

South of the border (occasional snippets from)

Nick Must

new

Bilderberg blessings

In this issue's *View from the Bridge*, Robin Ramsay makes reference to the list of UK attendees at this year's Bilderberg meeting.¹ The two names that stood out for me were those of Tom Tugendhat and David Lammy – respectively leading MPs for the Conservatives and Labour. It is nice to see that a blessing from Bilderberg is still an advantage if you are desirous of your party's leadership. I offer my sincerest best wishes to Mr. Lammy in the next hustings for Labour leader – which, for some in the party, can't come soon enough. Mr. Tugendhat, however, has just been eliminated from the current competition to lead the Conservatives. I am sure, though, that he will maintain the pressure from the backbenches and instigate a further challenge in due course.²

That the Bilderberg meeting has, in the past, acted as an approval committee for potential UK Prime Ministers and/or party leaders is easily illustrated. Three of the five Prime Ministers since 1997 have been Bilderberg alumni.³

While the Bilderberg meeting was taking place over the first weekend in June, Tugendhat managed to keep up a trickle of messages on his Twitter feed.⁴ In contrast, the Lammy feed, normally a lively scene on most days, was

¹ See <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/84/the-view-from-the-bridge-47/>> under the sub-heading 'Bilderbergers'.

² He has already indicated as much, Tweeting: 'Thank you to all those who supported me and believed in #ACleanStart. This is only the beginning!' Additionally, the revelation that Tobias Ellwood has had the Tory Whip removed – because he was abroad on Parliamentary business when the vote of now confidence took place – comes as interesting news. I am sure Messrs. Tugendhat and Ellwood could be viewed as something of a dream ticket for a future Tory party (once it gets its act together and ditches people like – God help us! – Liz Truss). Doubtless this is the real reason for the removal of the whip: divide and conquer.

³ These being Tony Blair <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4290944.stm>>, Gordon Brown <<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/bill-clinton-on-tony-and-gordon>> and David Cameron <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/07/david-cameron-attend-bilderberg-group>>.

⁴ <<https://twitter.com/TomTugendhat>> It is quite possible that he had/has someone managing his social media.

eerily quiet.⁵ It was the weekend after his attendance at Bilderberg that David Lammy said on his regular Saturday afternoon LBC radio phone-in show that '[speaking] frankly, behind closed doors'⁶ international leaders consider Boris Johnson 'a joke'.⁷

new

Wotcha, Young Liberals!

Also discussed by Robin Ramsay in his current *View from the Bridge* is Emeritus Professor Jonathan Rosenhead, of LSE.⁸ As Robin details, the Professor is a Jewish member of the Labour party and is one of those who has been a victim of the 'anti-semitism-in-Labour' smears – most of which have come from within Labour!

This is not the only issue the Professor is dealing with at the moment. He has also been a witness at the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI), as he and his fellow anti-apartheid campaigners in the Young Liberals⁹ were placed under surveillance by the Special Demonstration Squad of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch in the early 1970s. Professor Rosenhead has had a 34 page statement¹⁰ entered as evidence to the UCPI which, he clarifies on the second page, 'should not . . . be considered my final word on the issue of how I have been affected by undercover policing'. I expect he will be saying much more in due course.

Having had sight of many of the reports generated by the SDS surveillance, he says 'the language is hyperbolic – that is to say that the undercover reporter has not uncommonly put a lurid spin on a more mundane reality'. He also describes how someone (whom he does not identify, although they are now deceased) placed a number of 'small ads' in 'national

⁵ <<https://twitter.com/davidlammy>> Perhaps Lammy feels it would be dishonest to have someone post on his behalf?

⁶ In other words, according to the Chatham House rules rigorously adopted by Bilderberg.

⁷ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxT52V9TL_c>.

⁸ See <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/84/the-view-from-the-bridge-47/>> under the sub-heading 'Lord Levy's levy'.

⁹ Including Peter Hain (ex-Labour MP, Cabinet member and now sitting in the House of Lords as Baron Hain of Neath).

¹⁰ See <<https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UCPI0000034074.pdf>>.

newspapers' in an attempt at a coordinated smear:

One of his strategies was to place adverts in various journals that purported to show me as in support of various rightwing causes. The aim I assumed was to make me back off rather than experience the ire of my comrades. (Another advert which in effect suggested I was a pornographer was submitted to *Time Out* (or possibly the magazine *City Limits*)). But the layout man there knew me and got in touch to query the advert's provenance, so that one didn't make it into the light of day.

Which sounds exactly like what the British secret state would do to you, if you were on their shit list.

Reacting to another wildly exaggerated report, written up for the digestion of senior SDS officers, Rosenhead points out that:

They [the SDS officers and/or their source(s)] were free to put an extreme (or in this case completely fictitious) interpretation on a shred of fact — knowing presumably that such interpretations would be welcomed.

So the SDS were operating in what would, today, be called an echo chamber — merely reinforcing their pre-conceived suspicions that these 'radicals' were up to no good. One of the SDS officers had the cover name of 'Michael Scott' and he has been given the anonymous numeral HN298 by the inquiry. In his 'First Witness Statement'¹¹ he describes the light-touch management style of the senior SDS cadre:

I was not specifically tasked to infiltrate any particular group. I do not think I was given any particular instructions at the beginning of my deployment about what to do, nor do I think I received any instructions during my deployment. The decisions as to how to conduct my work were left to me, and I liked it that way. Despite not being specifically tasked by managers, I am sure my self-tasking was useful and relevant.

There is no further proof of that last part (because none can be given) so he considers his word as sufficient. He clarified his enjoyment of his work thus:

My recollection of being undercover is that I spent most of the time working. I would usually go to meetings during the evenings and at the weekends. I would get a couple of days off during the week when nothing was happening with my groups, during which I would go home and spend time with my family. I would attend the weekly meetings to

¹¹ See <<https://www.ucpi.org.uk/publications/first-witness-statement-of-hn298>>.

hand in reports and speak to my managers. We often shared a meal; two of the officers were good cooks. I cannot remember what happened with holidays, but I would have tried to fit them in around everything else.

I would interpret that as being a tacit admission that he had a ton of time on his hands – and, believe it or not, his ‘take home pay increased while [he] was on the SDS’! And we know that this went on for five years because the *Guardian* reported, in January of 2020, that ‘Scott used his fake identity to infiltrate the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Young Liberals and the Workers Revolutionary Party between 1971 and 1976’.¹²

Early in that period, he crossed paths with both Jonathan Rosenhead and Peter Hain when he attended a meeting at a private residence (i.e., note, not a public meeting) of the Putney Young Liberals. The SDS report that was produced following this infiltration shows ‘Mike Scott’ as having been elected as the ‘Membership Secretary’.¹³ Although, due to the passage of time, HN298 cannot specifically remember that meeting, he says that he ‘probably did volunteer’ for the position. I think it is safe to correct HN298 that he would not have been nominated in the first place unless he definitely did volunteer.

Page three of that SDS report is a list of the names of the fourteen people who attended the meeting. However, all but four of them have been redacted. The open names are that of ‘Mike Scott’ (i.e. HN298), Peter Hain and his two sisters Jo-Ann and Sally.¹⁴ Also redacted are the Special Branch references for each of the fourteen. Don’t let that statement pass you by. It would appear that every one of the fourteen attendees already had or, as a result of their attendance at that meeting were allocated, a Special Branch file. This is quite surprising, seeing as it was an entirely legal meeting of a local branch of a mainstream political party.

In HN298’s ‘First Witness Statement’ he said of his penetration of the Young Liberal branch: ‘I did not discuss taking up this post with my managers beforehand.’ He then goes straight on to claim ‘I do not remember them saying anything about it at the time’. Was there really no response when Special Branch command found out that HN298 had autonomously decided to penetrate the very core of the Putney Young Liberals?

¹² See <<https://tinyurl.com/5n82td6w>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/06/man-81-seeks-to-quash-conviction-for-apartheid-protest>>.

¹³ See <<https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UCPI0000008240.pdf>>.

¹⁴ See <<https://peterhain.uk/background/>>.

In that same year, Professor Rosenhead received a 'conviction for a public order offence during a demonstration' that was organised by the 'Stop the Seventy Tour' protestors – a group which included the Putney Young Liberals. The self-same 'Mike Scott'/HN298 was involved in that protest and was also convicted, under his alias, for his participation. All of that remained secret for more than 40 years, until the UCPI started the process of spilling the beans. The *Guardian* has reported:

His [Prof. Rosenhead's] case highlights how a significant number of protesters since 1968 could potentially have been unjustly convicted as key evidence gathered by undercover police officers was withheld from their trials.¹⁵

The Professor is quoted there are saying: 'I think that this unit was out of control. It was violating our human and legal rights.' And the Professor is, of course, absolutely correct.

new

The CIA and Afghanistan – start as you mean to go on

Following the withdrawal of western forces from Afghanistan last year, the question of fiscal probity was considered. This was framed by *Al Jazeera* as 'The US spent \$2 trillion in Afghanistan – and for what?'¹⁶

Don't go assuming that there was some late surge in spending that pushed this total to such massive heights: the first CIA unit on the ground in Afghanistan post 9-11 began by spending money like water. In his book '*First in*',¹⁷ the leader of that group of CIA officers details the amount of cash they initially took with them - \$3 million – and provides quite exhaustive chapter and verse as to whom they were giving the money.

On the very first day they supplied half a million dollars in cash to two

¹⁵ See footnote 12.

¹⁶ By Patricia Sabga, 16 Aug 2021 at <<https://tinyurl.com/2vxz7t4b>> or <<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/8/16/the-us-spent-2-trillion-in-afghanistan-and-for-what>>. Coincidentally, that same day, answer came from *The Intercept* with a piece by Jon Schwarz titled, '\$10,000 Invested in Defense Stocks When Afghanistan War Began Now Worth Almost \$100,000'. <<https://theintercept.com/2021/08/16/afghanistan-war-defense-stocks/>>.

¹⁷ Gary Schroen, *First in – an insider's account of how the CIA spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Presidio Press, 2007).

locals, asking that it be prioritised for intelligence purposes because 'much more money was available for purely military purposes'. The author states he found it assuring to see the Afghani men going through the process of making a written record, and confirming between themselves as to the total sum in cash. The possibility that the two might have merely been planning to split the money, keeping half each, seems not to have been considered.

The next day \$1 million was passed to a senior commander in the Northern Alliance. Again, the appearance they gave in their handling of the cash was taken as a sign that it was being entrusted to the right people. The eight members of the '*Jawbreaker*' team thus managed to get through \$5 million in the first 40 days in the Panjshir Valley – a rate of more than \$15,500 a day per Special Activities Division officer. (They were able to exceed their original \$3 million because they received a resupply in the third week of October, when an extra \$10 million was delivered.)

The CIA were bribing the Afghans and – especially considering the sums involved – the Afghans were very happy to be bribed. Why the pretence? *Jawbreaker* also paid significant sums in dollars to the locals – i.e. the cleaners, cooks and electricians – who had been helping them at their temporary base. This was not quite the altruistic move it seems: where could those much more lowly Afghans have exchanged this money into (practical/spendable) local currency without being identified as collaborators?¹⁸

new

Clarity with distance

'The centrality of intelligence to counter-insurgency operations and campaigns is now widely acknowledged, but this has not always been the case, even for Great Britain, which is generally regarded as the world leader in counter-insurgency.'

I was initially surprised to learn that an excellent potted history of post-Empire British counter-insurgency (which contains the quote above) has come from the Department of History at the University of New Brunswick in Canada and

¹⁸ When the BBC's John Simpson flew into Kabul with US Special Forces teams in late 2001, he saw 'bales of banknotes' totalling approximately a million dollars in each helicopter. That was local Afghani currency and must therefore have been separate funds from the US dollars used by *Jawbreaker*. I explained how those Afghani notes must have been forged currency in the 'Fake money matters' section of my South of the Border from *Lobster 75* at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/75/south-of-the-border/>>.

not closer to home.¹⁹ But then I learned that the paper's author was Professor David Charters, who has written extensively in this field.

new

Strange goings on . . .

. . . in Iran, where it is alleged that Britain's Deputy Ambassador, Giles Whitaker, was amongst those who had been 'Arrested by IRGC [the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] in Restricted Areas in Iran'.²⁰ Also arrested, according to bulletins – both western and middle-eastern – was 'the husband of Austria's cultural attaché in Iran' and a Polish scientist, Maciej Walczak. Whilst BBC news stated that 'Poland confirms scientist being detained in Iran'²¹ there was what seemed to be a blanket denial from elsewhere, because 'The UK and Austria denied the reports'.

Closer examination of that denial, however, shows some suspicious holes. As part of the denial, Britain's Ambassador to Iran, Simon Shercliff, tweeted:

These reports that our Deputy Ambassador is currently detained are very interesting

. . . He actually left Iran last December, at the end of his posting.²²

But the statement by Poland's foreign ministry was quite clear that Mr Walczak had been held since *September of last year*. So it is quite possible that this all happened before the end of Deputy Ambassador Whitaker's posting. And anyway, the Fars News Agency report referred to above said 'Whitaker was expelled from the city to which he had traveled after apologizing.' So, Iran is not even claiming that he is being currently detained. The rebuttal by Britain's Ambassador is worthless!

There has been some swift manipulation of Mr Whitaker's online presence since the story broke around 6/7 July. Firstly, his profile on the Government

¹⁹ 'Counter-insurgency Intelligence: The Evolution of British Theory and Practice' by Professor David A. Charters. See <<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/15233/19650>>. The University of New Brunswick is the oldest English-language university in Canada, and one of the oldest public universities in the North American continent.

²⁰ See the news report from the Fars News Agency (an Iranian news agency managed by the IRGC) at <<https://tinyurl.com/2s3jhydh>> <<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14010416000042/UK's-Senior-Envoy-Arrested-by-IRGC-in-Restricted-Areas-in-Iran>>.

²¹ <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-62077425>>

²² <<https://twitter.com/SimonShercliff/status/1544902780363628545>>

website was rapidly changed from 'Giles Whitaker took up *his current position* as Deputy head of Mission at the British Embassy in Tehran in November 2018' (added emphasis) to 'Giles Whitaker was *Deputy Head of Mission* at the British Embassy in Tehran from November 2018 to December 2021'.²³ (added emphasis) His LinkedIn page has also been altered as, when I first looked, it still showed him as being currently in post but that now states his Tehran job ended in December 2021 and that he has, since March 2022, been 'Senior Business Champion' at the 'Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office'.²⁴ (As if such a position as 'business champion' were possible under the Boris Johnson administration.)

new

I now realise I was really quite rude

In *Lobster 76* I used this column to ask the question 'Is Boris Johnson the new George Brown?'²⁵ Since then I have realised that I owe the late, somewhat unlamented, Labour cabinet minister from the 1960s an apology for being so rude!

Brown may have been a drunken fool the vast majority of the time but – if Tony Benn's diaries are to be relied upon – he at least had the decency to resign with speed when he had quite obviously become surplus to requirements.²⁶

The Falklands, 40 years on: putting the boot in

The evening of Sunday 27 March²⁷ saw the broadcasting by Channel 4 of a

²³ <<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/giles-whitaker>>

²⁴ <<https://www.linkedin.com/in/giles-whitaker-a907573/>>

²⁵ See <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/76/south-of-the-border-2/>>.

²⁶ See the entries for Thursday 14 & Friday 15 March, 1968 in Tony Benn, *Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72* (London: Hutchinson, 1988).

²⁷ This date being the closest Sunday *before* the anniversary of the Argentine invasion on 2 April, 1982.

documentary titled 'Falklands War: The Untold Story'.²⁸ On the surface, this would seem to have been merely an opportunity to rehash some old war glory. However, it was also an opportunity for several (still living) senior military officers – specifically Brigadier Julian Thompson, Lieutenant Colonel Ivar Hellberg and Lieutenant Colonel Nick Vaux (all of the Royal Marines) and General Sir Michael Rose (of the Special Air Service) – to collectively lay into the poor leadership qualities and alleged ineptitude displayed by Brigadier Tony Wilson, who commanded 5 Infantry Brigade (and is deceased, please note, so therefore unable to defend himself on camera).

Their beef was publicly and loudly stated: Brigadier Wilson had been an absolute idiot when he took the unnecessary risk of sending his troops on a southern loop around West Falkland. This had merely been an attempt – the accusation went – to beat the main force, which had been landed at San Carlos,²⁹ in an imagined race to Port Stanley. However, the merest thought about military tactics might explain the need for such a manoeuvre. It introduced the prospect for the Argentinians that they would have to face a two pronged attack, or that one body of troops was a diversion and that the final attack would come from the other.

This is strongly supported by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse in their *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*.³⁰ They report that:

From diaries captured at Goose Green a picture emerged of low morale [amongst Argentine troops] and the impact of gunfire and air attacks. The main prize from Mount Kent was an Argentine map together with the original operation order from 2 April. The map showed the location of every unit and the boundaries within which it was expected to operate. It contained a number of little circles, designating areas of counter-attack and defence, *confirming the Argentine presumption that*

²⁸ In the UK you can view it at

<<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/falklands-war-the-untold-story>>. If you're outside the UK, a version is currently on YouTube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gdd40e1GEW8>>.

The claim that any of it was 'untold' is pretty far-fetched. Group Captain Sid Edwards, UK Air Attaché in Chile at the time, is introduced and we were told that he was 'now speaking for the first time about his exploits'. But that's untrue: his book *My Secret Falklands War* (Hove, Sussex: The Book Guild Ltd.) – about the secret mission to liaise with the Pinochet dictatorship – was published eight years ago!

²⁹ And had to 'yomp' an exhausting 50 miles across the island.

³⁰ London: Faber & Faber, 1990.

the British attack would come from the south.

[. . .]

The British commanders had calculated that because the Argentine forces had been trained by the American marines they would expect the British to adopt the American approach and land as close as possible to Stanley and then attempt to overcome Argentine defences by means of intense firepower. If this was the case *the obvious approach was from the south.*³¹ (added emphasis)

Further, Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse confirm that Major-General Jeremy Moore (the Commander, Land Forces, for the task force)

. . . not only believed that he would need its [5 Infantry Brigade's] extra strength to overcome the Argentine garrison of six battalions, but he also hoped to keep Brigadier General Mario Menendez [commander of the Argentine forces on the Falklands] *looking to the south and south-west.*³² (added emphasis)

So – in spite of other commanders' apparent misgivings about the stratagem – Moore approved. It should be noted that Moore died in September of 2007 and so, like Brigadier Tony Wilson, he was unable to comment on this 'controversy' (which was presented in a very one-sided manner).

Some of the commanders who were so critical of Tony Wilson might do well to keep a little bit quieter, for fear of being painted as hypocrites. For example, when Michael Rose of the SAS was introduced it was mentioned that he was SAS CO at the time of the Iranian Embassy siege. The subsequent huge media attention on the regiment is also alluded to; then Mike Rose laments that the SAS hadn't been immediately summoned as part of the task force:

After a couple of days of not hearing from anyone, it became apparent that the Royal Navy *had never heard of the Special Air Service* and that we were not on the Order of Battle. (added emphasis)

Well, those two things – massive media and public attention on the SAS and the Royal Navy not knowing who they were – can't both be true! The obvious fact was that the SAS were not being considered as a part of the Task Force and Mike Rose pushed his way aboard. His 'Bufton Tufton' persona was reinforced by a profile that *The Telegraph* had previously published on the thirtieth anniversary of the conflict:

³¹ *Signals of War* pp. 382-383

³² *Signals of War* p. 385

Michael Rose did what his countrymen normally do when trying to get through to foreigners: speak English but more loudly. 'Fetch officer. I am British high command,' he barked over the radio. ³³

At one point during the documentary, Rose even admits he lied about the possibility of there being an Argentine radar station on Pebble Island to get Admiral Sandy Woodward to approve the raid,³⁴ saying 'I don't think he quite trusted us after that'. Well, who would?

The raid on Pebble Island was a success but the unique impact the SAS had on the war is questionable. Yes, their clandestine patrols provided important information on Argentine numbers and fortifications, but that same intelligence gathering could have been carried out by other forward reconnaissance platoons (i.e. not necessarily from special forces). Much has also been made of the SF contribution to the retaking of South Georgia (known as Operation Paraquet). But, as the Channel 4 documentary stated, the shelling of the Argentine positions on South Georgia by HMS Antrim was enough to make the occupying forces surrender without any actual fighting.³⁵ The pre-attack surveillance,

began disastrously. The SAS insisted on being inserted onto the highly crevassed Fortuna glacier, despite warnings about the weather. As winds rose to 70 knots and temperatures dropped to -20C, they called to be rescued. But first one, then a second rescue helicopter crashed and it was only on the third attempt they got off.³⁶

With two valuable choppers crashed, it was amazing that the worst injuries

³³ See <<https://tinyurl.com/55cuwafm>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/falklandislands/9329262/Gen-Sir-Michael-Rose-remembers-the-Argentine-surrender-on-the-Falklands-I-said-to-them-No-funny-business.html>>.

³⁴ *Signals of War* tells this somewhat differently, saying:

The SAS had already identified Pebble Island as an Argentine garrison *on the basis of radio traffic*, and had wanted to mount a raid to demoralize the defenders. Permission for this had been denied. However, Admiral Woodward had taken a renewed interest when *he became concerned that Pebble Island might be used as a helicopter base*. This variety of interests came together, and the SAS was given permission to mount the raid. (p. 327 added emphasis)

³⁵ This was alluded to by Alan Bell (ex-SAS) in his presentation to the Royal Canadian Military Institute on 17 June 2015. See the YouTube video 'The Taking of South Georgia Island 1982 with Alan Bell of the SAS' at <<https://youtu.be/Hj8Hkbb0-0Q?t=2343>>.

³⁶ See 'The retaking of South Georgia, 25 years on: watch Falklands veterans speak' by James Sturcke for *The Guardian*, 25 April 2007 at <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/apr/25/falklands.world>>.

were some frostbite. It might have been considered worthwhile, if even a modicum of information on the enemy had been obtained, but 'The SAS units were extracted but without having collected any intelligence.'³⁷

A similar situation – with problematic insertion and extraction, and a lack of result – occurred on the mainland of South America. While the Task Force had been sailing south, the Special Forces group in London, commanded by General Peter de la Billière, had come up with a rather crackpot plan to raid an airfield in Argentina. Operation Mikado was to involve landing two Hercules planes on the enemy airfield at Rio Grande, have more than fifty troops disembark and destroy as much Argentine equipment and/or kill as many pilots and flight mechanics as possible, before either reboarding the Hercules or (in the likely event that almost everything went counter to plan) escaping on foot to Chile. As Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse record in *Signals of War*:

Given the difficulties of putting even a crude airfield out of action, attacks on the bases on the Argentine mainland would have had only a limited chance of success. The possibility of an attack on a carefully delineated target, for example the base of the Super-Etendards [Rio Grande], was not ruled out, but the view in London from early on was that the political costs of this sort of escalation, its doubtful status in international law, combined with the practical problems of making it a success, rendered it unattractive.³⁸

Undeterred, the plan was morphed into Operation Plum Duff, which would be comprised of a small scale patrol – moving on foot *within* Argentina – to observe aircraft dispositions, flights and numbers. However, not even the slightest detail seemed to go according to plan and as the patrol's commanding officer, Captain Andy Legg, wrote in *The Times*: 'The SAS operation I took part in was ambitious, audacious and, ultimately, completely ineffective, proof that the SAS's reputation for infallibility can run aground on reality.'³⁹

The Falklands, 40 years on: oil

In the dim and distant past of *Lobster 9*, Robin Ramsay wrote about the idea

³⁷ 'Intelligence operations in the Falklands', by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman in *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 1, Issue 3, 1986.

³⁸ *Signals of War*, p. 328

³⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/2p9ctznj>> or <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/i-led-the-falklands-sas-mission-that-no-one-wants-to-talk-about-cvfh0jrpl>>.

that the war for the Falklands had been (at least partly) motivated by the possibility that there were significant oil reserves in the South Atlantic. He noted:

that there are, or are believed to be, considerable – possibly huge – oil deposits in the seabed between the islands and the Argentine mainland. (This was apparently sufficiently obvious for the US political columnist, William Safire, to write a piece in the early stages of the conflict, stating that oil was the 'bottom line' in the war.)⁴⁰

In his footnotes for that original article, Robin lamented his lack of access to the article in question. Fast forward thirty seven years and, thanks to the internet and the archiving of old *New York Times* stories, we can now read what had been written then. The very first two paragraphs say:

Why do you suppose Britain's Lord Carrington, normally so quick to urge accommodation under pressure, was so reluctant to negotiate with Argentina over its newly-pressed claim to the Falkland Islands?

The answer is oil. A study by energy expert Lawrence Goldmuntz in January of this year projected annual production within a decade from the new field between Argentina and the Falklands to be 2 million barrels a day. To Great Britain, such a development would match its North Sea potential and make it a far greater economic power; to Argentina, that offshore oil would nearly match Venezuela's annual production, and help transform Argentina into the dominant power in Latin America.⁴¹

Cometh *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign* in 2005 and its *Volume 1: The Origins of the Falklands War*⁴² explains the UK government's longstanding interest in the South Atlantic oil fields, particularly from the mid-70s onwards. Indeed, chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 give multiple references to the possibility of significant oil reserves in the South Atlantic, close to the Falklands. It even goes as far as to say that

Other than possible oil resources . . . the strategic and economic value of the Falklands to Britain was minimal

⁴⁰ See 'Thinking about the Falklands' from *Lobster* 9, September 1985 at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/online/issue09/lob09-02.htm>>.

⁴¹ See 'Opinion Essay: In Defeat, Defiance' at <<https://www.nytimes.com/1982/04/05/opinion/essay-in-defeat-defiance.html>>.

⁴² *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Volume 1: The Origins of the Falklands War* by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman (London: Routledge, 2005)

and how, in the mid 70s,

the sovereignty of the Falklands seemed a rather small matter while the possible oil wealth of the southwest Atlantic appeared to be of growing significance.⁴³

And the sovereignty argument was obviously very flimsy anyway: not only are the islands more than 8,000 miles away, in 1982 Britain had only been in occupation for 150 years, having booted out some Argentinian settlers. There is a contemporaneous 1833 news report from when that happened – titled ‘Buenos Aires protests the British occupation of the Falklands’ – in the archives of the *Observer*.⁴⁴

As recently as the autumn of last year, there was continuing interest over the oil reserves in the South Atlantic. On 23 September, it was announced that a London listed company, Harbour Energy, was abandoning ‘a project to develop the Sea Lion oil discovery offshore the Falkland Islands, which has been bitterly opposed by Argentina and is thought to hold some 1.7 billion barrels’. The company’s statement continued: ‘While the Sea Lion discovery has significant resource potential, development of the project is not deemed a strategic fit for Harbour.’ A hint as to quite what was causing this lack of ‘strategic fit’ came with the further revelation in the same article that, ‘Argentina has mounted a sustained campaign against all Falkland Islands oil drilling, including launching a sanctions process against Harbour Energy in July, and has repeatedly tried to block ships thought to be involved in oil activity in the islands.’⁴⁵

As Heiner Kubny asked, in an article for *Polar Journal*, ‘Oil production in Falkland – what next?’⁴⁶ He quoted Sam Moody, the CEO of Rockhopper (the firm that discovered the Sea Lion oil field in 2010) as saying ‘While we are disappointed that Harbour Energy has decided not to pursue the Falklands project, *we remain committed to advancing its development.*’ (added emphasis)

⁴³ *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, Volume 1 (see note 42) pp. 15 and 27.

⁴⁴ Digitised at <<https://tinyurl.com/2x8ataet>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2012/dec/08/falkland-islands-british-occupation-1833>>.

⁴⁵ See ‘UK’s Harbour Energy drops 250 mil barrel Falkland Islands oil project opposed by Argentina’ by Nick Coleman for S&P Global Commodity Insights at <<https://tinyurl.com/ysw9b4zk>> or <<https://www.spglobal.com/commodity-insights/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/092321-uks-harbour-energy-drops-250-mil-barrel-falkland-islands-oil-project-opposed-by-argentina>>.

⁴⁶ <<https://polarjournal.ch/en/2021/10/02/oil-production-in-falkland-what-next/>>

Nonetheless, some still argue that the presence of these potential oil fields had no bearing on the UK government's decision to retake the Falklands!⁴⁷

Questionable material in the CIA's online 'library'

At the CIA's website, there is a page titled 'November 2017 Release of Abbottabad Compound Material'.⁴⁸ This is a collection of the materials it is claimed was found by members of SEAL team six when they carried out the extrajudicial killing of Osama bin Laden.⁴⁹ An announcement at the very top of the web page states:

CIA resolved the technical issues associated with the 1 November 2017 posting of the Abbottabad compound material, *removing operating system and other copyrighted files* . . . (added emphasis)

But material that is surely copyright is still available. If you follow the link to the 'index' file⁵⁰ you will find at least one example in a PDF copy of *The Grand Chessboard* by Zbigniew Brzezinski (originally published in 1997 and obviously still subject to copyright).⁵¹

The CIA have, thoughtfully, included a 'Copyright Disclaimer' within the web page, declaring: 'The files underwent interagency review, and an effort was made to remove copyrighted material.' A little more effort is needed, maybe; not only to check for copyright material but also to check for other –

⁴⁷ See, for example, chapter 6 – 'Oil Spats: The Falkland/Malvinas Islands Dispute' – in Emily Meierding's *The Oil Wars Myth: Petroleum and the Causes of International Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

⁴⁸ <<https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/index.html>>

⁴⁹ The strong argument 'that the killing of bin Laden cannot be justified under international humanitarian law' is presented by Kai Ambos and Josef Alkatout in their paper 'Has "Justice Been Done"? The Legality of Bin Laden's Killing Under International Law' in *Israel Law Review* 45(2), 2012, at <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2097771>.

⁵⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/Everything.20171105.hash_index.txt>

⁵¹ A big thank you to the CIA for making *The Grand Chessboard* available. I needed a copy to check some facts when proof-reading Scott Newton's piece in *Lobster* 83 on the conflict in Ukraine.

extremely distasteful – material.⁵²

Michael Bettaney – death of a spy

Checking the index of *Lobster* back issues, I realised it had not been recorded in these pages that Michael Bettaney had passed away in 2018. Those sitting at the back might need reminding that Bettaney was perhaps MI5's maddest spy. From neo-fascist behaviour at Oxford University (he 'goose-stepped round the college quad and grew a toothbrush moustache'⁵³) to being so crap at trying to provide British state secrets to the Russians that they suspected him of being a plant ('Anatoly Gouk, his contact, believed these approaches a hoax, and never met Bettaney'⁵⁴). His story was truly lamentable.

He ended up writing for the Communist Party of Great Britain's news-sheet, *The Weekly Worker*, under a pseudonym. He would tell reporters who tracked him down to his Hertfordshire home that he and his partner 'just want to be left alone to get on with our life together'. After Bettaney's death his colleague at *The Weekly Worker*, Lawrence Parker, took 3,500 words in a slightly laborious attempt to rehabilitate the 'misunderstood' traitor's legacy.⁵⁵

Disappearing documents

Musing on the possibility that the assassination of Airey Neave might have had an impact of the result of the 1979 general election, I found an interesting document listed on the National Archives. PREM 16/2239 is titled 'SECURITY.

⁵² The collection of video files would seem to include al-Qa'ida beheading videos. I have not accessed any of those files but a search for the word 'beheaded' within the text of the page at <https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/index_video.html> produces 4 hits. The collection comes with this warning:

'The material in this file collection may contain content that is offensive and/or emotionally disturbing. This material may not be suitable for all ages. Please view it with discretion.'

⁵³ 'Michael Bettaney obituary', *The Times*, October 2, 2018 at <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/michael-bettaney-obituary-chg72k9nd>>.

⁵⁴ 'Michael Bettaney, also known as Michael Malkin — A Spook in the CPGB' by Larry O'Hara, *Notes from the Borderland*, Issue 4, winter 2001-2002. This is available at <shorturl.at/rzHN5> or <<https://www.scribd.com/document/222338706/Michael-Bettaney-also-known-as-Michael-Malkin-a-spook-in-the-CPGB>>.

⁵⁵ <<https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1224/tinker-tailor-soldier-marxist/>>

Irish terrorist activities in Great Britain; bomb explosion in Oxford Street; killing of Airey Neave MP' – but the record was 'closed and retained by Cabinet Office'.⁵⁶ On 5 March I sent an email to the Cabinet Office FOI team, requesting a copy of the documents under the Freedom of Information Act. I was unsurprised to hear back from them that it would probably take twenty working days for them to fully reply.

In contrast, the reply I did receive at the limit of that time allowed under the Act really was quite surprising:

We are writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, we have established that the information you requested is not held by the Cabinet Office.

PREM 16/2239 was referred to another department some years ago and not returned, it is presumed missing. ⁵⁷

In an immediate follow-up, I asked which department the documents had been sent to, the date of the transfer and when the presumption was made that the documents were now missing. I further said that I (quite reasonably) expected that the first two parts of that follow-up question could be answered immediately, as those details would surely have come to light during their enquiries following my initial FoI request.

Did I immediately get that easily accessible information? Of course not! I was instead told:

Thank you for your request for an internal review (reference IR2022/06542), which was prompted by our response to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We shall endeavour to complete the internal review and respond to you within 20 working days.⁵⁸

In the parlance of today's youth: FFS!

⁵⁶ See <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C11521753>>.

⁵⁷ Email from Cabinet Office FOI Team, 4 April 2022.

⁵⁸ Email from Cabinet Office FOI Team, 5 April 2022.