

# The View from the Bridge

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*Thanks to Nick Must (in particular) and Garrick Alder for editorial and proof-reading assistance with this issue of Lobster.*

*\*New\**

## JFK

I wrote below ('But not that page') that only Roger Stone and I seemed to have spotted that Robert Caro had omitted a large chunk of material about Billie Sol Estes and other Texas shenanigans from his celebrated biography of LBJ. Since then JFK researcher Robert Morrow sent out a link to a video of him asking Robert Caro at a recent public meeting why he had done this.<sup>1</sup> Morrow might have been better only asking about Estes rather than including him in a list of other people Caro hadn't talked to. Nonetheless Caro's (indistinct) answer to the effect that in forty years he never saw anything 'credible' linking LBJ to Dallas is disingenuous. Morrow's point was precisely that Caro had deliberately avoided such evidence.

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Meanwhile back at Chauncey Holt and the striking lack of interest in him among the assassination researchers, there's this from Jim DiEugenio:

'... other researchers have dug into Holt's story at great length, and have shown great doubt about his claims – for instance, that Holt traveled to New Orleans to deliver pre-printed leaflets to Guy Banister's office for Oswald to pass out, when in fact there is evidence these were printed in New Orleans and Oswald hand-stamped the leaflets with Banister's address.'<sup>2</sup>

I don't know of anyone who has researched Holt 'at great length'. There was some initial interest but, when the Dallas Police records of the arrest of the

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9vA6RHIkJ4&t=2s>>

<sup>2</sup> <<https://kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/the-decline-and-fall-of-jim-fetzer>>

three 'tramps' were released and Holt wasn't one of them, that interest disappeared. However Holt-sceptic Jim DiEugenio has given us something specific here about the leaflets and an apparent contradiction between Holt's account and what is known. What can we say?

Holt has given us two versions of the leaflets.<sup>3</sup> The first was in a profile of Holt by Bill Kelly when he first appeared in the early 90s.

'Driving to New Orleans, Holt, Belcher and Young delivered Fair Play for Cuba Committee leaflets to Guy Bannister's Camp Street office. Holt had made the leaflets in California. "These were professionally done, and not the leaflets with the 544 Camp Street address on them," said Holt, who doesn't know if his leaflets were ever used.'<sup>4</sup>

In his memoir, written about five years later, Holt merely refers in passing to 'the leaflets we had printed'.<sup>5</sup>

So: Holt did not claim to have produced the Camp St. leaflets and DiEugenio's claim that their existence in some way discredits Holt's story is mistaken.

On the leaflets there is a further complication. Those that were made in New Orleans, with the Camp Street address on them, were apparently not ordered by Oswald.

'It has been documented that they were printed at the Jones Printing Company of New Orleans. In the National Archives is the crude drawing Oswald did of the leaflet copy. The folks at the print shop recalled doing business with a man identifying himself as "Lee Osborne." Neither the owner Douglass Jones, nor the secretary Myra Silver, could identify photos of Oswald as being the same man named Lee Osborne that ordered the pamphlets printed. Jones specifically said the man he dealt with had a huskier build, that of a laborer. So who was this guy? Another cog in the operation?'<sup>6</sup>

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Looking through old issues of *Lobster* I noticed this item in *Lobster* 37.

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<sup>3</sup> There is nothing on them in the long interview with Holt done by John Craig, Phillip Rogers, and Gary Shaw in 1991. This is at <http://jfkcountercoup.blogspot.com/2009/12/chauncey-holts-execution-of-oswald.html> and is the place to start on Holt's account of events.

<sup>4</sup> William E. Kelly, 'Meet Chauncey Holt' in *The Third Decade*, Volume 9 Issue 1 at <https://www.maryferrell.org/showDoc.html?docId=48769#relPageId=35&tab=page>.

<sup>5</sup> Chauncey Holt, *Self-Portrait of a Scoundrel* (Waterville, OR: TrineDay, 2013) p. 158

<sup>6</sup> <http://oswaldsmother.blogspot.com/2008/07/lee-oswald-pamphleteer.html>

'In November 1997 the JFK Assassination Records Review Board released Pentagon documents which, according to the Reuters' report on this, show that "The Pentagon drew up plans to mount a bloody 'terror campaign' in the United States . . . and planned to blame it on Fidel Castro to justify a U.S. invasion of Cuba. . . .'

These are the Operation Northwoods documents which were included in James Bamford's book *Body of Secrets* on the NSA a couple of years later and have become a staple of the parapolitical canon. Curious that such a startling revelation had to wait until 9/11 to be taken seriously.

*\*New\**

## **Bower on Corbyn**

**I**n his devastating review of Tom Bower's biography of Jeremy Corbyn,<sup>7</sup> Peter Osborne commented that he had a longer list of Bower's errors in the book which he would send on request. So I requested. This is the list compiled by Osborne's researcher.

### **Other Bower errors**

Here are some of the other errors I have established either myself or included from other reviews. I have organized them in order of page number wherever possible. I should say that I have not been able to do a comprehensive fact-check of the entire book. I suspect there are many other errors.

- Bower repeatedly refers to Corbyn's wife, Laura, not by her preferred name of Laura Alvarez, but as 'Laura Corbyn'.
- Bower frequently accuses Corbyn of being a Trotskyite. Elsewhere he states that Corbyn's 'personal commitment to Stalinism set him apart from most Labour Party members.' Trotskyites and Stalinists hate each other, and Stalin ordered Trotsky's brutal murder. Bower, who, with his knowledge of the far-Left, ought to know you can belong to only one of these two communist factions.
- p. 13. Bower accuses Corbyn of being 'unable to engage in hard work'. On page 32 he describes him as 'tirelessly active.' Only one can be true.
- p. 40. Bower's account of the 1978-9 winter of discontent says that union leader Jack Jones was 'leading the militancy', but Jones had already retired.
- p. 83. Bower asserts that Denis Healey was elected Labour deputy leader under Neil Kinnock when it was actually Roy Hattersley [who became deputy].
- pp. 117-18. Bower gives an account of Corbyn taking a trip to India. This

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<sup>7</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y4bsmrmv>> or <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/tom-bower-book-dangerous-hero-jeremy-corbyn-labour-leader-truth>>

contains a mass of errors. I have spoken with Talal Karim, who was on the trip and refused to speak to Tom Bower at the time and he has pointed out the following:

1. Corbyn went for just under 10 days not three weeks.
2. They did not travel by steam train from Mumbai to Kolkata (it would have taken 4 days had they done so). They travelled on the Rajdhani Express, an intercity non-stop fast train from New Delhi to Kolkata. This train does not allow anyone to sit on the roof as Bower suggests.

3. Responding to Bower's claim that Corbyn lacks an interest in reading, Mr Karim told me that during the long train journey to Kolkata, Jeremy read *Freedom at Midnight* and Mahatma Gandhi's memoirs.

- pp. 133-4, 238: Bower says that Corbyn supported the organisation *Deir Yasin [sic] Revisited* organised by the Holocaust Denier and Antisemite Paul Eisen.

According to Corbyn, his relationship with Paul Eisen was before Eisen outed himself as a holocaust denier. While this has not been confirmed, Bower could have at least included Corbyn's denial. For Corbyn's account see [here](#).

- p. 149. Bower says the left were 'playing the diversity card' when Diane Abbott made her bid for the leadership in 2010, when her candidacy was in part because Harriet Harman and David Lammy, both on the party's right, wanted to ensure that the field of candidates was not all white men.

- p. 211. Bower writes that Corbyn 'had never publicly expressed any outrage about Emwazi's crimes' when in fact Corbyn clearly called Emwazi's crimes 'callous and brutal'.<sup>8</sup>

- pp. 235 and 251. Bower deals with the allegations of anti-Semitism at the Oxford University Labour Club at length. However, he does not once mention that the Royall report found there was 'at least one case of serious false allegations of antisemitism reported to the police'.

- p. 237. Bower contradicts himself here when he says that 'To Corbyn's frustration Iain McNichol prevented him exercising any control over the party's disciplinary processes.' Bower deals at length with how slow Labour has been to process the antisemitism cases, for the most part ignoring that Corbyn's political rival McNichol was party secretary for most of them.

- p. 276. Bower confuses Jackie Walker's two suspensions. He says that she 'had been suspended again from the party for saying that Jews were the "chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade in the West Indies"'. This was the origin of the first suspension, which was lifted.

- pp. 283-84. Bower confuses the 2<sup>nd</sup> leadership campaign against Owen Smith

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<sup>8</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yywxtqvq>> or <<https://www.indy100.com/article/what-jeremy-corbyn-has-said-about-the-reported-death-of-jihadi-john--b1xqiVWx4Kg>>

with the general election campaign of 2017.

I have also obtained off the record rebuttals to do with Bower's treatment of the Shami Chakrabarti report:

– p. 270. Bower writes that Chakrabarti 'incorporated only an anodyne part of Jan Royall's conclusion of finding "clear" evidence of the "ancient virus of anti-Semitism"' (Royall's report was on the OULC affair.)

This doesn't make sense as the two worked closely together. Indeed, in an article Royall wrote about her report she writes: 'Some of the most important issues I considered I have left for the Chakrabarti review, of which I am proud to be vice-chair.'

Bower's suggestion is that the Chakrabarti's inquiry does <sup>9</sup> mention overt anti-Semitism. This is incorrect. For example, on page 6, Chakrabarti's report states: 'according to the testimony received by my Inquiry and published by various contributors online, there have also been incidences of overt antisemitism'

– p. 271. Bower claims that Seumas Milne guided the Inquiry to fit his requirements. This was denied.

– Bower claims that 'unusually for a lawyer', Chakrabarti refused to define anti-Semitism and avoided the distinction between justified criticism of the Israeli government's policies and the conflation of Jews, Zionists and Israel.

Chakrabarti lays out her clear reasons for not defining anti-Semitism on p.7 of her report.

On page 12 of the report, contrary to Bower's account, Chakrabarti addresses the distinctions between criticism of Israel and Jews. For example, she highlights dictionary definitions of Zionism and compares them with testimony of the word Zionist being used 'personally, abusively or as a euphemism for "Jew"'.

– pp. 270-71 Bower claims that the report recommends that Labour Party members who were found guilty of anti-Semitism should not be disciplined.

It is likely that he is referring to this recommendation in the report:

'Once my Report is disseminated and so as to give members an opportunity to be guided by it, I recommend a moratorium on triggering new investigations into matters of relevant language and conduct arising before publication. This in no way effects investigations and disciplinary proceedings already in train.'

This recommendation was designed to avoid punishing people for breaching the guidance in the report, until the guidance was in effect. It is suggesting that the guidance shouldn't be retrospective. The Report then goes on to give

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<sup>9</sup> Obviously, Osborne's researcher here really meant to say that Bower was claiming there had *not* been any mention of overt anti-Semitism.

other detailed disciplinary recommendations, which further renders Bower incorrect. For example, on p. 28 of the report: 'I recommend consideration of a greater range of NCC sanctions short of suspension and expulsion.'

*\*New\**

## **Assange**

Caitlin Johnstone's 'Debunking all the Assange smears' <sup>10</sup> is very good.

Not a million miles away is the question: did Assange/Wikileaks leak the material from the Democratic National Committee to the Trump campaign? Everyone and their cousin seems to take it or granted that they did. Notable dissenters from this view are Craig Murray and, more significantly, the former Technical Director of the NSA, William Binney, who has written an essay explaining why the material must have been loaded on to a USB thumb drive (or something similarly mechanical) and not downloaded via a hack of the DNC computer.<sup>11</sup>

## **But not *that* page**

In a recent piece he wrote for the *New Yorker*, 'Turn Every Page', promoting his new book, celebrated biographer of LBJ, Robert Caro, describes how, as a young reporter, he was summoned to see the editor of *Newsday*, Alan Hathaway.

'Alan looked at me for what I remember as a very long time. "Just remember," he said. "Turn every page. Never assume anything. Turn every goddam page." He turned to some other papers on his desk, and after a while I got up and left.' <sup>12</sup>

But he did not, apparently, turn the page that mentioned Billie Sol Estes and the scandals associating him with LBJ. That part is excluded from the fourth volume of Caro's biography of Lyndon Johnson. Estes and his corrupt schemes might have made the front cover of *Time* in May 1962 but he's not in Caro's book. The omission really is a big 'tell'. As I have noted before, I have twice

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<sup>10</sup> <<https://caitlinjohnstone.com/2019/04/20/debunking-all-the-assange-smears/>> My thanks to John Booth for this.

<sup>11</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yxpd8d9d>> or <[https://turcopolier.typepad.com/sic\\_semper\\_tyrannis/2019/02/why-the-dnc-was-not-hacked-by-the-russians.html#more](https://turcopolier.typepad.com/sic_semper_tyrannis/2019/02/why-the-dnc-was-not-hacked-by-the-russians.html#more)>

The film about Binney, *A Good American*, is at  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=666wsDcoNrU>>.

<sup>12</sup> 'The Secrets of Lyndon Johnson's Archives' <<https://tinyurl.com/y8wvkr83>> or  
<<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/28/the-secrets-of-lyndon-johnsons-archives>>

emailed Caro via his publisher about this and received no response. In the absence of an explanation from Caro, what we are we to conclude but that he was afraid to get into Estes because that led into Estes' allegations about LBJ's role in the assassination of JFK?

To my knowledge only Roger Stone – yes, that Roger Stone – and I have noticed Caro's deception about Estes.<sup>13</sup>

## **That post-modernism non-sense**

Reviewing the two post-modernist social theory books on conspiracy theories for this issue<sup>14</sup> reminded me of my first and only encounter with the post-modernists. About 30 years ago one of my subscribers invited me to speak at a conference in Birmingham University at the Centre for Cultural Studies. 'Sure', said I. 'You pay my train fare and I'll come.' All I knew about the Centre for Cultural Studies was that Stuart Hall was its director; and I had never heard of post-modernism.

I was speaking in the afternoon, so, for the morning, I was part of the audience of about thirty – post-grad students with a sprinkling of their lecturers. Speaker after speaker talked this weird nonsense. I had no idea what they were doing but they used the same vocabulary and the same buzz phrases kept cropping up. After lunch it was my turn. I had been asked to speak about 'Publishing a radical magazine'. Having heard the morning's proceedings I knew there would be no interest in what I had to say.<sup>15</sup> So I rattled through it, sat down, leaned back, put my feet up on the table in front of me and said something like this: 'I never heard so much crap as I did this morning.'

So we had a barney. With some barely remembered ordinary language philosophy from my student days about 15 years earlier, I kicked them round the room.<sup>16</sup> It was a hoot.

There were a number of consequences.

I was excluded from the plenary session at which the speakers sat at a table at the front of the room. Of course, first chance I got I put my hand up

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<sup>13</sup> See <<http://stonezone.com/article.php?id=580>>.

<sup>14</sup> Todor Hristov, *Impossible Knowledge: Conspiracy Theories, Power, and Truth* and Katharina Thalmann, *The Stigmatization of Conspiracy Theory since the 1950s*.

<sup>15</sup> After the event I realised that I had been invited as an example of the old-fashioned concern with *facts*.

<sup>16</sup> I don't suppose they would agree with that description, of course.

The encounter was an almost parodic version of the English language tradition in philosophy versus what it regards as waffy, continental theorising. The proponents of post-modernism were all beginners and I could barely remember the philosophy I used to know.

and asked the chair if he'd care to explain to the audience why I wasn't at the top table.

When I got home that night I received a phone-call from one of the members of the audience. He was in the department and was thrilled that I had assaulted them. I asked who he was. He had been in prison for murder, done a degree inside and was doing a PhD at the Centre. 'Why don't *you* attack them?' asked I. No, he dared not do that.

Then my train fare didn't get paid and I had to write and threaten to inform the Dean – administrative head in a university department – if they didn't cough up. Eventually they did.

And the subscriber who had invited me didn't renew his subscription.

## Muellered

That faint chortling noise you may just hear beneath the raucous jeering from the pro-Trump media is coming from the small section of the American left-liberal media who were too smart and/or too spook-savvy to buy Russiagate and have not been embarrassed by the first accounts of the Mueller report. Take a bow the writers at Consortium News, in particular.<sup>17</sup> What we might call the military–Democratic Party–media complex's enthusiasm for anything which might kibosh the Trump group's attempted *rapprochement* with Russia was a pretty unedifying spectacle, no matter how corrupt the Russian regime is or how murderous towards its domestic enemies.

Also in the 'told you so' chorus is Matt Taibbi, who opens his brutal essay on the way the American media (mis)handled the story with this: 'The Iraq war faceplant damaged the reputation of the press. Russiagate just destroyed it'.<sup>18</sup>

In a comment on the event, Jonathan Cook noted that Mueller was 'a former head of the FBI, the U.S. secret police, for chrissakes!' <sup>19</sup> To which we might add that as acting Attorney General of the United States he was in charge of the Lockerbie investigation, during which he was either conned by the CIA or took part in the Agency's conspiracy to blame Libya.<sup>20</sup>

But since the Mueller report has yet to be published and we don't really

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<sup>17</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y2h5nejy>> or <<https://consortiumnews.com/2019/03/24/consortium-news-record-on-russia-gate-a-series-of-articles-on-how-cn-covered-the-scandal-no-1-the-sleazy-origins-of-russia-gate/>>

<sup>18</sup> <<https://taibbi.substack.com/p/russiagate-is-wmd-times-a-million>> As usual with Taibbi, there are many lines worth quoting. This, for example: 'The Russiagate era has so degraded journalism that even once "reputable" outlets are now only about as right as politicians, which is to say barely ever, and then only by accident.'

<sup>19</sup> <<https://consortiumnews.com/2019/03/26/three-lessons-from-failed-mueller-inquiry/>>

<sup>20</sup> <<https://www.wired.com/story/robert-muellers-search-for-justice-for-pan-am-103/>>



know what is in it, this is a kind of beginning not an end.

## Witchfinder

'Virginia "Ginny" Keyes has a long history of supporting David Icke – the infamous antisemitic conspiracy theorist who tours the country preaching that the world is run by secret Jewish shape-shifting lizards – "Rothschild Zionists" naturally.'<sup>21</sup>

Thus Rachel Riley, of ITV's Countdown, in her new role as anti-semite hunter. I haven't read David Icke for over 20 years,<sup>22</sup> and hadn't grasped from the reports of him that his lizards were Jewish. I thought they were aliens. So I asked the Internet. Wikipedia told me:

'He believes that an inter-dimensional race of reptilian beings called the Archons (or Anunnaki) have hijacked the earth, and that a genetically modified human/Archon hybrid race of shape-shifting reptilians, also known as the "Babylonian Brotherhood", the Illuminati, or the "elite", manipulate global events to keep humans in constant fear so the Archons can feed off the "negative energy" this creates.'

So: Icke may be a dingbat but is not an anti-semite. Apparently the Labour Party didn't bother to check Riley's statement and, on the basis of her (false) claim about Icke, has prevented Ms Keyes from standing as a Labour councillor in May. A political party being stampeded by a game show host? This is all getting very silly.

## The big bad bear

In *The Atlantic*, former US diplomat William Burns reminisced about his time in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> He visited Chechnya and saw

'... a glimpse of how far Russia had fallen since the Soviet Union's collapse; here were the ill-fed and ill-trained remnants of the Red Army, once reputed to be capable of reaching the English Channel in 48 hours, now unable to suppress a local rebellion in an isolated republic.'

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<sup>21</sup> Tony Frewin spotted this. <<https://tinyurl.com/y4aemuna>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6906521/Labour-party-suspends-local-election-candidate-amid-anti-Semitism-probe.html>>

<sup>22</sup> And then managed only a few pages of his turgid rehash of American theories about the global elites.

<sup>23</sup> 'How the U.S.-Russian Relationship Went Bad' at <<https://tinyurl.com/yxnk2zzx>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/william-j-burns-putin-russia/583255/>>.

Pity he didn't pursue the thought about the Red Army's reputation. How good was the Red Army? It depends upon who you believe. One interesting dissenter from the 'fearsome Red Army' narrative was the pseudonymous Victor Suvorov, a former GRU officer, who defected in the late 1970s.<sup>24</sup> I wrote about Suvorov in *Lobster* 6:

'His first [book], *The Liberators* (London 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. Precisely because this was such a refreshing blast of fresh air on the 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 Soviet 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 October 1984)

The shambolic Russian Army which Burns met in 1994 is the Red Army that Suvorov had written about in 1981.

## **Bloody Sunday**

On 3 March, Boris Johnson used his *Daily Telegraph* column (and the renewed interest in the events of Bloody Sunday) for another of his pitches to be leader of the Conservative Party.

'What kind of a world is it – you may ask – where we can put former squaddies in the dock, and simultaneously tell IRA killers that they can get away with it? [...]

No – if these men are put on trial for murder, it will be an absolute outrage not because they are old, and may die in jail; not because Bloody Sunday took place 47 years ago; not because they were serving soldiers up against bomb throwers.'<sup>25</sup>

Does he really believe that the British Army was facing bomb throwers that day? And if the solitary British lance corporal, who is apparently going to be tried, simply says in court, 'I was following orders', and names the person who

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<sup>24</sup> Profile at  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/29/ex-soviet-spy-viktor-suvorov>>.

<sup>25</sup> <<https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-daily-telegraph/20190304/281509342486370>>

gave the order, what then? As Eamonn McCann pointed out, in response to the announcement of the charge, the real scandal is that none of the officers involved have ever been prosecuted.<sup>26</sup>

## Lockerbie

On 21 March the front page of *The Times* had a story headlined 'Former Stasi agents questioned over role in Lockerbie bombing'. It reported that 'nine officials from the Scottish Crown Office are focusing on the role of the East German intelligence service' in the event. The piece had three authors, one of them being Magnus Linklater, sometime editor of *The Scotsman* and much else besides.<sup>27</sup> I shared a platform with Mr Linklater last autumn in Edinburgh. We were nominally discussing conspiracy theories and Linklater regaled us with his experiences on the so-called '*Hitler diaries*' story while at the *Sunday Times*. He also told us that he believed the official version of Lockerbie, that the Libyans had indeed done the bombing. I asked the audience who among them believed this: no-one else did.

By coincidence, on the same day as *The Times* piece I received a prompt to look at an 8 year-old piece on the Lockerbie plane bombing which is on Cryptome.<sup>28</sup> The article, 'Policing Lockerbie, A Bella Caledonia Special Investigation', is no longer on the Bella Caldeonia site. Let us take this back a step.

In 2005 *The Scotsman* ran an article, 'Police chief – Lockerbie evidence was faked'.<sup>29</sup> This began:

'A FORMER Scottish police chief has given lawyers a signed statement claiming that key evidence in the Lockerbie bombing trial was fabricated. The retired officer – of assistant chief constable rank or higher – has testified that the CIA planted the tiny fragment of circuit board crucial in convicting a Libyan for the 1989 mass murder of 270 people.'<sup>30</sup>

The police officer was not named by *The Scotsman*. The Bella Caledonia article, however, *did* name him and it was a legal threat from his lawyer (also reproduced on Cryptome) which resulted in the article being taken off the Bella

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<sup>26</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y359errs>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/15/bloody-sunday-derry-top-brass-one-soldier-charged>>

<sup>27</sup> See <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnus\\_Linklater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnus_Linklater)>.

<sup>28</sup> <<https://cryptome.org/0005/cia-golfer.pdf>>

<sup>29</sup> <<https://www.scotsman.com/news/police-chief-lockerbie-evidence-was-faked-1-1403341>>

<sup>30</sup> Oddly, *The Scotsman* has got the year of the Pan Am flight 103 bombing wrong. It was on 21 December in 1988, *not* 1989.

Caledonia site.

That the Libyans did Lockerbie is believed by almost no-one.<sup>31</sup> There was little evidence against the unfortunate Al Megrahi who was convicted of it, and what they had was either paid for by the Americans<sup>32</sup> or fabricated and planted.<sup>33</sup> Former CIA officer Robert Baer told the *Daily Telegraph* in 2014 that the CIA 'believed to a man' that Iran not Libya was behind the attack.<sup>34</sup>

A tiny fragment of circuit board purportedly found at the Lockerbie site was allegedly made by the Swiss firm MEBO run by Edwin Bollier. At the trial of Al Megrahi, Bollier was questioned and he acknowledged making electronic equipment for the Stasi and Libya.<sup>35</sup> More than eighteen years after the original wrong verdict, the Scottish Crown office is now talking to former Stasi officers. This suggests that, so long as the Scottish legal system can say that they are still 'pursuing leads', it won't have to face the fact that it made a dreadful mistake in going along with the Americans' fabrication.

## Dreamers

**I** have been reading William Keegan's thoughts on economic policy for at least 30 years and generally agree with him. He finished his column in the *Observer* on 10 February with this:

'Now, to my mind there is little doubt that after a prolonged period of damaging austerity this country needs an Attlee-style government – and shadow chancellor John McDonnell is well aware of this. But, as [Charles] Enoch points out, every version of Brexit guarantees that the country will

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<sup>31</sup> A 2009 piece by the solicitor Gareth Peirce shows why. See <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n18/gareth-peirce/the-framing-of-al-megrahi>.

<sup>32</sup> The key witness was given \$2 million by the U.S.. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/02/lockerbie-documents-witness-megrahi>.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, <http://tinyurl.com/y2f6aort> or <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6502363/Vital-Lockerbie-evidence-doomed-flight.html> and <http://tinyurl.com/yytsht45> or <https://gosint.wordpress.com/2018/10/17/lockerbie-30th-anniversary-pt-35b-the-most-expensive-forgery-in-history-poll/>.

A detailed analysis of (the lack of) evidence is at <http://lockerbiedivide.blogspot.com>.

<sup>34</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/y3aupqsn> or <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10688412/Lockerbie-bombing-CIA-believes-to-a-man-that-Iran-carried-out-attack-on-Pan-Am-Flight-103-says-former-agent.html>

<sup>35</sup> Bollier and Mebo were discussed by Simon Matthews towards the end of his 'The devil has all the best songs: reflections on the life and times of Simon Dee' in *Lobster* 58. See <https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster58/lobster58.pdf>. On this account Bollier looks more like a CIA asset than anything else.

Mr Bollier has his own Website on which some of the Lockerbie issues are discussed. See <http://www.mebocom-defilee.ch>.

be made poorer and the tax base will suffer. In order to carry out its ambitious programme, Labour would need a growing economy. The last thing it needs is Brexit.<sup>36</sup>

But to do anything resembling what the Attlee government did, it will need an Attlee-period British *economy*. Yes, in 1945 the UK was laden down with debts: the war had been financed by debt creation. But the UK had a large manufacturing base and big chunks of the world had either been cut off from British goods by the war (e.g. the Commonwealth), or were starting to repair the damage caused by the war and wanted British products. In 1948, British industry accounted for 41% of the British economy. By 2013, it was just 14% and falling.<sup>37</sup> There is no chance of an Attlee-style economic policy based on that 14%, even if it was all British-owned. Economically this country is in much deeper doo-doo than Keegan or the Labour Party leadership seem willing to acknowledge and looking back to the Attlee government is little more than wishful thinking.

## **IRD and fake news**

The depositing of 2000 Information Research Department (IRD) files in the National Archives prompted a piece by the BBC's Sanchia Berg – "'Fake news" sent out by government department' – which is on the the BBC News website.<sup>38</sup> Berg writes that 'This is the first time that IRD's own forgeries have been revealed'.

I'm not sure if that is true or not. A number of forgeries produced for the British state during the war in Northern Ireland have come to light. Who produced them is unclear, as it might have been either IRD or MI5. Some of these were in the possession of Colin Wallace and some were sent to me anonymously circa 1988.<sup>39</sup> Most of them seemed to have been aimed at foreign journalists who wouldn't know enough to question their content; and those we have seen mostly either tried to portray the IRA as a Soviet front – that being the IRD 'line' at the time – or tried to show certain Labour MPs as

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<sup>36</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y2nuykmv>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/feb/10/labour-budget-will-not-need-brexite-will-need-growth-corbym>>

<sup>37</sup> The Office of National Statistics quoted in <<https://tinyurl.com/hvtvjnh>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2014/apr/24/uk-economy-seven-things-need-to-know-ons-g7>>.

<sup>38</sup> <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47571253>> A general piece about the relationship between the BBC and the British state, including IRD, triggered by the BBC story, is Ian Sinclair's 'The original "fake news"? The BBC and the Information Research Department' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y4fx9qn4>> or <<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/original-fake-news-bbc-and-information-research-department>>.

<sup>39</sup> A selection was reproduced in Paul Foot's *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* (1989).

pro-IRA.

Below is an example of the latter. It's a poor copy but the gist should be clear. This is a poster for a genuine event that was doctored with the addition of the names of Labour MPs Merlyn Rees, Stan Orme, David Owen, Tony Benn and Paul Rose.

**3.55pm.**  
**Derry, Bloody Sunday**

**DERRY BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION VIGIL**

BDCC  
37 Middle Lane  
London N.8

On Sunday, January 28th, 1973, the people of Northern Ireland will be commemorating BLOODY SUNDAY 1972, when highly trained soldiers of the British Army, under official orders, shot and killed 13 unarmed civilians peacefully marching for their civil rights. English, Scots and Welsh people of many different political opinions will be visiting Derry on Saturday, January 27th, to hold an ALL-NIGHT VIGIL at Free Derry Corner in order to disassociate ourselves from the outrage that was committed by "our" Government in "our" name. NICRA (the Northern Ireland Civil Right Association) welcome this action. It's important that a large body of Scots, English and Welsh participate — both as individuals and as delegates from organisations. WHAT ABOUT YOU? Participants will be going from all parts of Britain. There is a Heysham-Belfast boat Friday night returning Sunday night (£6.60 return). BEA flies London-Belfast Saturday, returning Sunday evening (after the Commemoration Ceremony) at £13.20 return. It is hoped to organise cheap coaches from Belfast to Derry. Please return form as soon as possible.

**Sponsors**

FENNER BROCKWAY	ERNIE ROBERTS	PAUL ROSE
GWYNFOR EVANS	JOAN MAYNARD	CHRIS FARLEY
DONALD SOPER	BILL JONES	TONY BENN
GORDON McLELLAN	BRIAN NICHOLSON	MALCOLM CALDWELL
DIGBY JACKS	STAN ORME	JOHN BERGER
PETER HAIN	KEN COATES	ADRIAN MITCHELL
LOUIS EAKS	COLIN SWEET	MARY HOLLAND
MERLYN REES	PAT ARROWSMITH	DAVID OWEN

Printed by The Russell Press Ltd.

TO: British Derry Commemoration Committee, 37 Middle Lane, London N.8.

I am/... of us are/interested in joining the Derry Commemoration Vigil. Please send further information. I enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope and £..... as a contribution to the organisation expenses. I intend to travel as follows:

NAME (S) .....

ADDRESS .....

PHONE; day ..... eve/weekend ..... Organisation .....

## Conspiracy theory-wise

In his mailing on 5 February Tony Gosling<sup>40</sup> included some material about a short-lived American tv show, *The Lone Gunmen*, a spin-off from *The X-Files*. Written by *X-Files* creator Chris Carter, this had an episode in which a plane was hijacked with the intention of crashing it into the World Trade Centre. The

<sup>40</sup> <<http://www.bilderberg.org/tonyhom.htm>>

website which ran this commented:

'Six months before the attacks of 9/11 2001, on primetime television the events of that fateful day were spelled out in excruciating detail. What does this all mean? Mere coincidence? That would be the greatest coincidence in the history of mankind. Is Chris Carter—the creator of X-Files and The Lone Gunmen—somehow clairvoyant? Highly unlikely but if you go back and watch the original show, you'll find out this wasn't the first time he apparently knew "what was up".' <sup>41</sup>

Disappointingly, if you read the transcript of this section of the show or watch the extract,<sup>42</sup> 'excruciating detail' it isn't. Crashing a plane into the World Trade Centre is the only thing which corresponds with 9/11.

I asked Google for fiction which predicted 9/11 and found John J. Nance's novel *Blackout*, published in 2000, which 'predicted the possibility of a commercial aircraft crashing into the World Trade Center in a terrorist attack'<sup>43</sup> and Tom Clancy's 1994 novel, *Debt of Honour*, which has terrorists crashing an airliner into Washington.<sup>44</sup> There's even a Youtube video showing all the shows/cartoons etc which apparently predicted 9/11.<sup>45</sup> It's practically a meme!

\*

I wrote a column about conspiracy theories for the *Fortean Times* for ten years. Looking back at those columns I noticed this paragraph from one in 2010.

'In the 1970s and 80s the cry was for "alternative media". I began publishing an "alternative magazine" in 1983. The Net and YouTube mean that anyone, saying almost anything, can broadcast globally, with no initial editorial interference. So why does this type of evidence-free rumour-mongering make me so nervous?'

Nine years later, a piece in the *New York Times* reported on the issue of conspiracy theories on YouTube, taking as an example one Shane Lee Yaw (who goes as Shane Dawson) who has 20 million subscribers and churns out

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<sup>41</sup> <<http://tinyurl.com/yysvdmp>> or <<https://medium.com/@SwordOfCamelot/scenario-12-d-9-11-foretold-in-primetime-4cfd318c2774>>

<sup>42</sup> At <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rsMG2hHsLo>>

<sup>43</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ydeq9d2k>> or <<http://911blogger.com/news/2011-08-24/aviation-thriller-novel-predicted-plane-hitting-wtc-and-other-aspects-911>>

<sup>44</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ybsrkkk3>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/10350806/Tom-Clancy-the-writer-who-predicted-911.html>>

<sup>45</sup> <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_KY6IOOcQU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_KY6IOOcQU)>

conspiracy theory videos, one of which has had 35 million hits and rising.<sup>46</sup> The author concluded:

'It's possible that YouTube can still beat back the flood of conspiracy theories coursing through its servers. But doing it will require acknowledging how deep these problems run and realizing that any successful effort may look less like a simple algorithm tweak, and more like *deprogramming* a generation.'<sup>47</sup> (emphasis added)

'Deprogramming'? Does the fact that 20 million people click on a conspiracy theory video mean that those viewers *believe* those theories? Or is it just that they find them entertaining? And how many of those who clicked stayed for more than five minutes?

\*

Lyndon LaRouche Jr. died on 12 February. Many years ago a couple of the writers on his *Executive Intelligence Review* (EIR) used to ring me up and pick my brains. The conversations always went the same way: as soon as I said something which didn't fit their world view, I would almost hear their minds shutting down and they would end the call soon after. At one time LaRoche propagated the craziest conspiracy theory I had come across: his claim that the British royal family controlled the world drug traffic. But then David Icke appeared and outcrazied him with his lizards story (hardly a 'theory' is it?) and LaRouche became an also-ran. There were occasional things of interest in EIR but I couldn't take them seriously because of all the nonsense surrounding them.

## **Blog recycling**

In 2008, thinking that it might help sell copies of the book of mine she was publishing, the late Corinne Souza asked me to write a blog for her publishing company's website. This disappeared with her death and the demise of the company and I forgot about it. I came across these blog entries recently while looking for something else on my computer. Some still resonate. This one, for example (in which I have tweaked a couple of the original sentences; new material is in square brackets [ ]):

### **I was a premature green**

Writing I was 'a premature something or other' refers back to the Soviet Communist Party's attempts before WW2 to control 'the line' of its

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<sup>46</sup> <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHLBaOASC74>>

<sup>47</sup> <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/19/technology/youtube-conspiracy-stars.html>>



affiliated parties. Thus, most famously, some people who opposed Hitler and Mussolini before the Soviet CP thought it apposite, were described as 'premature anti-fascists'.

So: I was a premature green. I was around in the late 1960s when the first green-eco wave took place. I cannot remember how it happened that I came across this material but [in 1970/1] I bought an expensive hard-backed copy of Paul [and Anne] Ehrlich's *Population, Resources, Environment* and contemplated the end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it. What did I do? Apart from spreading gloomy talk through my first year as an undergraduate and clipping British newspapers for the Sierra Club Bulletin, not very much. What could you do? I started a branch of Friends of the Earth, attended the first meeting and never went back: these were not people I wanted to do anything with; nor did campaigning about recycling bottles seem an appropriate response.

And then oil was discovered in the North Sea and with that any possibility of another kind of less consumption-oriented society in this country went out the window for a generation [or several]. I was one of a tiny minority of people in this country whose response to a government announcement of future oil from the North Sea was 'Oh no'. When the 1975 referendum on Britain staying in the then EEC took place I voted 'Yes' for staying in. Why? Well, as I told Andy Mullen when he was doing a survey on this subject for his book, *The British Left's 'Great Debate' on Europe*, it seemed like a good idea to belong to a protein surplus area. (At the time, like almost everyone else in this country, I had no idea of the idiotic Euro-federalist ambitions of the elites running the then EEC.)

Yes, the pessimists in the first green-eco wave got the timing wrong – at least as far as the rich Western world is concerned. The environment hasn't collapsed at the speed they thought it would. But all those issues are back – and we now have about seven million more people on this island than we did in 1970 (and it is really only this island about which I think or care greatly.)

For the British political system as it is presently constituted, the situation is impossible. Parties are constructed to compete to persuade the electorate that they, rather than their rivals, will make the electorate better off and more content. For the foreseeable future all the economic and environmental news about the world is going to be bad and getting worse. How can this work with the competitive electoral system we have today? A friend of mine, Colin Challen,<sup>48</sup> a [now ex] Leeds MP and a serious-minded campaigner on global warming, recognised this in a recent letter to the *Guardian* in which he called for the creation of a national

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<sup>48</sup> He blogs at <<http://www.colinchallen.org/blog>>.

government to respond to climate change, citing Churchill's cabinet in WW2 as an exemplar. It says much about the diminished status of MPs that this striking suggestion raised no response that I noticed. Yet he clearly has a point – if we are serious about carbon emission reduction. A party which proposes to reduce society's carbon emissions is, willy-nilly, proposing to reduce the living standards of the voters and will lose any election to a party which proposes not to do so (or to do less).

Added to which British society has had 30 years of propaganda telling us that the state is the central problem in society and the free market is the answer to all questions. We have a government of people who have abandoned their belief in the efficacy of the state as a regulator of the free market just in time to discover that they were right the first time: we need the state. And, as things degrade, we will need more and more of the state. Selling this to a population the majority of whom have now had a generation of easy credit and are accustomed to living now and paying later (to use the late Jack Trevor Storey's phrase), many of whom think that at least two cars per family and two foreign holidays a year is their minimum due, is only one of the huge items on the agenda which the political system is currently entirely unwilling to deal with.

## **The lobby**

**W**hat we might call the received view of the Labour and anti-semitism story was expressed by Andrew Rawnsley in *The Observer* on 3 March:

'The party has only been polluted with anti-Jewish racism since Mr Corbyn and his allies were given the keys to the Labour house and took responsibility for what kind of person is allowed to live there.'<sup>49</sup>

In the new, vastly expanded Labour Party there will be some anti-Semites among the (estimated) 500,000 members: in a group that size there is going to be almost every conceivable opinion and variety of dingbat. The on-going Labour Party enquiries into the issue may reveal some genuine anti-semites; but thus far little of the anti-semitism being complained of is actually coming from Labour Party members.<sup>50</sup> Norman Finkelstein has examined the numbers:

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<sup>49</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yycnhdc3>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/03/labour-balance-of-terror-has-shifted-now-corbynites-have-cause-to-be-fearful>>

<sup>50</sup> *The Times* magazine on 2 March ran a long profile of Luciana Berger MP, former Labour Friends of Israel chair, who has now joined the Independent group of MPs – in effect, leaving the Labour Party. She described various forms of anti-semitic abuse she had received but the closest this got to the Labour Party was one message from 'a former member of the Labour Party'.

`1,106 referrals of antisemitism allegations;

» 433 of these had nothing to do with party members, leaving 673 to be investigated;

» 220 of these were dismissed entirely for lack of evidence;

» this left 453 cases;

» 453 is 0.08% of the party's 540,000 members – that's about 1/12th of 1%;

» 96 of these resulted in suspensions – that's 0.01%, or 1/100th of 1% of members;

» there were twelve expulsions – that's 0.002%, or 1/500th of 1% of members!<sup>51</sup>

Among the constituencies in which there have been reports of anti-semitism is Liverpool Riverside, whose MP is Labour Friends of Israel member Louise Ellman. The text of an internal inquiry into Liverpool Riverside has been leaked and reprinted in the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>52</sup> The report describes what happens (a) when you allow all members to attend constituency meetings, rather than the previous system of branches sending delegates; and (b) when you allow former members of the Militant Tendency to rejoin the party. As I recall from the 1980s, some of the Millies are aggressive and obnoxious, their tactic being to make meetings so unpleasant that their opponents stop attending.<sup>53</sup> Anti-semitism *per se* barely figures in the inquiry's report.

There is another explanation of the current anti-semitism-in-Labour story. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt are American academics who have written in detail about the role of the Israel lobby in US politics.<sup>54</sup> They were interviewed recently and Stephen Walt said this:

'I want to add something. We've said all along that of course this conduct is perfectly legitimate. It's interest group politics, the way many of these groups operate. There's one exception to that, which is the tendency to smear anyone who questions Israel's policy or questions

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<sup>51</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y5258fex>> or <[http://normanfinkelstein.com/2019/02/26/that-labour-antisemitism-crisis-in-numbers/?fbclid=IwAR1s1mX2WU8YYeTM\\_eops4GSMYB1G1PE0E4GdDmLO4V0tic7HPUFybmy77A](http://normanfinkelstein.com/2019/02/26/that-labour-antisemitism-crisis-in-numbers/?fbclid=IwAR1s1mX2WU8YYeTM_eops4GSMYB1G1PE0E4GdDmLO4V0tic7HPUFybmy77A)>

<sup>52</sup> It can be found at the bottom of the text at <<https://tinyurl.com/y6slrraq>> or <<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/plot-to-oust-mp-ellman-spearheaded-by-a-former-member-of-the-trotskyist-militant-tendency-1.480621>>.

<sup>53</sup> I found being verbally abused by the handful of Millies we had in North Hull CLP in those days amusing rather than threatening.

<sup>54</sup> They began in March 2006, with an essay in the *London Review of Books* <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby>>, enlarged that into a long academic essay <<http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/IsraelLobby.pdf>> and expanded it again into their book <<https://www.amazon.com/Israel-Lobby-U-S-Foreign-Policy/dp/0374531501>>.

unconditional American support for Israel. And to smear them primarily by accusing them of being anti-Semite.<sup>55</sup>

Thus the other – and much more plausible – explanation of the Labour-is-institutionally-anti-semitic claim is that the British branch of the Israel lobby has manufactured it because Jeremy Corbyn, being pro-Palestinian, is perceived as a threat to Israel.

## Line change

On the excellent <whowhatwhy.org>, on 14 February, under the headline 'SHOCKER: "WASHINGTON POST" PUBLISHES NUANCED ARTICLE ABOUT RFK ASSASSINATION', Russ Baker began:

'Saturday was a turning point in American history.

For perhaps the first time ever, one of the biggest legacy news organizations published a fair, fact-based article about a political assassination without dismissing, out of hand, any evidence of conspiracy.'<sup>56</sup>

How do we explain this? *WaPo* is not some radical liberal outfit, as it showed in 2016 when it carried a ridiculous story naming 200 US 'alternative' media organisations as propagators of the Russian 'line'.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, the current editor, Martin Baron, used to edit the *Boston Globe*, and it is possible that Baron and the Kennedy family knew each socially in Boston. If so, the fact that Robert Kennedy Jnr signed the recent appeal for the assassinations of the 1960s to be reinvestigated,<sup>58</sup> may have legitimised this perspective for Baron. (It would be difficult to exaggerate how allergic the mainstream media has been to 'conspiracy theorising', as they see it.)

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<sup>55</sup> <<http://tinyurl.com/y4tws8fd>> or <<https://whowhatwhy.org/2019/02/15/whos-telling-the-truth-about-the-israel-lobby-and-anti-semitism/>> For a very recent example see <<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/04/omar-israel-house-democrats-1201881>>.

<sup>56</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y5zb6ba4>> or <<https://whowhatwhy.org/2019/02/14/shocker-washington-post-publishes-nuanced-article-about-rfk-assassination/>> The *Post* article is about the new Lisa Pease book about the assassination of RFK.

See <<https://tinyurl.com/y3hx3v83>> or <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/02/09/cia-may-have-used-contractor-who-inspired-mission-impossible-kill-rfk-new-book-alleges/?utm\\_term=.67def3f0fbf1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/02/09/cia-may-have-used-contractor-who-inspired-mission-impossible-kill-rfk-new-book-alleges/?utm_term=.67def3f0fbf1)>.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, <<https://tinyurl.com/y98bu7j3>> or <<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-propaganda-about-russian-propaganda>> and <<https://tinyurl.com/y5rbdmzh>> or <<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/the-washington-post-blacklist-story-is-shameful-and-disgusting-115978/>>.

<sup>58</sup> <<https://consortiumnews.com/2019/01/20/a-call-to-reinvestigate-american-assassinations/>> This is discussed below.

Then there's this thought:

'Whatever else one thinks of Trump, he has successfully "changed the weather" in American political debate. This is what made repositioning of the *Washington Post's* editorial line possible. Even media outlets that have no truck with "Deep State" notions are being forced to deal with them seriously.'<sup>59</sup>

Which is true, as a quick search for 'Deep state and the media' would show.

There is also the fact that *WaPo* is now owned by Amazon's Jeff Bezos, by some calculations the world's wealthiest person, and the newspaper must be a very minor item on his agenda. Because Bezos' interests do not depend upon the American empire, he has no economic reason to continue the policy of supporting the fictitious account of American politics in the 1960s which the national security state – and the political system – has been defending for the last half century. On the other hand, if the national security state still considers that account of the sixties worth defending, Mr Bezos should start watching his back. There will be a knife in it shortly.<sup>60</sup>

I emailed *WaPo* on 4 March about the apparent change in line and will report any response I get. (I'm not holding my breath. . .)

## **Coulda seen Trump coming . . .**

**M**y brother-in-law used to work in Paris and his flat was available some long weekends when he came back to London. On one trip I went to Shakespeare and Company, the famous bookshop opposite Notre Dame, which has been selling English-language books since James Joyce did some of his writing there. Just before the first wave of tourists had made it to Notre Dame from their hotels, in the boxes of second-hand books on the pavement outside the shop I found two books I wanted: William Domhoff's *The Higher Circles* (1971) and David Brock's *Blinded by the Right* (2002). These books sort of bookend recent US politics.

Domhoff is an American sociologist who analysed the American ruling class (he called it the 'Upper' or 'Governing Class' and, after C. Wright Mills, the 'Power Elite'). He also did some of the first academic work on what are now known as the elite policy planning groups: in foreign policy, for example, the

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<sup>59</sup> Garrick Alder in an email to me.

<sup>60</sup> Nick Must commented on reading this:

'I think the knives have been out for Mr Bezos already this month. The media stoked "scandal" about his new "sex-text girlfriend" seems completely manufactured, especially considering that he already announced in January that he was divorcing his wife.'

Council on Foreign Relations. In so doing he moved into intellectual territory which had hitherto only been of interest to a conspiratorially-minded section of the American Right, centrally the John Birch Society.

When Domhoff's earlier book on this subject, *Who Rules America?*, appeared in 1967 it had been seized upon by the conspiracist American Right as support for their theories about having 'lost' America to an elite East Coast conspiracy. In the final section on *The Higher Circles* Domhoff discusses the conspiracist Right's use of his earlier material.

In 1971 that conspiracist group was a tiny minority to the right of the Republican Party, and of no political significance. (It had the support of only one Congressman, Larry McDonald.) Thirty years later we have Brock's *Blinded by the Right*, his account of being part of what Hilary Clinton described as a 'vast conspiracy' by the Republican Party and its allies which was machinating against her husband's administrations. As well as being an insider's view of the 'vast conspiracy', Brock's memoir portrays many of the major players on the Republican Right in and around Congress and the Senate in the 1990s as screwed-up, hypocritical, intellectual and moral pygmies. Brock's account puts new life into the old view of the left that those on the right are either stupid, venal or psychologically damaged. I'd spent nearly thirty years trying to shake off that view of the right only to have it revalidated by Brock.

These conspiracist elements, especially the Christian fundamentalists, became a major power in the Republican Party. In a sense, the lunatics have taken over the political asylum. That particular cliché is actually used in a 2011 piece by a Republican staffer, Mike Lofgren, who saw the Republican Party then as:

'... less and less like a traditional political party in a representative democracy and becoming more like an apocalyptic cult, or one of the intensely ideological authoritarian parties of 20th century Europe.'<sup>61</sup>

The arrival of Trump and Pence should not have been a surprise.

## **JFK 1**

**I**n the middle of January a letter was sent to the US Congress and the major media,<sup>62</sup> calling for an official reexamination of the assassinations of JFK, RFK

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<sup>61</sup> <<https://washingtonmonthly.com/2011/09/04/mike-lofgren-leaves-the-cult/>>

<sup>62</sup> The only MM source to use this I have seen was the *Daily Mail* at <<https://tinyurl.com/ycj3m9xw>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6613747/New-probes-demanded-deaths-John-F-Kennedy-Robert-F-Kennedy-Martin-Luther-King-Jr-Malcolm-X.html>>.

and MLK.<sup>63</sup> It was signed by the major researchers and a smattering of celebrities.<sup>64</sup> Most significantly, it was also signed by a couple of members of the Kennedy family – thus breaking the family’s tradition of never commenting on the assassinations. The signatories of the letter call themselves the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

In a statement accompany the text, its only British signatory, John Simkin, discussed the background to its creation.<sup>65</sup> A couple of sources in the last decade have produced evidence – at any rate have asserted – that the assassination was the work of some anti-Castro Cubans and their American sponsors: the key names involved are Gerald Patrick Hemming, Gene Wheaton, Carl Jenkins and Raphael Quintero.<sup>66</sup> Simkin commented:

‘I wrote about Jenkins and Quintero on my website. I was then contacted by an American journalist and historian, David Talbot, who was working on a book on John and Robert Kennedy. He was friends with the Kennedys and they told him that Robert Kennedy had employed several people to investigate the assassination.

However, he eventually discovered the truth from Enrique Ruiz-Williams, a Bay of Pigs veteran. Kennedy then told the rest of the family but explained he could not reveal in to the public and would go along with the cover-up. The reason for this was the men used for the killing of JFK were the same men who had been trained by the CIA to assassinate Fidel Castro as part of Operation Mongoose. Not only had JFK ordered the operation, RFK had been placed in charge of it. To expose the conspiracy would have revealed details of their role in the attempts to assassinate Castro. Robert feared that this would severely damage the Kennedy image and would make it impossible for him to become president. His solution to the problem was to become president and then manage the information in such a way as to do as little harm as possible to the Kennedy name . . . .

The reason that David Talbot contacted me was that the story of the assassination that I had written on my website was very similar to the one told to him by the Kennedy family. Talbot’s book, *Brothers: The Hidden History of the Kennedy Years* came out in 2007. However, Talbot was not allowed to quote the Kennedy family members and the book was ignored

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<sup>63</sup> You can read the text at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7zen7xs>> or <<https://jfkfacts.org/a-joint-statement-on-the-kennedy-king-and-malcolm-x-assassinations-and-ongoing-cover-ups/>>.

<sup>64</sup> Signatories are listed at <<https://jfkfacts.org/who-are-the-signatories-of-the-mlk-rfk-jfk-letter/>>

<sup>65</sup> Simkin created the Education Forum on JFK: see <<http://educationforum.ipbhost.com/forum/126-jfk-assassination-debate/>>

<sup>66</sup> Simkin writes about this background at <<https://spartacus-educational.com/JFKjenkinsC.htm>>.

as just another speculative conspiracy book.'

This material is discussed in his typically thorough way by Larry Hancock (with David Boylan).<sup>67</sup> They describe the central claims as 'war stories': X says he heard Y talking about the assassination.

This is impossible to evaluate. We don't know what Enrique Ruiz-Williams told Robert Kennedy, or why Kennedy believed it. Within the faction-ridden, anti-Castro Cuban community in 1968, would Enrique Ruiz-Williams have had access to reliable information on the assassination? By 1968 there must have been as many anti-Castro Cubans claiming to have been on Dealey Plaza as there are people who claim to have been present at the first gig by the Sex Pistols. How did Kennedy know that Ruiz-Williams – wittingly or unwittingly – wasn't feeding him disinformation? The one sure way of stopping Robert Kennedy pursuing the events on Dealey Plaza was to suggest to him that the assassination of his brother was blow-back from the anti-Castro operations of which RFK was head.

Nonetheless, the fact that Robert Kennedy was indeed formally head of the plot to assassinate Castro is significant. In their essay referred to above, Hancock and Boylan show that in 1963, as well as trying to kill Castro, the Kennedy administration wanted to move the anti-Castro effort out of the USA to somewhere offshore. They had also begun secret attempts to negotiate some détente with Castro. The attempt to move the anti-Castro Cubans abroad, along with the efforts at negotiation, showed that the administration was actually thinking of ditching the anti-Castro guerrilla efforts. Unsurprisingly, some of the anti-Castro Cubans were wise to this. No wonder so many have suspected the anti-Castro Cubans of doing the dirty deed. But we still have no evidence that they did it.

Fingers crossed for the Truth and Reconciliation project; but I suspect it will be ignored until the Democrats control the Senate, House of Reps and the Presidency – and maybe not even then. And I have to confess that my initial reaction to receiving the communication from John Simkin was: why is the JFK research community still ignoring Chauncey Holt? He worked for the CIA and the Mob, was photographed on Dealey Plaza and has talked and written about his supporting role for the CIA in the assassination. Yet he is taken less seriously than 'war stories'. Go figure!

## **JFK 2**

**V**ictor Marchetti died last October.<sup>68</sup> He was the first former CIA officer to write

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<sup>67</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/yagjsu6k>> or <<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14WMnEEy9otCemUh7OHiNCY5iomx5l4O02eSr4vzLrGM/edit>>

<sup>68</sup> <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/obituaries/victor-marchetti-dead.html>>



about the Agency in the 1970s while living in the USA. (Philip Agee was abroad when his *CIA Diary* appeared.) Marchetti's book, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, was redacted by the Agency in more than 300 places and the reporting of this brought 'redacted' into general use.

I was reminded of Marchetti when he cropped up in a long essay<sup>69</sup> about the telephone call Oswald tried to make while in custody at the Dallas police station. Oswald was an intelligence asset of some kind, certainly for the CIA, and possibly for other agencies. When arrested he did two things: he maintained his left cover-story, publicly asking for John Abt, the lawyer for the Communist Party USA, to come and help him; and he tried to make a phone call to a number in North Carolina.

What was the North Carolina call about? That's obvious, said Marchetti: Oswald was calling his cut-out, who would contact his Agency handler for him. That was Agency S.O.P..

## Threat management

Spending on weapons systems and related technology is a significant part of the US economy, 3.15% of GDP in 2017.<sup>70</sup> (In 1960 it was 8.62% but of a much smaller cake.) Weapons spending can only be passed through Congress if there is a sufficient 'threat', so threat management is a central activity of the weapons sector. Post 1945 the threat had been the Soviet Union/Russia. In the 1970s, in the days of detente, the perception of the Soviet 'threat' coming from CIA analysts was accused by some of being too soft. CIA Director George H.W. Bush created 'Team B', a set of hawkish analysts to challenge the relatively dovish forecasts. Team B's version of reality duly triumphed<sup>71</sup> – another victory for the military-industrial-congressional complex.<sup>72</sup>

After the events of the 2000s – the 'colour revolutions' in the former Soviet satellites and the near civil war in Ukraine – Russia was safely reestablished as the major 'threat'. Then along came Donald Trump who apparently wanted to end the confrontation with Russia – and whose team had

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<sup>69</sup> <<http://www.groverproctor.us/jfk/jfk80.html>>

<sup>70</sup> <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>>

<sup>71</sup> How this happened is described in Anne Hessing Cahn, *Killing Detente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). I reviewed this in *Lobster* 45 where my last sentence was this: 'In the final paragraph of this exemplary piece of research, Cahn notes that the Team B exercise was crucial to a movement which led to the spending of a trillion and a half dollars on defence, turning America into a debtor nation, "to counter the threat of a nation that was itself collapsing".'

<sup>72</sup> This is what outgoing President Eisenhower was apparently going to call it before he was persuaded to drop 'congressional' from his 'farewell America' speech in 1960.

been talking to the Russians. Cue a frenzy of anti-Trump activity and confusion for some of the American left. For, like Trump, they want to end the confrontation with Russia. Unlike Trump, they want this in order to be able to spend some of that defence budget on other things – healthcare, housing, infrastructure etc. – and thus perhaps ought to be supportive of the man. But which of the claims about Trump are real and which merely ‘threat management’?

## **Beyond irony**

In 2018 the *Washington Post* wrote:

‘[Prime Minister] Orban’s demonization of [George] Soros, to the exclusion of virtually all other issues, reflects just how far Hungary has drifted from the European mainstream since his election in 2010. A fringe obsession in other parts of the West, Soros-bashing in this nation of 10 million has moved to the very center of political debate.’<sup>73</sup>

Then it turns out that the entire Soros-Jewish-conspiracy-theory campaign in Hungary had been designed by two American ‘political consultants’, George Birnbaum and Arthur Finkelstein, who are themselves Jewish.<sup>74</sup> In response to that story it was pointed out that the anti-Soros stuff had begun on Fox News over a decade ago.<sup>75</sup>

## **Purely coincidental**

Of course, the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this, therefore because of this) fallacy has to be borne in mind, nonetheless it is a very striking coincidence that the allegations of sexual assault made against former First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond have surfaced three months after Mr Salmond publicly cast doubt on the official verdict on the Lockerbie bombing.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y7aq4lwt>> or <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/once-fringe-soros-conspiracy-theory-takes-center-stage-in-hungarian-election/2018/03/17/f0a1d5ae-2601-11e8-a227-fd2b009466bc\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.e190d9fe2f35](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/once-fringe-soros-conspiracy-theory-takes-center-stage-in-hungarian-election/2018/03/17/f0a1d5ae-2601-11e8-a227-fd2b009466bc_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e190d9fe2f35)>

<sup>74</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ycerkd74>> or <<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hnsgrassegger/george-soros-conspiracy-finkelstein-birnbaum-orban-netanyahu>>

<sup>75</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/y7bfs5vw>> or <<https://www.gotoground.com/the-plot-against-george-soros-didnt-start-in-hungary-it-started-on-fox-news/>>.

<sup>76</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y83tz9vv>> or <<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/homenews/15694249.alex-salmond-casts-doubt-on-lockerbie-bomber-conviction/>>

## Is this a conspiracy theory I see before me?

**At** the Cambridge Conspiracy and Democracy project, researchers are trying to quantify belief in conspiracy theories – apparently without much thinking about what a conspiracy theory actually is.

On a recent blog on their site Dr. Hugo Leal wrote:

‘Researchers also looked at a number of other popular conspiracy theories. Both Trump and Brexit voters were more likely to believe that climate change is a hoax, vaccines are harmful, and that a group of people “secretly control events and rule the world together”’.<sup>77</sup>

The numbers who believe that climate change is a hoax, that there is a conspiracy of scientists to promote climate change theories *which they know to be false*, is declining, even in the Republican Party.<sup>78</sup> That it exists at all is explicable: the US coal and oil companies employed people to propagate that it was a hoax, and their views were reported seriously by right-wing US media, such as Fox News.

The vaccine story is completely different. Some people believe vaccines are potentially harmful. And in a small number of cases vaccines *are* harmful. No-one is arguing that they are completely benign. The argument has always been that the risk to a tiny number of individuals is justified by the wider positive effects of vaccination. So where are these vaccine conspiracy theories? I asked Google and top of their list was ‘A brief history of vaccine conspiracy theories’<sup>79</sup> – in which there is an interesting account of the history of anti-vaccine thinking in the US, but a striking absence of conspiracy theories.

In the case of vaccines the use of ‘conspiracy theory’ is inappropriate. What is being described is people who do not accept the consensus view, who are sceptics. Indeed, ‘A brief history of vaccine conspiracy theories’ is subheaded ‘Vaccine skepticism is as old as the idea of inoculation itself’.

Although the term ‘conspiracy theory’ has been traced back to the 19th century,<sup>80</sup> its contemporary usage probably stems from the notorious 1967 memo from the CIA to all its assets advising them how to combat the critics of

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<sup>77</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/ycdfe6ne>> or <<https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/brexit-and-trump-voters-more-likely-to-believe-in-conspiracy-theories-survey-study-shows>>

<sup>78</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/yc5848cg>> or <<http://oxfordre.com/climatescience/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228620-e-328>> which cites a 2013 study that found that 20% thought climate change was a hoax by scientists who wanted more government research money.

<sup>79</sup> <<https://psmag.com/news/a-brief-history-of-vaccine-conspiracy-theories>>

<sup>80</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/yc4m24mv>> or <<https://www.metabunk.org/debunked-the-cia-invented-the-term-conspiracy-theory-in-1967-with-memo-1035-960.t960/>>.

the Warren Commission Report by labelling their claims as 'conspiracy theories'.<sup>81</sup> The Conspiracy and Democracy project people are in danger of following the line in that CIA memo: anything which challenges conventional views is a conspiracy theory.

Why are conspiracy theories increasingly popular? Some of us were asking this question twenty plus years ago. The answer then seemed obvious: the immediate cause was the world-wide popularity of the tv programme *The X-Files*, whose content included many conspiracy theories. The underlying reasons I discussed in a talk I gave in 1997.<sup>82</sup>

'In my view the proliferation of conspiracy theories [in America] . . . is the result three things: the failing US empire; recent developments in reprographic and communication technologies; and the actual events in US political history since the sixties.

First the failing US empire. 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 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.

You can see the change reflected in the US accounts of encounters with extra-terrestrials. In the 1950s, when the US empire was booming, and the average white American consumer was experiencing increasing material prosperity, the extra-terrestrials reportedly contacting the America citizen, were overwhelmingly benign. Now that the US empire is falling apart and sections of the big American cities are turning into war zones, the skies over America at night are apparently – apparently – bustling with Alien Rapists, beaming down into peoples' bedrooms to scoop them up and take them away for extended sessions of sexual abuse, forced copulation and experiments. In the 1950s white America

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<sup>81</sup> Full text at <<http://www.jfklancer.com/CIA.html>>.

That memo, 'Concerning Criticism of the Warren Report', included the line 'Conspiracy theories have frequently thrown suspicion on our organization, for example by falsely alleging that Lee Harvey Oswald worked for us.'

<sup>82</sup> At the Edinburgh International Science Festival. This was reproduced in Robin Ramsay, *Politics and Paranoia* (Hove: Picnic Publishing, 2008).

had blue skies. Today they have dark skies.<sup>83</sup>

Surveys regularly report that only around 2% of adult Americans read books of any kind. As you discover when you visit the place, most American newspapers and magazines barely mention the outside world, and the primary source of information for most Americans is television. But most American television simply does not deal with real political and economic issues in enough depth for the average American citizen to understand something as complicated as the economic decline of a great power. The average American knows things are going wrong – but not why. Not only are the information and the 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 America myth, most Americans simply find it impossible to believe that there is something 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.

Most conspiracy theories provide a simple explanation: things are going wrong because of X. Of course the X changes. Different groups are scapegoated. Since the 19th century the Freemasons, Catholics, and the Jews have been blamed by significant sections of the American population; and there were great anti-communist witch-hunts after each World War. There are obvious similarities between today's conspiracy theories portraying America threatened by extraterrestrial aliens, and the post WW1 and WW2 scares that aliens – immigrants from Europe, with socialist beliefs, after WW1; a secret network of communist agents after WW2 – were threatening America. It is also striking that the recent explosion of stories about alien abductions and UFO flaps in America have coincided with the collapse of the great Red Menace.

Most conspiracy theories come from white people. There are some distinctively black conspiracy theories: enough for an American academic

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<sup>83</sup> *Dark Skies* was the name of a 1996/7 spin-off from *The X-Files*. See <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0115151/>>.

to write a book about them a couple of years ago. Currently a large section of African Americans appear to believe that the CIA was deliberately selling crack cocaine to them to finance the war against Nicaragua. But American conspiracy theories seem to be primarily a white phenomenon; and primarily a white male phenomenon (though there are some prominent women); and primarily a working-class or blue collar rather than middle- or upper-class male phenomenon. It may be simply that the middle-class is too educated to believe the crazier large-scale conspiracy theories, and the upper-class too close to real power to believe them.

The second factor in the rapid spread of conspiracy theories is technology. When I first became aware of US conspiracy theories in the 1970s, the type-generating Apple Mac and the FAX had not been invented, photocopiers were expensive machines which still used rolls of coated paper, and newspapers and magazines were still set in metal type. In those days the amateur publication looked like an amateur publication. It was simply too expensive to make it to look professional. These days about £500, maybe less, will buy second-hand computer kit with which it is possible to make your copy look like *The Times*, if you want to. And there are fax machines, cheap telephones and, most of all the Internet. Today, for a relatively small outlay, almost anybody can put their theories up on the Internet and wait for people to browse through them, pick them up and pass them on.<sup>84</sup> Any old nonsense gets posted on the Net. To some extent the spread of conspiracy theories has been brought about by communication technology. Even I've got a Website.

The third, and I think most important factor is a shift that has taken place in our perception of the real world; behind conspiracy theories are real events. In 1963 conspiracy theorists as we now think of them were a tiny minority in both Britain and America whose views were rarely if ever reported in the mass media of the day. In 1964 an American journalist came to Britain and surveyed what he called in the title of the subsequent book, *The British Political Fringe*. On the far right he found the neo-nazis, Oswald Mosley, and the League of Empire Loyalists, a little group semi-detached from the right of the Tory Party. All of these groups believed in variants of the Jewish conspiracy theory; that is that the Jews controlled the world's financial system. But their combined membership was only a few thousand. In America at the same time there was the US Nazi Party, some racists groups in the southern states such as the States Rights Party, and the John Birch Society. The latter was most famous – or

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<sup>84</sup> This, obviously, was written before the development of social media and its instant data distribution facility.

notorious – for the claim by its founder that President Eisenhower was a conscious agent of the communist conspiracy. Of these US groups the Birchers, as they were known, were the most significant with two congressmen who were associated with them.

The shift began in the 1960s. And no wonder. American history since the 60s has been a long succession of assassinations and conspiracies. The three most important left of centre politicians, the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King, were assassinated – none of them by the assassin identified by the authorities. Some of the leadership of the Black Panthers was murdered – and it was revealed a decade later, largely as a result of a conspiracy by the FBI. Then came Watergate and the various revelations trailing in its wake of widespread surveillance and covert operations by the FBI and the CIA. And there was the war in Vietnam. After 1980 began the various intelligence, military, and financial scandals – conspiracies – of the Reagan-Bush era, of which the secret financing of the war against the Nicaraguan government by illegally selling arms to Iran was just the most prominent. In other words, from the assassinations of the 1960's through to Iran-Contra and the other Reagan-Bush horrors in the 1980s, events have revealed major governmental conspiracies which have made it impossible for the powers-that-be to maintain the line that such things just don't happen.

Fifty years of secrecy, lies, media manipulation and covert operations are coming back to bite the legs of the elite managers of American society and politics. A large number of US citizens no longer believe government statements about anything; and a significant minority believe the federal government capable of any calumny, up to and including planning to brainwash its citizenry, detonating the bomb in Oklahoma to give itself a pretext for pushing draconian anti-terrorism laws through Congress, and even organising a secret conspiracy with extraterrestrial beings begun in the late 1940s.'

## **Mind control**

The Black Vault website has recently added at least 1500 pages of declassified documents from the CIA's MK Ultra program.<sup>85</sup> The *Daily Mail* spotted a document in that collection which described inserting electrodes into dogs' skulls to manipulate their behaviour.<sup>86</sup> It is but a relatively small step from

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<sup>85</sup> <<https://www.theblackvault.com/documentarchive/cia-mkultra-collection/#behavioral>>

<sup>86</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/y7lrrrew>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-6487023/CIA-used-mind-control-experiments-dogs-humans-1960s.html>>

there to trying it out on humans – as was done to Robert Naeslund in Sweden a few years later. Odds must be good that this was MK Ultra outsourced to one of the CIA's allies.

## **Not even close. No cigar.**

Reviewing Rory Cormac's book in the previous issue<sup>87</sup> reminded me that I had an earlier book of his (co-authored with Richard Aldrich) that I hadn't read: *The Black Door: Spies, Secret Intelligence and British Prime Ministers*.<sup>88</sup> This is noteworthy because its academic authors take on the parapolitics of the Wilson and Thatcher years. Of course I turned immediately to their account of 1974-76, the so-called 'Wilson plots' episode. While they do a decent job, sketching in the 'private armies' events, rumours of coups and machinations by the likes of Brian Crozier, they fail the Colin Wallace test.<sup>89</sup> There is no reference to Information Policy, IRD in Northern Ireland, or Paul Foot's book *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* They do, however, quote former Northern Ireland Minister, Merlyn Rees, speaking in 1993, on the existence of a 'dirty tricks campaign in Northern Ireland . . . included a list of politicians of all parties'. I wondered what had been removed from the quote and looked it up. The full quote is below; the deleted words have been italicised:

'With regard to Northern Ireland, I discovered that the "dirty tricks" campaign in Northern Ireland – *I possess the papers now though I did not have them at the time* – included a list of politicians in all parties. They are listed under the headings of sex, politics and finance. It is the most illiterate rubbish that I have ever read, even worse than that found in some of our national newspapers. It was quite extraordinary. A psych-ops operation was run against politicians in the south and politicians in Northern Ireland. It is no way to win the battle of Northern Ireland, let alone to get involved in politics here.' <sup>90</sup>

Rees was speaking in the House of Lords in 1993, three years after the government had admitted that Wallace did have a psy-ops role in Northern Ireland. And these 'papers' Rees possessed are obviously Colin Wallace's

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<sup>87</sup> <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster76/lob76-disrupt-and-deny.pdf>>

<sup>88</sup> London: Collins, 2016

<sup>89</sup> For anyone new to this material, a sense of its complexity can be got from reading just one of the many House of Commons statements on this subject by the late Tam Dalyell MP. Try <<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm198990/cmhansrd/1990-07-12/Debate-20.html>>.

<sup>90</sup> <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1993/dec/09/intelligence-services-bill-hl>>



handwritten notes for Clockwork Orange 2.<sup>91</sup> The authors immediately follow the Rees quote with this:

'Like that of Peter Wright, the evidence from Wallace has been partly discredited. He was forced out of the Ministry of Defence in 1975, and later imprisoned for the manslaughter of a colleague's husband. Although the conviction was quashed, *leading to rumours* that Wallace was framed, his reputation never recovered' (p. 324). (emphasis added)

No examples of his evidence being 'discredited' are offered and I have no idea to what they are referring. In his 1989 *Who Framed Colin Wallace?*, the late Paul Foot showed that Wallace had been framed, *seven years before* his conviction was quashed, not after it.

As for his reputation, as soon as the Thatcher government admitted in 1990 that Wallace had been telling the truth about his psy-ops role – hitherto officially denied – the sections of the major media which were aware of the Wallace story simply assumed that he had been telling the truth about everything – as did Merlyn Rees, by the sounds of it. For example, the BBC began using part of a film that BBC2's Newsnight had made about Wallace in 1986, while he was still in prison. This had been pulled just before broadcast by the then Deputy Director of the BBC, Alan Protheroe.<sup>92</sup> Prior to 1990 the BBC were denying the film even existed. Nothing of what Wallace has been talking and writing about for almost 40 years has been rebutted and he – and Fred Holroyd – have become go-to sources for the media on Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

Having marginalised and misrepresented Wallace's evidence of an MI5 conspiracy against Wilson, on p. 327 the authors conclude 'there is certainly no evidence confirming that an *organised* MI5 conspiracy against Wilson existed.' (emphasis added) What role does the word 'organised' have in that sentence? As opposed to a disorganised, unorganised conspiracy? Perhaps they mean official but, for some reason, don't want to use the word.

The authors refer to the Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour book, *The Pencourt File*, which began with interviews given to them by Harold Wilson just after he resigned as prime minister in 1976. But the authors have missed – or have omitted – the fact that in 2006, during a BBC documentary on 'the Wilson plots', Barrie Penrose said that in 1976 Harold Wilson had steered him and

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<sup>91</sup> Those hand-written notes and copies of some of the anti-Labour forgeries from this period are reproduced at the end of Paul Foot's *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>92</sup> Protheroe was also an information officer with the Territorial Army, specialising in media-military relations, and presumably had a good idea of what Wallace and Information Policy had been doing in Northern Ireland.

Roger Courtiour towards Colin Wallace but they had not contacted him.<sup>93</sup> This gives rise to an interesting 'what if?' What if Penrose and Courtiour *had* contacted Wallace in 1976/7 and been told then the things that didn't begin to emerge until a decade later? It is just possible that we might have avoided Mrs Thatcher. . . .

So who told Harold Wilson about Colin Wallace? Probably SIS chief, Maurice Oldfield, whom Wilson was seeing occasionally in this period.

## Here comes 5G

Despite a fair bit of evidence showing that the microwave radiation associated with mobile phones does produce cancers,<sup>94</sup> there was no significant campaign against the introduction of 4G (fourth generation) – just a few Jeremiahs on the sidelines. Now 5G approaches – bigger, and better and faster and more powerful. But it will require bigger and more numerous transmitters, producing more powerful radiation. This time the alarm bells have begun to ring rather early.<sup>95</sup> Of course, nothing will stop it. The lobbying power of the big electronics companies will overwhelm whatever medical protests there are.

## A nice man?

Considering his roles in the American military-intelligence system, the outpouring of affection and nostalgia for George H W Bush at the time of his death and funeral was nauseating. Succinct summaries of the Bush horrors can be found at Truthout<sup>96</sup> and Consortiumnews.<sup>97</sup>

So routine is Uncle Sam's global violence, it can be difficult to hang on to

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<sup>93</sup> The documentary concerned was discussed at <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/4789060.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4789060.stm)> and a somewhat poor copy of the programme is available on YouTube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG6FR03BqIQ>> [specifically the section from 00:56:33 - 01:00:30]. This shows Wilson trying to steer Penrose and Courtier towards 'a Ministry of Defence press officer'. Wallace also confirms he knew Courtier 'from my time in Northern Ireland' and would, thus, have felt confident to brief them as necessary.

In an e-mail to me about this on 17 December 2018 Colin Wallace wrote: 'Barrie [Penrose] did tell me that although Wilson mentioned me by name when he and Roger Courtiour met with him, they became sidetracked by other aspects of the story and failed to contact me.'

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, <<https://tinyurl.com/yb2hepak>> or <<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/new-studies-link-cell-phone-radiation-with-cancer/>>.

<sup>95</sup> See <<https://tinyurl.com/y95j4ov5>> or <<https://www.salon.com/2018/12/03/why-public-health-experts-are-worried-about-5g-the-next-generation-of-cell-network/>>. Search for '5G danger' on YouTube.

<sup>96</sup> <<https://truthout.org/articles/i-will-not-speak-kindly-of-the-dead-bush-was-detestable/>>

<sup>97</sup> <<https://consortiumnews.com/2018/12/05/the-bushes-death-squads/>>

the sense of outrage that it should produce. Every once in a while I stumble across a report which brings me up short again. This is the most recent to do so.

'Throughout the Second Indochina War (1964-1973) more than 580,000 bombing missions (or a bombing mission every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years) and wide ranging ground battles, led to over 2 million tons of ordnance being dropped on Laos. Over 270 million cluster munitions were used, of which there are an estimated 80 million malfunctioned [sic] and remained live and buried in the Lao landscape after the war's end.'<sup>98</sup>

80 *million* unexploded cluster bombs . . . .

This is the system to which George H W Bush devoted much of his adult life. Never mind 'What a decent guy he was (in comparison to Trump)' which we got from the mainstream media in the Anglosphere. Like all the other senior administrators of the American military-intelligence system, Bush was a mass murderer.

## **Annie Machon**

**R**egular readers of these pages will have noticed that my focus these days is rarely on the British intelligence and security complex. To try and keep minimally informed of what is going on in those fields, among the sites I look at is that of former MI5 officer Annie Machon.<sup>99</sup> She spoke at Hull University a couple of years ago after a showing of the film about the NSA whistle-blower, William Binney, *A Good American*.<sup>100</sup> She was rather impressive: intelligent, confident and articulate. In the predictably stodgy Q and A which followed – the predominantly student audience had almost nothing to say or ask – I lobbed her a question about the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee which allowed her to run a number of well-rehearsed points of her thesis about the spooks and democracy. Machon is still fighting the good fight.

## **Militarising the weather**

**I**n 'Weather weapons: the dark world of environmental warfare' in *Lobster* 62,<sup>101</sup> T. J. Coles described in great detail US military attempts to 'own the

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<sup>98</sup> <<http://www.nra.gov/la/uxoproblem.html>> Yes, that clunky sentence is in the original.

<sup>99</sup> <<https://anniemachon.ch>>

<sup>100</sup> Now on Youtube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=666wsDcoNrU>>.

<sup>101</sup> <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster62/lob62-weather-wars.pdf>>

weather'. Now it has been reported that China and Russia are going down the same path in joint operations.<sup>102</sup> Given their ostensible military and political rivalry, these joint operations by China and Russia are striking.

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<sup>102</sup> 'China And Russia Have Run Controversial Experiments That Modified Earth's Atmosphere' at <<https://tinyurl.com/ybe3z775>> or <<https://www.sciencealert.com/china-and-russia-conducted-controversial-experiments-that-modified-earth-s-atmosphere>>