK and *improvise* the Skripal events when they turned up in Salisbury? I mean, *really*?

Huh?

The last place I would have expected to find an essay titled 'When the CIA Interferes in Foreign Elections: A Modern-Day History of American Covert Action' would be *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the US Council on Foreign Relations.⁹⁵ But there it is, the lead story on 21 June.⁹⁶ Even though the author of the essay argues that the Agency no longer interferes in foreign elections, this is still a very striking event. I have no idea what its appearance in those august columns signifies.

The problem of sources

In this column in the previous *Lobster* I made a passing reference to the White Helmets, the group in the Syrian war which has been variously praised as humanitarian or condemned as propaganda. I subsequently came across an article about them which illustrates the problem of sources on the Net. The article is 'After His Mysterious Death, the Media Scrambles to Get its Story Straight About White Helmets Founder James Le Mesurier' by Vanessa Beeley.⁹⁷

The article reports claims that White Helmets were organ trafficking. The source for this claim is a 250+ page report published by the Foundation for the Study of Democracy.⁹⁸ As the Foundation's url suggests, this is a Russian group. Since Russia is part of the Syrian war, this is not a source we can trust. Beeley also claims that the White Helmets persecuted civilians. That claim links

⁹⁵ Spotted by Garrick Alder.

⁹⁶ <<http://archive.vn/WTvmP>>

⁹⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/y9jdqea5>> or <<https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2019/12/03/after-his-mysterious-death-the-media-scrambles-to-get-its-story-straight-about-white-helmets-founder-james-le-mesurier/>>

This Strategic Culture Foundation version of her article is (what used to be called) a reprint of the original at <<https://www.mintpressnews.com/mysterious-death-media-scrambles-white-helmets-founder-james-le-mesurier/263142/>> where, her self-penned bio follows the piece. In that bio it states: 'In 2018 Vanessa was named one of the 238 most respected journalists in the UK by the British National Council for the Training of Journalists.' She means the National Council for the Training of Journalists and the list to which she refers is at <<https://tinyurl.com/y92ns4ew>>.

⁹⁸ <<http://democracysciencefund.ru/userfiles/THE%20%20WHITE%20HELMETS%20.pdf>>

to a *Russia Today* piece by Beeley herself.⁹⁹ In that she writes, 'The obviously sectarian aspect of the group has been admitted by the British mercenary and founder of the White Helmets, James Le Mesurier'. Oh, really? The source for *this* claim is an essay, 'Syrian Civil Defense: A Framework for Demobilization and Reconstruction in Post-Conflict Syria' in the *Georgetown Security Studies Review*.¹⁰⁰ But the only reference to Le Mesurier in that essay is this:

'James Le Mesurier – the former British military officer behind Mayday Rescue, which trains and equips these teams – believes that their successes in rebuilding and maintaining communities in conflict could result in their serving as a "reconstruction carta for Syria"¹⁰¹ after hostilities end.'

Is that admitting 'the obviously sectarian aspect of the group'? No, it is not.

So, for the key charges in her essay Beeley offers herself, a Russian source and a wild misinterpretation (let's be generous) of a third. So her apparently well sourced essay isn't, in fact, well sourced at all.

Who is Beeley? She is on Twitter at <<http://twitter.com/VanessaBeeley>> and is a member of the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media with a group of British academics, of whom the best known is probably Professor David Miller.¹⁰² Looking a little further, Beeley turns up at UK Column where she concludes one article thus:

'The questions must be asked: Who is really in charge of the Covid-19 response? Who benefits most? Who will suffer most from the long term consequences? And who will provide respite from those consequences when the "pandemic" has disappeared from view?'¹⁰³

Do those scare quotes round pandemic tell us that Beeley is sceptical that there is a pandemic at all? It isn't clear; in another essay she uses pandemic without the scare quotes.¹⁰⁴ If she's sceptical, she's at the right place, for other

⁹⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y7r3uce3>> or <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/472844-white-helmets-syria-terrorists-aid/?fbclid=IwAR0a8jtpv2mF7izQfXfWyxJAipx7r1m8sMYIk4yH7rah0DK3Zb1Fz6jTD_Q>

¹⁰⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/ycm8a345>> or <<https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2015/05/13/syrian-civil-defense-a-framework-for-demobilization-and-reconstruction-in-post-conflict-syria/>>

¹⁰¹ By 'carta' he means 'charter'.

¹⁰² <<http://syriapropagandamedia.org/about/members>>

¹⁰³ <<https://tinyurl.com/y7qx88by>> or <<https://www.ukcolumn.org/article/who-controls-british-government-response-covid19-part-one>>

¹⁰⁴ <<https://www.rt.com/op-ed/484185-white-helmets-coronavirus-syria/>>

writers at UK Column are suspicious of the pandemic.

UK Column is the latest project of Brian Gerrish, the author of 'Common Purpose Exposed', which purported to expose the great Common Purpose conspiracy. Of itself that organisation says: 'Common Purpose UK is a not-for-profit organization that develops leaders who can cross boundaries. This enables them to solve complex problems both in organizations and in cities.'¹⁰⁵ For example, they run a program called Meridian, for senior officials.

'As leaders become more senior, they find themselves delivering complex change with ever more diverse stakeholders. More than ever, they need to be able to collaborate with different people and understand the wider context in which they operate.

Meridian develops leaders with the skills, networks and understanding to make an impact in their organization and across their city. The programme uses a real-world experiential approach. We convene leaders from every corner of the city who share open accounts of their leadership challenges. We take participants to places and organizations where they can explore how leaders approach complex change in different contexts. On each programme, we guarantee a diverse mix of leaders from the private, public and NGO sectors.'¹⁰⁶

This course isn't cheap – around £5,000, apparently. However the Net is strikingly short of any signs that people have ever found a Common Purpose course to be useless or expensive – and one would expect that must happen occasionally. The courses sound harmless and may even be as useful and inspirational as so many do seem to claim.¹⁰⁷

But according to Gerrish:

' . . . evidence shows that Common Purpose is rather more than a Charity "empowering" people and communities. In fact, CP is an elitist pro-EU political organisation helping to replace democracy in UK, and worldwide, with CP chosen "elite" leaders. In truth, their hidden networks and political objectives are undermining and destroying our democratic society and are threatening "free will" in adults, teenagers and children. Their work is funded by public money and big business, including international

¹⁰⁵ <<https://commonpurpose.org/uk/>>

¹⁰⁶ <<https://commonpurpose.org/leadership-programmes/meridian/>>

¹⁰⁷ Nick Must noted that a recent Meridian course based in Dublin was priced at €5500. <https://commonpurpose.org/media/7319/common-purpose-meridian_dublin_i_2019.pdf> For the Global Leaders Programme (just started in June) it's £8,000 +VAT. <<https://commonpurpose.org/leadership-programmes/january/>>

banks.’¹⁰⁸

Does Mr Gerrish offer evidence? Not really. Of the Common Purpose network believed to exist by Gerrish, there was one alleged sighting detected around the Leveson Inquiry into the media.¹⁰⁹ And – who knows? – it may function as a kind of contemporary Freemasonry, though little evidence has been offered of this. But as for Gerrish’s list of its *aims*, for this he has no evidence.

The nub

Amidst the oceans of media coverage of Chancellor the Exchequer Rishi Sunak’s package of measures to revive the COVID-stricken British economy, the sharpest comment came from former TV producer and journalist Janet Street-Porter:

‘Nice try Rishi, but if saving our economy relies on bribing us all to going back to buying throwaway fashion, half-price Nando’s and over-priced houses from each other, maybe we have the wrong kind of economy.’¹¹⁰

What could possibly go wrong?

Frank Partnoy wrote a very interesting book about his experiences selling financial derivatives for Morgan Stanley in the 1990s.¹¹¹ If he didn’t predict the big financial crash of 2007/8, his account of that world should have served as a warning about what could happen when the derivatives world starts driving the economic train. Thus I paid attention when I saw he had written an essay alerting us to another approaching financial derivatives disaster.¹¹² This is the heart of it.

‘The reforms [post 2007/8 financial crisis] were well intentioned, but, as we’ll see, they haven’t kept the banks from falling back into old, bad habits. After the housing crisis, subprime CDOs naturally fell out of favor.

¹⁰⁸ <<https://www.cpexposed.com/about-common-purpose>>

¹⁰⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y8pthzey>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10423070/Press-row-PM-faces-questions-over-link-to-charity.html>>

¹¹⁰ <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8503691>>

¹¹¹ *F.I.A.S.C.O.: Blood in the Water on Wall Street* (London: Profile Books, 1997).

¹¹² ‘The Looming Bank Collapse’, In *The Atlantic* at <<https://tinyurl.com/yd3rcgz7>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/07/coronavirus-banks-collapse/612247/>> .

Demand shifted to a similar – and similarly risky – instrument, one that even has a similar name: the CLO, or collateralized loan obligation. A CLO walks and talks like a CDO, but in place of loans made to home buyers are loans made to businesses – specifically, troubled businesses. CLOs bundle together so-called leveraged loans, the subprime mortgages of the corporate world. These are loans made to companies that have maxed out their borrowing and can no longer sell bonds directly to investors or qualify for a traditional bank loan. There are more than \$1 trillion worth of leveraged loans currently outstanding. The majority are held in CLOs.’

A trillion dollars in dodgy loans . . . What could possibly go wrong?

Huh?

I have some time for Peter Hitchens. Though I disagree with most of what he writes, he is generally interesting and (more or less) rational. But every once in a while he comes out with something spectacularly stupid. In his *Mail on Sunday* blog on 14 June he wrote this:

‘The Left are already in control of every lever of power and influence, from the schools the Tories are too weak to reopen to the police, the Civil Service, the courts and the BBC.’¹¹³ (punctuation in the original)

To take the last of that list: I listen to/watch the BBC a fair bit and, with the departure of Paul Mason, I can’t think of a single lefty given space anywhere in its programming other than very occasionally on Question Time and Politics Live.

More on 5G

In response to my snippet below about 5G, *Lobster’s* web manager, Ian Tresman, sent me a summary he had written of the science which shows that the e-m radiation from 5G – and 4G and 3G – devices is harmless to humans. I read his report and thought, ‘I still don’t trust it’. I began rummaging about in the material about this I had published earlier in *Lobster*; and then did a little Googling. Now, unlike Ian, I really do not understand the science behind all this. However I can read English and that is all you need. Here are some of the many links to items on this subject over the last 25 years or so, some of which

¹¹³ <<https://tinyurl.com/yd8danp4>> or <<https://hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/2020/06/peter-hitchens-as-the-left-now-controls-every-lever-of-power-we-face-nothing-less-than-regime-change.html>>

were in earlier editions of *Lobster*.

* Robert C. Beck and Eldon A. Byrd, 'Bibliography on the psychoactivity of electromagnetic fields', 1986.¹¹⁴

* Robert Uhlig 'Mobile telephones in new brain tumour alert', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 2001.¹¹⁵

* 'Motorola, Microwaves and DNA breaks: "War-gaming" the Lai-Singh Experiments', from *Microwave News*, January 1997.¹¹⁶

* Melinda Wenner, 'Cellphone Games: Does radio frequency radiation pose a cancer risk? Researchers in the largest study to date won't say', from *The Walrus*, 2008.¹¹⁷

* R L Davis and F K Mostofi, 'Cluster of Testicular Cancer in Police Officers Exposed to Hand-Held Radar' from the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, August 1993.¹¹⁸

* I Yakymeno *et al*, 'Long-term Exposure to Microwave Radiation Provokes Cancer Growth: Evidences From Radars and Mobile Communication Systems' from *Experimental Oncology*, June 2011.¹¹⁹

* Ido Ifrati, 'Israeli Soldiers Working With Radar Face Higher Risk of Cancer, Israeli Study Suggests', *Haaretz*, 20 March 2018¹²⁰

* Brad Jacobson, 'What the Cellphone Industry Doesn't Want You to Know About Radiation Concerns', *AlterNet*, 7 June 2013.¹²¹

* Kingsley Dennis, 'Opening Pandora's Box: How technologies of communication and cognition may be shifting towards a "Psycho-Civilized Society"', *First Monday*, 25 January 2008.¹²²

And so on. The list could go on for pages had I the patience to keyboard

¹¹⁴ <www.vxm.com/bib.doc.html>

¹¹⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/yd6zugsh>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1339509/Mobile-telephones-in-new-brain-tumour-alert.html>>

¹¹⁶ <<https://tinyurl.com/y97kbz6x>> or <<https://www.rfsafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/cell-phone-radiation-war-gaming-memo.pdf>>

¹¹⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/y8fpceca>> or <<https://thewalrus.ca/cellphone-games/?ref=2008.09-health-cellphone-brain-tumour-melinda-wenner&page=>>>

¹¹⁸ <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8213849/>>

¹¹⁹ <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21716201/>>

¹²⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/ya97h2e5>> or <<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/radio-frequency-radiation-may-cause-cancer-israeli-study-suggests-1.5918197>>

¹²¹ <<https://www.alternet.org/2013/06/radiation-concerns-about-cellphones/>>

¹²² <<https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2084/1940>>

it. There is a vast collection of such material available on-line.

Ruth Smeeth

In his *Times* column (15 June 2020) Trevor Phillips told us that Index on Censorship, 'the global freedom of expression campaign', has a new chief executive: former Labour MP Ruth Smeeth. Phillips wrote:

'For speaking out against antisemitism in the [Labour] party. Smeeth found herself the object of a hate campaign, receiving 25,000 messages of abuse in two months.'

Ah yes, that 25,000 figure (and 20,000 of those, she claimed, had come in 12 hours). I was always curious about that figure. Smeeth said 'Most of it was on social media, some of it was on Twitter, a great deal on Facebook and then calls to my office and emails.'¹²³ Who counted them? Who read them all to ascertain their contents? Say you could open and glance at 10 a minute. That would take 33 hours. Do I believe Smeeth or her staff actually examined 25,000 messages? No, I don't. Made a nice headline, though.

Phillips didn't mention Smeeth's prominent role in the Israel lobby's campaign against Jeremy Corbyn,¹²⁴ or the fact that she had been an agent of the American state. An April 2009 cable from the US embassy in London included this:

'Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Burton Ruth Smeeth (*strictly protect*) told us April 20 that Brown had intended to announce the elections on May 12, and hold them after a very short (matter of weeks) campaign season.'¹²⁵ (emphasis added)

Which raised the question of what a *prospective* parliamentary candidate had done – or offered to do – to become a confidential source for the US embassy.

Ah yes: the USA as moral leader

The notion that America is the world's moral leader goes back to the innocent days of the Cold War when it rested on the comparison between Western

¹²³ <<https://www.buzzfeed.com/emilyashton/ruth-smeeth-on-abuse>>

¹²⁴ See, one example of many, <<https://tinyurl.com/ydfch3pb>> or <<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/uk-labour-mp-ruth-smeeth-was-funded-israel-lobby>>.

¹²⁵ <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09LONDON956_a.html>

democracies – ‘the Free World’ – and the Soviet bloc and China. You would expect that such a notion died when the US killed several million people in South-East Asia between 1965 and 1975. But no, it lingers on in the mainstream mind – albeit under a little pressure. Here’s Michael Barnett in 2012: ‘But, America has not fallen behind in providing moral leadership in the world.’¹²⁶ Here’s a headline from AP a couple of years ago: ‘Trump retreats from US moral leadership stance’.¹²⁷ And two journalists at CNN recently asked ‘Is the US still the world’s moral guardian?’¹²⁸

If the Vietnam War and the destruction of much of the Middle East hasn’t shattered this delusion, what’s it going to take?

*

Anne Applebaum is someone else who (perhaps unconsciously) buys into the US’s moral leadership nonsense. She has an interesting piece on *The Atlantic*. Thinking of the mainstream Republicans who support Trump, she discusses why people collaborate with repressive regimes. She uses information from France in WW2 and East Germany after it.¹²⁹ She describes Trump’s first big lie as president – the claim that, despite the photographic evidence to the contrary, the crowd at his inauguration was larger than the one at his predecessor’s. She then draws a parallel with an incident in the Cold War.

‘In the 1950s, when an insect known as the Colorado potato beetle appeared in Eastern European potato fields, Soviet-backed governments in the region triumphantly claimed that it had been dropped from the sky by American pilots, as a deliberate form of biological sabotage. Posters featuring vicious red-white-and-blue beetles went up all across Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. No one really believed the charge, including the people making it, as archives have subsequently shown.’

For Applebaum, the idea that the US dropped Colorado beetles on the Soviet bloc would be absurd. But I stopped at that paragraph and thought, ‘I wonder if the US *did* do that?’ Enough has been revealed about US intelligence and military operations in the Cold War era (which Applebaum won’t have read) to show that such an act would fall well within the parameters of the kind of things the US *did* do, or was planning to do during the Cold War. So I looked at the Net and discovered two substantial things. First, the 1950 Colorado beetle

¹²⁶ See ‘Is America the moral leader in the world?’ by Michael Barnett, 4 July 2012 at <<https://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/04/opinion/barnett-human-rights/index.html>>.

¹²⁷ <<https://apnews.com/9211dcbb2fde4410b30a061bc3036d9f/>>

¹²⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/ycrleatf>> or <<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/06/politics/us-protests-george-floyd-world-moral-leader-intl/index.html>>

¹²⁹ <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/07/trumps-collaborators/612250/>>

incident is well known. For example, it was retold in some detail on the BBC World Service in 2013.¹³⁰ Second, during WW2 both the Germans and the Americans were doing research on entomological warfare and both considered using the Colorado beetle.¹³¹ But of evidence that the US dropped Colorado beetles on East Germany in 1950 there is no sign.

Did the US do it? In the climate of the period, as the world's biggest economy with the largest armed forces, having done research into biological, chemical and entomological warfare – I would guess they did. Why wouldn't they try it out? Just as they tried out biological weapons in Korea.

Applebaum is hard to avoid these days. And she's rather grand. In her review of the latest volume of Charles Moore's biography of Margaret Thatcher in the *New York Review of Books* (26 March 2020) she mentions that she attended Thatcher's funeral in St Paul's Cathedral – not an invitation given to *hoi polloi*. The 'biography' section of her website's homepage tells us that she studied at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and that '[f]rom 1988-1991 she covered the collapse of communism as the Warsaw correspondent of *the Economist magazine*'.¹³²

Well now: St Antony's, the spook college,¹³³ and the *The Economist*, just in time for the fall of the Soviet bloc. Were she British I would wonder if that was her route into SIS. As an American, probably not. More likely it was just another stop on the way to her current prominent place among the apologists for liberal internationalism. She was named as being a member of the Integrity Initiative,¹³⁴ the contemporary FCO-funded network of people willing to take on

¹³⁰ The BBC World Service programme is available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p01dsyr3>>. There was also a BBC News Magazine article – 'The great Cold War potato beetle battle', derived from the World Service programme – and that is at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23929124>>.

¹³¹ Dr. Robert K.D. Peterson, 'The Role of Insects as Biological Weapons' <<http://www.montana.edu/historybug/insects-as-bioweapons.html>>

¹³² <<https://www.anneapplebaum.com>>

¹³³ There are many references to St Antony's if you search for it at <www.lobster-magazine.co.uk>.

¹³⁴ On which see <<https://tinyurl.com/yczglske>> or <<http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>>.

Her participation is mentioned at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7zdm8p3>> or <<http://network.futuretechinsider.com/@clarityofsignal/previous-secret-documents-reveal-anne-applebaum-of-the-washington-post-on-list-of-uk-foreign-office-funded-disinfo-group>>.

Russian disinformation,¹³⁵ and has been invited to Bilderberg meetings.¹³⁶

Still: she's a nice writer and, though I disagree with much of her politics, always worth reading.

*

Pulitzer Prize-winner Applebaum is almost too big a figure for the Integrity Initiative (II). At first look II is neither surprising nor sinister. What is the British state supposed to do about Russian disinformation except look for some way to counter it? So the creation of a discrete, arms-length organisation which collected expertise in various fields to do so, is the kind of thing we should expect. As is the assumption that this would have to be done in the shadows, rather than openly.

The striking thing is the listing of an II subgroup on NHS reform, which has nothing to do with Russian disinformation operations. Given the orientation of the group, we may safely presume that the subgroup's purpose wasn't to *oppose* NHS 'reform' – i.e. its privatisation. And this suggests a wider, neo-liberal agenda.

The Russian disinformation operations are a problem for some on the Anglo-American left who find it difficult to acknowledge that Russia is what it appears to be: a kleptocracy which murders people who oppose it, at home and abroad. Back in the day there was a slogan: Neither Washington nor Moscow! Still sounds good to me.

COVID

Donald Trump and some of his supporters may be pooh-poohing the threat from COVID-19, but one of the most prominent Trumpians, Roger Stone, was taking it very seriously. In an email in June he wrote:

'I have been ordered to surrender to a COVID-19 infested prison in Georgia in just nine days. At 67 years old and with a lifelong history of asthma this is a DEATH SENTENCE!'

On p. 13 of *The Times* on 22 June, slightly over one inch's worth of a column of type on a six column page, was given to the information that the UK is 155th out of 179 nations on 'a world league table on effective measures to conquer the coronavirus'.

¹³⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/y7zdm8p3>> or <<http://network.futuretechinsider.com/@clarityofsignal/previously-secret-documents-reveal-anne-applebaum-of-the-washington-post-on-list-of-uk-foreign-office-funded-disinfo-group>>

¹³⁶ See the 2018 list at <<https://publicintelligence.net/2018-bilderberg-participant-list/>>.

Harding and his Friends

'The unmasking of the Salisbury poisoning suspects by a new digital journalism outfit was an embarrassment for Putin – and evidence that Russian spies are not what they once were.'

So begins the *Guardian's* Luke Harding's portrait of the website Bellingcat, which operates as an Internet detective, chiefly against the Russian state's activities.¹³⁷ It doesn't occur to Harding to explain why Bellingcat rarely finds much of interest in things west of the Russian border with Poland. Bellingcat tells the reader:

'The Bellingcat Investigation Team is an award winning group of volunteers and full time investigators who make up the core of the Bellingcat's investigative efforts.'¹³⁸

Facing this is a list of 'Recent Posts by Bellingcat Investigation Team'. Of the 10 reports, 8 are about Russia.

Towards the end of his piece, Harding brings forth a Russian defector. Or, more accurately, a *Soviet* defector. For it's the former Red Army officer who published under the pseudonym Viktor Suvorov. Harding quotes from an interview with the man in 2018 – 40 years after he defected. About Suvorov I wrote the following in *Lobster* 5:

'The books [about Soviet intelligence agencies] that are available are mostly rubbish, tales from defectors now in the embrace of the West's intelligence services; and there are too many obvious examples of such defectors having their scripts written for them for anyone with critical faculties to do anything but be suspicious of them all.

Victor Suvorov's books exemplify this. (Suvorov is a pseudonym). His first, *The Liberators* (1981) was a sardonic inside account of life in the Red Army which he presents as a large, drunken, corrupt, brutal shambles, occasionally putting on charades for the visiting top brass from Moscow.¹³⁹ Precisely because this was such a refreshing blast of fresh air on the

¹³⁷ "'A chain of stupidity": the Skripal case and the decline of Russia's spy agencies', *The Guardian* 23 June 2020 at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7dr7y63>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/23/skripal-salisbury-poisoning-decline-of-russia-spy-agencies-gru>>.

¹³⁸ <<https://www.bellingcat.com/author/bellingcat/>>

¹³⁹ This view was confirmed by Alexander Cockburn's *The Threat* (London, 1983) based on interviews with emigré Soviet Jews who had been through the Red Army. The major difference which seems to emerge between the Soviet armed forces and those of the United States is the US soldier's access to a wider variety of drugs. His Soviet counterpart seems stuck with alcohol and its substitutes such as boot polish. Maybe the occupation of Afghanistan will introduce hashish to a wider section of Soviet society.

subject, it seemed “real” to me – I believed it. (Mostly I believed it because it seemed consonant with my view of wider Soviet society – drunken, brutal, charade-mounting.) A year later Suvorov produced *Inside The Red Army* (1982) which tells the opposite story. Here, in great detail, is the super-efficient, super-dangerous Red Army beloved of the Pentagon’s estimators. So striking was the reversal that even mild-mannered “Kremlin watcher” Andrew Crankshaw was moved to ask in his review if “Suvorov has been persuaded by his new American friends that he must not make fun of such a solemn subject.” (*Observer* 24 Oct. 1984)

A year later Suvorov produces a third, *Soviet Military Intelligence* (London, 1984) which drove the *Times*’ reviewer Iain Elliot to wonder “Could the same man who, as a young tank commander, participated in the ‘liberation’ of Czechoslovakia in 68, really be so expert in the inner workings of the GRU to produce such a comprehensive manual?” (10 July 1984)

Harding quotes Suvorov at some length on the decline in the Russian intelligence services – as exemplified by the Salisbury/Skripal operation, in his view – as if Suvorov knew something about the subject. Harding is widely believed to have good contacts with SIS. Couldn’t they come up with someone more current than Suvorov for him?

Colby and Phoenix

I have just started reading Douglas Valentine’s book *The CIA as Organised Crime: How Illegal Operations Corrupt America and the World* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2017).¹⁴⁰ This is a collection of essays written by Valentine and the transcript of interviews with him. The first chapter is his account of the writing of his book about the Phoenix Program in Vietnam. How did Valentine do it? He contacted former CIA Director William Colby, the CIA officer most associated with Phoenix.

‘No one had written a book about it, so I wrote Colby a letter and sent him my first book, *The Hotel Tacloban*. I told him I wanted to write a book that would demystify the Phoenix program, and he was all for that. Colby liked my approach – to look at it from all these different points of view – so he got behind me and started introducing me to a lot of senior CIA people. And that gave me access from the inside. After that it was pretty easy. I have good interview skills. I was able to persuade a lot of these CIA people to talk about Phoenix.’

¹⁴⁰ Review at <<https://tinyurl.com/ydhamoaw>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster73/lob73-cia-organised-crime.pdf>>.

On the face of it, Colby was simply conned by Valentine. Is this possible? Would a former DCIA not routinely make a phone call or two before talking to a writer, even about events from 20 years before? In which case, would he not have learned something about Valentine's political orientation? I emailed Valentine about this and he replied:

'Alas, I don't know if Colby checked me out initially. He knew I'd written the book about my father, because I gave it to him, and I remember him making a comment that he felt I'd understand what it meant to be a soldier assigned to the Phoenix program. I'm sure the people he referred me to reported back to him, and the reports must have been favorable at first, because he kept vouching for me into 1986. But CIA officers often make snap judgments and I suspect his decision was based on my appearance and presentation and stated objectives. The CIA itself certainly did not want me mucking around. They helped me at first by forwarding letters to ex-officers I was looking for, but then the curtain came down.'

So: for whatever reason, the single greatest exposure of CIA methods and people since Philip Agee in the 1970s was enabled by former DCIA Colby.

The 5G heebie-jeebies

It was Garrick Alder who alerted me to the suggestion that Wuhan, the apparent centre of the COVID-19 outbreak, had also been China's first smart 5G city.¹⁴¹ However, on checking, he found that Wuhan was only one of the first 5G cities. So that one bit the dust. When I read this and subsequent elaborations of the 5G-causes-COVID thesis, it struck me that this dumb conspiracy theory was going to be used by the telecoms companies to dismiss all opposition to 5G on health grounds as merely conspiracy theories. Other people had the same thought. This was in vice.com:

'Some old school 5G conspiracy theorists are now even claiming that 5G coronavirus conspiracies are a false flag planted by the government to make their warnings against the health effects of 5G seem dumb.'¹⁴²

For an example of a mainstream journalist using the 'loony fringe' to ridicule the opposition to 5G, see the account by BBC's technology correspondent, Rory

¹⁴¹ <<https://winteroak.org.uk/2020/03/29/the-acorn-56/#3>>

¹⁴² <https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/pke7yv/5g-coronavirus-conspiracy-theory-origin>
Note the reference to 'old school 5G conspiracy theorists'. This issue has been current for what, about two years, and we have an 'old school' already?

Cellan-Jones, of a meeting in Glastonbury which led to the local council there deciding to oppose the introduction of 5G.¹⁴³ This was headlined 'Glastonbury 5G report "hijacked by conspiracy theorists"', though the phrase in quotation marks is not to be found in his report. Cellan-Jones writes that one of the witnesses at the enquiry was

' . . . Dr Andrew Tresidder, a former GP whose website offers flower remedies and emotional healing. His presentation focused on people claiming to suffer from "electromagnetic stress", which he said was often not taken seriously by mainstream doctors.'

I looked at Dr Tresidder's website. He is still working as a GP. The 'flower remedies' are, of course, homeopathy. Dr Tresidder has discovered that homeopathy sometimes works. (The British royal family use homeopathy, as does about half the population of France.)

Despite the certainty of naive technophiles like Cellan-Jones, there really are grounds for concern, as a very good recent piece in the *New Republic* has pointed out.¹⁴⁴ The central problem is, as that author notes:

'The [5G] build-out, one of the most expensive communications infrastructure expansions in U.S. history, is expected to require tens of billions of dollars of investment and, it's hoped, bring in many times that in profits, adding over \$17 trillion to the global economy by 2035, by one estimate.

Meanwhile, millions of miles of new fiber-optic cable will be laid underground or strung on utility poles to support the insatiable hunger for bandwidth. And as consumers enter the upgrade cycle for 5G-capable devices, many millions of new phones will be manufactured and sold globally over the next five years, while the total number of connected internet-of-things devices will rise to an estimated 50 billion by 2022.

5G, in other words, is big money, and for obvious reasons the telecom service providers, the phone manufacturers and distributors, the fiber-optic cable and cell site manufacturers and installers would prefer that the rollout proceed without impediment.'

¹⁴³ <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52674949>>

Nick Must added: The Cellan-Jones report centres upon Glastonbury Town council and its Committee examining the roll-out of 5G. Interestingly, of the 16 councillors on Glastonbury Town council the majority, nine, are Greens. <<https://glastonbury.gov.uk/council/members/>> Also, of the 5G committee, five of the seven councillors who served the full term of the committee are Greens. (There were, originally, eight on the committee but one Lib-Dem dropped out). The Mayor, a Green, also voted ex-officio.

The report: <<https://glastonbury.gov.uk/2020/04/29/glastonbury-calls-for-5g-inquiry/>>.

¹⁴⁴ <<https://newrepublic.com/article/157603/5g-going-kill-us-all>>

The mark of the shyster

The *Daily Mirror* put it as succinctly as I could:

'In yesterday's press conference, [the Prime Minister's] chief advisor Dominic Cummings claimed he had written "for years" about the dangers of pandemic and the threat of coronaviruses, but it's been revealed he altered old blog posts from last year to explicitly include references to coronaviruses.'¹⁴⁵

And he thought no-one would notice? A shyster and a *schmuck*.

Who is driving this train?

The British state – all states – have a big problem now with propaganda and disinformation on the Net. They are losing their grip on the perceptions of their populations. A 2018 Oxford University investigation of this was summarised thus:

- '1. We have found evidence of formally organized social media manipulation campaigns in 48 countries, up from 28 countries last year. In each country there is at least one political party or government agency using social media to manipulate public opinion domestically.
2. Much of this growth comes from countries where political parties are spreading disinformation during elections, or countries where government agencies feel threatened by junk news and foreign interference and are responding by developing their own computational propaganda campaigns in response.
3. In a fifth of these 48 countries—mostly across the Global South—we found evidence of disinformation campaigns operating over chat applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram and WeChat.
4. Computational propaganda still involves social media account automation and online commentary teams, but is making increasing use of paid advertisements and search engine optimization on a widening array of Internet platforms.'¹⁴⁶

And that was 2018. It will be infinitely worse by now.

At one level this is familiar: operations in support of foreign policy

¹⁴⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/y8xkmj8j>> or <<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/dominic-cummings-edited-blog-claimed-22088430>>

¹⁴⁶ <<http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/cybertroops2018/>>

objectives now include what we might call covert social messaging.¹⁴⁷ But some of this is new. For example, the British Army's 77th Brigade is now in operation domestically trying to counter misinformation about COVID-19.¹⁴⁸ The Brigade's website states its role as this:

'77th Brigade is an agent of change; through targeted Information Activity and Outreach we contribute to the success of military objectives in support of Commanders, whilst reducing the cost in casualties and resources.'¹⁴⁹

But disinfo about COVID in the UK is hardly a military objective, no matter how loosely that term is interpreted. And after COVID, what next will be deemed suitable for the 77th? Arguments against 5G perhaps? Criticism of American farming and food production methods, if we do a free trade deal with the US after Brexit? Who decides such objectives? And who took the decision to bring in the military?

There's something about David

So there was David Aaronovitch, in his role as Conspiracy Theorist Hunter, in *The Times* on 28 May sneering at Craig Murray for speculating that Dominic Cummings' story about his drive to Barnard Castle might be the cover for something else.¹⁵⁰ Striking – if not surprising – that Aaronovitch didn't write about the preceding item on Murray's blog, about his prosecution by the Scottish legal system for his reporting on the Salmond case.¹⁵¹ Is the Scottish state really stupid enough to make a martyr of Murray? Apparently so.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Mark Curtis on UK covert ops in Syria at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9chrzyc>> or <<http://markcurtis.info/2020/05/19/revelations-about-uk-covert-operations-in-syria-challenge-media-narratives-on-the-war/>>

¹⁴⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/ybjl22ds>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/uk-news/british-army-coronavirus-conspiracy-theory-5g-a9538791.html>>

¹⁴⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y322pasf>> or <<https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/formations-divisions-brigades/6th-united-kingdom-division/77-brigade/>>

¹⁵⁰ Murray's speculation was a mistake in my view: he didn't have anything and it opened him up to ridicule from the likes of Aaronovitch.

¹⁵¹ <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/05/authoritarianism-is-shoddy/>>