

# The view from the bridge

**Robin Ramsay**

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

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## **Simon says**

**R**egular contributor to these columns, Simon Matthews, has a new book out. *Looking for a New England*, the sequel to his *Psychedelic Celluloid*, is published on 28 January 2021. Details of what it covers can be found at <https://youtu.be/YmcL6K9PYyg>.

Simon also noticed this in my 'View from the Bridge' in *Lobster* 68 (2014).

## **Boris and the City**

**I**f you wondered what the subtext was to Mayor of London Boris Johnson's announcement in early August that he would be trying to return to the House of Commons, the answer lay in a story in the *Daily Telegraph* on 8 August headed 'Brussels plots fresh City of London power grab: European Commission calls for greater powers for Brussels regulators in move likely to inflame tensions between City and Europe'. Reading (just) between the lines of his speech it is obvious that Boris is offering himself as the leader of the Conservative Party who will take the UK out of the EU to preserve the City of London as the financial crime centre of the world economy.

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## **Footnotes-R-us**

**Y**ou have noticed how web links (URLs) in the footnotes of *Lobster* articles in many instances now include not only the original 'long' URL but a TinyURL as well. Converting the URLs to TinyURLs in John Booth's review-essay on Corbyn and antisemitism, it struck me that I had only once explained why I do this –

and that was a long time ago. Many long URLs will not fit into one line of text on our pagination. As a result, these line breaks sometimes mean that the URL won't work properly (in internet jargon, it will open to a '404 error'). The TinyURL – being so much shorter – solves this problem but, very occasionally, the TinyURL doesn't work. So I offer both in the hope that one of them will work when clicked.

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## The problem with Global Research

Every once in a while I have a look at Global Research.<sup>1</sup> And I have the same reaction each time: some interesting material there but . . . .The 'but' arises because there is simply not enough editorial control of the torrent of articles that are posted on the site. For example, there is a recent post by the site's main man, Professor Michel Chossudovsky, 'The Covid "Pandemic": Destroying People's Lives. Engineered Economic Depression. Global "Coup d'Etat"?'<sup>2</sup> I scrolled through that and came across this:

'The March 11 2020 Lockdown project uses lies and deception to ultimately impose a Worldwide totalitarian regime, entitled "Global Governance" (by unelected officials). In the words of **David Rockefeller**:  
"The world is now more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a **world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers** is surely preferable to **the national auto-determination practiced in past centuries.**" (quoted by *Aspen Times*, August 15, 2011, emphasis added)'

The given *Aspen Times* link led me to '**Beware New World Order | News | August 15, 2011**' in which was this quote attributed to David Rockefeller (who died in 2017):

'We are grateful to the Washington Post, The New York Times, Time Magazine and other great publications whose directors have attended our meetings and respected their promises of discretion for almost 40 years. . . . It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years. But, the world is now more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.globalresearch.ca>>

<sup>2</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y52b52fw>> or <<https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-second-wave-destroying-peoples-lives-global-coup-detat/5728207>>

intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national auto-determination practiced in past centuries.'

It's a famous quotation, recycled endlessly on-line, something he reportedly said at the 1991 Bilderberg meeting.<sup>3</sup> But did he actually say it? At <metabunk.org><sup>4</sup> there is what purports to be the audiotape of Rockefeller saying this in 1991. Yet on the screen beneath a picture of Rockefeller it says 'audio simulation'. This isn't Rockefeller speaking – and doesn't purport to be so. And it isn't Rockefeller's voice; you can check this by listening to his real voice.<sup>5</sup> Sourcewatch tells us that the quotation first appeared in September 1991 issue of the *Hilaire du Berrier Report*. Who he? Wiki tells us a little<sup>6</sup> and further on down the search results we find a copy of his newsletter from 1974 released by the CIA.<sup>7</sup> This is a rather impressive if bizarre piece of right-wing propaganda on behalf of the colonial powers in Africa then beginning to experience serious local resistance. There is this paragraph, for example.

**THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**, which dictates and implements American policies, was determined to hasten the bloodbath in Africa. CFR member Lawrence C. McQuade accompanied Irving Brown, labor's traveling spreader of revolts, to Ghana in December 1959 and told the cruelest people on earth, "Unite! You have a continent to gain and nothing to lose but your chains!" How many hundreds of thousands were murdered by native tyrants in the years that followed was no concern of Mr. McQuade. Millions of dollars were wrung out of American workmen or provided by CIA to be handed over to African revolutionaries by Irving Brown. He was communism's angel. Victor Riesel

The CIA's Irving Brown as 'communism's angel' is amusing.

But Mr du Berrier's original report with the Rockefeller quotation in it does not appear to be on-line.

This is reminiscent of Kenneth de Courcy.<sup>8</sup> Like du Berrier, de Courcy had some interesting early experiences in politics/intelligence and parlayed this into a subscription-based newsletter which purported to show the world as it really

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<sup>3</sup> How far we have come: Bilderberg was once secret and now there is a vast collection of their reports and minutes at <<https://tinyurl.com/yytagow8>> or <<https://www.bilderberg.org/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=7528&sid=86b5685eaa0bbae0f34a3bd21a554fe8>>.

<sup>4</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yylc9ycw>> or <<https://www.metabunk.org/threads/debunked-audio-of-david-rockefeller-leaked-speech-in-1991-audio-simulation.9996/>> The same clip, complete with 'audio simulation', is played on <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJDFYNkWr8I>>.

<sup>5</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y583z3qp>> or <<https://www.overpopulationawareness.org/en/david-rockefeller-speaks-about-population-control>>

<sup>6</sup> <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilaire\\_du\\_Berrier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilaire_du_Berrier)> See also <<http://sorenbh.dk/page9.html>>.

<sup>7</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y5hzmxbf>> or <<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80R01731R001900020033-8.pdf>>

<sup>8</sup> <[https://everipedia.org/Kenneth\\_de\\_Courcy](https://everipedia.org/Kenneth_de_Courcy)>

is. De Courcy had interesting snippets but wasn't reliable as a source and I doubt that du Berrier was, either; and an expensive subscription newsletter demands that you keep producing 'hot stuff'; and thus the temptation to invent it.

The thing with Global Research is that its editorial philosophy is the same as that espoused by *Rolling Stone* in its original printed version in the 70s: *all the news that fits*. Thus the Rockefeller quotation *fits* and neither Professor Chossudovsky, nor anyone else apparently, bothered to check if it was genuine. Which, considering the torrent of fakes and disinformation out there, isn't good enough, is it?

And we have been here before. In *Lobster* 73 I quoted something from Global Research in my column under the subhead **Fake News? Fake something**.<sup>9</sup> For it had published an article taking Pizzagate seriously. I ended that piece by asking 'Did anybody at Global Research even read this before it was posted?'

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## Thought for the day

Someone called Tom (no surname) emailed me wondering about the current validity of Anthony Summers' distinction between conspiracy theories and theories about conspiracies. Tom wonders if it wouldn't make more sense to describe contemporary phenomena – such as QAnon – as conspiracy *ideologies*.

There certainly is a distinction between what we might call pre-Net conspiracy theories and some of the Net-based versions. The older, print-based versions consisted of propositions – a theory of any sort contains propositions – and their proponents did their best to assemble evidence to support their claims.<sup>10</sup> The QAnon thing, from what I have read about it, is a kind of group construction; it is circulated and expanded by its consumers and little attempt is made to stand-up its propositions. In that sense QAnon is closer to a religion, whose members rarely make any attempt to provide supporting evidence for their beliefs. They don't need evidence; they have *faith*. Some religions are explicitly offered as an alternative to evidence-based belief systems. Thus, people *believe* in God; they don't offer *evidence* of God. In this

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<sup>9</sup> <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster73/lob73-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>>

<sup>10</sup> Gary Allen's *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, originally published in 1971, is a good example. It is available at <<https://tinyurl.com/yxd9pdj9>> or <<http://www.falseflag.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/None-Dare-Call-it-Conspiracy-Gary-Allen.pdf>>

sense QAnon is peculiarly apt for a society like the USA where religion – beliefs without evidence – is taken seriously by a substantial chunk of the population. And therefore, yes, Tom is right: it might be described as a conspiracy ideology.

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## **Down under**

**O**n ConsortiumNews there is a very striking essay 'Australia Sabotaged Its Own Interests in China Relations'. The opening paragraph lays out the thesis:

'The destruction over the past five years of Australia's mutually beneficial diplomatic and trade relationship with China was probably a successful "Five Eyes" information warfare operation, writes Tony Kevin.'<sup>11</sup>

The author, Tony Kevin, is a former Australian ambassador. Well, now: a retired diplomat pointing the finger at the US-dominated spook network? Other than Craig Murray, I can think of no other former diplomats who have been willing to tell it like they see it. There is more from Mr Kevin at his website.<sup>12</sup> I suspect that his life is going to get very complicated if anybody of substance starts listening to him.

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## **The usual suspects**

'**M**eeet The Anti-Regulation Groups Influencing Post-Brexit Trade Policy' is a very good piece on the free market/business groups assembled around the Conservative Party's spokespeople on the environment and economic policy, on a site that is new to me, DESMOG.uk.<sup>13</sup>

Never mind the imminent collapse of the environment, what we need is more economic freedom and less government regulation! The question that always arises with these groups is this: are they people putting out nonsense to make a living, or do they really believe it? And if, as I suspect, it is the latter, how do they handle the cognitive dissonance they must receive every time they look at a news report?

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<sup>11</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y2dxexah>> or <<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/12/08/australia-sabotaged-its-own-interests-in-china-relations/>>

<sup>12</sup> <<http://www.tonykevin.com.au>>

<sup>13</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y2o6kxoc>> or <<https://www.desmog.co.uk/2020/11/27/meet-anti-regulation-groups-influencing-post-brexit-trade-policy>>

## Spy cops

The 'spy cops' inquiry has restarted. I went back to the list of groups the Metropolitan Police had thought it worth penetrating.<sup>14</sup> This is incomplete – about a quarter of the total of over 1000 admitted at the beginning of the inquiry – but impressive nonetheless. The list reminded me of a number of things. There was the comment by former BOSS agent, Gordon Winter that, 'British intelligence has a saying that if there is a left-wing movement in Britain bigger than a football team our man is the captain or the vice captain, and if not, he is the referee and he can send any man off the field and call our man on at any time he likes'. When Winter said this in 1981, the powers-that-be thought it sufficiently dangerous to make it the only thing that was removed from a 1981 Panorama documentary, the first about British intelligence and security agencies. Now we know why.

The list makes it clear that the people on the left who thought they were being surveilled and bugged in the 80s and 90s were probably right to have those suspicions. And it reminds me of the old gag from the 70s: Yes, I'm paranoid; but am I paranoid enough?<sup>15</sup> The answer to that would appear to be 'probably not'.

## Biowarfare

Professor Paul Rogers responded to my piece<sup>16</sup> on biowarfare.

'Three of us at Bradford did some work on anti-crop biowarfare (I started off in 1964 as a plant pathologist at Imperial College) and published an article in *Scientific American* on 'Biological Warfare Against Crops' in 1999. Simon Whitby did his PhD on the subject (it's in the library at Bradford) and wrote a book about it, as well, *Biological Warfare Against Crops*.<sup>17</sup>

Among many things, the US had the so-called 'turkey feather bomb' which was a kind of cluster munition that dispersed turkey feathers impregnated with spores of pathogenic fungi for infecting rice and wheat crops. The Iraqis looked at this in the 1980s for possible use against

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<sup>14</sup> <<http://undercoverresearch.net/spycops-targets-a-whos-who/>>

<sup>15</sup> The Net attributes this to the American novelist David Foster Wallace but it's much older than that. I just can't remember who said it first.

<sup>16</sup> See below under subhead **Ah yes: the USA as moral leader.**

<sup>17</sup> <<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9780333920855>>

Iranian cereal crops.<sup>18</sup>

On another issue I've been looking at COVID and why the UK, with one of the world's best national biological security strategies, has made such a hash of it. I've managed to get the Joint Select Committee on the National Security Strategy to take evidence and they have published it though I don't know whether they will take any notice of it.<sup>19</sup> It is largely based on a slightly dated thing I did for Oxford Research Group earlier in the year.<sup>20</sup>

## Uncle Sam's influencers

**A** story at wingsoverscotland.com<sup>21</sup> reported on 2016 trips taken by 'Scottish Opinion Leaders' (caps in the original) as part of the US State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program.<sup>22</sup> However Covid brought this to a halt in March when the State Department announced a temporary pause to the program.<sup>23</sup>

## Covid

**I** am reluctant to use these columns for more chatter about Covid but there are the occasional snippets which are too interesting/important to ignore.

'On Monday [9 November], Newark Mayor Ras Baraka did his best to sound the alarm on Facebook, confirming that Newark's overall coronavirus rate had hit 19 percent, more than twice New Jersey's infection rate of 7.74%.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See <<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/biological-warfare-against-crops/>>.

At the end of WW2, if the atomic bombs didn't end the war, the US had a plan to attack Japan with chemical weapons. See my 'By any means necessary: the United States and Japan' in Open Democracy at <[https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/byanymeansnecessary\\_2727jsp/](https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/byanymeansnecessary_2727jsp/)>.

<sup>19</sup> <<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/12743/pdf/>>

<sup>20</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/y4zljajt>> or <<https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/writing-on-the-wall-the-uk-and-the-early-warning-signs-of-covid-19>>.

<sup>21</sup> <<https://wingsoverscotland.com/all-the-jolly-boys-and-girls/>>). Thanks to WM for this.

<sup>22</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yyhtn4ew>> or <<https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/international-visitor-leadership-program-ivlp>>

<sup>23</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yy6z4hhp>> or <<https://www.state.gov/temporary-pause-of-international-exchange-programs-due-to-covid-19/>>

<sup>24</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y6toblaj>> or <[https://www.salon.com/2020/11/13/covid-explodes-in-newark-tragic-result-of-a-long-legacy-of-urban-abuse-and-neglect\\_partner/](https://www.salon.com/2020/11/13/covid-explodes-in-newark-tragic-result-of-a-long-legacy-of-urban-abuse-and-neglect_partner/)>

19 per cent? This is like the plague.

In its usual fashion *The Times* buried the really important – but politically awkward – story deep in the paper. On the right-hand column of six on page 11 on 13 November it was reported that the NHS Test and Trace system – for which the government has chucked billions at the private sector – reached only 60.4% of ‘close contacts of people who test positive for coronavirus’ in the week ending 4 November. But ‘local health protection teams’ – on which the government has spent very little if anything – contacted 99.1% of targets . . .<sup>25</sup>

## **Body-in-bag-spy**

The *Daily Mail* website is on my ‘must read’ list because every once in a while it runs something substantial that no-one else does. This was the case on 14 November when former Lib-Dem MP Norman Baker had a large piece, ‘Revealed: How the body in a bag spy Gareth Williams was murdered by Russians and smeared by MI6’.<sup>26</sup> Worth a look, is this. It is detailed enough to suggest that Mr Baker might be writing a book about the case.

## **No cigar . . .**

Prompted by the baffling rise of the QAnonsense, everybody and their cousin is now running pieces about conspiracy theories. Even the generally amiable and interesting digg.com did so, running a piece by Kirby Ferguson, ‘Why Conspiracy Theories Are Constantly Wrong’. The pitch for the piece began with this: ‘Conspiracy theories make us all feel like the world is a lot more complicated than it actually is’. *Au contraire*, they do the opposite. They make the complex seem simpler. The QAnon crap and its predecessor pizzagate are perfect examples. The enormous complexity of the decline of the world’s leading power – and its equally complex internal politics – are boiled down to a dumb story about sex and satanism.

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<sup>25</sup> Same data was reported by ITV News. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y4eenwna>> or <<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-11-12/test-and-trace-struggling-to-reach-more-than-60-of-contacts>>. The *British Medical Journal* version was ‘Covid-19: Local health teams trace eight times more contacts than national service’ at <<https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m2486>>.

<sup>26</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y4t3dmuj>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8924617/NORMAN-BAKER-body-bag-spy-Gareth-Williams-murdered-Russians-smeared-MI6.html>>

## Forget the Palestinians

On 13 August the BBC News carried the story of the agreement between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel to normalise relations.<sup>27</sup> There was much related talk about how good this would be for trade in the Middle East. So presumably about oil, then. Just over a week later *The Times* reported:

'The United Arab Emirates has signed a deal to send oil directly to the Mediterranean through an Israeli pipeline, the biggest result yet from the normalisation of relations between the countries.

Oil from the UAE "and other eastern markets" will be shipped by tanker to the Israeli Red Sea terminal at Eilat, from where it will be sent along an existing 158-mile pipeline to the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon.'<sup>28</sup>

So: not oil per se but an oil pipeline. Since both UAE and Israel are client states of the USA, there would be something in it for Uncle Sam. And there it was: the announcement that 'Israel won't oppose US sale of "weapons systems" to UAE'.<sup>29</sup> I love the idea that Israel, whose existence as a state depends on US subsidies, could oppose anything the Americans chose to do. It seems that the US is going to sell F35 fighters to UAE.

And the Palestinians? The deal is 'a collapse of Arab solidarity on the Palestine question that had been in place for three-quarters of a century'.<sup>30</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser must be rapidly rotating in his grave.

Sort of related to which, there is a section in Jack Straw's memoir where he – a Christian from a Jewish background – comments on the furore he generated while Foreign Secretary simply by referring to Palestine in an article.

'One Israeli Cabinet minister described this as an "obscenity" and "pornographic". Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon expressed "anger, outrage and disappointment". Israeli president Moshe Katzav cancelled a meeting with me. Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres cancelled a formal banquet.'<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-53770859>>

<sup>28</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y53quspj>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/israel-and-united-arab-emirates-strike-oil-pipeline-deal-kxqfdwm3t>>

<sup>29</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y3owfga4>> or <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/23/israel-will-not-oppose-us-sale-of-f-35-to-uae>>

<sup>30</sup> Jon B Alterman director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies at <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/significance-israel-uae-deal>>.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Straw, *Last Man Standing* (London: Pan, 2013) p. 433.

## 5G

Even without being contaminated by the ridiculous 5G-causes-Covid claims, there never was any chance of the anti-5G campaign halting its introduction. Nonetheless its opponents continue their research. Two members of the European Parliament, Klaus Buchner and Michèle Rivasi, have commissioned and published a very detailed report on The International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection, the body which provides the science for the telecoms industry. You may not be astonished to learn the said body is essentially a front for the telecoms industry and *starts* from the position that there are no health issues with non-ionising radiation. This has been the industry's line from the beginning.<sup>32</sup>

Writing for *TruePublica*, Annelie Fitzgerald and Tom Imber summarised the anti-5G case in 'Ten reasons to be concerned about 5G – and it has nothing to do with C-19':<sup>33</sup>

1. 5G and existing wireless technologies use artificial radio-frequency radiation (RFR) that has adverse effects on health.
2. 5G has not been safety tested.
3. 5G is being rolled out under obsolete RFR exposure guidelines.
4. 5G will introduce more RFR into our environment, with the risk of adverse impacts on flora and fauna.
5. 5G will increase energy consumption.
6. 5G will usher in a regime of total surveillance.
7. 5G will create an insatiable need for rare earth elements and more toxic e-waste.
8. 5G from space is a tragedy of the cosmic commons.
9. 5G is being imposed on us with no public debate or informed consent.
10. We don't need 5G.

I'm not entirely sure what no 8 means but Amen to the rest of them, especially no 10.

Nic Must commented:

There is also the human perception factor to be taken into consideration – i.e. how much would the average person notice any data speed improvements that would be offered by 5G? In the audio-visual industry,

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<sup>32</sup> Report at <<https://tinyurl.com/y38aybjk>> and <<https://betweenrockandhardplace.files.wordpress.com/2020/06/icnirp-report-final-19-june-2020.pdf>>.

<sup>33</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yyjarzbz>> or <<https://truepublica.org.uk/united-kingdom/ten-reasons-to-be-concerned-about-5g-and-it-has-nothing-to-do-with-c-19/>>

HD televisions will only ever go to a certain level of pixels per square inch (quite possibly the current '4K') because, beyond that level, the human eye doesn't notice the difference.<sup>34</sup>

## Money talking?

Anthony Frewin noticed the following paragraph in the Wikipedia entry for Lycamobile, which I copy and paste directly from the webpage, with formatting and links included.

'Lycamobile has not paid any corporation tax for several years in the United Kingdom though the company put aside £9.5 million to cover "a potential liability of unpaid taxes" including "interest and penalties" in its 2015 accounts. Lycamobile's 2015 accounts were filed seven months late, appearing after Companies House threatened to strike Lycamobile off, such an action would have prevented the company from conducting business in the UK.<sup>[46]</sup> Lycamobile had previously been threatened with being struck off in 2012, its accounts were filed two years late that year.<sup>[47]</sup> Lycamobile is a significant donor to the British Conservative Party, having donated £1.3 million since 2011, including £500,000 in 2015.<sup>[46]</sup> They also donated use of a call centre to Boris Johnson during his 2012 London mayoral election campaign.'<sup>[48]</sup>

## Who believes the QAnonsense?

**W**ho believes all this nonsense on the Net about QAnon now spreading in UK? (If you copy America you get America. . .) I confess that my first thought would have been the young, who know little, and can't tell shit from Shinola. I would have been wrong. It's older people.

"Older adults consume more misinformation and are more likely to share misinformation," said Briony Swire-Thompson, a senior research scientist at Northeastern University who specializes in social media networks. During the 2016 election, users over 65 shared more fake news than any other age group and seven times more than users between 18 and 29. In 2020, Trump has dedicated almost half of his reelection campaign budget

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<sup>34</sup> This article explains it:

<<https://www.techspot.com/article/1113-4k-monitor-see-difference/>>

to Facebook ads — many of which include blatant misinformation — to users over 65 years old.’<sup>35</sup>

This, surely, is the central issue:

‘The bubble communities we each inhabit on Facebook shield us from alternative views to our own; we do not see what we are not already predisposed to see.’<sup>36</sup>

## **The wrong kind of member**

The EHRC report on anti-semitism in the Labour Party found . . . not very much;<sup>37</sup> what they did find hinged on debatable definitions of anti-semitism; and most of it was the responsibility of the anti-Corbyn managers of the party who remained in office until mid-2018.<sup>38</sup> Jeremy Corbyn’s subsequent ‘offence’ was to state that ‘the scale of the problem was . . . dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media’. Which is demonstrably true. For that comment, Corbyn was suspended from membership of the Party.

Current leader Sir Keir Starmer was quite explicit that anyone who points out that the anti-semitism ‘problem’ has been exaggerated has no place in the party. In effect: toe this line or else. Is there a precedent for such a position adopted by a Labour leader? It is hard to see past Craig Murray’s point that Starmer wants to rid the Party of the hundreds of thousands of members who joined in the last five years and support the left.<sup>39</sup>

## **A nice little earner**

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<sup>35</sup> ‘What Is The Internet Doing To Boomers’ Brains?’ at <<https://tinyurl.com/y36sk5nj>> or <[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/internet-baby-boomers-misinformation-social-media\\_n\\_5f998039c5b6a4a2dc813d3d?ri18n=true](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/internet-baby-boomers-misinformation-social-media_n_5f998039c5b6a4a2dc813d3d?ri18n=true)>

<sup>36</sup> Sue Greenwood at <<https://tinyurl.com/y2p3lb82>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/27/how-qanons-conspiracies-gained-traction-uk-social-media>>.

<sup>37</sup> Report at <<https://tinyurl.com/y5e993lb>> or <<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/investigation-into-antisemitism-in-the-labour-party.pdf>>.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Sanders and Peter Osborne point this out in an excellent essay at <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/ehrc-labour-antisemitism-starmer-corbyn-soul>>.

<sup>39</sup> <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/10/time-to-stand-up-and-be-counted/>>

**I**n August the *Financial Times* had a headline 'UK spending on coronavirus consultants tops £100m'.<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere it was reported that some of these 'consultants' were being paid £7,000 a day to work on the test-and-trace, which still isn't working as I write.<sup>41</sup> If you want more details on the extraordinary way this government has handled the COVID crisis by throwing public money at its friends in the private sector, the place to start is Peter Geoghegan's excellent essay *Cronyism and Clientelism* in the LRB.<sup>42</sup> Then, if you missed it, read the review of Geoghegan's recent book by Colin Challen in this issue of *Lobster*.<sup>43</sup> And then ask yourself why Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition isn't talking about this stuff from morning til night.

## **Is COVID-19 man-made?**

**P**rofessor Francis A Boyle is that rarity: a serious political radical who is a full professor at an American University. The account of his thinking and career on Wikispooks is striking – startling even – for an American academic.<sup>44</sup> And he's not afraid to tell his friends what he thinks of them. Of Amnesty International, on whose board he was for a while, he said: 'Amnesty International is primarily motivated not by human rights but by publicity. Second comes money. Third comes getting more members. Fourth, internal turf battles. And then finally, human rights, genuine human rights concerns.'<sup>45</sup> This is reminiscent of Colin Wallace saying that the IRA was fourth on the British Army's enemies list in Northern Ireland; and the sentiment is probably familiar to anyone who has been a member of a bureaucratic organisation.

Boyle has had his say on many of the big issues of the last forty years, one of them being biological weapons. His CV at the University of Illinois tells us that 'He drafted the U.S. domestic implementing legislation for the

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<sup>40</sup> <<https://www.ft.com/content/f872960d-bb68-4b9b-a85b-be932bb62df7>>

<sup>41</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yy8uzalg>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/test-and-trace-consultants-are-being-paid-7-000-a-day-n9l8v1qv>>

<sup>42</sup> <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n21/peter-geoghegan/cronyism-and-clientelism>>

<sup>43</sup> <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster80/lob80-democracy-for-sale.pdf>>

<sup>44</sup> <[https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Francis\\_Boyle](https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Francis_Boyle)>. *Lobster's* sub-editor in chief, Nick Must, doesn't trust Wikipedia or Wikispooks but in this case, even if some of the details are wrong, the evidence is overwhelming.

<sup>45</sup> Originally stated in a June 2002 interview, a transcript of which is available at Global Policy Forum. See <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/176/31407.html>>.

Biological Weapons Convention, known as the Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989, that was approved unanimously by both Houses of the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President George H.W. Bush.’<sup>46</sup>

All of which is a preamble to noting that he has had a long interest in biological weapons and has recently been telling anyone who will listen that COVID-19 is a bio-warfare lab escapee.<sup>47</sup> Boyle’s potential audience has been diminished by the fact that Youtube have removed a video of his in which he makes these claims.<sup>48</sup>

## **Just to make sure . . .**

**Nils Melzer** is the ‘United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment’. In an interview about the treatment of Julian Assange he said this:

‘Another thing is that Assange’s procedural rights have been so severely and consistently violated that, by now, this extradition proceeding has become irreparably arbitrary. He has not had adequate access to his lawyers, he has not been granted a single meeting since the lockdown in

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<sup>46</sup> <<https://law.illinois.edu/faculty-research/faculty-profiles/francis-boyle/>>

<sup>47</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y5bbd3m7>> or <<https://www.thehansindia.com/my-voice/basically-humanity-is-fighting-world-war-iii-against-covid-19-649426>>

On which see also <<https://tinyurl.com/yxsnsazt>> or <<https://www.biologicalweapons.news/2020-02-19-covid-19-coronavirus-found-to-contain-gain-of-function-for-efficient-spreading-human-population.html>>.

<sup>48</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/w5sydye>> or <<https://www.siasat.com/covid-19-biowarfare-says-bioweapon-creator-dr-francis-boyle-1866058/>>. When I tried to paste the the url from Youtube into this text I got this message: ‘This video wasn’t inserted because it couldn’t be found.’

Nick Must commented:

A likely reason for the removal of the video is that it was (for reason unknown) latched onto by a bot that artificially increases the view count for a video. Part of YouTube’s ‘community guidelines’ prohibits the artificial boosting of the number of views a video receives. Using the ‘Wayback Machine’ I haven’t been able to see the actual video but can see that the view count was into the 200,000s after just three weeks. Other videos on the same ‘Geopolitics & Empire’ channel (16.6K subscribers) usually get between 1k and 20k views. Their top three vids (in terms of views) are 155k, 45k and 27k respectively. You can see the whole list, in descending order of views at <<https://www.youtube.com/c/GeopoliticsEmpire/videos?view=0&sort=p&flow=grid>> and that shows how unusual the number of views for the Prof Boyle vid would seem to be.

There are still a few other videos of Prof Boyle being interviewed on this subject. Many do seem to be with foreign media (particularly from the Indian subcontinent) and are overdubbed with a translation for the intended viewers but one that is in English is at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVTbW47hPmo>>.

March, he has had extremely restricted access to his case documents, he only received a computer after a year in prison, he doesn't have internet access, and on top of that, *they have glued down the keys of the keyboard so he can't write.*<sup>49</sup> (emphasis added)

## **Magic economic theories**

This is one of the paragraphs in the Pope's recent encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*.

'168. The marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem, however much we are asked to believe this dogma of neoliberal faith. Whatever the challenge, this impoverished and repetitive school of thought always offers the same recipes. Neoliberalism simply reproduces itself by resorting to the magic theories of "spillover" or "trickle" [sic: he means trickle down] – without using the name – as the only solution to societal problems. There is little appreciation of the fact that the alleged "spillover" does not resolve the inequality that gives rise to new forms of violence threatening the fabric of society. It is imperative to have a proactive economic policy directed at "promoting an economy that favours productive diversity and business creativity"[140] and makes it possible for jobs to be created and not cut. Financial speculation fundamentally aimed at quick profit continues to wreak havoc. Indeed, "without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfil its proper economic function. And today this trust has ceased to exist".[141] The story did not end the way it was meant to, and the dogmatic formulae of prevailing economic theory proved not to be infallible. The fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom. It has also shown that, in addition to recovering a sound political life that is not subject to the dictates of finance, "we must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need."<sup>50</sup>

This was noted by the *Daily Mail*<sup>51</sup> and the *Guardian*<sup>52</sup> but not, as far as I can see, by the *Telegraph*, the *Times*, or the BBC News website. I mean, yes, the

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<sup>49</sup> <<https://www.exberliner.com/features/julian-assange-trial-2020/nils-melzer-assange/>>

<sup>50</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y3u7z3cv>> or <[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html)>

<sup>51</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y2cxggvr>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8803479/Pope-says-coronavirus-pandemic-proven-world-needs-new-type-politics.html>>

<sup>52</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y3x6t2xw>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/06/pope-francis-encyclical-us-election-biden-trump-catholic-vote>>

Catholic Church is in decline, thanks largely to the sexual behaviour of some priests; but even so, you would have thought this encyclical would have been worthy of note by BBC News. Apparently not. Weird.

## Who is paying the piper?

Scott Newton brought OCCRP, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project<sup>53</sup> to my attention. And this is big stuff, the kind of detailed investigative work which is getting scarce these days as newspaper and TV income declines. A quick perusal of the site shows there to be about 50 people involved. Who is funding all this? Click on 'Supporters' on the site and you find a stellar cast of financial backers including the UK's FCO, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), George Soros and the Rockefellers. Now there's a list for the conspiracy theorists to play with! Politics, dear boy, politics.

Thus Charles Moore, the official biographer of Margaret Thatcher:

'At the time of the 2008/9 financial crisis, I remember Mervyn King, then Governor of the Bank of England, telling me with bitter perceptiveness, "The trouble with these global banks is that they are global in life, but national in death." Our nation had to pay out back home for gigantic errors made across five continents.'<sup>54</sup>

To me the startling thing about those events is that the Labour government of Gordon Brown declined the chance to acquire chunks of British banks in exchange for bailing them out.<sup>55</sup> Alastair Darling, Brown's Chancellor of the Exchequer, sort of explained why:

'When I went across to see Gordon in the flat that evening, I told him that nationalisation [of Royal Bank of Scotland] was looking increasingly likely [. . . .] like me [he] could see the political watershed we faced. It would hark back to the wilderness years, when Labour appeared unelectable.'<sup>56</sup>

It would be hard to beat that as an example of the sheer oddity of the political

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<sup>53</sup> <<https://www.occrp.org/>>

<sup>54</sup> Charles Moore, at <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/08/14/can-no-longer-escape-necessity-borders/>>.

<sup>55</sup> 'In the midst of the 2008-9 banking crisis, the "Greatest ever" British Chancellor Gordon Brown gave perhaps the best impression ever (for he was now Prime Minister) of The Boneless Man by caving in completely to the cap-proffering demands of international banking. It is staggering to realise this, but Britain's banking bailout at that time cost £780 billion – almost exactly the same sum as the much larger US Federal Government had to cough up.' John Ward at <<https://therealslog.com/2020/09/22/a-tragic-compendium-of-cowardice/>>.

<sup>56</sup> From Darling's memoir, *Back from the Brink*, reviewed in *Lobster* 62. See <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster62/lob62-back-from-brink.pdf>>.

perspective. In the first place, how would it hark back to 'the wilderness years'? Neil Kinnock was not campaigning to nationalise the banks in the 1980s. I can only assume he means reminding people of the days when government felt it should have a role in the national economy. But is this why Labour failed to get elected between 1979 and 1997? In 2008, how many people even *remembered* those days? And, faced with economic collapse, how many of the tiny minority who remembered would have cared?

## **The conspiracy theory *sheitgeist***

There's an essay on the *Esquire* site about the role of 9/11 film, *Loose Change*, in creating today's conspiracy theory fantasia in America and, increasingly, the UK.<sup>57</sup> The essay argues that the film, seen by millions, kicked it all off. But this just isn't true. What started the road to the idiocies of QAnon was chiefly *The X-Files* TV programme, seen by hundreds of millions of people around the world in the mid-late 1990s. A glimpse of the world we have today was visible then. I wrote the following in 1997, while *The X Files* was still running.

'The American Dream is faltering. At best, real wage rates are no higher than they were twenty years ago for many of the working class in America. For many they are lower. There are thousands of homeless people on the streets of all the big American cities. The gap between the top strata in the US and the bottom is wider than it has been since the Second World War, and getting wider every year. In my view this is the predictable – and predicted – consequence of the infantile free market economic theories of the Reagan-Bush and Thatcher regimes; but whatever view is taken of the causes of this, things are not going according to plan for many white Americans, and they need to explain this to themselves. . . .

The average American knows things are going wrong – but not why. Not only are the information and concepts they need not readily available, they are handicapped in their ability to understand the world by the power of the American myth. America, after all, is the country of manifest destiny, bearing the shining torch of freedom and democracy, the land of the brave and the home of the free. Most importantly and most damaging, America is a country in which anyone can make it and become rich if they try hard enough. So deeply ingrained is this American myth, most Americans simply find it impossible to believe that there is something

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<sup>57</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y6oqddd9>> or <<https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a33971104/loose-change-9-11-conspiracy-documentary-history-interview/>>.

wrong with their economic and social *system*. But if the *system* is fine, and things are going wrong what is causing the problem?

The answer is, of course, that things are going wrong because of the actions of *bad people*. And not only must there be somebody to blame for their problems, they're doing it behind everybody's backs. This must be the case because most people can't see them doing it! The essence of the standard conspiracy theory is this: somebody's *behind* our troubles and behind the scenes.<sup>58</sup>

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I haven't seen Loose Change. Although I began collecting material on 9/11 from the Net within three hours of the event, after a fortnight I had far too much to handle and gave up. That material is on a disk somewhere. Truth is, I could never take the US-did-9/11 thesis seriously, because of the targets: Manhattan and the Pentagon. I just could not imagine any US conspirators deciding to attack those locations. Had it been Disneyland, or some provincial city, OK. But not those towers of capital and their protector; too many friends and relatives might be killed. Why would anyone pick targets so big when the same effect on public opinion could have been created by something less damaging to the US economy? Added to which there is no evidence that any of the US military and/or intelligence agencies had either the competence or the *hutzpah* to attempt such an operation. However, the collapse of the buildings looks hinky in the extreme. So, if pushed, my view would be that Bin Laden, backed by elements within the Saudi government, did 9/11 and the buildings were demolished by persons unknown for reasons unknown.

## **Denial is not a river in Egypt**

**Y**ou may be all 'Trumped-out', tired of endless demonstrations of the obvious: the man is an obnoxious dummy.<sup>59</sup> I've been keeping only half an eye on the subject, largely relying on John Newsinger's series of essays which have

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<sup>58</sup> From my 'The Truth Behind the X-Files: Conspiracy Theories of the Failing American Empire' at the Edinburgh International Science Festival, 1997.

<sup>59</sup> 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/](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/).

covered the torrent of books about him.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup>

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.<sup>63</sup> A stunning example of this has recently come from one Simon

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<sup>60</sup> <<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>>

<sup>61</sup> <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/08/magazine/us-russia-intelligence.html>>

<sup>62</sup> 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>>

<sup>63</sup> I discuss the persistence of this ridiculous belief below, under subheading **Ah yes: the USA as moral leader.**

Rosenberg, president of the New Democrats Network and the New Policy Institute, a liberal think tank based in Washington.<sup>64</sup> *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.*'<sup>65</sup> (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?

## **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 Baker<sup>66</sup> 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

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<sup>64</sup> 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.

<sup>65</sup> <<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/>>

<sup>66</sup> Perhaps best known for his 1992 novel *Vox*.

War, was given a code name: Project Baseless. It was assigned priority category I, as high as atomic weapons.<sup>67</sup>

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.

## **Russian money talking?**

**I**n 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 the DC cables in the Tunnel and the underground AC cable system in the UK.<sup>68</sup>

The company website shows that much of the construction work on both sides of the Channel has been done.<sup>69</sup>

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

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<sup>67</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y62dczbz>> or <<https://lithub.com/inside-the-quest-for-documents-that-could-resolve-a-cold-war-mystery/>>

<sup>68</sup> <<https://www.getlinkgroup.com/en/our-group/eleclink/>>

<sup>69</sup> 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>>.

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.<sup>70</sup>

Currently, despite all the expenditure, 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.’<sup>71</sup> 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 Tory Party £1.3 million.<sup>72</sup>

There was a time when a million pound donation to a British political party would buy a government policy.<sup>73</sup> 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’.<sup>74</sup> But sleaze really isn’t all there is. 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*.

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<sup>70</sup> <<https://aquindconsultation.co.uk>>

<sup>71</sup> ‘Eurotunnel rival to energy project is left in limbo’ at <<https://tinyurl.com/yyx4bx2u>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/eurotunnel-rival-to-aquind-energy-project-is-left-in-limbo-9nx9svswc>>

<sup>72</sup> 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>>.

<sup>73</sup> 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](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/391831.stm)>.

<sup>74</sup> <<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>>

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?

## **See no evil**

**O**n a single day in mid August I found the following stories on [dailymaverick.co.za](http://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'.<sup>75</sup>

Two things are going on here. The obvious one is the British state clinging 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](http://dailymaverick.co.za): 'UK censors all Saudi Arabia conversations from latest release of cabinet minutes'.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Phil Miller was involved in writing all of them.

<sup>76</sup> <<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.

## 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 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.<sup>77</sup>

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

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<sup>77</sup> <<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](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)>

academic subjects in which fuddy-duddy historians interested in 'What happened?' are still encamped.<sup>78</sup>

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 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'.<sup>79</sup>

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

## **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 Braeckelee at Intel Today. De Braeckelee 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.<sup>80</sup> The little I have read of it is excellent.

## **The colour of money**

**S**o 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-

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<sup>78</sup> <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/online/issue46/lob46-24.htm>>

<sup>79</sup> 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.

<sup>80</sup> The book is at <<https://gosint.wordpress.com/lockerbie/>>.

American Democratic candidate in one advert<sup>81</sup> and lengthened the nose of a Jewish Democratic candidate in another.<sup>82</sup> And Republican pols are working to put Kanye West's name on the ballot in several states.<sup>83</sup> West's presence on the ballot as a third candidate, to take black votes, may be the Republicans' best hope of re-electing Trump.<sup>84</sup>

## Dallas again

Joe Rogan did an interview with the film director Oliver Stone.<sup>85</sup> Stone has a memoir out and has made an as yet unreleased documentary series about the Kennedy assassination,<sup>86</sup> based on the new information which has emerged since the Assassination Records Review Board, if I understood him correctly.<sup>87</sup> Jim DiEugenio is involved in this, Stone said.

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

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<sup>81</sup> <<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/>>

<sup>82</sup> <<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/>>

<sup>83</sup> <<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/05/politics/kanye-west-ballot/>>

<sup>84</sup> 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/>>.

<sup>85</sup> <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOrOYUxzX3o>>

<sup>86</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/y3v62ztn>> or <<https://variety.com/2019/tv/global/agc-television-picks-up-worldwide-oliver-stones-jfk-destiny-betrayed-1203368818>>.

<sup>87</sup> See <<https://twitter.com/theoliverstone/status/1184528170701197316?lang=en>>.

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 building . . . .'88

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

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<sup>88</sup> Chauncey Holt, *Self-Portrait of a Scoundrel* (Oregon: TrineDay, 2013) pp. 160, 183

phony assassination attempt on JFK, to pressure him into attacking Cuba,<sup>89</sup> 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?'<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> But still, I thought, maybe I missed something. So I went back to the report<sup>92</sup> and searched for 'Conservative' and there was one hit, in footnote 28, a reference to 'socially liberal and socially conservative camps'. Did Misha Glenny actually *read* the report?

## Scheuer-nuff

Michael Scheuer was leader of the team within the CIA tracking Bin Laden in the years before 9/11.<sup>93</sup> Since leaving the Agency, Scheuer has made a number of very sharp comments on the role of the Israel and Saudi lobbies in

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<sup>89</sup> Holt denies advance knowledge of a phoney assassination attempt. He concluded it was that after the events. He's probably lying about that.

<sup>90</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y3fqfd53>> or <<https://bylinetimes.com/2020/08/05/why-would-russia-want-to-interfere-in-british-politics/>>

<sup>91</sup> Under subhead **The ISC Russia report**.

<sup>92</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yy3nc6el>> or <<https://docs.google.com/a/independent.gov.uk/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=aW5kZXBlbmRIbnQuZ292LnVrfGlzY3xneDo1Y2RhMGEyN2Y3NjM0OWFI>>

<sup>93</sup> This is described at <<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2004/11/path-to-9-11-200411>>.

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 . . . .' <sup>94</sup>

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.'<sup>95</sup>

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 more items to count.'<sup>96</sup>

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.<sup>97</sup>) Jefferson Morley has written a very good

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Marching Towards Hell: America and Islam After Iraq* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009) p. xiv.

<sup>95</sup> '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/>>.

<sup>96</sup> '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.

<sup>97</sup> 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/>>.

analysis of Scheuer's journey from sharp critic of the insanities of American foreign policy to his present embrace of conspiratorial idiocy.<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> Student Freemasons?

## The ISC Russia report

It is not difficult to see why the government wanted the ISC report, titled '*Russia*', suppressed.<sup>101</sup> 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:

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 ddpractices, 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

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<sup>98</sup> '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.

<sup>99</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y6sy8ozr>> or <<https://www.freemasonrytoday.com/ugle-sgc/ugle/freemasons-vow-to-help-protect-the-elderly-during-the-covid-19-crisis>>

<sup>100</sup> 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.

<sup>101</sup> <<https://www.scribd.com/document/469886680/Russia-Report>>

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*.<sup>102</sup> Christopher Donnelly I had to look up. He is deeply involved in both the Integrity Initiative and its parent body the Institute for Statecraft,<sup>103</sup> and he spent fourteen years of his career as a ‘Special Adviser for Central and Eastern European Affairs to the Secretary General of NATO’.<sup>104</sup>

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:

‘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.’<sup>105</sup>

This is true, isn’t it?

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<sup>102</sup> 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>>

<sup>103</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yy2pv3zx>> or <<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/derelict-crumbling-scots-mill-shadowy-13674992>>

<sup>104</sup> <<https://www.nato.int/cv/is/sp-adv/donnelly.htm>>

<sup>105</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y2vmmg7c>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/catherine-belton-putins-people/614212/>>

The one thing in the report which surprised me was the reference to the piece in BuzzFeed to which I referred in *Lobster 74*.<sup>106</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup>

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.<sup>108</sup> 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 Don't Apply to the Rich Who Bring Money to London scheme).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster74/lob74-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>> under subhead **Things Russian**, starting on p. 32.

<sup>107</sup> 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.'

<sup>108</sup> <<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>>

<sup>109</sup> 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>.'

## 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.'<sup>110</sup>

St Antony's College, Oxford again.<sup>111</sup>

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)<sup>112</sup> 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 Moss.<sup>113</sup> 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.

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<sup>110</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y3cntj3n>> or <<https://www.thearticle.com/julian-and-john-two-working-class-jewish-tories-the-old-etonians-dislike>>

<sup>111</sup> 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>>.

<sup>112</sup> Reviewed in *Lobster* 26.

<sup>113</sup> 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/>>.

Crozier and Lewis went on to work together in the 1980s, in the Coalition for Peace Through Security, most famous for its various stunts against CND.<sup>114</sup>

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,<sup>115</sup> 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 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:

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<sup>114</sup> See <[https://powerbase.info/index.php/Coalition\\_for\\_Peace\\_through\\_Security](https://powerbase.info/index.php/Coalition_for_Peace_through_Security)>.

Nick Must added: On the early history of the Coalition for Peace Through 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>>).

<sup>115</sup> <<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>>

'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.'<sup>116</sup>

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.'<sup>117</sup> (emphasis added)

This, you might think, would be enough. Not among computer/internet experts it isn't. Duncan Campbell<sup>118</sup> published an essay in 2018<sup>119</sup> 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 conclusions.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/jz4s3wv>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/10/cia-concludes-russia-interfered-to-help-trump-win-election-report>>

<sup>117</sup> <[http://russiahouse.org/current\\_news.php?language=eng&id\\_current=2251](http://russiahouse.org/current_news.php?language=eng&id_current=2251)>

<sup>118</sup> 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.

<sup>119</sup> '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>>

<sup>120</sup> '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>>.

And yet: in an on-line conference in July this year,<sup>121</sup> 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.<sup>122</sup> 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.’<sup>123</sup>

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 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

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<sup>121</sup> 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.’

<sup>122</sup> See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t4m7VZOFMc>>. Watch from 4.30 onwards.

<sup>123</sup> <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/07/cold-wars-and-profit/>>

and #Resistance “journalists” blamed the Russian government for the email leak.’<sup>124</sup> (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,<sup>125</sup> everybody and their cousin in the American centrist media has denounced the Rich story as nonsense.<sup>126</sup> 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.”<sup>127</sup>

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

## 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**

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<sup>124</sup> This is quoting from the papers of a lawsuit brought by Edward Butowski which are at <<https://tinyurl.com/y3jnu5ww>> or <[https://ncn5qbovydygetsp7y5knmrtmrl5y3ldfph4vgr3nxzapga4fwrq.arweave.net/aJvYBdXA8GJOT\\_46prIzZFcbWMrz8qaO23yB5gcLaM](https://ncn5qbovydygetsp7y5knmrtmrl5y3ldfph4vgr3nxzapga4fwrq.arweave.net/aJvYBdXA8GJOT_46prIzZFcbWMrz8qaO23yB5gcLaM)>.

<sup>125</sup> See <<https://consortiumnews.com/tag/seth-rich/>>.

<sup>126</sup> Detailed at <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder\\_of\\_Seth\\_Rich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Seth_Rich)>.

<sup>127</sup> ‘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>>.

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*,<sup>128</sup> 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/cm<sup>2</sup> 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',<sup>129</sup> in which the authors detail some of the smear campaign run in the British media against Corbyn.<sup>130</sup> The essay's 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

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<sup>128</sup> <<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](https://www.magdahavas.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/BIOLOGICAL_EFFECTS_OF_ELECTROMAGNETIC_RADIATION-RADIOWAVES_AND_MICROWAVES-EURASIAN_COMMUNIST_COUNTRIES.pdf)>

<sup>129</sup> <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/killing-jeremy-corbyn>>

<sup>130</sup> Osborne was the author of a detailed critique of the Tom Bower biography of Corbyn. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y4bsrmv>> 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**.

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.<sup>131</sup> 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'.<sup>132</sup>

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

**I**n the *Telegraph* one Bryan Young reviewed the newly published *The China*

*Journals* by Hugh Trevor-Roper.<sup>133</sup> 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

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<sup>131</sup> 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.

<sup>132</sup> See 'Where's Ware?' at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/issue39.php>>.

<sup>133</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y8yknyay>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/mad-rich-british-left-wingers-became-chinas-useful-idiots/>>

published in this new book. Does Young mention that *Encounter* was CIA front organisation? No. Communist fronts the *Telegraph* will expose; CIA fronts are, apparently, still unmentionable.

## Friedman

**I**n a very good essay on the failing economies and societies of America and the UK,<sup>134</sup> 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.<sup>135</sup>

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>><sup>136</sup>

\* <<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>>.<sup>137</sup>

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

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<sup>134</sup> 16 July 2020

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

<sup>135</sup> Under subhead **How the chips fall** at

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

<sup>136</sup> <<https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/lab-made-coronavirus-triggers-debate-34502>>

<sup>137</sup> <<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.<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup>

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'.<sup>140</sup> 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.'<sup>141</sup>

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

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<sup>138</sup> 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*.

<sup>139</sup> <<https://order-order.com/2020/07/13/political-activist-group-behind-independent-sage/>>

<sup>140</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y6je6qtc>> or <<https://vidrebel.wordpress.com/2020/07/15/president-kennedys-assassination-reporter-killed/>>

<sup>141</sup> <[https://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/russ/testimony/ruby\\_j1.htm](https://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/russ/testimony/ruby_j1.htm)>

**A**propos the 'suppressed' report by the House of Commons Intelligence and 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 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.<sup>142</sup>

As far as I can see, this £11 million worth of donations has not been thought worthy of mention by the *Telegraph*,<sup>143</sup> *The Times*, or even the *Guardian*. It did, however, make it into the *Independent*.<sup>144</sup> 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.<sup>145</sup>

## Skripal

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<sup>142</sup> <<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/>>

<sup>143</sup> 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>>.

<sup>144</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y7rudsk3>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tory-party-property-developer-boris-johnson-conservative-donors-a9588381.html>>

<sup>145</sup> 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](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1462&context=fac_articles_chapters)>.

There is lots of critical analysis of the Skripal affair – ranging from doubt cast 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,<sup>146</sup> Blogmire<sup>147</sup> and documents with links to the major themes of the dissenters are at Wikispooks.<sup>148</sup> 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!'<sup>149</sup>

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.<sup>150</sup> 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?<sup>151</sup> 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

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<sup>146</sup> <<https://www.moonofalabama.org/>>

<sup>147</sup> <<https://www.theblogmire.com/category/skripal-case/>>

<sup>148</sup> <[https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Skripal\\_Affair#Related\\_Documents](https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Skripal_Affair#Related_Documents)>

<sup>149</sup> <<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/>>

<sup>150</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yazu865k>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jan/20/novichok-poisoning-victims-sergei-skripal-first-helped-by-teenage-girl>>

<sup>151</sup> 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.

not have had to wait for Bellingcat to identify the two GRU officers<sup>152</sup>). So what did the British spooks do in this alternative version? Follow the GRU men around the UK and *improvise* the Skripal events when they turned up in Salisbury? I mean, *really*?

## The problem of sources

**I**n 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.<sup>153</sup>

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.<sup>154</sup> 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 to a *Russia Today* piece by Beeley herself.<sup>155</sup> 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

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<sup>152</sup> See – one of many – <<https://tinyurl.com/yyoeunub>> or <<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2019/10/14/averyanov-chepiga/>>.

<sup>153</sup> <<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>>.

<sup>154</sup> <<http://democracysciencefund.ru/userfiles/THE%20%20WHITE%20HELMETS%20.pdf>>

<sup>155</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y7r3uce3>> or <[https://www.rt.com/op-ed/472844-white-helmets-syria-terrorists-aid/?fbclid=IwAR0a8jtv2mF7izQfXfWyxJAipx7r1m8sMYIk4yH7rah0DK3Zb1Fz6jTD\\_Q](https://www.rt.com/op-ed/472844-white-helmets-syria-terrorists-aid/?fbclid=IwAR0a8jtv2mF7izQfXfWyxJAipx7r1m8sMYIk4yH7rah0DK3Zb1Fz6jTD_Q)>

and Reconstruction in Post-Conflict Syria' in the *Georgetown Security Studies Review*.<sup>156</sup> 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"<sup>157</sup> 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.<sup>158</sup> 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?'<sup>159</sup>

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.<sup>160</sup> If she's sceptical, she's at the right place, for other 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

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<sup>156</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ycm8a345>> or <<https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2015/05/13/syrian-civil-defense-a-framework-for-demobilization-and-reconstruction-in-post-conflict-syria/>>

<sup>157</sup> By 'carta' he means 'charter'.

<sup>158</sup> <<http://syriapropagandamedia.org/about/members>>

<sup>159</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y7qx88by>> or <<https://www.ukcolumn.org/article/who-controls-british-government-response-covid19-part-one>>

<sup>160</sup> <<https://www.rt.com/op-ed/484185-white-helmets-coronavirus-syria/>>

enables them to solve complex problems both in organizations and in cities.<sup>161</sup> 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.<sup>162</sup>

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.<sup>163</sup>

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 banks.'<sup>164</sup>

Does Mr Gerrish offer evidence? Not really. Of the Common Purpose network believed to exist by Gerrish, there was one alleged sighting detected around

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<sup>161</sup> <<https://commonpurpose.org/uk/>>

<sup>162</sup> <<https://commonpurpose.org/leadership-programmes/meridian/>>

<sup>163</sup> 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](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/>>

<sup>164</sup> <<https://www.cpexposed.com/about-common-purpose>>

the Leveson Inquiry into the media.<sup>165</sup> 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.

## 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.<sup>166</sup> But there it is, the lead story on 21 June.<sup>167</sup> 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.

## What could possibly go wrong?

Frank Partnoy wrote a very interesting book about his experiences selling financial derivatives for Morgan Stanley in the 1990s.<sup>168</sup> 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.<sup>169</sup> 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. 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

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<sup>165</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y8pthzey>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10423070/Press-row-PM-faces-questions-over-link-to-charity.html>>

<sup>166</sup> Spotted by Garrick Alder.

<sup>167</sup> <<http://archive.vn/WTvmP>>

<sup>168</sup> *F.I.A.S.C.O.: Blood in the Water on Wall Street* (London: Profile Books, 1997).

<sup>169</sup> ‘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/>> .

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?

## The nub

**A**midst 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.’<sup>170</sup>

## More on 5G

**I**n 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 were in earlier editions of *Lobster*.

\* Robert C. Beck and Eldon A. Byrd, ‘Bibliography on the psychoactivity of electromagnetic fields’, 1986.<sup>171</sup>

\* Robert Uhlig ‘Mobile telephones in new brain tumour alert’, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 2001.<sup>172</sup>

\* ‘Motorola, Microwaves and DNA breaks: “War-gaming” the Lai-Singh

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<sup>170</sup> <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8503691>>

<sup>171</sup> <[www.vxm.com/bib.doc.html](http://www.vxm.com/bib.doc.html)>

<sup>172</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yd6zugsh>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1339509/Mobile-telephones-in-new-brain-tumour-alert.html>>

Experiments', from *Microwave News*, January 1997.<sup>173</sup>

\* 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.<sup>174</sup>

\* 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.<sup>175</sup>

\* I Yakymenko *et al*, 'Long-term Exposure to Microwave Radiation Provokes Cancer Growth: Evidences From Radars and Mobile Communication Systems' from *Experimental Oncology*, June 2011.<sup>176</sup>

\* Ido Ifrati, 'Israeli Soldiers Working With Radar Face Higher Risk of Cancer, Israeli Study Suggests', *Haaretz*, 20 March 2018.<sup>177</sup>

\* Brad Jacobson, 'What the Cellphone Industry Doesn't Want You to Know About Radiation Concerns', *AlterNet*, 7 June 2013.<sup>178</sup>

\* 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.<sup>179</sup>

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

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<sup>173</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y97kbz6x>> or <<https://www.rfsafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/cell-phone-radiation-war-gaming-memo.pdf>>

<sup>174</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y8fpceca>> or <<https://thewalrus.ca/cellphone-games/?ref=2008.09-health-cellphone-brain-tumour-melinda-wenner&page=>>>

<sup>175</sup> <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8213849/>>

<sup>176</sup> <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21716201/>>

<sup>177</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ya97h2e5>> or <<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/radio-frequency-radiation-may-cause-cancer-israeli-study-suggests-1.5918197>>

<sup>178</sup> <<https://www.alternet.org/2013/06/radiation-concerns-about-cellphones/>>

<sup>179</sup> <<https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2084/1940>>

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.'<sup>180</sup> 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,<sup>181</sup> 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.'<sup>182</sup> (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.

## 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.'<sup>183</sup> (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 in its programming other than occasionally on Question Time and Politics Live.

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<sup>180</sup> <<https://www.buzzfeed.com/emilyashton/ruth-smeeth-on-abuse>>

<sup>181</sup> 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>>.

<sup>182</sup> <[https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09LONDON956\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09LONDON956_a.html)>

<sup>183</sup> <<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>>

## 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 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.'<sup>184</sup> Here's a headline from AP a couple of years ago: 'Trump retreats from US moral leadership stance'.<sup>185</sup> And two journalists at CNN recently asked 'Is the US still the world's moral guardian?'<sup>186</sup>

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

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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.<sup>187</sup> 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

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<sup>184</sup> 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>>.

<sup>185</sup> <<https://apnews.com/9211dcbb2fde4410b30a061bc3036d9f/>>

<sup>186</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ycrleatf>> or <<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/06/politics/us-protests-george-floyd-world-moral-leader-intl/index.html>>

<sup>187</sup> <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/07/trumps-collaborators/612250/>>

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 incident is well known. For example, it was retold in some detail on the BBC World Service in 2013.<sup>188</sup> Second, during WW2 both the Germans and the Americans were doing research on entomological warfare and both considered using the Colorado beetle.<sup>189</sup> 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*’.<sup>190</sup>

Well now: St Antony’s, the spook college,<sup>191</sup> 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,<sup>192</sup> the contemporary FCO-funded network of people willing to take on

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<sup>188</sup> The BBC World Service programme is available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p01dsyr3>>.

<sup>189</sup> Dr. Robert K.D. Peterson, ‘The Role of Insects as Biological Weapons’ <<http://www.montana.edu/historybug/insects-as-bioweapons.html>>

<sup>190</sup> <<https://www.anneapplebaum.com>>

<sup>191</sup> For references to St Antony’s search at <[www.lobster-magazine.co.uk](http://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk)>.

<sup>192</sup> 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,<sup>193</sup> and has been invited to Bilderberg meetings.<sup>194</sup>

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

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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'.

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<sup>193</sup> <<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>>

<sup>194</sup> 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.<sup>195</sup> 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.'<sup>196</sup>

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.<sup>197</sup> Precisely because this was such a refreshing blast of fresh air on the

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<sup>195</sup> "'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>>.

<sup>196</sup> <<https://www.bellingcat.com/author/bellingcat/>>

<sup>197</sup> 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).<sup>198</sup> 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.’

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<sup>198</sup> 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**

**I**t 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.<sup>199</sup> 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.'<sup>200</sup>

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

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<sup>199</sup> <<https://winteroak.org.uk/2020/03/29/the-acorn-56/#3>>

<sup>200</sup> <[https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/pke7yv/5g-coronavirus-conspiracy-theory-origin](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.<sup>201</sup> 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.<sup>202</sup> 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.'

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<sup>201</sup> <<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/>>.

<sup>202</sup> <<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.'<sup>203</sup>

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

## **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.<sup>204</sup> 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.<sup>205</sup> Is the Scottish state really stupid enough to make a martyr of Murray? Apparently so.

## **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

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<sup>203</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y8xkmj8j>> or <<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/dominic-cummings-edited-blog-claimed-22088430>>

<sup>204</sup> 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.

<sup>205</sup> <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/05/authoritarianism-is-shoddy/>>

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.’<sup>206</sup>

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

At one level this is familiar: operations in support of foreign policy objectives now include what we might call covert social messaging.<sup>207</sup> 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.<sup>208</sup> 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.’<sup>209</sup>

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?

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<sup>206</sup> <<http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/cybertroops2018/>>

<sup>207</sup> 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/>>

<sup>208</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ybjl22ds>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/uk-news/british-army-coronavirus-conspiracy-theory-5g-a9538791.html>>

<sup>209</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y322pasf>> or <<https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/formations-divisions-brigades/6th-united-kingdom-division/77-brigade/>>