

The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

new

FIMI

YouTube is now littered with AI political propaganda. The material I have seen, mostly talking heads, is anti-Trump. And much of it is good, too. Indeed, the AI talking heads are more interesting – more coherent, better scripted – than their human counterparts. These films are examples of FIMI: Foreign Information, Manipulation and Interference. In the case of the anti-Trump videos, who is producing them? (Google AI mode couldn't help.) Not to worry: the EU is on the case. It has been funding the Athena project to:

help protect Europe by studying foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). It will analyse over 30 cases of FIMI, identify attackers' tactics, and develop countermeasures. ATHENA will create tools like a disinformation analysis dashboard and offer training to schools and universities. The project also aims to improve legal frameworks and help people recognise disinformation.¹

Athena began in 2023 and one of the results of its labours is a collection of essays, *Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference: Case Studies from the Athena Project (Terrorism)* edited by David Wright. You might think the EU would want the information widely available, posted on a website somewhere, with free access. *Au contraire*. This was published in late 2025 by Springer and costs \$219.99.

These AI videos raise an interesting issue. Before the Net we would say 'Seeing is believing'. (Sceptics would say 'Believe half of what you see and none of what you hear'.) With AI around we are rapidly approaching the point where what we see in on-line videos can't be believed until reliable other sources have confirmed it as real.

new

Broon

Despite being the unapologetic co-parent of the financial disaster of 2007-9,

¹ <<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101132686>>

Gordon Brown still has access to the *Guardian's* columns for his banalities. In a recent piece,² he wrote:

the US has abandoned its longstanding championing of the rule of law, human rights, democracy and the territorial integrity of nation states.

Is he really this naive? Or does a lifetime of toeing the American line make it too difficult to face reality? Either way, he might usefully glance at the Wiki entry on US involvement in regime change;³ or, for more details, read one of the books written by the late William Blum which have documented the dozens of coups the US has organised or supported since WW2.⁴

new

Wikilaundering

Wikipedia is a wonderful thing and I give it a tenner every year. But the closer you get to politics and areas of historical controversy the less reliable it is. Because it is omnipresent, there is a minor industry devoted to editing Wiki entries to remove negative material. A striking example of this was posted recently.⁵ Under the headline 'London PR firm rewrites Wikipedia for governments and billionaires', it reported that one of the London-based PR companies involved in this, Portland Communications, was founded by Tim Allen, who is now director of communications for prime minister Starmer. In which role, it would have to be said, he is not doing very well.

new

Food and drink

In a three inch story at the bottom of page 17 of *The Times* on 23 January was a reference to a report 'put together with the help of the joint intelligence committee . . . Due to be published last autumn it was blocked by No 10 as too negative'. The BBC discussed it on the 27th,⁶ so evidently Whitehall had

² 'As Trump menaces Greenland, this much is clear: the free world needs a new plan – and inspired leadership' <<https://shorturl.at/HpYtf>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jan/20/donald-trump-greenland-world-plan-leadership>>.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_involvement_in_regime_change>

⁴ See, for example, <<https://www.amazon.com/s?k=William+Blum>>. Several of which were reviewed in these columns.

⁵ <<https://shorturl.at/9TsS4>> or <<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2026-01-14/london-pr-firm-rewrites-wikipedia-for-governments-and-billionaires>>

⁶ <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce9y1e09j72o#>>

decided to release it. Since when *Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security: A national security assessment*,⁷ has put been on the Net. It includes these paragraphs.

Ecosystem degradation or collapse will challenge the UK's food security. The UK relies on global markets for its food and for fertiliser. The UK imports 40% of its food from overseas, with over 25% coming from Europe. The UK is heavily reliant on imports for fresh fruit, vegetables and sugar. Animal farming at current levels is unsustainable without imports - soy from South America makes up 18% of produced animal feed. Nearly 50% of packaged products contain imported palm oil. The UK is not self-sufficient in fertiliser – for both nitrogen and phosphorus it is partially reliant on imports. Global phosphorus production is dominated by China and Morocco.

The UK is unable to be food self-sufficient at present, based on current diets and prices. Full self sufficiency would require very substantial price increases for consumers, as well as improvements in efficiency, waste reduction and resilience across the food system, including agricultural production, food processing, distribution and consumption. The UK does not have enough land to feed its population and rear livestock: a wholesale change in consumer diets would be required. It would also require greater investment in the agri-food sector so that it is capable of innovating in sustainable food production.

Without significant increases in UK food system and supply chain resilience, it is unlikely the UK would be able to maintain food security if ecosystem collapse drives geopolitical competition for food. The UK relies on imports for a proportion of both food and fertiliser and cannot currently produce enough food to feed its population based on current diets. Countries best placed to adapt are those that invest in ecosystem protection and restoration, and resilient and efficient food systems.

No wonder the government did not want this published! How is the British political system, unwilling or unable to control something as relatively piffling as the privatised child care industry, going to do any of the things required to increase domestic food and fertiliser production? To take the obvious example: will this – or any foreseeable – government stop the building of housing estates on prime farmland?

Not a million miles from this, and more immediately pressing, is the issue

⁷ <<https://shorturl.at/Joarh>> or <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/696e0eae719d837d69afc7de/National_security_assessment_-_global_biodiversity_loss__ecosystem_collapse_and_national_security.pdf>

of water supplies in general and the demand for water by AI companies in particular. The UK already has substantial areas which are suffering what is euphemistically called 'stress' where water is concerned. For instance, a government report, 'Water use in AI and Data Centres', notes that in water poor regions such as Sussex, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, and Norfolk:

housing and business growth [is] constrained by water supply availability and inadequate or ageing water infrastructure'.⁸

It also comments that:

the UK's ambition to be a global leader in AI and a top destination for technology businesses currently creates a direct tension with its Net Zero commitments and existing water scarcity challenges.

Another semi-official report concludes:

AI has potential to address challenges in healthcare, inequality and climate monitoring. However, these benefits must be weighed against the full environmental impact of building and running AI systems. This requires development of a comprehensive and transparent series of metrics that include carbon emissions, energy consumption, water usage, biodiversity and social impact. Only by looking at AI through these combined lenses can we ensure it delivers net benefit rather than widening inequality or disproportionately impacting communities and regions.⁹

How likely do you think it is that those considerations will be taken seriously by this – or any foreseeable – UK government seeking economic growth and employment? The evidence suggests that the game is already up and the AI companies will get what they want, where they want it.¹⁰ And populations in areas under water 'stress' can look forward to standpipes.

Happy trails

Below, under subheading **Ukraine and NATO**, I referred to Russian claims that the US had created a number of biological warfare plants in Ukraine. A reader of this column pointed me towards two essays. The first is by Finian Cunningham, 'Despite U.S. Bluff and Bluster, Pentagon's Bioweapon Threat to

⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/OBNgb>> or <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/688cb407dc6688ed50878367/Water_use_in_data_centre_and_AI_report.pdf>

⁹ <<https://sustainableict.blog.gov.uk/2025/09/17/ais-thirst-for-water/>>

¹⁰ <<https://www.thecanary.co/uk/analysis/2026/01/06/ai-data-centres-water-stressed-areas/>>

Russia and China Is Serious'.¹¹ Cunningham writes:

When Russia launched its intervention in Ukraine on February 24, the Kiev regime promptly ordered a network of 30 laboratories funded and managed by the Pentagon to destroy samples of pathogens. That these laboratories were engaged in biological weapons development was later *admitted* on March 8 by U.S. State Department official Victoria Nuland during hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. (Emphasis added.)

Nuland said that *in public*? This didn't seem likely; and no, in fact she didn't. She said Ukraine has 'biological research facilities'.¹² Why spice it up?¹³

The content of the second recommended essay, by Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, is suggested by the title: 'Documents expose US biological experiments on allied soldiers in Ukraine and Georgia',.¹⁴ But she wrote this by researching publicly available material. Surely Pentagon biological *weapons* development would be a closely-held secret?

The putative existence of such biological weapons developments by the US has been a recurring theme in Russian propaganda. Thus far they have apparently offered no actual evidence.¹⁵

Trumpski?

Russ Baker wrote this recently:

In response to Trump's saber rattling, Denmark says if Trump attacks Greenland, that's the end of NATO. Who now doubts that Putin pulls Trump's strings? This is exactly what Putin has always wanted.¹⁶

¹¹ <<https://shorturl.at/8IjXg>> or <<https://strategic-culture.su/news/2022/04/16/despite-us-bluff-and-bluster-pentagon-bioweapon-threat-to-russia-and-china-is-serious/>>

¹² <<https://shorturl.at/I5r4d>> or <<https://www.c-span.org/clip/senate-committee/user-clip-nuland-confirms-existence-of-bio-research-labs-in-ukraine/5005368>>

¹³ The journalists' directory, Muckrack, tells me that Cunningham has written for *Russia Today* and *Sputnik*. So pro-Russian? But also for *The Unz Review* and *Veterans Today*, both far right conspiracy theory sites, and *Lew Rockwell*, whose content is difficult to easily categorise.

¹⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/Hq0Bx>> or <<https://dilyana.bg/documents-expose-us-biological-experiments-on-allied-soldiers-in-ukraine-and-georgia/>>

¹⁵ See, for example, <<https://shorturl.at/efiS1>> or <<https://euvdisinfo.eu/report/russia-suspects-the-us-of-developing-biological-weapons-in-secret-laboratories-around-the-world>>.

¹⁶ <<https://russbaker.substack.com/p/trump-administration-is-now-murder>>

On the Trump-Putin theme, see earlier by Baker

<<https://whowhatwhy.org/politics/government-integrity/fbi-cant-tell-trump-russia/>>.

Why do I resist the idea that Putin is running Trump? Mainly because were it so, the US spooks and military – many of whom detest Trump and all his works – would've told us already.

'Havana syndrome' returns

Two recent snippets have appeared on the 'Havana syndrome' theme which has been touched on in this column.¹⁷ Said 'syndrome' was the name given to a series of stories about US diplomatic personnel being assaulted by some kind of Russian beam weapon – presumably, but not definitively, microwave based. (The first such reports came from the US embassy in Havana.)

The first item was a story which came out of the US attack on Venezuela. A member of the Venezuelan armed forces is reported as saying that he and hundreds of his colleagues were assaulted and immobilised by some kind of beam.¹⁸ The second was a report from CBS that in 2024 the US bought – 'using Pentagon funding that exceeded eight figures' – one of the Russian beam weapons.¹⁹

Neighbourhood radiation?

Dick Russell, whom I quote fairly regularly in this column, returned to a subject I have written about here: the possible radiation from cell phone towers. He wrote:

There is a real crisis looming that's getting almost zero attention. The Federal Communications Commission, the very agency that's supposed to protect the public from such dangers, is actively looking to undo what minimal rules are currently in place around the expansion of cell towers. The FCC's new proposed rules would strip away virtually all remaining power to regulate cell towers and antennas from local governments, and would fast-track 5G deployment into every neighborhood across the country.

The UK government's position is laid out in *Mobile phone base stations: radio*

¹⁷ See, for example, under subhead **Havana Syndrome** in this column in *Lobster* 88. <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/88/the-view-from-the-bridge-51/>>.

¹⁸ <<https://shorturl.at/sORCH>> or <<https://www.newsbreak.com/share/4434974323408-us-used-powerful-mystery-weapon-that-brought-venezuelan-soldiers-to-their-knees-during-maduro-raid-witness-account>>

¹⁹ <www.cbsnews.com/news/device-havana-syndrome-obtained-by-u-s-government/> See also <<https://sashaingber.substack.com/p/exclusive-us-has-been-testing-a-captured>>.

*waves and health*²⁰ and follows the line taken by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection.²¹ This body states that there is no research evidence that there are any health consequences from non-ionizing radiation. Other, non-governmental bodies, are not so sure. The Environmental Health Trust lists schools and public bodies in the US which are trying to keep cell towers away from people.²² Given the economic significance of the internet and mobile (cell) phones, how much faith should we put in official research? Not much, in my view. The economic consequences of an official statement that mobile phone/internet tech is a health hazard would be so serious, it is close to inconceivable that the authorities in either the US or the UK would state this. On the other hand, house prices near cell towers are lower than elsewhere.²³ The word – accurate or not – is slowly getting out.

Footnotes or hypertexts?

With all its footnotes, *Lobster* now looks very old-fashioned. This is simply a choice I have made. Yes, I could follow other journals and put notes as hypertexts. But I don't like reading texts covered in underlinings or with words in different colours. So footnotes will remain.

Gerry Gable

Gerry Gable has died. An anti-fascist campaigner and organiser, Gable was editor of *Searchlight* for many years. There was an obituary by Andrew Bell in the *Guardian* on 13 January.²⁴ Back in the early 1990s there was quite a bit about Gerry Gable in these columns, much of it centred round the so-called 'Gable memorandum', a letter he apparently wrote to MI5. Bell comments on this:

For many years, Gerry was the target of allegations that he secretly

²⁰ <<https://shorturl.at/hG72i>> or <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>>

²¹ <<https://www.icnirp.org/en/frequencies/radiofrequency/index.html>>

²² See, for example, <<https://ehtrust.org/health-effects-of-cell-towers-near-homes-and-schools/>> and <<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s62217/>> and <<https://cdnsiencepub.com/doi/10.1139/A10-018>>.

²³ <<https://ehtrust.org/new-research-cell-towers-near-homes-drop-property-values/>>

²⁴ <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jan/13/gerry-gable-obituary>>

worked for the security services. This arose from a memo he wrote in 1977 while working as a researcher on the investigative ITV show *The London Programme*. He was a novice at mainstream journalism and felt he had to impress. In the memo, which three years later was leaked by someone on the programme, he laid claim to high level secret service contacts in various agencies. In fact, he was, as he later explained ruefully to me, “just flamming it up for an editor . . . I wasn’t the first to do it, but I paid a heavier price than most”.

The fact he had no such contacts was clear to me in 1981, when *Searchlight* obtained evidence of a planned neo-Nazi bomb attack on the Notting Hill carnival in London, and Gerry and I had to use a convoluted route through a friendly journalist to get the information to the security services.

This really won’t do. Even a cursory look at the ‘Gable memo’ shows that Gable had contacts with MI5. I wonder how long it has been since Bell read it? See for yourself. The memo was reproduced and discussed in ‘Our *Searchlight* problem’ in *Lobster* 24.²⁵

Ukraine and NATO

The best writing on the background to the Ukraine conflict I have seen recently is two essays by Lord Robert Skidelsky in which he tries to unpack Russian actions and counter ‘the Russians are coming’ line now dominant in Western Europe defence circles. In the first of them²⁶ he notes comments by former Defence Secretary Lord George Robertson:

[Robertson’s] presentation of the Russian threat is weird. He presents Russia as economically failing, militarily inept (‘advancing one millimetre at a time’ in Ukraine), and demographically imploding (‘the younger generation being eliminated’), while simultaneously arguing that Russia is an existential threat not just to its neighbours but to Europe as a whole (the UK is ‘directly in the crosshairs’).

These two claims cannot both be true. A state suffering acute demographic decline, a stalled military, and a failing economy cannot simultaneously constitute a multi-theatre threat to Europe.

²⁵ <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/24/our-searchlight-problem/>>

²⁶ <<https://robertskidelsky.substack.com/p/ukraine-the-delusion-of-the-warmongers>>

The second piece is a response to critics of the first:

<<https://robertskidelsky.substack.com/p/follow-up-to-ukraine-the-delusions>>.

Skidelski is still best known for his biography of J. M. Keynes.

Skidelsky also comments on the (unstated) rationale for massive European-wide rearmament that

. . . is being justified through the language of security, yet in practice functions as an attempt to revive Europe's weak productivity and failing industrial base—an industrial strategy masquerading as a defence imperative, in effect a post-pandemic and post-stagnation strategy of military Keynesianism. From this perspective, the insistence on an existential Russian threat functions not simply as a strategic assessment but as political cover for a massive industrial mobilisation that EU leaders hope will restore European economic competitiveness.

His critique of the West's involvement in Ukraine does not mention the American activities leading up to the arrival of the pro-NATO president Victor Yushenko in 2005. (Perhaps he takes for granted that his readers understand this.) I was reminded of these events when I came across in my files a yellowing hard copy of a two page spread in the *Mail on Sunday* in 2005 by Mark Almond: 'If the Cold War is over why did the CIA buy the Ukraine election?'²⁷ Almond stated: 'The Americans alone gave pro-Yushenko groups at least £50 million'. Nor does Skidelsky mention the evidence showing that the massacre on the Maidan Square, which was the immediate cause of the downfall of the pro-Russian government, was the work of the Ukrainian far-right.²⁸

Looking at Skidelsky's Wikipedia entry,²⁹ the man has had a complex political journey. A founder member of the SDP, he moved to the Conservative Party. At one point he was appointed a Conservative spokesman in the House of Lords but was dismissed by then Conservative leader William Hague for publicly opposing NATO's bombing of Serbia. In September 2015 Skidelsky endorsed Jeremy Corbyn's campaign in the Labour Party leadership election, writing in *The Guardian*:

Corbyn should be praised, not castigated, for bringing to public attention these serious issues concerning the role of the state and the best ways to finance its activities. The fact that he is dismissed for doing so illustrates the dangerous complacency of today's political

²⁷ *Mail on Sunday* 2 January 2005. Alas not on-line, as far as I can see.

²⁸ Ivan Katchanovski, 'The "snipers" massacre" on the Maidan in Ukraine'.
<https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4628852>

²⁹ Some people – notably Nick Must, who writes for *Lobster* – do not trust and will not cite Wikipedia. In this instance everything I quote from the Wiki entry on Skidelsky is third party sourced.

elites. Millions in Europe rightly feel that the current economic order fails to serve their interests. What will they do if their protests are simply ignored?

And finally we are told he was 'a non-executive director on the board of Russian oil company Russneft'. Mmmmmm. . . .

*

I saw this from John Ward:

He [Putin] negotiated openly with NATO in 2014 to end the bloodshed between Russian speakers and others in The Ukraine. NATO and Washington agreed 'Not to move a millimetre towards the RF border with Ukraine' then placed a series of biowarfare centres directly along that border – while bankrolling the Pentagon creature Volodomore Zelenskyy to break the 2014 ceasefire at every opportunity.³⁰

How much of this is true? I looked at the biowarfare centres allegation. Such Russian claims have been universally poo-pooed as disinformation in the West. (Well, they would be, you may be thinking.) The Russian charges were presented to the UN in 2022 in a letter.³¹ The evidence supporting the claims is apparently contained in two files at the end of the on-line version of the letter. Alas, neither link worked when I tried them.

While searching for evidence of said biowarfare centres I came across JATEC, The NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre, officially inaugurated in February 2025. On JATEC's site³² there is this:

JATEC's Role

JATEC, as one of the important pillars of the NATO-Ukraine evolving jointness, is to provide for the NATO-Ukraine interoperability, to contribute to the development of NATO's and Ukraine's transformation in deterrence and defence, crisis prevention, crisis management and cooperative security. JATEC identifies and supports to apply lessons from Russia's war against Ukraine. . . . JATEC will support Ukraine in their objective to be able to conduct joint activities with NATO on all levels.

So we have 'interoperability', 'evolving jointness' and 'joint activities'; but we don't have Ukraine actually joining NATO. This may be how the US and Ukraine will meet one of Russia's central demands in the coming peace deal: that

³⁰ <<https://therealslog.ghost.io/crying-wolf/>>

³¹ Letter text at <<https://docs.un.org/en/A/76/785>>.

³² <<https://www.act.nato.int/jatec/>>

Ukraine does not become a member of NATO. JATEC offers membership in everything but name.

Epstein

The Epstein documents released so far are on-line.³³ I put Tony Blair into the search box there and found a reference to him being the chair of 'JPMorgan's "international council" of senior advisers'. I asked Google how much Blair would earn and got this:

In 2008, it was reported that former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair could earn \$1 million per year for his part-time advisory role, which included joining the council.

And there are still people in the Labour Party who yearn for his return . . .

Not the Soviet terror network

An anonymous correspondent asked me if I had seen Daniela Richterova's *Watching the Jackals: Prague's Covert Liaisons with Cold War Terrorists and Revolutionaries* (Georgetown Studies in Intelligence History).³⁴ I hadn't; but from the Amazon summary it sounds rather interesting:

Richterova unveils the story of Prague's engagement with various factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization as well as some of the era's most infamous terrorists including Carlos the Jackal, Munich Olympics massacre commander Abu Daoud, and the Abu Nidal Organization. Richterova explains why terrorists and revolutionaries had long gravitated towards Prague, why Prague benefitted from the attraction, and why Czechoslovakia's powerful security and intelligence apparatus – the StB (Státní bezpečnost) – felt ambivalent about these unpredictable groups.

There is one essay by Richterova, a book review, on-line and free.³⁵ Its subject

³³ <<https://www.justice.gov/epstein>>

³⁴ <<https://shorturl.at/QGozG>> or <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Watching-Jackals-Liaisons-Terrorists-Revolutionaries/dp/1647125146/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0>

³⁵ 'Reconnecting the dots: state-terrorist relations during the Cold War' at <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02684527.2021.2001956>>. Richterova is at King's College, London, which is partially funded by the Ministry of Defence. It is the only university I have been to which had an armed guard on the door.

matter is clearly related to her new book. In it she discusses the work of academics working in the state-intelligence relations field who show in detail, country by country, that reality differed greatly from the view that Soviet intelligence directed all the Warsaw Pact agencies.

As for the 'terror network' theory invented by those around Ronald Reagan, she writes:

. . . the 1980s saw a number of prominent American journalists, practitioners, and politicians advance ideologically driven interpretations of state-terrorism. Most famously and controversially, some argued that Moscow and its satellites were supporting a worldwide terror network aimed at destabilising Western democratic societies. The so-called 'terror network theory' found ardent supporters within the Reagan Administration, not least Secretary of State Alexander Haig and CIA Director Bill Casey who spent considerable energy and taxpayer money trying to substantiate this narrative.

There were a fair few on the liberal/left around at the time who knew the whole thing was a scam;³⁶ and I don't suppose very many professional intelligence analysts believed it, either. But hey, the US military-industrial-complex needed a new 'threat' to generate arms spending and one was duly manufactured.

Related to which, the US's desire to constantly expand NATO is largely driven by the same thing: weapons spending. New NATO countries buy US weapons and/or communications systems when they join

Brexit

I look at the *Morning Star* website from time to time and saw this in an editorial on 30 December 2025

Labour must not reverse Brexit. At least one of the reasons for working-class support for Brexit was creating the space for state-led economic intervention to bring jobs, in manufacturing above all, back to former industrial districts. People well understood that the EU's neoliberal rules rendered such a return to social democracy impossible.³⁷

³⁶ Including this journal, of course. See the 1990 'Truth Twisting: notes on disinformation' in *Lobster* 19 at <<https://shorturl.at/aUzYj>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/19/truth-twisting-notes-on-disinformation/>>. Re-reading this I was struck by the sheer crudity of the disinformation being pumped out by the anti-left forces in the UK.

³⁷ <<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/labour-must-not-reverse-brexit>>

I didn't pay much attention to the Brexit referendum: like Prime Minister Cameron, I assumed 'Remain' would win comfortably. Influenced by Larry Elliot at the *Guardian*, I voted 'Leave' for the reason expressed in the last sentence above: the EU's neo-liberal rules would make rebuilding the British domestic economy difficult. But looking at the issue now, what manufacturing could be brought 'back to former industrial districts'? From where? Funded by what, to make what? Most of the British economy is now owned by overseas companies.³⁸

Are spies important?

This question arose again with the death of CIA officer Aldrich Ames in prison in early January. His obituary in *The Times* carried his comment, made during his sentencing for espionage in 1994, that spying was 'a self-serving sham carried out by careerist bureaucrats who managed to deceive policy-makers and the public about the necessity and value of their work'.

This proposition was considered in my review of Philip Knightley's *A Hack's Progress in Lobster* 34.³⁹ Knightly quoted Ames and added that he had attended an historical conference on intelligence in Germany in 1994.

I challenged a panel that included Sergei Kondrashov; his colleague the former head of the KGB Leonid Sherbarshin; former head of East German intelligence, Markus Wolff; and former head of West German intelligence, Heribert Hellenbroich, to name a single important historical event in peacetime in which intelligence had played a decisive role. No one could so so.

I thought then that Knightley was being harsh. I wrote:

By asking for a 'decisive role' played by intelligence Knightley is asking for too much. Even during the Cold War there have been occasions when the intelligence services, the CIA and SIS for example, actually did provide intelligence of substance. The first that springs to mind was the Cuban missile crisis, when the information from the Soviet intelligence officer Penkovsky about the actual accuracy of Soviet missiles did appear to play a major role in the outcome of the crisis.

³⁸ Angus Hanton in his *Vassal State*, writes that 56% of British shares are now owned overseas. See the review by John Booth at <<https://shorturl.at/TrHHT>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/89/vassal-state-how-america-runs-britain-by-angus-hanton/>>.

³⁹ <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/34/are-spies-useless/>>

The second was the role of Oleg Gordievsky in explaining Soviet policy and thinking just at the point when the Soviet Union was cracking up, thus smoothing the way for the Gorbachev relationship first with Thatcher and then with the Americans. 'Decisive' – maybe not; but not insignificant.

Dallas again

1) a correction

In the previous issue, in this column under subhead **Israel and Dallas**, I stated 'All we know for sure is that Angleton's department of the CIA was reading Oswald's mail in America after his return from the USSR'. This is wrong. You might think that after 40+ years of doing this that I would have learned not to trust my memory – especially in a field as complex as the Kennedy assassination. Alas I hadn't, and in this case my memory was wrong. That *isn't* all we know for sure. In fact there were three sections of the CIA monitoring Oswald after his return from the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ This makes no difference to my conclusions in that essay but still . . .

2) Rob Reiner

The murder of film director Rob Reiner and his wife got much mainstream media attention, in none of which did I see any reference to his work in the Kennedy assassination field. This is described by Dick Russell⁴¹ and James DiEugenio who both worked with Reiner on the assassination.⁴²

. . . or get off the pot

I have distrusted Andrew Neil since he was editing the *Sunday Times* in the late 1980s and early 1990s and ran MI5 disinformation in its columns. These days, as well as a weekly programme on Times Radio, he writes a column for the *Daily Mail*. On 27 November its headline was:

This is a watershed moment in our economic history that will consign Britain to a Lost Decade.

⁴⁰ See chapter 2 of Bill Simpich's *State Secret* at https://www.maryferrell.org/pages/State_Secret_Chapter2.html.

⁴¹ <https://dickrussell.substack.com/p/rob-and-michele-reiner>

⁴² <https://shorturl.at/k2AU0> or <https://www.kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/eulogy-for-rob-and-michele-reiner>

Six weeks later, 1 January, the column was headed:

The evidence suggests this will be a year of economic revival that could lift Britain out of its gloom

Well, come on Mr Neil, which is it: a lost decade or economic revival?