

The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

*As always, thanks to Nick Must and Garrick Alder
for editorial help with Lobster.*

Unbecoming American

Dr T. P. Wilkinson wrote a dozen or so striking essays for *Lobster*. Some of them are included in a collection of his essays, *Unbecoming American: A War Memoir*, available from Amazon.¹ About the collection he writes:

The context of these essays, the cultural history of the United States, is also one of a country that has been at war for most of its history. This is a war memoir, but one written by a non-combatant. Based on more than forty years of travel, work, and scholarship, this book is a reflection on what it has meant to be intimately connected to the 'front' and yet neither armed nor a helpless refugee. Eschewing the ambulance chasing of contemporary journalism and popular history, this is an attempt to synthesize a perspective in which the entire duration of the US as nation-state forms the time frame for examining everyday life, culture, art, politics, economics and the imagination in which past, present and future are enveloped.

Notes from the Borderland

Rummaging through the 40 years of paper I have accumulated, I came across some old copies of Larry O'Hara's magazine *Notes from the Borderland*. 'Wonder what happened to that?', I thought. And, blow me, a few days later a new edition arrived, issue 12. This is 64 A4 pages, with lots of photographs and reproductions of newspaper cuttings, leaflets etc. on the British far right. Half of those 64 pages are taken up with O'Hara's 'A modern witch-finder

¹ <<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0D2TCL5PS>>

general? Matthew Feldman and the National Action trials'. This is the first *sentence* of the introduction to that essay:

Emeritus Professor Matthew Feldman (formerly Director of the now vanished Centre for Analysis of the Radical right: CARR) captured my attention because, with more than a passing interest in post-war British fascism (my PhD subject the National Front 1986-90 and I have analysed Neo-Nazi group Combat 18), I was perturbed at the variable quality of his expert academic testimony in the now concluded trials involving both members/alleged members of the Neo-Nazi group National Action (NA) (proscribed in December 2016) and off-shoots such as the FeuerKreig/SonnenKreig Divisions (FKD/SKD).

O'Hara needs an editor and a proofreader and But I said all that in my comments on issue 11.² In the 7 or 8 years between issues 11 and 12, *Notes from the Borderland* has changed not one jot. But have a look at the website <www.borderland.co.uk>. It's rather good. The pity is that whoever is doing the website isn't producing the hard copy magazine.

Back to paper? (as if)

At the IT Governance blog on 2 May, one Neil Ford reported that there had been '9,478 publicly disclosed incidents' of cyber intrusion thus far in 2024, resulting in '35,900,145,035 known records breached'.³

NuLab old and new

The new vision

To state that Keir Starmer wrote an article for the *Daily Telegraph* in December last year presumes that he writes his own material; and the chances are good that he doesn't. Leaders of major parties are usually too busy for such chores, especially in the final few months before a general election. So let's just say his name was on an article in the *Telegraph*, near the beginning of which was this striking paragraph.

Every moment of meaningful change in modern British politics begins

² I made similar comments about the previous edition in *Lobster* 73 under subhead **Notes from the Borderland** at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/View-from-Lob-73.pdf>>.

³ <<https://www.itgovernance.co.uk/blog/global-data-breaches-and-cyber-attacks-in-2024>>

with the realisation that politics must act in service of the British people, rather than dictating to them. Margaret Thatcher sought to drag Britain out of its stupor by setting loose our natural entrepreneurialism. Tony Blair reimagined a stale, outdated Labour Party into one that could seize the optimism of the late 90s. A century ago, Clement Attlee wrote that Labour must be a party of duty and patriotism, not abstract theory. To build a 'New Jerusalem' meant first casting off the mind-forged manacles. That lesson is as true today as it was then.

The historian David Edgerton⁴ commented:

Starmers suggests Attlee and Blair's strengths were their submission to duty and patriotism, and the fact that they both changed Labour. Attlee rejected abstract theory (presumably meaning socialism), and Blair a stale, outdated Labour Party (presumably meaning Attlee's).

However, he continues:

Far from unleashing natural British entrepreneurialism, this has been a period characterised by historically slow emergence of significant British firms, and of a historically unprecedented entry of foreign capital (and entrepreneurialism) into nearly all parts of the British economy. Since Thatcher, there has been a high negative balance of payments paid for by capital flows into the country, and much higher inequalities in income and wealth and between regions than in the 1970s. The past 40 years have seen a politics of redistribution to the top, to London and to wealth.⁵

Which is true, but could be put more plainly. It is now 45 years since the arrival of PM Thatcher and the free market nonsense. In that time, the UK has been in continuous relative economic decline (when measured by GDP per head) from around 10th to 25th? 27th? on the world list. Are the Stormtroopers unaware of this? Or merely unwilling to mention it?

Foreign policy

As I write this, it looks likely that Labour will win the general election. In that event, David Lammy will probably be Foreign Secretary. He gave us a glimpse

⁴ <<https://www.davidedgerton.org/>>

⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/buPW5>> or <<https://www.redpepper.org.uk/political-parties-and-ideologies/labour-party/keir-starmers-bad-history/>>
Simon Matthews spotted this.

into what that might look like in an essay he wrote for *Foreign Affairs*, 'The Case for Progressive Realism'.⁶ (Now there's a catchy little phrase!) It apparently means this:

Progressive realism advocates using realist means to pursue progressive ends. For the British government, that requires tough-minded honesty about the United Kingdom, the balance of power, and the state of the world. But instead of using the logic of realism solely to accumulate power, progressive realism uses it in service of just goals—for example, countering climate change, defending democracy, and advancing the world's economic development. It is the pursuit of ideals without delusions about what is achievable.

So far, so much well-meaning guff. But there is some meat here, too.

. . . the United Kingdom must seek a new geopolitical partnership with the EU. The centerpiece of this relationship should be a security pact that drives closer coordination across a wide variety of military, economic, climate, health, cyber, and energy security issues—and that complements both parties' unshakable commitment to NATO, which will remain the foremost vehicle for European security. The United Kingdom should also double down on its close relationships with France, Germany, Ireland, and Poland. It should, for example, pursue a British-German defense agreement to go along with the similar Lancaster House treaties it signed with France in 2010.

'closer coordination across a wide variety of military, economic, climate, health, cyber, and energy security issues' – this is a proposal to rejoin the EU without actually saying so.

The original NuLab

I noticed recently that just after the election of the original NuLab, in 1997, I commented that Labour was led by three 'not very bright Thatcherites'.⁷ One of them, Gordon Brown, is still talking about poverty here without betraying the slightest awareness that he had any role in this country's economic decline.⁸

⁶ <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-kingdom/case-progressive-realism-david-lammy>>

⁷ <<https://shorturl.at/P7vJv>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/34/back-to-the-future-the-1970s-reconsidered/>>. Peter Mandelson was Thatcherite number 3.

⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/an2Vx>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/may/14/british-children-poverty-tories-gordon-brown>>

Hey Gordon, you were in charge of economic policy for 13 years as Chancellor and then Prime Minister.

Say what?

Tom McTague is the political editor of unherd.com.⁹ Recently he wrote a profile of Morgan McSweeney, the Labour Party's campaign director.¹⁰ In that there is not a word about the Israel lobby money which has been supporting McSweeney's pressure group within Labour, Labour Together.¹¹ Not so much unherd as unsayable, apparently.

Spycops

The spycops inquiry – formally the Undercover Policing Inquiry – is still going, providing lots of well paid, easy work for another bunch of British lawyers. There are now thousands of documents to read on-line. I began on the oldest and quickly came across a 1968 report, 'Penetration of extremist groups', by one Chief Inspector Conrad Dixon,¹² a guide for new recruits to the so-called Special Demonstration Squad on how to infiltrate the left. On the fourth page is this:

The incompetence of the British left is notorious, and officers must take care not to get into a position where they achieve prominence in an organisation through natural ability.

Dixon did not explain why, if the British left is so incompetent, it was necessary to penetrate it.

What could possibly go wrong?

While it's true that there is still no absolute proof that the covid outbreak began at the Wuhan lab, can it just be a weird coincidence that the source of the outbreak and the research lab were both in the same city? The reluctance

⁹ I quote him below under subhead **Broken-down Blighty**.

¹⁰ <<https://unherd.com/2024/05/the-mcsweeney-project/>>

¹¹ Discussed below under subhead The invaluable *Declassified* noted in late May that '126 of the Tory party's 344 MPs have accepted funding from pro-Israel lobby groups'. <<https://www.declassifieduk.org/>>

¹² <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MPS_0724119.pdf>

of the western military to acknowledge this most obvious hypothesis isn't hard to fathom. Both the USA and the UK have a long history of experimenting with biological weapons themselves. This goes all the way back to at least 1763, when British soldiers deliberately gave American Indian tribal representatives a number of blankets that were doused with the smallpox virus.¹³ And the leading centres for research into weaponised pathogens – with decades of experience – are, of course, Fort Detrick in the US and Porton Down in the UK. The collective desire of NATO to remain distinctly mute on this has been recently exploited by Russia, who accused the US of having 'labs across Ukraine . . . secretly developing biological weapons'.¹⁴

Encounter

Lobster readers are probably familiar with the story of how the CIA secretly funded *Encounter* magazine, a publication that promoted the Gaitskelite wing of the Labour Party. Less well known is the fact that there was other, also covert, funding for *Encounter* which came from the British Foreign Office. Then, in 1963 – and for reasons which are unclear – the *Daily Telegraph* exposed the secret funding but, after being leaned on, almost immediately withdrew the story.¹⁵

The beast from the East

I was reading a recent piece on *Consortiumnews* by Patrick Lawrence, 'Russia's Turn From the West', in which he discusses the growing Russia-China Axis.¹⁶

The 5,000-word charter Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping made public two years ago next month, the 'Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development', can be understood now as what your columnist called it at the time: the most important political document to be issued so far in the 21st century.

¹³ <<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/weapon-timeline>>

¹⁴ The accusation seems to be false. But what does the truth actually matter in an era of information warfare, when the first strike is the most memorable? See <<https://shorturl.at/wzGV5>> or <<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/22/1087991730/russia-claims-u-s-labs-across-ukraine-are-secretly-developing-biological-weapons>>.

¹⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/nQX78>> or <<https://www.declassifieduk.org/uk-intelligence-secretly-funded-leftist-magazine-then-covered-it-up/>>

¹⁶ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2024/01/22/patrick-lawrence-russias-turn-from-the-west/>>

On the same day, there was a little piece in *The Times* referring to a fleet of large Chinese fishing boats hoovering up the krill in the Antarctic. This is part of the wider concern that China, having polluted the seas off its coast for hundreds of miles making cheap goods for us all,¹⁷ is slowly stripping the world's oceans of their fish.¹⁸

Truly, the world has changed

I got this message recently.

Hi Robin,

You recently downloaded "Intelligence Analysts Vs. The Bush Administration." 84,555 papers on Academia discuss "Intelligence Gathering and Counter-Intelligence."

[View 84,555 papers ▶](#)

84,555 papers! When *Lobster* began there were none.

Briefly

There is a devastating account by Chris Hedges of the current internal workings of the *New York Times*.¹⁹ Former NYT journalist Hedges looks back on the *Times* in his day, 20 years ago, and compares it to today's timid version. This may all be true but let's not get too nostalgic about the good old days at the *Times*. It never seriously challenged the American empire, and it flunked the assassinations of the sixties at the time and refuses to take the assassination research seriously.

Dr. Roger Cottrell is a kind of *Lobster* fellow-traveller, as a search for his name on this site will show. He now has a 'substack' with some of his recent writing

¹⁷ See – one of dozens, if not hundreds – <<https://shorturl.at/AZ289>> or <<https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/the-looming-environmental-catastrophe-in-the-south-china-sea/>>.

¹⁸ See, for example, <<https://shorturl.at/cQZ68>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/26/world/asia/china-fishing-south-america.html>> and <<https://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2023/fishing-rights/>>.

¹⁹ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2024/04/17/chris-hedges-requiem-for-the-nyt/>>

on it.²⁰

T. J. Coles wrote a couple of pieces for *Lobster* but took his bat home when I criticised his *Manufacturing Terrorism* book in *Lobster* 77. Nonetheless, please note that he has a new book about the death of the Labour MP Bob Cryer: *Killing Cryer: The Life and Mysterious Death of a British MP Who Exposed America's Secret Spy Base*.²¹

Who's zooming who?

It sure is getting complex out there where the interests of global corporations and states meet the internet. Trying to protect their brands from association with people who might reduce sales by offending this group or that, western corporations began subscribing to the services of organisations which claimed to be able to detect purveyors and amplifiers of disinformation. NewsGuard was the one I noticed first when *ConsortiumNews* reported that it had run foul of the organisation's disinformation detectors.²² Since when other commercial organisations have joined the lucrative game of brand defence and purification.

Just behind the corporations came states, several of which (including the UK) are funding the Global Disinformation Index. But GDI is now seriously misnamed. It may have begun with a focus on disinformation, but it is now much wider than that. Here's their pitch.

How We Define Disinformation

Identifying disinformation is a complex and nuanced process that goes beyond fact checking. Disinformation, as we use the term, does not denote information about which reasonable parties may disagree, such as varying political views. Instead, we use the word to refer to deliberately misleading information, knowingly spread, or the omission of certain facts in service of a particular narrative.

So far, you might think, not so bad – although the 'omission of certain facts in service of a narrative' is surely something we all do, consciously or not. But that was just the starter. The main course is something else.

²⁰ <<https://rogercottrell.substack.com/>>

²¹ <<https://shorturl.at/gsRX5>> or <https://www.amazon.com.au/Killing-Cryer-Mysterious-British-Americas/dp/B0D1KK9YKY?source=ps-sl-shoppingads-lpcontext&ref_=fplfs&psc=1&smid=ANEGB3WVEVKZB>

²² See under subhead **NewsGuard** at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/lob84-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>>.

GDI views disinformation through the lens of adversarial narrative conflict.²³ Adversarial narratives share common characteristics: They have the intent to mislead; They are financially or geopolitically motivated; They aim to foster long-term social, political or economic conflict; They create a risk of harm to at-risk individuals, groups or institutions.

“At-risk groups” range from immigrants, to protected classes like women, persecuted minorities, people of colour, the LGBTQ+ community, children etc. “Institutions” goes beyond institutions themselves to also include the current scientific or medical consensus on topics such as climate change or vaccines, as well as democratic processes like voting laws or the judicial system. The harm caused by disinformation is wide ranging, from risks of financial damage to violence, illness and even death.²⁴

This is bonkers. At best, it is well-intentioned nonsense. At worst, it is something totalitarian regimes around the world would approve of and use with only minor changes to the categories.²⁵

I looked at GDI because unherd.com fell foul of them and were put on the organisation’s list of places advertisers should not use. *Unherd’s* Freddy Sayers commented:

They [GDI] provided examples of the offending content: Kathleen Stock, whose columns are up for a National Press Award this week, Julie Bindel, a lifelong campaigner against violence against women, and Debbie Hayton, who is transgender. Apparently the GDI equates ‘gender-critical’ beliefs, or maintaining that biological sex differences exist, with ‘disinformation’ — despite the fact that those beliefs are specifically protected in British law and held by the majority of the population.²⁶

GDI is the perfect expression of what John Gray recently described:

Suspending freedom of expression for the sake of liberal values may

²³ <<https://shorturl.at/gDJ35>> and <<https://www.disinformationindex.org/research/2019-4-1-adversarial-narratives-a-new-model-for-disinformation/>>

²⁴ <<https://www.disinformationindex.org/mission/>>

²⁵ The radical right in the USA has spotted it. See ‘Disinformation Inc: State Department bankrolls group secretly blacklisting conservative media’ at <<https://shorturl.at/cFQTV>> or <<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/finance/2773271/disinformation-inc-state-department-bankrolls-group-secretly-blacklisting-conservative-media/>>.

²⁶ <<https://unherd.com/2024/04/inside-the-disinformation-industry/>>

seem a paradox, but it is not illogical. For latter-day hyper-liberals, free speech is useful only so long as it advances a progressive project. Confronted by criticism, they respond by trying to suppress debate. An ever-widening category of 'hate speech' is deployed against any discourse deemed offensive or a risk to public safety.²⁷

Gladio in the movies

Below, under subhead **Briefly**, the question of the portrayal of the Gladio network in film is briefly touched on. In response to that, Simon Matthews sent this.

A 1979 UK film known variously as *The Great Riviera Bank Robbery*,²⁸ *Dirty Money* or *Sewers of Gold*, is about 'the Catena, a loose alliance of political units in various countries'. They are ultra-right and protected by the legitimate state. In this instance they raise money by carrying out a bank robbery, and the film is basically a heist movie about how they do this with the co-operation of local criminals.

It was filmed in the summer of 1978 and starred Ian McShane as 'the brain', the leader of a local Catena unit, who explains that he operates purely for ideological reasons because 'right now the left are on the march all over Europe' and 'whatever the left can do, we can do better'.

Sounds like Gladio to me.

It was directed by Francis Megahy whose other work included *Death of an Informer* (TV, 1976) and *The Best Government Money Can Buy*, a 2009 documentary about US politics.

As *Sewers of Gold*, it can be watched for free on YouTube.

Broken-down Blightly

The penny is dropping about the terrible position the UK is in. Tom McTague wrote recently:²⁹

The staggering scale of our problems was revealed yesterday in Jeremy Hunt's thoroughly depressing budget statement. Despite heavy doses of

²⁷ <<https://shorturl.at/lmHIO>> or <<https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2024/04/biggest-threat-freedom-west-liberalism-itself-john-gray>>

²⁸ For more details see <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0079238/>>.

²⁹ 'Welcome to stagnation nation: Our Government has no money — and no strategy', <<https://unherd.com/2024/03/welcome-to-the-stagnation-nation/>>.

magical thinking to make his sums add up, the grim reality of the budget, buried in the small print, is that we are getting poorer and more vulnerable.

. . . taxes as a share of GDP will rise to 37.1% in 2028-29, four points up on what they were before the pandemic. But spending will fall 'steadily' as a share of GDP from 44.5% this year to 42.5% in 2028-29. All the while, national debt will rise. Put bluntly, the size of our debt — and the scale of the interest we are paying on it — means we are now much poorer than we used to be. And this is before we consider the economic burden caused by our ageing population and the crisis in Ukraine leeching more money for defence.

In the *London Review of Books*, James Butler wrote something similar.

The miserable state of public services will require higher tax and spending commitments from whoever occupies Number 11 after the next election. Hunt's detachment from the catastrophe in local government is symptomatic of an odd doubleness that afflicts British politics, a refusal to acknowledge the yawning gap between the country as it actually is and as it is represented in Westminster.³⁰

If Butler and McTeague are political commentators, Libby Purves is not. *Times* columnist, BBC presenter for many years, Purves is the personification of the middle-of-the-road, mainstream, apolitical (but conservative) journalist.³¹ But things are now so bad even Purves was moved to write that the privatisation of public services has been a disaster³² – something the current leaders of Labour Party dare not say – even if they think it; and there is no evidence that they do.

There isn't anything too complex here. Everything done since 1979 has been a mistake for most of the UK. Obviously not for those for whom the policies of 'Thatcherism' were crafted: the City of London and the top 10% or so who have benefitted from asset-stripping the state. But the poor, many of the elderly and the sick – say 10 million people – are either in the mire or heading there. This cannot be acknowledged by the major parties.

Butler refers to the

. . . pervasive lie about whether it is possible to run an advanced society, preserving its past achievements in the eradication of misery,

³⁰ <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v46/n06/james-butler/short-cuts>>

³¹ Her articles are listed at <<https://muckrack.com/libby-purves/articles>>.

³² In her 'Our privatised utilities are a busted flush', *The Times* 1 April 2024.

disease and destitution, by failing to spend any money on it. It isn't quite that the government believes that voters are too stupid to notice the gap between description and reality, but that the reality is so bad that nobody wants to face it

Reality eventually bites. Political bills come due. Fourteen years of wilful decline and stagnation can be laid against the Conservative Party. But greater bills are coming due. Failure to acknowledge the problems everyone sees around them – councils pawning the family silver, crisis-only services in health and care, crumbling buildings, unattainable housing, dead wage growth, a frayed public realm – fuels Britain's disdain for politicians. Its most pernicious consequence may be the deep sense that nothing can be done differently, that things – in a reversal of the Blairite anthem – can never get better. It would be a good time for politicians to get real.

But politicians can't 'get real' just yet. No mainstream British politician is willing to say that Britain is run down because (a) the Thatcher and New Labour administrations abandoned the manufacturing sector of the economy, and (b) the prosperous haven't paid enough taxes for 40 years. For a while longer our politicians will continue to pretend to the electorate that they, rather than their opponents, can solve the problems by tweaking this or that. But eventually the current mutual deception will end.

The traditional British response to a crisis – and this is a really big crisis – is to abandon party politics and form coalition governments to do unpopular things. The interesting questions now are how long it will take before the crisis is acknowledged? And who will be first to suggest a coalition?

Enoch Powell

In this column in *Lobster* 84 I mentioned a series of articles on the website of the Irish magazine *Village* describing an Anglo-Irish paedophile network in the 1960s and 70s.³³ I commented then that, although fascinating, this does not have enough reliable sourcing for many of its claims.

With the resignation of Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, *Village* has returned to this theme.³⁴ It has

³³ <<https://villagemagazine.ie/https-villagemagazine-ie-anglo-irish-vice-ring-online-book/>>

³⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/vzLP9>> or <<https://villagemagazine.ie/the-mentor-of-sir-jeffrey-donaldson-the-new-leader-of-the-dup-was-a-racist-and-a-paedophile-with-deranged-views-about-the-intelligence-of-women/>>

Simon Matthews spotted this.

reproduced a 2021 article it ran about Donaldson and his mentor Enoch Powell. Powell, the article claims, was gay when a young man. This is reasonably well documented in the essay. Then we are offered the memories of former Kincora inmate, Richard Kerr. He tells us he was abused by Powell in a guesthouse and later at the Europa Hotel in Belfast. Enoch Powell was one of the most readily identifiable figures in British politics at the time (1977) and the last place in the world he would use to have sex with a young man would be the Europa Hotel in Belfast, where the world's media, reporting on 'the Troubles', went to socialise. Simon Matthews also pointed out to me that Kerr claims he was given 'half a crown' after Powell was finished with him. The half crown piece ceased to be legal tender seven years before, in January 1970.

Havana Syndrome

Remember Havana Syndrome? The reports of American foreign service officials apparently having their brains assaulted by some kind of beam weapon? On 16 March this year the headline in the *Scientific American* was 'People with "Havana Syndrome" Show No Brain Damage or Medical Illness'. The report said:

The abrupt onset of these symptoms led to years of debate among scientists and those affected about possible causes, which ranged from pesticides to group psychology to noise from crickets. Now two medical studies that were conducted by the National Institutes of Health and released on Monday morning might finally have an answer. The researchers compared more than 80 of these affected individuals with similar healthy people. The results, detailed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, show no clinical signs or brain image indications to explain those widely varied symptoms. The *JAMA* findings follow the 2023 release of an intelligence community assessment that found that the injuries were not the result of foreign attacks.

More likely, the assessment suggested, they were tied to previous injuries, stress, environmental concerns and 'social factors' such as group psychology, in which illness symptoms reported by one individual in a community can spread serially among its members. Such outbreaks have been seen everywhere from hiccupping in high schools to repetition strain cases among Australian typists in the 1980s.³⁵

³⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/aqz01>> or <<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/people-with-havana-syndrome-show-no-brain-damage-or-medical-illness/>>

Less than a month later we have 'Unraveling Havana Syndrome: New evidence links the GRU's assassination Unit 29155 to mysterious attacks on U.S. officials and their families'.³⁶ This is the introductory paragraph.

A year long investigation by *The Insider*, in collaboration with 60 Minutes and *Der Spiegel*, has uncovered evidence suggesting that unexplained anomalous health incidents, also known as Havana Syndrome, *may* have their origin in the use of directed energy weapons wielded by members of Russian GRU Unit 29155. Members of the Kremlin's infamous military intelligence sabotage squad have been placed at the scene of suspected attacks on overseas U.S. government personnel and their family members, leading victims to question what Washington knows about the origins of Havana Syndrome, and what an appropriate Western response might entail. (emphasis added)

The use of 'may' in the third line of that paragraph is striking. What they offer is much closer to 'almost certainly is' than it is to 'may'. The incidents began in 2014, coincidentally or not, after the US supported the overthrow of Russia-supported President Yanukovich in Ukraine. But the phenomenon really came to attention in 2017:

. . . in connection with strange ailments affecting more than twenty CIA and State Department officials posted to Cuba in the wake of revived diplomatic relations between the Obama administration and the government headed by Fidel Castro's brother Raúl. The cases were recorded in Havana between May 2016 and September 2017, when the Trump administration radically reduced the State Department's presence on the Caribbean island and the CIA withdrew all of its personnel from the reopened U.S. Embassy there. But few in the intelligence community believed the Cubans were behind the phenomenon. Given Moscow's outsized influence on the Communist-run nation, the prevailing theory was that the Russians had carried out the attacks as part of an effort to hamper the U.S.-Cuban rapprochement.

The Insider's research shows that the Russians have been experimenting with beam weapons – this is presumed to be microwaves, rather than sound – and members of the GRU's Unit 29155 have been identified as being in the area of one or two of the incidents, though not with a visible electronic device. What has not been established is that the microwave weapons technology has been scaled down sufficiently to be used and concealed without being spotted in the 100+ incidents which have been reported.

³⁶ *The Insider* at <<https://theins.press/en/politics/270425>>.

And there is one of the obvious difficulties with the theory: given how much of life is now filmed, can the Russians really have escaped being detected attacking US officials over 100 times? (Unit 29155 is the people who were filmed travelling to and from Salisbury en route to attack the Skripals.³⁷)

Why has nothing been said or done by the US authorities? The obvious answer is that there isn't conclusive evidence of Russian involvement yet. However:

A consensus has formed among the growing community of AHI [anomalous health incidents] sufferers that the U.S. government — and the CIA in particular — is hiding the full extent of what it knows about the source of Havana Syndrome. The victims offer two general hypotheses as to why. The first is that releasing the full intelligence around Russian involvement might be so shocking as to convince the American people and their representatives that Moscow has committed an act of war against the United States, thereby raising thorny questions as to how a nuclear power fond of showing off its hypersonic missiles ought to be made to pay. The second is that acknowledging Havana Syndrome is caused by a foreign adversary could put a damper on recruitment to the CIA and State Department. After all, how many Americans would be willing to serve their country overseas in the full knowledge that their next load of laundry or morning jaunt to the embassy could result in permanent physical and mental ailments?

So take your pick: it's nothing or something very serious indeed. If it is Russian operations, my guess would be that the US will produce similar devices and begin attacking Russian officials overseas. Both sides might then stop using them.

More JFK nonsense

History Extra is a BBC website. In early February it put up Danny Bird's 'Who was behind JFK's assassination? The real history that challenges the conspiracy',³⁸ as a come-on for a podcast on the case with Gerald Posner, whose *Case Closed*, over 20 years ago, was the last book which supported the Warren Commission.

³⁷ There is a discussion of problems with the story at <<https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=39889517>>.

³⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/jtGM5>> or <<https://www.historyextra.com/period/20th-century/who-killed-jfk-real-history-conspiracy/>>

You can see why the piece was written. In the current climate, awash as we are with stupid conspiracy theories, if you knew nothing about the Dallas events, it could seem a good wheeze to debunk conspiracy theories about the JFK killing. And so Danny Bird, the author of the piece, duly crams both feet into his well-educated mouth.³⁹

There are two points here. The big one is that the CIA's 1967 operation to dismiss the Warren Commission critics as conspiracy theorists was a triumph: more than half a century later it is still working. The small one concerns the revelation late last year by former Secret Service officer Paul Landis that he found the 'magic bullet' in the presidential limousine *behind* JFK's body, and thus the Warren Commission verdict must be wrong. This got a lot of attention for a day or two but has had no lasting impact.⁴⁰ Landis didn't make it into Mr Bird's account.

The miners' strike

Interesting piece by ex *New York Times* reporter Joe Lauria at *Consortiumnews* on the 40th anniversary commemoration of the miners' strike.⁴¹ But there are two serious omissions in it. Lauria presents the assault on the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as being essentially about economic ideas: the clash between the 'new' (but old, pre-WW2) free market ideas of the City/Thatcher faction, and the 'old' (but post-WW2) ideas of the welfare state and social democracy. Lauria's first omission is the substantial political underpinning to the government's assault on the NUM. For the previous 20 years or so a lobby of former and serving intelligence and security personnel had been asserting that there was a substantial Soviet threat to the UK in the form of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Laughable though this may have been to anyone who had contact with the CPGB,⁴² people like Mrs Thatcher believed that Arthur Scargill, though not a CPGB member, was part of 'the enemy within' – an agent of the Soviets. This idiocy climaxed with the murder of police sergeant John Speed in Leeds in a botched psy-op intended to blame

³⁹ Jefferson Morley takes this nonsense apart in great detail at <<https://jfkfacts.substack.com/p/bbc-on-jfk-a-journalistic-failure?>>.

⁴⁰ Landis is discussed below under subhead **Dallas again**. And see, for example, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-66792977>>.

⁴¹ <<https://consortiumnews.com/2024/03/14/the-legacy-of-thatchers-war-on-the-miners/>>

⁴² And this included MI5 who had 100% penetration of the Party.

striking miners for his shooting.⁴³

As soon as Conservative MP Nicholas Ridley's 1977 plan to fight the miners on the government's terms, the so-called Ridley Plan for Coal, was rediscovered a few weeks into the strike,⁴⁴ it was obvious that the miners would lose. They would not defeat the British state.⁴⁵ This was clear to the rest of the British labour movement's leaders and, in part, explains the reluctant support for the NUM by the TUC, most individual member unions and the Labour Party. The Ridley Plan is Lauria's second omission.

Getting Corbyn

The campaign to destroy Jeremy Corbyn has been described in this journal in some detail.⁴⁶ Both of the articles cited in note 47 below concentrated on the work of the Israel lobby against him. Published in 2022 is another study of the subject which focuses on the campaign against Corbyn by non-Israel lobby forces. In their 'Anatomy of a Propaganda Campaign: Jeremy Corbyn's Political Assassination', Florian Zollman and T. J. Coles⁴⁷ describe in great detail the campaign in the British media against Corbyn by the MoD-NATO *et al* in the context of the history of previous ops against Labour leaders.

Ukraine

Reading Craig Murray's blog post 'Rethinking Ukraine: Putin and the Mystery of National Identity',⁴⁸ I noticed this:

⁴³ See 'The British Gladio and the murder of Sergeant Speed' at <<https://tinyurl.com/3sfkmp59>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/81/the-british-gladio-and-the-murder-of-sergeant-speed/>>.

⁴⁴ It had been leaked in 1977 but had been forgotten. See <<https://www.margarethatcher.org/document/110795>>.

⁴⁵ My support for the strike ended when I read Ridley's plan.

⁴⁶ See, for example, John Booth's piece in 2017 at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/74/labour-corbyn-and-anti-semitism/>> and my review of the Winstanley book in 2023 at <<https://shorturl.at/uBDQ1>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/86/weaponising-anti-semitism-how-the-israel-lobby-brought-down-jeremy-corbyn/>>.

⁴⁷ <<https://shorturl.at/fjvFV>> or <<https://monthlyreview.org/2022/02/01/anatomy-of-a-propaganda-campaign-jeremy-corbyns-political-assassination/>>

⁴⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/cgmW9>> or <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2024/02/putin-history-and-the-mystery-of-national-identity/>>

It is not that any of the arguments are new. It is simply that before I did not believe that the West would sponsor mass ethnic cleansing and genocidal attack on the Donbass by extreme Ukrainian nationalist-led, Western-armed forces.

Oh really? '[M]ass ethnic cleansing and genocidal attack on the Donbass'? So I googled ethnic cleansing in the Donbass and yes, there are reports of these kinds of atrocities, but they all come from Russian sources. And the price the Russian state pays for its torrent of disinformation is that nothing it says is believable. So: until Murray (or someone else) offers a reliable source, I think he's fallen for Russian disinformation.

Joining the dots . . .

I received an email from Kit Klarenberg, who is mentioned below in the column. Klarenberg is a prolific writer on British and US intelligence operations and politics. He took exception to my describing the British government's Institute for Statecraft (and the Integrity Initiative which it created) as an attempt 'to try and combat Russian disinformation'. 'Nonsense', wrote Klarenberg. 'IFS/II was a NATO/MI6 front organisation concerned with starting war with Russia.'

Well no, actually, it wasn't. Begun in 2015, apparently as a response to the Russian annexing of the Crimea and all that implied about the future geopolitics of Europe, the Integrity Initiative (II) was an attempt to more or less recreate the Information Research Department (IRD), the state propaganda outfit, which was closed in 1977.⁴⁹ Funded by the Foreign Office, the Integrity Initiative created a network of sympathetic journalists and intellectuals – clusters, it called them – across Europe. Its formal aim was to combat what it perceived as Russian influence and disinformation. But – like IRD – it also ran offensive operations against people it didn't approve of. In one of his essays Klarenberg says an II 'cluster' in Spain apparently prevented the appointment to the Spanish government of someone who was deemed to be insufficiently anti-Russian. As a by-product of this operation, Julian Assange was falsely portrayed as a pro-Russian activist in the information war going on in Spain. This was the excuse needed for pressure to be exerted across the Hispanic world to get Assange out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where

⁴⁹ The Integrity Initiative was hacked – presumably by Russia – and its files leaked. There is a long, detailed account of those files at <http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>.

he had claimed asylum.⁵⁰

Klarenberg writes regularly for *The Grayzone* which is anti-American, anti-Israeli and pro-Russian. *The Grayzone's* founder/editor, Max Blumenthal – yes, the son of Sidney – attended the tenth anniversary celebration of *Russia Today*. Also present was one Vladimir Putin.⁵¹ Blumenthal's transition from being anti-American imperialism to where he is today appears to be unexplained.⁵²

Ben Norton was *Grayzone's* assistant editor. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of geopoliticaconomy.com, where there is content and orientation similar to that found on *Grayzone*. On one page⁵³ there is even a link to the communication app Telegram, which is allowed to operate in Russia and is monitored by the Russian authorities.⁵⁴

The Grayzone goes to striking lengths to exculpate Russia from criticism. After the attempted murder of Alexei Navalny by the Russian state, it had an article headlined 'Navalny poisoning: CIA, MI6, "discredited" state-funded Bellingcat play key role in accusing Russia'.⁵⁵

JFK's assassination, the death of a hack and . . . the *Reader's Digest* and the CIA

The death of Edward Jay Epstein was announced in January. Epstein meant two things to me. The first was his 1966 book *Inquest*, which raised doubts about the Warren Commission. The second was his 1978 book *Legend*, reaffirming the Warren Commission verdict. The timing of *Legend* is interesting. Jim DiEugenio commented in his piece on Epstein's death:⁵⁶

With the Church Committee exposing the crimes of the CIA, and issuing

⁵⁰ <<https://www.kitklarenberg.com/p/how-british-intelligence-framed-julian-088>>

⁵¹ <<https://prospect.org/politics/my-adventures-with-rt-putin-russia/>>

⁵² See, for example, <<https://shorturl.at/dejD9>> or <<https://ms.detector.media/trendi/post/30269/2022-09-16-dossier-in-the-grey-zone-how-did-an-american-journalist-turn-into-a-pro-russian-propagandist/>>

⁵³ <<https://geopoliticaconomy.com/2023/12/03/west-sabotaged-ukraine-peace-russia/>>

⁵⁴ <<https://news.yahoo.com/yaroslav-azhnyuk-why-doesnt-ukraine-145841286.html>>

⁵⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/jlnV8>> or <<https://thegrayzone.com/2020/12/27/navalny-poisoning-cia-mi6-discredited-state-funded-bellingcat-play-key-role-in-accusing-russia/>>

⁵⁶ <<https://shorturl.at/kpquZ>> or <<https://www.kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/edward-epstein-the-critic-who-flipped>>

a report showing how poorly the FBI had investigated the case, there was movement to reopen the Kennedy case. Clearly an establishment lion like the *Reader's Digest* would want to get a jump on such a reopening. Knowing what they wanted, they called in Epstein to do a full scale biography of Lee Oswald. Ken Gilmore, a managing editor there, contacted the FBI and told them the book would put to rest recurring myths surrounding the Kennedy assassination. Gilmore requested that the Bureau allow Epstein to access their files on the case. Epstein did visit the FBI offices at their invitation. (Op. cit. *Probe*, pp. 15-16)

John Barron, a senior editor, was also friendly with the CIA. Therefore, the Agency did something remarkable, they gave Epstein access to Soviet defector Yuri Nosenko. They also told him he would have access to the tapes made at the Mexico City station of Oswald at the Soviet and Cuban embassies. (ibid)

But the *Reader's Digest* was rather more than just an 'establishment lion'. It has been shown to have had a relationship with the CIA.⁵⁷ I think the Agency and the FBI were hoping to preempt/distract from the anticipated report of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which was sitting while *Legend* was being researched and written.

With the *Digest's* money, Epstein hired a small bus-load of researchers and did his best to show that the Warren Commission verdict was right: Oswald did the shooting. On top of which, despite the CIA's input, he tried to persuade the reader that the KGB were (somehow) involved. The strange thing about the book is that, despite a large team of researchers and the enormous resources of the *Reader's Digest*, Epstein produced a shoddy piece of work with obvious errors in it. Even the *Washington Post* reviewer spotted this.⁵⁸ I wrote this in *Lobster 2*:

Epstein has two problems. First there is not a shred of real evidence that Oswald was KGB. Second his thesis rests on the premise that Oswald, alone, shot Kennedy: for which there is no evidence; which Epstein knows to be false; and which Epstein's first book on the assassination, *Inquest* (1966) did much to undermine.

Epstein tries to conceal this latter difficulty by relegating his revised version of Oswald's role in the actual shooting to a brief section at the

⁵⁷ See Fred Landis, 'The CIA and the *Reader's Digest*' at p. 41 of <<https://shorturl.at/uwBE7>> or <<https://archive.org/details/CovertActionInformationBulletin29/page/n39/mode/2up?view=theater>>.

⁵⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/rINTU>> or <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1978/04/23/agents-assassins-and-moles/20915ac6-cfb3-436f-944b-56d3288bbb02/>>

back of the book. It is unbelievably sloppy. For example, in Section VI of Appendix A (this is in the UK paperback version), titled The Sequence of the Shots, Epstein tells us that:

'The Warren Commission . . . concluded that only two shots were fired accurately, the first striking the President in the back of the neck and passing through him to cause two wounds in Governor Connally; and the second exploding the President's head and fragmenting. (A third shot missed completely).'

Then, four lines later, he assures us that:

'from the path of the bullets delineated in the autopsy photographs and X-rays (and other collateral evidence) it can be concluded that Kennedy and Connally were hit by separate bullets and that a third bullet then hit Kennedy.'

But he has forgotten about the bullet that missed and, absurdly, in a few lines, commits himself to *four* shots, and demolishes his entire case. Did anyone actually proof-read *Legend*?

Legend showed us first, that Epstein was a hack, a writer literally for hire – though why *Reader's Digest* chose him from all those available to write the book is unknown; perhaps it was merely that he had some knowledge of the case. Second, *Legend* demonstrated what happens when a journalist starts dealing with intelligence agencies. DiEugenio describes the CIA offering Epstein KGB defector Nosenko, who had told the Agency after his defection that the KGB had taken no interest in Oswald. This was the message the CIA wanted broadcast, the original Warren Commission verdict: no KGB involvement and a deranged lone gunman.

But plans go awry, and Epstein came into the orbit of the CIA's former head of counterintelligence, James Angleton. At the time Angleton was in a long dispute with his ex-employer because he was convinced there was a mole in the Agency. (Angleton was convinced there were moles in pretty much every Western intelligence agency.) Angleton believed that Nosenko had been sent by the KGB to disinform the Agency. All this and a great deal more is in the wonderfully detailed piece about Epstein on Jim DiEugenio's website cited above.

*

Seeing the *Reader's Digest* mentioned by DiEugenio reminded me that I had referred to it in an earlier *Lobster*.⁵⁹ In the 70s and 80s the London

⁵⁹ In 'Spooks and hacks' in *Lobster* 34.

correspondent of the *Digest* was one David Moller. In *Lobster* 34 I suggested that he was probably CIA. He rang me up and sort of denied it. At the time I had no evidence, merely his presence at the foundation meetings of a group in the labour movement.⁶⁰ A report written by one of the group's members on its early activities stated that it had begun with funding from Common Cause, and listed Moller as among the people who had attended its first meetings. We now have good grounds for believing that Common Cause was, indeed, funded by the CIA.⁶¹ Further, one of the people involved in the early years of Common Cause, Peter Crane, was also a member of the board of the UK version of *Reader's Digest*. Even a cursory glance at the British edition of the *Digest* in the later 1970s showed a heavy input from the Atlanticist end of the British labour movement – Eric Hammond, Kate Losinska etc.⁶² Why would the London correspondent of the *Reader's Digest* attend the formation meetings of an obscure group on the fringe of the British trade union movement, if he was *not* working for the American state?⁶³

Paranoid?

I skimmed through John Ferris' 1995 paper 'Coming in from the Cold War: the historiography of American Intelligence, 1945-1990'.⁶⁴ On the second page he writes that '[o]ther writers have demonized American intelligence, assisted by a marvelously paranoid strain in popular entertainment.' As examples he cites, *inter alia*, Peter Dale Scott, Jonathan Marshall and the late William Blum. *Really?* Blum, Scott and Marshall are many things but popular and entertaining they ain't. Curiously, he also says of Marshall and Scott that they

have provided useful introductions to the topic of the relationship between postwar American intelligence and the international drug trade.

⁶⁰ The Trade Union Education Centre for Democratic Socialism.

⁶¹ See my 'The Clandestine Caucus: a minor update' in this issue.

⁶² On this network see David Osler's piece, 'New Labour, new Atlanticism', in *Lobster* 33.

⁶³ At <https://c59574e9047e61130f13-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/831021Ingham_mnt_READER'S_DIGEST_THCR_5-1-1E-45_part1_f187.pdf> – yes, I know the url looks odd, but it works, though it can't be shortened – is a 1983 memo from Margaret Thatcher's then press secretary, Bernard Ingham, advising her that she was going to be interviewed by the *Reader's Digest* Editor-in-Chief and his 'staff writer' David Moller.

⁶⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/pzSU5>> or <https://www.academia.edu/85731020/Coming_in_from_the_Cold_War_The_Historiography_of_American_Intelligence_1945_>

This literature is controversial: Much rubbish has been printed on this topic, and even more shown on the screen. Although [Alfred] McCoy and Scott and Marshall try to avoid sensationalism, their political views are clear, and details of their arguments may well be wrong. (p. 109)

Well hell, details of anyone's arguments 'may well be wrong'. That's almost praising with faint damns

Copy America and you get . . . America

And so to the Frank Hester story. Hester is the Conservative Party's largest donor, having recently given the Party £15 million.⁶⁵ Hester has been getting hundreds of millions of pounds worth of contracts from the NHS for his company. As its sole shareholder, his company paid him more than £20 million in dividends in 3 years.⁶⁶ So the American model of funding political parties has definitely arrived in Britain. Money from the state goes to companies via contracts. The companies return some of it to the political party in office as donations. In effect it is the state funding of political parties. This must have been happening since forever but, thanks to the Hester incident, it is in the open now.

Broken-down Blighty

We've had at least a century of essays and books bemoaning British decline. This a nicely surveyed in Andrew Gamble's 'Britain's eternal decline' in the *New Statesman* in September last year.⁶⁷ Gamble tells us that the *Daily Telegraph* (which I stopped reading when it went behind a paywall) regularly runs essays about 'the decline of Britain' but elsewhere, where is the political consciousness of this?

Aditya Chakraborty, is the *Guardian's* senior economics commentator. In 2022 he had an essay in the paper ⁶⁸ describing Britain as 'The sixth-richest

⁶⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/cyFOT>> or <<https://goodlawproject.org/winner-of-huge-public-contracts-becomes-tories-biggest-ever-donor/>>

⁶⁶ <<https://shorturl.at/jqyBH>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/sep/20/one-of-tories-biggest-ever-donors-frank-hester-profited-from-135m-of-nhs-contracts>>

⁶⁷ <<https://www.newstatesman.com/the-weekend-essay/2023/09/britain-eternal-decline>>

⁶⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/AFMPX>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/26/energy-bills-britons-afford-pay-price-hike-poor>>.

country in the world' in the first sentence. No it isn't, as anyone who travels to the EU countries sees as soon as they leave the airport or ferry terminal. Britain isn't actually even in the top ten; we're somewhere around 25th.⁶⁹ I have commented before on this delusory sense of Britain's relative position on the British left. In this column in *Lobster* 78 I noted that Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 manifesto described Britain as the fifth richest country in the world. At the micro level, in a recent by-election for the council seat where I live, the Socialist Party candidate's leaflet told us that 'Britain is the 6th richest country in the world'.

Looking back through old *Lobsters* I see that I began commenting on the UK's decline in issue 33, in 1997:

It is presumably not wholly coincidental that Britain's decline from 10th in the OECD 'league tables' of economic performance to its present 18th began in 1980 when the Conservative government scrapped all the remaining controls on overseas investment of British-generated wealth.

Is Doty dotty?

I have been slightly interested in the UFO phenomenon since the early 1970s. The subject leaked into these columns more than twenty years ago, when I began paddling in the murky pool of a US military operation to disinform some American UFO buffs.⁷⁰ That disinformation campaign climaxed with the production and distribution of the MJ-12 papers – a pretty sophisticated forgery.⁷¹ At the centre of this was Sergeant Richard Doty of the USAF's Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI). Fast forward to 2017 and the existence of US military film of UFOs began to leak into the major media;⁷² we have had a stream of such disclosures by military personnel ever since.

At the heart of the US campaign for official information on UFOs is Dr Steven Greer, who founded the Disclosure Project in 1993. In July 2016 Greer

⁶⁹ 27th at <<https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-per-capita/>>.

⁷⁰ 'Messing with the UFO-minded', a subsection of 'The disinformation hall of fame' in *Lobster* 40.

⁷¹ A photostat reproduction of the MJ-12 papers begins on page 17 of the PDF file at <<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/public/2021-06/40-654-209237723-046-002-2021.pdf>>. NB this is the collection of Ronald Reagan's presidential papers. Doty says that Reagan asked to be briefed on the UFO thing as soon as he became president.

⁷² See, for example, Brain Bender, 'The Pentagon's Secret Search for UFOs' from *Politico* in 2017 at <<https://shorturl.at/lwL29>> or <<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/16/pentagon-ufo-search-harry-reid-216111/>>.

filmed a two hour interview with Richard Doty. By then Doty had left the USAF, became a policeman in New Mexico, and retired. Doty also featured in a 2017 film made by Greer, *Unacknowledged*, and bits of that interview began to appear on the Net. The entire interview – with some visible editing – was posted on YouTube four years ago,⁷³ more or less in sync with the revelations by US pilots of their regular encounters with UFOs. It has had 2 million views. The fact that I only came across all of this recently is testament to how casual my interest in things UFO has been!

In the interview Doty recounts his knowledge of the US military's handling of UFOs and aliens: viz. yes, in the late 1940s there were crashed alien vehicles – two of them close to but not at Roswell, New Mexico, with dead bodies and one live extraterrestrial; and there has been continuous UFO activity ever since, especially around US military bases. (Our extraterrestrial visitors seem to have taken an interest in this tiny speck in the universe after the first use of nuclear weapons in 1945.)

What is the status of this? After all, Doty has admitted disinforming the UFO buffs in the 1980s. Is this more of the same? Greer takes him seriously and he's now had nearly thirty years experience in this field. I can find no comment by Doty or his peers about the status of his comments. Is he straying off the reservation? Given his track record of state service of one kind or another, this seems unlikely. At a couple of points in the interview with Greer, Doty declines to name individuals in his narrative. This suggests that the interview is officially sanctioned – with limits. My guess is this is part of an operation which includes the videos of pilots meeting UFOs.

Where this is all going – your speculation will be as good as mine. It does appear that sections of the US military and intelligence community (and their Soviet/Russian equivalents, as reported by Doty) have been sitting on *the* big story: *homo sapiens* is not the only intelligent life form in the cosmos. But since the existence of other intelligent beings in the cosmos might be a very big problem for the United States – a large chunk of whose population takes the Bible literally – my thought is that we are in the midst of an operation to inoculate the population with a series of (relatively) small revelations.

Even more Broon

'Tables without food, bedrooms without beds. Grinding child poverty in Britain calls for anger – and a plan'. Thus the headline to Gordon Brown's latest tone-

⁷³ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3xK5O7Iqo0>>

deaf article about Broken-down Blighty.⁷⁴ He is incapable of admitting – or, perhaps, incapable of grasping – that he and Tony Blair played a considerable role in creating this mess with their support for neo-con economic fantasies and their belief that this country didn't need to make things because we had 'the knowledge economy'.

I saw Brown's latest piece on the same day that I read at Open Democracy that Starmer's version of New Labour had accepted donations worth £2 million from City sources.⁷⁵ Who will believe that these donations had nothing to do with the announcement by Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves that the next Labour government would remove restrictions on bankers' bonuses?

Cock-up? No, conspiracy.

Back to *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the Council on Foreign Relations – i.e. what used to be the beating heart of the US establishment. They have a review of a new book by the American journalist Steve Coll.⁷⁶ If he's no Chomsky, Marshall or Scott, Coll is rather good. In a review of an earlier book of his, I noted that one of its dominant themes is 'the extraordinary difficulties in funnelling information from the bottom to the top of a bureaucracy as large and as politicised as that of the United States national security structure'.⁷⁷ And the *Foreign Affairs* review suggests his new book is a variation on the same theme: the invasion of Iraq by the US (and its gophers, like the UK) was just a mistake caused by the US and Saddam Hussein not understanding each other.

Having thus guaranteed utter confusion, and while continuing to deny any charges against him that had not already been proved, Saddam

⁷⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/grMS2>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/feb/08/child-poverty-britain-anger-gordon-brown>>

I commented on previous statements of his of this ilk in *Lobster* 83, in this column at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/83/the-view-from-the-bridge-46/>> under subheads **Broon** and **More Broon**.

⁷⁵ 'Finance firms gave Labour £2m in two years before banker bonuses U-turn' at <<https://shorturl.at/aIBX4>> or <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/labour-city-banks-finance-2m-donations-bankers-bonuses-u-turn-rachel-reeves/>>

⁷⁶ Gideon Rose, 'How Iraq Happened: Washington's Fateful Misreading of Saddam' <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/how-iraq-happened-saddam-hussein>>

⁷⁷ *Ghost Wars: The Secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001*, reviewed in *Lobster* 48.

then acted as if everybody should have understood what had happened. In Coll's words:

'He assumed that an all-powerful C.I.A. *already knew* that he had no nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. . . . Since America knew the truth but nonetheless faked claims that he was still hiding illicit arms, he reasoned, what did this imply? It meant that the Zionists and spies lined up against him were using the WMD issue cynically to advance their conspiracy to oust him from power. He saw no reason to play their game or deal with their prying inspectors.' (emphasis in the original)

But Saddam Hussein was correct: the CIA did indeed know Iraq had no WMDs. I noted in *Lobster* 86 that two former CIA analysts had recently been talking about the way the US (and UK) intelligence services were simply ignored by the American politicians bent on invasion.⁷⁸ In this column in *Lobster* 78 I had the following:

In his essay 'Why did Bush go to war in Iraq?',⁷⁹ Ahsan Butt argues that the cause of the war

' . . . had little to do with fear of WMDs – or other purported goals, such as a desire to "spread democracy" or satisfy the oil or Israel lobbies. Rather, the Bush administration invaded Iraq for its demonstration effect.'

He quotes Bush Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld saying on the evening of 9/11, 'We need to bomb something else to prove that we're, you know, big and strong and not going to be pushed around by these kinds of attacks';⁸⁰ and the so-called Ledeen doctrine, named after Michael Ledeen: 'Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business.'⁸¹

But actually it was worse than that. The US Defense Department were making plans to attack *seven* countries. General Wesley Clark, one time Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, told us this in 2007:

⁷⁸ An account of the pre-invasion intelligence process is one of the themes in my 'Iraq' in *Lobster* 48,

⁷⁹ <<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/bush-war-iraq-190318150236739.html>>

⁸⁰ Quoted by Richard Clarke, onetime chief White House counterterrorism adviser, at <<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2009/02/bush-oral-history200902>>.

⁸¹ <<https://www.nationalreview.com/2002/04/baghdad-delenda-est-part-two-jonah-goldberg/>>

'So I came back to see him [a General] a few weeks later, and by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan. I said, "Are we still going to war with Iraq?" And he said, "Oh, it's worse than that." He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, "I just got this down from upstairs" — meaning the Secretary of Defense's office — "today." And he said, "This is a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran." I said, "Is it classified?" He said, "Yes, sir." I said, "Well, don't show it to me." And I saw him a year or so ago, and I said, "You remember that?" He said, "Sir, I didn't show you that memo! I didn't show it to you!"⁸²

This is a military expression of the fantasies of the neo-con Project for the New American Century (PNAC), which saw the US in the late 1990s as freed from the constraints of the Soviet bloc's military power and thus able to dominate the world.⁸³ One of the PNAC statements – issued the day after 9/11 – called for 'capturing and eliminating Osama Bin Laden, overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime, targeting Hezbollah, defending Israel and forcing the Palestinian Authority to eradicate terrorism and finally, to substantially reinforce the United States defense budget.'⁸⁴ All in the name of democracy and freedom, of course.

Dallas and Dimona

I am grateful to Frederick Schultz for pointing me towards Laurent Guyénot's 'Kennedy Assassination: "CIA-Did-It" Theorists Are Covering for Israel'.⁸⁵ I have never seen an Israelis-dunnit explanation of Dallas which was worth taking seriously but Guyénot's version, nearly 10,000 words and thoroughly documented, deserves a look. The thesis is that JFK was killed because he was

⁸² See

<https://www.democracynow.org/2007/3/2/gen_wesley_clark_weighs_presidential_bid>.

⁸³ <<https://shorturl.at/abcF0>> or <<https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/01/new-american-century-1997-2006-and-the-post-cold-war-neoconservative-moment/>> I am grateful to Garrick Alder for this thought.

⁸⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/afBHI>> or <<https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/01/new-american-century-1997-2006-and-the-post-cold-war-neoconservative-moment/>>

⁸⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/jvB06>> or <<https://www.unz.com/article/kennedy-assassination-cia-did-it-theorists-are-covering-for-israel/>> BTW both the author and the magazine are anti-semitic.

a threat to the Israeli nuclear programme. They had a reactor at Dimona and JFK was making vague noises about getting more friendly with the Arabs in the Middle East, and was reportedly unhappy with the Israelis' progress towards an independent nuclear capacity. Which is interesting, in terms of the general history of the JFK administration – and might even be worth pursuing. (I don't know much about JFK's foreign policy.) But that's the limit of anything that could be remotely considered evidence; the rest is just speculation.

The thesis is therefore implausible. There is an enormous gap between the fact that JFK was reportedly unhappy with the Israelis moving towards an independent nuclear capacity and the Israelis killing him. Why would they bother? There was no guarantee he would win the 1964 presidential election; and, even had he done so, presidential animosity towards a project is no guarantee of that project being discontinued. Would the Israel lobby in the US not have had levers they could pull before deciding on assassination?

However, independent of the Israeli element, the essay contains some snippets supporting the piggy-back thesis of the assassination: i.e. a real assassination attempt was mounted on top of a fake attempt. The author quotes claims by Gary Wean, a former detective sergeant for the Los Angeles Police, that Texas Senator John Tower told him:

There was to be an *attempt* on the life of President Kennedy so *realistic* that its failure would be looked upon as nothing less than a miracle. The footprints would lead *directly* to Castro's doorstep, a trail the rankest amateur couldn't lose. (emphases in the original)

Guyénot's thesis is that this was 'hi-jacked' by the Israelis. But he has no evidence. There is infinitely more evidence that it was hi-jacked – or piggy-backed upon – by the CIA and LBJ's people.

Spook-wise

Christopher Moran's 'Company Confessions: The CIA, Whistleblowers, and the Cold War'⁸⁶ takes us back to the 1970s and the appearance of CIA 'defectors', Philip Agee, Frank Snepp and Victor Marchetti, and the books they wrote. (Of those three only Snepp is still alive.) The most damaging to the CIA was Agee. For he began 'naming names' in his several books and in the magazine *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. Moran's account of Agee's 'defection' relies heavily

⁸⁶ <<https://shorturl.at/kJK79>> or <https://www.academia.edu/110584450/Company_Confessions_The_CIA_Whistleblowers_and_Cold_War_Revisionism>

on the memoirs of the KGB archivist Vasili Mitrokhin.⁸⁷ Cryptome.org has published extracts from that memoir written by Metrokhin and co-author Professor Christopher Andrew.⁸⁸ They include this:

The KGB's most valuable asset in its active measures to discredit the Agency was an embittered former CIA operations officer in Latin America, Philip Agee (codenamed PONT),⁴² who had been forced to resign in 1968 after complaints at his heavy drinking, poor financial management and attempts to proposition wives of American diplomats.⁴³

Agee said he left the Agency because he was ideologically disillusioned by what it was doing. So what is the source referred to in footnote 43 above? It's a page reference in John Barron's *The KGB Today*, first published in the 1984. I checked it. Yes, the allegation is there but there is no source. Barron – who died in 2005 – was the American equivalent of our Chapman Pincher: a man who ran stories for the security and intelligence people. So Mitrokhin's co-author Professor Christopher Andrew has tarted-up Mitrokhin's documents with something as crappy as an unsourced allegation in Barron. Dear oh dear.

Moran's essay is an interesting trip down memory lane for me because I was reading Cold War history as the Agee thing was happening. Moran makes the interesting point that these CIA defector books bolstered the American revisionist historians⁸⁹ who showed that the Cold War was generated by the expansion of the American empire rather than the threat of the Soviet Union and/or communism.

Briefly

The University of Washington Press has just published a study of the CIA front, the Asia Foundation, David H Price's *COLD WAR DECEPTIONS: The Asia Foundation and the CIA*.⁹⁰ Among the Asia Foundation's members, you may recall, was Sir John Kerr, the Governor-General of Australia, who sacked Labour prime minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, in 1975.

⁸⁷ Extracts are at <<https://cryptome.org/jya/agee-kgb.htm>>.

⁸⁸ <<https://cryptome.org/jya/agee-kgb.htm>> This extract is from p. 300 of Christopher Andrew and Vasili Metrokhin, *The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Penguin, 2000).

⁸⁹ Notably Gabriel Kolko. See, for example, <<https://s-usih.org/2014/05/gabriel-kolkos-contribution/>>.

⁹⁰ <<https://uwapress.uw.edu/book/9780295752242/cold-war-deceptions/>>

Another significant article on the Did-the-US-use-biological-weapons-during-Korean-War? question has appeared: Jeffrey S. Kaye's 'The Lights Were Blinking Red',⁹¹ which concludes:

By January 1952, when by all accounts the U.S. BW [biological warfare] air campaign had begun, it seems that for both U.S. allies and domestic U.S. law enforcement, the warning signs of the pending germ war campaign in Korea were wildly blinking red.

Colin Challen⁹² reports that there is a film on Netflix, *The Fox* (2017), which has the Gladio network in its plot. He wonders if this is the only film to have used it.

Early on in the Israeli assault on Gaza it was reported that the Israeli state had been funding Hamas as what it thought was a *religious* rival to the PLO, Fatah and other *political* Palestinian political organisations.⁹³ Media reporting is one thing. A senior political figure saying the same thing is another. Cue Josep Borrell, the head of the EU's foreign policy organisation, stating it.⁹⁴ This striking event was reported by the *Times of Israel* but not, as far as I can see, by the *Times of London* – or the *Guardian*, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*.

Broken-down Blighty

In my local library book sale I picked up a copy of Dominic Sandbrook's 2019 account of the early years of Mrs Thatcher, *Who Dares Wins*. Yes, the title is meant to evoke the SAS and the Iranian Embassy siege, but it also represents Sandbrook's view that Mrs T had come to rescue Blighty from decline.⁹⁵ And after 40 years of Thatcherite policies of low taxes and privatisation, here we

⁹¹ <<https://kayej.substack.com/p/the-lights-were-blinking-red>>

This issue was discussed in this column in *Lobster* 80, <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Lob-80-view-from-Bridge.pdf>> under subhead **Baseless**.

⁹² <<http://www.colinchallen.org/>>

⁹³ In this column in *Lobster* 87 under subhead **Divide and rule**.

⁹⁴ <<https://www.politico.eu/article/israel-funded-hamas-claims-eu-top-diplomat-josep-borrell/>>

⁹⁵ For a recent summary of his political views see <<https://shorturl.at/mrIV1>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-11344119/DOMINIC-SANDBROOK-Left-wing-nation-despite-12-years-Tory-governments.html>>.

are: 25th or thereabouts in the table of GDP/per head,⁹⁶ with the worst public services in Europe and at least three quarters of a million people using food banks.⁹⁷

That same morning I clicked on the European Union's 2nd EEAS *Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats: A Framework for Networked Defence*.⁹⁸ In other words, how do we cope with (mostly Russian) disinformation? This is not an easy read. Here's a paragraph on p. 7. (Bold in the original.)

In 2023, the defender community made significant progress towards a more standardised, collective understanding of the threat and more effective cooperation in tackling FIMI.

Advancements in the creation and adoption of standardised analytical frameworks, such as ABCDE⁸, DISARM⁹ or the Online Operations Kill Chain¹⁰ are just some examples. Convened by the European Fact-Checking Standards Network Project (EFCSN), a European Union (EU) funded project, civil society organisations have cooperated to establish voluntary guidelines for investigators conducting public-facing Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) work.¹¹ In November 2023, the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) launched the Defending Against Disinformation-Common Data Model (DAD-CDM) project, "*a [global] open source initiative to develop data exchange standards for normalising and sharing*" FIMI threat information based on the well-established Structured Threat Information Expression (STIX)¹² standard. [I have left footnote numbers in the quotation but have not included the footnote texts.]

There is also an illustration showing which countries in the world are the target of Russian (and occasionally Chinese) disinformation attacks. The UK is in the lowest category, suffering between 1 and 5 such attacks. Blighty isn't even worth disinformation!

Declassified UK sent out an email

Dear Robin,

⁹⁶ 27th at <<https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-per-capita/>>.

⁹⁷ <<https://shorturl.at/nGOR1>> or <[https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9209/#:~:text=More than 760,000 people used,% increase from 2021/22](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9209/#:~:text=More%20than%20760,000%20people%20used,%20increase%20from%202021%2F22)>

⁹⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/fmuKY>> or <[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EEAS-2nd-Report on FIMI Threats-January-2024_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EEAS-2nd-Report%20on%20FIMI%20Threats-January-2024_0.pdf)>

Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) has described itself as “a Westminster based lobby group working within the British Labour Party to promote the State of Israel”.

LFI currently counts 73 of Labour’s 197 MPs as parliamentary supporters or officers of the organisation, as well as 37 lords and 4 MSPs.

Why is the group allowed to have such an association with elected officials without saying who funds it?

In the current climate, even asking the question is ‘anti-semitism’.

Dallas again

In September 2023 a memoir by former US Secret Service agent Paul Landis was published in which he said he found the Kennedy assassination’s so-called ‘magic bullet’ on the top of the back seat of the presidential limo and placed it on the gurney which had carried Governor Connally into the Parkland hospital, where it was found.⁹⁹ Officially, Governor Connally and JFK were hit by the same bullet, fired from behind them by Lee Harvey Oswald. With Connally sitting in front of Kennedy, the bullet found *behind* them thus cannot have passed through them. Therefore there are too many shots to have been fired by Oswald and the Warren Commission’s account is wrong.

Landis’s admission received massive but short-lived attention in the Anglo-American media. There are no mainstream journalists who know the assassination research and the subject is too big for rapid acquisition of knowledge from scratch. So after the initial report of Landis’s claim there has been virtually no major media follow-up that I am aware of.

However, on the margins – triggered by Landis or not – there does appear to be new interest in the subject. There is a long essay by one Josh Messiet which includes a massively documented account of the deep politics of the JFK assassination.¹⁰⁰ To find this in a Marxist journal is rather striking.

And there’s Ed Moloney, known for his writing on the war in Northern Ireland from the 1970s onwards.¹⁰¹ Now living in New York, Moloney has a very interesting website which I have only recently come across. In December

⁹⁹ <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-66792977#>>

¹⁰⁰ <<https://cosmonautmag.com/2022/06/surge-and-decline-part-2-of-5-course-correction/>>

¹⁰¹ Wikipedia is not always reliable but the entry on Moloney looks OK to me. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_Moloney>.

he ran a very good piece about the assassination research as seen through the eyes of Jefferson Morley, starting from the time in the 90s when Morley was at the *Washington Post*.¹⁰² Anthony Summers and Morley have the distinction of being the only major media figures to have taken the JFK research seriously.

Returning to Landis's admission: the bullet on top of the rear seat can only have got there by falling out of the shallow wound on JFK's back. Which explains why it was undamaged: it hit no bones in Kennedy's back. But it cannot have been a regular rifle round, which would have caused much more destruction. Much of the discussion of this at the Education Forum site thinks this means the cartridge was low on powder – perhaps a mistake in reloading it.¹⁰³ But Chauncey Holt offered another explanation. Some months before the assassination, his unit was tasked by the CIA to produce some smooth bore rifles which would take a cartridge already fired through the Mannlicher-Carcano. Such a smooth bore round would have little power. The Landis admission supports Holt's account.

Support for Holt also comes from Malcolm Blunt, one of the most assiduous of the JFK researchers.¹⁰⁴ I noticed recently that a piece of mine about Holt is in issue 12 of *Garrison: the journal of deep politics*.¹⁰⁵ Searching my computer for the copy I had sent to *Garrison*, I came across an email I received from Blunt in 2017 and did nothing with. Blunt wrote:

Holt had a colourful life and I was pleased to get his book and possibly gain some new insights . . . as a person who is primarily looking at documents I was especially interested in the material printed in the book backing up his story of a close working relationship with Bill Harvey. Well I found it on page 513, on a letterhead which says Bishop Service. In an unrelated Office of Security file on Robert Maheu there is a clipping which features Bill Harvey and Hal Swenson (both CIA retirees and former FBI agents) . . . they are described as working for Bishop Reporting (sic). From memory I think the Office of Security had clipped this piece from *The Grapevine* a small magazine published by

¹⁰² <<https://thebrokenelbow.com/2023/11/13/did-the-cia-kill-jfk/>> This site also carries substantial recent essays on the British Army's Frank Kitson (who died recently) and Kincora.

¹⁰³ This is discussed at <<https://shorturl.at/qyCS7>> or <<https://educationforum.ipbhost.com/topic/29791-paul-landis-the-slug-and-the-dented-cartridge/#comment-518070>>.

¹⁰⁴ An enormous collection of Blunt's documents relating to the case is at <<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RrTiwCzJSUFQIjPYvkbBkABwR1dDC291>>.

¹⁰⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/aloRT>> or <<https://www.lulu.com/shop/midnight-writer-news-publications/garrison-the-journal-of-history-deep-politics-issue-012/paperback/product-ppwjgr.html?page=1&pageSize=4>>

and for FBI retirees. Now nobody ever knew that Harvey worked at Bishops . . . so this short note from Harvey to Holt really pushes Holt up the credibility chart as far as I am concerned.

9/11 and Israel

I don't know much about the mountain of 9/11 research. The subject just didn't grab me. Even though it looked like the Twin Towers had been demolished, I never really doubted that Bin Laden's people had flown the planes into them. But how does one square al-Q and a demolition? The piece I quoted in this column in the previous issue is one such explanation (and thus far the only one I have seen). But an event of that size – regardless of who did it – will produce interesting spinoff material. And one such spinoff, which I noticed again recently, is the Israel connection.

I came across the so-called Shea Memorandum, a long report written by a corporate lawyer, Gerald Shea (Yale, class of '64).¹⁰⁶ No conspiracy buff, Mr Shea! His 2004 document was titled 'Israeli Surveillance of the Future Hijackers and FBI Suspects in the September 11 Attacks and Their Failure to Give Us Adequate Warning: The Need for a Public Inquiry'.¹⁰⁷ Shea assembled official US agency reports of a very strange Israeli operation in the US in the months before 9/11. Groups of young Israelis – nearly 200 in total, apparently – pretending to be selling art works, approached numerous Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) officials and offices. Shea pointed out that some of these Israeli 'art students' were living close to the al-Qaeda members who did 9/11 and concluded that in fact they were surveilling the al-Q people. (It was some of this group who were seen filming – and apparently celebrating – the attack on the Twin Towers from the other side of the Hudson river.)

But so unconvincing were these 'art students' that they aroused official suspicion everywhere they went. Their cover stories broke down almost immediately when they were questioned. If 'selling art' was just a cover story for their presence, why approach government officials who might be professionally suspicious? And of all the US government agencies, why chose the DEA? The whole thing was amateurish – and inexplicable. *This is Mossad?* The only explanation which makes any sense is that the 'art students' thing was meant to be blown and was a kind of cover for something more

¹⁰⁶ See <<https://www.yale64.org/news/shea.htm>>.

¹⁰⁷ <<https://shorturl.at/DGS46>> or <<http://ariwatch.com/Links/SheaMemorandumIsrael/SheaMemorandumIsrael.htm?fbclid=IwAR0Wj2HzbccSLgwfpenYvr9KiQ4Zujua000UEBaFQmolJBQjFgK1Majp9xM>>

professional.

Shea was not first on the case, however. Two years before, Christopher Ketcham had covered much the same ground in great detail, in *Salon*, in his 'The Israeli "art student" mystery'. Ketcham's subtitle laid it out: 'For almost two years, hundreds of young Israelis, falsely claiming to be art students, haunted federal offices – in particular, the DEA. No one knows why – and no one seems to want to find out.'¹⁰⁸ Ketcham does a first class research job and ends up offering three possible theories, only the third of which is consistent with the evidence:

Israeli agents wanted, let's say, to monitor al-Qaida members in Florida and other states. But they feared detection. So to provide cover, and also to create a dizzyingly Byzantine story that would confuse the situation, Israeli intel flooded areas of real operations with these bumbling "art students" – who were told to deliberately stake out DEA agents.¹⁰⁹

The sensitive political issue, Gerald Shea's focus, is how much did the Israelis know about the plans to plane-bomb America? And how much – if anything – did they tell US authorities? Israel and 9/11: hard to imagine a more toxic combination for American politicians. No wonder Mr Shea's questions have been unanswered for almost 20 years.

Huh?

Among the government files from the 1980s which were released in late December, was one concerning the Peter Wright book *Spycatcher*. The *Guardian* reported that on one of these documents prime minister Thatcher wrote in October 1986: 'I am utterly shattered by the revelations in the book. The consequences of publication would be enormous.'¹¹⁰ Obviously she didn't have time to actually read the book and will have read a summary prepared by

¹⁰⁸ <<https://www.salon.com/2002/05/07/students/>> This really is a very good piece indeed. Ketcham's writing is at <www.christopherketcham.com/>.

¹⁰⁹ A year after Ketcham, a long article appeared in the Scots newspaper *The Herald* – the *Glasgow Herald* as was – with much of the same material. <<https://shorturl.at/az389>> or <<https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/12768362.five-israelis-were-seen-filming-as-jet-liners-ploughed-into-the-twin-towers-on-september-11-2001/>> Twenty years after its publication, the *Jewish Chronicle* described this *Herald* story as 'bizarre'. <<https://shorturl.at/fgptN>> or <<https://www.thejc.com/news/world/who-were-the-dancing-israelis-of-9-11-c7f9b960#:~:text=>>>

¹¹⁰ <<https://shorturl.at/hCV05>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/29/thatcher-utterly-shattered-by-mi5-revelations-in-spycatcher-files-reveal>>

someone. What do you suppose she found so shattering in a summary of its contents?

In the City

One of the recurring themes of my writing in *Lobster* has been economic policy, specifically the malign influence of the City of London on this country. But I managed to miss Geraint Anderson's 2008 *CITYBOY: Beer and Loathing in the Square Mile*. Fifteen years late, let me highly recommend Anderson's memoir of life in the City of London as it boomed around the turn of the millennium.¹¹¹ No matter how bad you thought it was, the reality was worse. Amidst his tales of greedy psychopaths ripping-off everything, Anderson notes:

Between 1990 and 2005 the top one per cent of the UK's richest people's share of the national wealth moved up from seventeen per cent to twenty-five per cent and has undoubtedly risen even further in the last three years. The rich are getting richer and the poor relatively poorer. Ironically, this has been especially true under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's management of UK plc. Eighteen years out of power had made these jokers so paranoid about being viewed as 'old Labour' that every time Cityboys and entrepreneurs asked for 'business-friendly' reforms they rolled over and allowed tax and regulatory changes that facilitated the rich accumulating ever more capital. (p. 209)

The fear of being viewed as 'old Labour' was undoubtedly a part of it, but Blair and Brown were true believers in the virtues and efficacy of the market, with their 'light touch' regulation and all that.¹¹²

Anderson writes about the dangers of hedge funds gambling with the savings of UK citizens. The arrival of private equity in the game came mostly after he had quit the City. Alarms bells are now sounding in the USA as people are waking up to the fact that as much as 20% of US capitalism is now owned by private companies whose ownership is invisible.¹¹³ The spread of private equity is happening in London.

¹¹¹ Still widely available on-line. See the review at <<https://shorturl.at/hAL69>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1029229/Sex-City-Boy-Champagne-cocaine-prostitutes--Square-Mile.html>>. Author interview at <<https://shorturl.at/acjtR>> or <<https://www.vice.com/en/article/pp8jey/the-city-boy-who-uncovered-every-secret-of-the-city-boy>>.

¹¹² <<https://shorturl.at/azOS5>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/dec/12/labour-regulations-city-rbs-collapse>>

¹¹³ See <<https://shorturl.at/qwDLV>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/10/private-equity-publicly-traded-companies/675788/>>

Allies

There are a couple of essays on unherd.com which are well worth your time.¹¹⁴ This is from Aaron Bastani's 'How Blair broke Britain'.

The surge in house prices after 1997 was no accident. Buy-to-let mortgages increased 30-fold under Blair while his government built fewer council houses than Margaret Thatcher. And while Blair certainly isn't the *prima causa* of today's housing crisis — the policy of right-to-buy in the Eighties was the catalyst, while supply issues are a major variable — it is remarkable that something as elementary as home ownership was permitted to become a luxury under a Labour government.

Alongside this abysmal record on housing, New Labour oversaw a historic collapse in British industry. Between 1997 and 2007, output from all manufacturing, value adjusted for inflation, fell by 3% — while a million workers lost their jobs. Despite the post-industrial paeans of New Labour this was not inevitable: over broadly the same period, between 2000 and 2006, manufacturing output rose in the US, Germany and France. Most striking of all, manufacturing as a share of the overall economy fell more under Blair than Thatcher and Major combined.

And this is from Mary Harrington's 'Tony Blair's war on reality: New Labour met Thatcherism: a monster was born'.

So it was Maggie and Tony together who created the conditions for the 21st-century war on reality we're all now enjoying — a war now exacerbated by the onrushing digitisation of everything. We can thank him, too, for a set of perverse political incentives that condemn half of Britain's youth . . . to perpetual indebtedness and a credentialist Ponzi scheme [student loans], while stranding (sic) the other half in a grim and prospectless gig economy.¹¹⁵

The Labour Party and the Israel lobby

Following one of those Internet trails, I came across the new(ish) website of

¹¹⁴ <<https://unherd.com/2022/04/how-blair-broke-britain/>> Hat tip to Robert Henderson for spotting these.

¹¹⁵ <<https://unherd.com/2022/04/tony-blairs-war-on-reality/>>

the excellent Matt Taibbi ¹¹⁶ and found he had written about a British organisation, the Centre for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), which is currently being sued by X (Twitter as was).¹¹⁷ Taibbi wrote:

Groups like the CCDH often paralyze left-leaning political figures and media commentators by making them afraid to be lumped in with anti-vaxxers or Trump supporters. Only a few sharp reporters like Branko Marcetic of *Jacobin*, have had the vision to understand that 'They'll come for us next.'

In other words, the danger is that what begins with perhaps defensible suppression of racists on the right will eventually spread to the suppression of the left. In the case of CCDH there is another dimension. Branko Marcetic prefaced his 2020 essay about CCDH with this:

Google's censure of right-wing outlets over repulsive racist content was pushed by the UK's Center for Countering Digital Hate, an outfit with strong ties to the Labour right. As awful as outlets like the Federalist are, do we really want Blairites who claim Jeremy Corbyn is an antisemite to decide what is and is not acceptable to publish?¹¹⁸

Marcetic goes on to show that many of the people behind CCDH were indeed involved in the Labour Party campaign against Jeremy Corbyn. He also points out:

Its original director and 'person with significant control' — defined as someone with more than a quarter of a company's shares or voting rights, and who can appoint or dismiss the majority of its board — was Morgan McSweeney . . . McSweeney was also a director of Labour Together, a group formed as a conservative counterweight to the rise of Corbyn. As the *Canary* pointed out both the CCDH and Labour Together share the same address. McSweeney has now been appointed chief of staff by Labour's new centrist leader, Keir Starmer,¹¹⁹ just as the party has begun purging pro-Palestinian members.

Who has funded Labour Together?

¹¹⁶ <<https://www.racket.news/p/uk-files-reports-show-both-left-and>>. I reviewed his *Griftopia* in *Lobster* 61.

¹¹⁷ Google 'Court case : X v CCDH'.

¹¹⁸ Branko Marcetic, 'They'll Come for Us Next' at <<https://jacobin.com/2020/06/anti-corbyn-blair-censorship-google-labour-uk>>.

¹¹⁹ At time of writing he is Director of Campaigns. See <<https://shorturl.at/lrsv0>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/oct/07/whos-who-in-keir-starmers-reshaped-top-team>>.

From the end of 2019 to the start of 2023, Labour Together have registered donations from just two private individuals, Trevor Chinn and Martin Taylor.¹²⁰ In 2021, Chinn spent £90,000 and Taylor £138,500 funding this one group. Combined they provided over £400,000 in 2 years. This total is now substantially more. . . . Sir Trevor Chinn CVO¹²¹ has had numerous roles in equity and investment and has been Chief Executive of the RAC. He was a major contributor to Tony Blair's Labour Leader's Office Fund. Chinn historically has donated over £840,000 to Labour entities, including substantial funds to anti-Corbyn pressure groups. He gave £27,000 to Owen Smith's Leadership bid and £50,000 to Keir Starmer.¹²²

From 1973 to 1993 Chinn was Chairman of the Joint Israel Appeal (now United Jewish Israel Appeal), the major fund-raising organisation for Israel. Since 1993 he has been President of the UJIA. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre.¹²³

To Chinn and Taylor we should add businessman Gary Lubner who gave £395,000 to Labour Together in 2023.¹²⁴ South African-born Lubner has grandparents who were Jewish refugees and is quoted as saying he was 'appalled by the scale of antisemitism in the Labour party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. His son, a Labour student activist, was "abused, pilloried, attacked", under Mr Corbyn's tenure.' Lubner 'praised Mr Corbyn's successor Sir Keir Starmer for "getting rid" of the "cancer" of antisemitism plaguing the party.'¹²⁵

In short, the Starmer-led faction of the Labour Party has received significant funding from the Israel lobby in Britain, as did the Blair faction thirty years ago.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ On Taylor see <<https://shorturl.at/evH17>> or <<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2015-03-20/labours-mystery-600k-donor-martin-taylor-revealed-as-mayfair-hedge-funder>>.

¹²¹ CVO = Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.

¹²² <<https://the-free-press.co.uk/labour-together-watch-the-project/>>

¹²³ <<https://www.thejlc.org/sir-trevor-chinn-cvo>>.

¹²⁴ Put Lubner's name in the search box at <<https://search.electoralcommission.org.uk/>>. See also <<https://www.politico.eu/article/meet-the-think-tank-secretly-shaping-keir-starmers-labour/>>.

¹²⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/dINTW>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-donor-autoglass-gary-lubne-b2351429.html>>

¹²⁶ This was discussed in my 'Blair and Israel' in *Lobster* 43, which was republished in issue 73.

Dallas again

We all have blind spots. Like many of the Kennedy assassination researchers, the excellent Jim DiEugenio has one about the LBJ-dunnit theory of the Kennedy assassination. In a recent comment on Phillip F. Nelson's *LBJ: The Mastermind of the JFK Assassination* and *LBJ – From Mastermind to "The Colossus"* he wrote:

The 2 key pieces of evidence Nelson uses to incriminate Johnson are wrong. As Groden showed in *Absolute Proof*, he did not duck down before the shots were fired.

And Joan Mellen demonstrated that the fingerprint that was recovered from the sixth floor was not Mac Wallace's and he was not in Texas on that day.

Does this mean that LBJ was not part of the plot or that he was not cognizant of it or was not in on the cover up?

No, it just means that those two pieces which are meant to directly implicate him will not stand up to scrutiny.

Let me add, if you do not know, the book that started all this stuff about LBJ was something called *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*. That book was brought out by the John Birch Society in order to help Goldwater get elected. It obviously failed in that attempt but it succeeded in becoming a huge bestseller, and many researchers used it as a source. I always thought it was written at a decibel level that was over the top, as a John Birch Society book would be.¹²⁷

DiEugenio is simply wrong about *A Texan Looks At Lyndon*. It was not published by the John Birch Society, though the Birchers' shops sold it. It was self-published by Haley after he could not find a publisher who would touch it.¹²⁸ And though Haley and the Birchers had similar views about many things, Haley denied being a member of the John Birch Society.¹²⁹

As for his other points: the 'ducking down' claim is of no significance in the case against LBJ, and while Joan Mellen wrote a very good book about the man, her central claims against the LBJ-dunnit case were rebutted by me in *Lobster 73* and, in much more detail, by David Denton.¹³⁰ If this is of interest,

¹²⁷ <<https://educationforum.ipbhost.com/topic/29950-the-exoneration-of-lyndon-johnson/>>

¹²⁸ <<https://www.texasmonthly.com/arts-entertainment/a-texan-looks-at-lyndon/>>

¹²⁹ <<https://www.nytimes.com/1964/09/03/archives/sales-of-antijohnson-book.html>>
On Haley see the *Texas Monthly* article cited in note 20 above.

¹³⁰ <<https://shorturl.at/tGHIW>> or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_I9QjzWCfIcml2RHdwZHRnZ1E/view?resourcekey=0-rk7-jo1ZQAUyCT4I099vOQ>.

read Denton.

Promises, promises

Among the rationales for the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the claim that Russia was promised no NATO/Western expansion eastwards after the Soviet Union collapsed. Well, no, they weren't. There was a series of discussions between Gorbachev and various senior American officials and politicians but no promises were made; and, most importantly, no agreement was signed.

Detailed accounts of these discussions are now available.¹³¹

The great churn

After more than three years since its first edition, I was finally handed a copy of the wacky British conspiracy newspaper – no other way to describe it – *The Light: The UnCensored Truth*. A little googling revealed that the editor/founder, Darren Smith, began public life as a flat-earther. Which sort of fits. The striking thing about all this popular conspiracy theorising is not that most of the content could be shown to be false/exaggerated/meaningless by an averagely intelligent 15 year-old, but that its proponents don't seem to care that it is false/exaggerated/meaningless. Or, perhaps, in some obscure and never articulated way, they reject the true and false concepts as irrelevant and/or corrupted by their genesis within corrupt Western society. Something similar – essentially a kind of defence mechanism – was a feature of some lumpen leftism: 'bourgeois thinking'.

Russians under the bed?

In an apparently coordinated action, it was revealed on 7 December, in the UK and the USA, that **Russia 'targeted hundreds of MPs, civil servants and academics in eight-year hacking campaign': Spies working for security agency FSB 'snooped on private emails and conversations in sustained attempt to interfere in British politics'**, as the clunky headline in the *Daily Mail* had it.¹³² Two Russians were named in the article: Ruslan Aleksandrovich

¹³¹ <<https://transnational.live/2022/01/11/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-2/>> and <<https://shorturl.at/fvHJ5>> or <<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>>

¹³² <<https://shorturl.at/CEILO>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12836977/russia-fsb-interfere-uk-political-process.html>>

Peretyatko, who is an FSB intelligence officer, and Andrey Stanislavovich Korinets.

On the same day it was reported in the US:

A federal grand jury in San Francisco returned an indictment on Tuesday charging two individuals with a campaign to hack into computer networks in the United States, the United Kingdom, other North Atlantic Treaty Organization member countries and Ukraine, all on behalf of the Russian government.¹³³

The indictment named the same two individuals and described similar operations to those in the account in the *Daily Mail* and many other outlets that day.

Some of the emails hacked by the FSB were published under the name of Kit Klarenberg in *The Gray Zone* in 2022.¹³⁴ At the time of their publication, I asked Klarenberg how he got them and he replied that they had arrived anonymously, by 'burner email'.

Russians are also said to have carried out the 2018 hack of the Institute for Statecraft (IfS), a UK think tank created apparently to try and combat Russian disinformation. Klarenberg wrote about this for Russia's *Sputnik News* in 2018.¹³⁵ To my knowledge Klarenberg has never written anything critical of Russia.¹³⁶

The EU produces a regular bulletin of Russian disinformation and very depressing (and occasionally amusing) reading it makes.¹³⁷

Telling it like it is

This appeared in Dan Atkinson's column.

¹³³ <<https://shorturl.at/rsxDW>> or <<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-russian-nationals-working-russias-federal-security-service-charged-global-computer>>

¹³⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/bBGR2>> or <<https://thegrayzone.com/2022/05/15/operation-leaked-emails-intelligence-coup-boris-johnson/>>

¹³⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/uDRT4>> <<https://sputnikglobe.com/20181213/integrity-initiative-intelligence-disinformation-1070655802.html>>

¹³⁶ There is a collection of essays by Klarenberg at <<https://substack.com/@kitklarenberg>>. The site is devoted to 'The role of intelligence services in shaping politics and perceptions.' More accurately it would be 'The role of the British and American intelligence services in shaping politics and perceptions'.

¹³⁷ <<https://euvdsinfo.eu/>>

16 December 2023 3:04 PM

Saturday PS: Normal service resumed

LET no-one tell you that organisations don't learn from their mistakes. More than a quarter-century ago, Britain's Conservatives handed Tony Blair and his Labour colleagues an economy in fine working order. So smoothly was the machine purring that Labour went on to win two more elections and came close to winning a third.

Well, they're not going to make that sort of error again. The proper role of Labour governments is to inherit an appalling economic mess, as in 1974, and make themselves so unpopular in trying to sort it out that they lose office. Normal service, it would seem, has been resumed.

The position Sir Keir Starmer and his team will find themselves in after their expected election victory will be the worst for 50 years.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ <<https://blogs.thisismoney.co.uk/author-dan-atkinson/>>