

The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

Harold Smith RIP

Harold Smith has died. In *Lobster* 24 I summarised Smith's account of witnessing the outgoing British state rigging the pre-independence elections in Nigeria which, he argued, led to the Biafran war and millions of dead. Smith's story can be found by Googling 'Harold Smith + Nigeria'.

The comments in the online condolence book for Smith¹ show that Harold was held in high regard by Nigerians.

Revolutionary defeatism

A piece in the *Guardian* (19 March 2011), 'Thatcher papers reveal how she stoked rightwing rebellion in war against "wets"', notes that Thatcher's private secretary, Ian Gow MP, met with Labour MP Neville Sandelson, six months before Sandelson joined the SDP when it went public. Gow's report includes this paragraph:

'Sandelson says that his remaining political purpose is to ensure the re-election of the Conservative Party at the next Election, because only by another Conservative victory will there come about that split in the Labour Party, which he considers to be an essential pre-condition for a real purge of the Labour Left.'²

Sandelson was then one of the Labour MPs, about to defect to the SDP, who had voted for Michael Foot rather than Denis Healey in the leadership election contest of 1982. This, plus the decision by the party's right (and trade unions) not to challenge the left over the content of the manifesto for the 1983 election, gave the party Michael Foot as leader and the notorious 'longest suicide note in history' as its manifesto.

¹ At <<http://haroldsmithmemorial.wordpress.com/condolence-register/>>.

² The Gow memorandum can be read at <www.margaretthatcher.org>.

Storming teacups

Robert Eringer tells us that he is being sued by Prince Albert of Monaco.³ Eringer claims to have created an intelligence agency for Prince Albert and is the author of *Ruse*, which recounts his years working undercover missions for the FBI. Those with longer memories will recall Eringer as the author of one of the first books on the elite management groups, *The Global Manipulators* (1980).

We were briefly in touch in the mid-1980s when I lent him my copy of the early LaRouche masterwork, *Dope Inc.*, which he never returned.

Not even true lies

One of the Wiki releases from the US State Department is a 2006 briefing paper (06MANAGUA1002, NICARAGUA'S MOST WANTED) from the US embassy in Managua, Nicaragua, which details the life and high crimes of Daniel Ortega. How much of this is true? Given the level of disinformation produced against the Sandinistas by the US government, this is difficult to evaluate without reading the local media, which I can't do. However, the cable includes the story of the Sandinistas and the cocaine trade, and this we know something about. This is the version in the cable.

'Interior Minister Tomas Borge and his subordinates went so far as to assist Escobar with the loading and unloading of drugs onto his airplanes in Nicaragua. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) managed to place a hidden camera on one of Escobar's airplanes and obtained film of Escobar and Ministry of the Interior officials loading cocaine onto one of Escobar's planes at Managua's international airport. CBS news later broadcast the film and the entire story of Escobar-Ortega-FSLN collaboration.'

Pablo Escobar, multibillionaire coke dealer, actually loading a plane? *Don't think so.* And why have we not seen said film? It would have been dynamite. The answer, of course, is that the story is disinformation. It is based on a fragment of the Barry Seal story. Seal was a big-time cocaine smuggler who got busted and becoming an informant for the US authorities. The CIA, not the DEA, installed a camera on his plane which malfunctioned and all Seal got were some murky stills of men, one of whom Seal identified as Frederico Vaughn, allegedly an aide of Tomas Borge, and another as Escobar. However, on closer

³ At <www.eringer33.com/2011/02/monacos-prince-albert-enraged-by.html>.

examination Vaughn turned out not to be an aide to Borge but a businessman who himself was involved in the cocaine trade and may have also been a CIA informant.⁴

Nonetheless the Sandinista-cocaine story was launched by the US government.

'The [American] press initially accepted the Nicaraguan drug trafficking story without question, even though Seal's charges were a little thin. As U.S. Attorney Stanley Marcus and DEA chief Peter Gruden in Miami said, they had no evidence implicating any Nicaraguan official besides Vaughn. Nevertheless, the White House exploited the Seal case to the hilt. Officials from the president on down mentioned it at every opportunity as proof of the Sandinistas' immorality. "High level officials" of both Nicaragua and Cuba "have been personally implicated" in drug smuggling, Reagan said during the 1985 debates over contra aid (Reagan 1987:673-76). The State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy, which managed the administration's public-relations campaign against the Sandinistas, added the drug trafficking charge to its litany of Nicaragua's evil deeds, and distributed the photograph of Vaughn loading cocaine onto Seal's plane (U.S. State Department and Defense Department 1985:38-39).'⁵

In short, in 2006 the US embassy in Managua was feeding back to Washington an exaggerated version of its own 20 year-old disinformation.⁷

False flag ops

A new 'false flag' operation has been acknowledged by a retired Turkish general.

'In remarks published in the *Haber Türk* daily yesterday as part of an interview with Gen. Sabri Yirmibesoglu, who led the Special War Department in 1971 and also worked to mobilize civilian resistance during Turkey's military intervention on Cyprus in 1974, said: "In Special War, certain acts of sabotage are staged and blamed on the enemy to increase

⁴ Gary Webb, *Dark alliance: the CIA, the contras, and the crack cocaine explosion*, p. 264. This is on-line.

⁵ William M. LeoGrande, 'Did the Prestige Press Miss the Nicaraguan Drug Story?' at <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/journals/PREP/pp24-sample.pdf>>.

public resistance. We did this on Cyprus; we even burnt down a mosque.”⁸

Life after Tony

An article in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 13 January reported that the Labour Friends of Israel is going to rebrand itself ‘as a membership organisation to argue actively for the two-state solution and develop the “progressive case” for Israel.’ Its new director, Jennifer Gerber, was quoted as saying:

‘People seem to forget that Israel was founded on social democratic values and remains a example of a socially and economically progressive country – in a region where progressive values are in short supply.’⁹

Israel is ‘a socially progressive country’ – but is also engaged in the slow-motion ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. On the successful negotiation of such contradictions are political careers built.

British politics today

Among the Wikileaks cables released so far was the US Embassy in London’s account of a 2010 conversation with Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, about messieurs Osborne and Cameron. The cable says:

‘Both Cameron and Osborne have a tendency to think about issues only in terms of politics, and how they might affect Tory electorability. King also raised concerns that Osborne’s dual roles as Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer but also as the Party’s general election coordinator could create potential problems in the approach on economic issues . . . King also expressed concern about the Tory party’s lack of depth. Cameron and Osborne have only a few advisors, and seemed resistant to reaching out beyond their small inner circle.’

What does this sound like? It sounds like NuLab. And it sounds like the Liberal Democrats. All three major parties are now in the grip of little cliques with predictable consequences: as the parties’ members are not of interest or value to the leadership cliques (except as sources of money and election workers) the members are abandoning the parties.

⁸ <www.todayszaman.com/news-222544-100-retired-general-confesses-to-burning-mosque-to-fire-up-public.html>

⁹ <www.thejic.com/news/uk-news/43687/israel-friends-change-tack-and-relaunch>

On the Tories, there was an interesting piece in one of the *Daily Telegraph* blogs, Ed West's 'My local Tory party has just died. What the hell is going on?'

'In a "mystery shopper" exercise, CCHQ [Conservative Campaign Headquarters] wrote to over 300 associations under the guise of being a person who wanted to join up, and asking how to do so. Over half of the letters received no response at all, which is bad enough. Weirdly, a handful wrote back saying the applicant would need to pass a membership interview before they could join the Conservatives. Most worryingly, though, around 10 per cent wrote back to the pretend applicant saying they were "closed to new members".'

The membership of the Liberal Democrats is also falling, though not quite so rapidly.¹⁰ The years of PR politics, inauthenticity and kissing the butts of the rich and powerful have taken their toll on all three major parties.

In effect British parliamentary politics has been reduced to four elements:

- * focus groups and opinion sampling;
- * getting the support of Rupert Murdoch;
- * promising the City what it wants;
- * raising operating/campaigning money by selling policies or selling-off parts of what's left of the state to the private sector.

With this present regime the most obvious links are to the City, from whence comes more than half of the Tories' current money,¹¹ and the private health care industry which is being given access to the NHS resources and the tax streams within in.¹²

What the British do not yet seem to have grasped is that *if you copy America, you get America*.

The McGurk's bar massacre

In December 1971 a bomb exploded at McGurk's bar in Belfast, killing 15

¹⁰ <<http://liberalengland.blogspot.com/2008/11/declining-lib-dem-membership.html>>

¹¹ See for example <<http://thebureauinvestigates.com/2011/02/08/city-financing-of-the-conservative-party-doubles-under-america/>>

Not that this makes a change from NuLab. See James Chapman, 'Meet Labour's City cronies: The roll call of bankers rewarded by Brown and Blair', *The Daily Mail* 12 February 2009.

¹² These are detailed in James Lyons, 'NHS reform leaves Tory backers with links to private healthcare firms set for bonanza', *Daily Mirror* 19 January 2011.

Catholics. The response of the Army and police was to blame the IRA for an 'own goal' – the accidental detonation of an IRA bomb intended for somewhere else. Almost 30 years later a report was issued by the Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman which denied claims that there had been collusion between the Crown forces and the Protestant paramilitaries which carried out the bombing but stated that there had been an 'investigative bias' by the Royal Ulster Constabulary which had prevented a proper inquiry. Uh-huh . . .

A relative of one of those killed in the explosion runs <www.themcgurksbarmassacre.com/>, at which he has assembled a good deal of interesting material documenting the cover-up of the event by the British and Northern Irish states and does some informed speculation that the explosion was part of the counterinsurgency strategies of Brigadier Frank Kitson then being tried out in Belfast. My (barely informed) view would be that this might be the case. Whether it is or not, it raises the big issue of that period which none of the official inquiries to date have been willing to contemplate: the extent to which the military and intelligence services were working in Northern Ireland without political control. The Bloody Sunday tribunal, for example, spent £200 million (or was it £400 million?), gave everyone their day in court, enriched many barristers, and conspicuously flunked the central question: had the Army checked with the politicians before it decided to go and shoot some of the bog-wogs?¹³

Bill Wilson MSP

For much of the developing world the basic message is this: challenge America and it bombs and shells you with depleted uranium (DU), irradiating you, your children (born and unborn) and your land.¹⁴ A member of the Scottish Parliament has taken on the issue of the military use of depleted uranium and has sent the Minister of Defence a long list of pertinent questions and useful sources of data.¹⁵

Since what Wilson is doing is in effect challenging the US military, on past

¹³ 'Bog-wogs' was the term used by one of Colin Wallace's superior English officers in Northern Ireland at the time.

This is the period when the British MRF was active. A recent book, Tom Siegrist, *SAS Warlord* (2010), purports to be a memoir of the MRF period. As to its veracity, I have no idea.

¹⁴ For details see the case of Fallujah in Iraq discussed at <www.scribd.com/doc/34158205/Cancer-Infant-Mortality-and-Birth-Sex-Ratio-in-Fallujah-Iraq-2005-2009>.

¹⁵ Wilson's letter with the links therein can be read at <www.billwilsonmsp.com/>.

experience we may reasonably expect them to do their best to ruin his career and/or his life.

Peter Dale Scott

It was reading Peter Dale Scott's early writing on the JFK events which steered me in the direction I have taken ever since. So it was with some pleasure that I found that there is a short biography of the man with links to some of this work which compliments the Wiki entry on him.¹⁶

1976, the IMF crisis and all that

One of the major stepping stones on the way to the world-as-it-is-now in this country was the IMF crisis of 1976. On its 30th anniversary there was an interesting (though not revelatory) discussion of those events by some of those who witnessed them: Peter Hennessy, Bernard Donoghue, Shirley Williams, Tom McNally, Adam Raphael, William Keegan, Hugh Stephenson, Peter Jay and Sir Alan Bailey. Out of which one item looms large: the 'crisis' was manufactured by the Treasury exaggerating the size of the deficit in the public finances. Now, why does this sound familiar? ¹⁷

Ooops!

Occasionally someone in public life tells it as they see it. Former ambassador Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles KCMG, LVO,¹⁸ did when he told the Foreign Affairs Select Committee:

'The war in Afghanistan has given the British Army a *raison d'être* it has lacked for many years, and new resources on an unprecedented scale. In the eyes of the Army, Afghanistan has also given our forces the chance to redeem themselves, in the eyes of the Americans, in the wake of negative perceptions, whether or not they were justified, of the British Army's performance in Basra. Not surprisingly, in a profession paid to fight, most have been enjoying the campaign.

¹⁶ <www.onlinecourses.net/peter-dale-scott>

¹⁷ <www.meg.qmul.ac.uk/Transcripts/IMF/index.html>

¹⁸ LVO = Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order.

Against that background, the then Chief of the General Staff, Sir Richard Dannatt, told me in the summer of 2007 that, *if he didn't use in Afghanistan the battle groups then starting to come free from Iraq, he would lose them in a future defence review. "It's use them, or lose them", he said.* In my view, the Army's "strategy" in Helmand was driven at least as much by the level of resources available to the British Army as by an objective assessment of the needs of a proper counterinsurgency campaign in the province.' (emphasis added)

Dannatt, of course, denied saying this.¹⁹

Uncle Sam's military empire

There is an interesting essay by Nick Nurse describing his attempts to nail down from official US sources just how many US bases there are in the world. It appears that no-one actually knows, in part because no-one can agree on the definition of 'a base'.²⁰

The most important research currently available on NATO and all its doings is that by Rick Rozoff ²¹and many other sites, notably Global Research. I know nothing about Mr Rozoff, and there is little readily accessible on the Net about him, but he makes me feel lazy. Try his April essay on the NATO deployments against Libya, 'Libyan War In Third Week As NATO Takes Command', which lists all the countries involved and what they have contributed so far. For example, Bulgaria and Romania have each sent a frigate.²²

Policing dissent in Britain

In the early days of *Lobster* policing was among the subjects with which I tried to keep up to speed. But it has been many years since I did so. However there was a very interesting essay on changing styles in British political policing on

¹⁹ <www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmfaaff/writev/afpak/afpak18.htm>

²⁰ 'Empire of Bases 2.0 Does the Pentagon Really Have 1,180 Foreign Bases?' at <www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175338/>.

²¹ <<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/>>

²² <<http://dandelionsalad.wordpress.com/2011/04/03/libyan-war-in-third-week-as-nato-takes-command-by-rick-rozoff/>>

Global Research, Nathan Allonby's 'Britain's police state: London arrests based on cctv identification'. As you would expect it is technology – especially identification software – which is driving the train. (And input from our elected representatives appears to be nil, as usual.) ²³

About face

Scott Newton in his piece in this issue notes the way the Liberal-Democrats joined the coalition with the Tories and committed themselves to economic policies to which they had been formally diametrically opposed only days before. The account of the formation of the coalition by Conservative MP Rob Wilson, *5 Days To Power* (London: Biteback, 2010), offers one or two insights into how this transformation took place.

In the first instance, the Conservative Party had become the mouthpiece of the Bank of England:

'the Conservatives had listened carefully to what the Governor was telling them at a number of meetings held at the Bank, and drew up their plans accordingly.' (p. 107)

As the negotiations with the Lib-Dems began, the deficit reduction plan was nonnegotiable:

'George Osborne . . . believed that any government formed would fall apart without taking the action deemed necessary by the Bank of England. There had been a preliminary discussion about the economy . . . when the Liberal Democrats had been offered and declined briefings with the Treasury and the Bank of England. Governor Mervyn King had been on standby to speak to negotiators.' (p. 164)

'Even during the election, Clegg had been moving on the issue – but without telling the electorate. He later told the BBC that he had changed his view during the general election: "Remember between March and the actual general election, a financial earthquake occurred on our European doorstep." '(p. 168)

'One Clegg aide said: "The thing that changed minds was George Osborne saying that he had seen the figures and it was quite horrific in real life as opposed to spin life"

'Clegg . . . had already changed his mind about the deficit reduction plans. He was concerned about the firestorm engulfing Greece, and

²³ <www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=22478>

worried that it would spread across Europe, as Spain appeared vulnerable . . . he felt that if an incoming government did not do something more than the previous government, the country would find itself pushed around by the markets. Clegg said to Brown: "If doing some fiscal contractions this year keeps the markets at bay, surely it's worth it.'" (pp. 182/3)

So it was just as it appeared: another group of economic illiterates were stampeded by the Bank of England.

Duuuuh

Speaking at the Davos meeting in January 2011, David Cameron concluded his remarks by calling for more deregulation in the EU. 'It is time for Europe to move in a different direction that really encourages growth in our economies.'

What, the EU should copy the disastrous Anglo-American deregulation? Does he *really* think this? Or is it that he has to pretend to think this because of his party's thinking? Or is asking of a modern politician, 'Does he really think this?', just a dumb question?

Dodgy dossiers

The headline on the BCC News website on 12 May was 'Iraq inquiry: Campbell dossier evidence questioned', in the *Daily Mail* 'The proof that Campbell and Blair DID lie about the Iraq War'.²⁴ They were referring to the publication of Michael Laurie's e-mail to the Chilcott Inquiry (complete with redactions). The emphasises are mine.

Dear Sir John

I am writing to comment on the position taken by Alistair Campbell during his evidence to you on the 12th of January when he stated that the purpose of the Dossier was not to make a case for war; I and those involved in its production saw it exactly as that, and *that was the direction we were given*.

In 2002 and 2003 I was the Director General Intelligence Collection in the Defence Intelligence Staff, in the rank of Major General. I reported to the Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI), Air Marshall Sir Joe French. My

²⁴ <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1386262/Alastair-Campbell-did-mislead-Iraq-inquiry-claims-general.html>

responsibility was to command all defence intelligence collection operations, delivering raw or analysed intelligence to the Defence Intelligence Assessment Staff, who also worked for CDI.

– 5 line redaction –

I was one removed (sic) from the discussions in the Cabinet Office and the JIC though I attended the latter occasionally, but not during the period in question as CDI was always present. Obviously he would come back from such meetings with feedback and fresh requirements.

Alistair Campbell said to the Inquiry that the purpose of the Dossier was not “to make a case for war”. I had no doubt at that time this was exactly its purpose and *these very words were used*. The previous paper, drafted in February and March, known to us then also as the Dossier, was rejected because it did not make a strong enough case. From then until September we were under pressure to find intelligence that could reinforce the case.

– 4 line redaction –

I recall Joe French frequently enquiring whether we were missing something; he was under pressure. We could find no evidence of planes, missiles or equipment that related to WMD, generally concluding that they must have been dismantled, buried or taken abroad. There has probably never been a greater detailed scrutiny of every piece of ground in any country.

During the drafting of the final Dossier, every fact was managed to make it as strong as possible, the final statements reaching beyond the conclusions intelligence assessments would normally draw from such facts. It was clear to me that there was direction and pressure being applied on the JIC and its drafters.

In summary, we knew at the time that the purpose of the Dossier was precisely to make a case for war, rather than setting out the available intelligence, and that to make the best out of sparse and inconclusive intelligence the wording was developed with care. The question that needs to be asked is, if there had been no remit to draft the “Dossier”, would the JIC in their normal process have produced papers that would have come to the same assessment as the Dossier?’²⁵

²⁵ <www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/52051/Laurie-statement-FINAL.pdf>

A former DIS colleague of Laurie's, Dr Brian Jones, commented on Laurie's letter in *The Independent* on 16 May:

'In 2002 Major-General Laurie was one of the three most senior members of the Defence Intelligence Staff. As a more junior member, it is interesting to learn all these years later, that our top man, Air Marshal Sir Joe French, explicitly told him something that was not revealed to us lesser mortals – that the purpose of the Iraq dossier was to make a case for war ('Campbell "misled" Chilcot over dossier', 13 May). It was more than a nod and a wink.

If that was the case, as I could only infer it was at the time, it is even more important that the insistent objections of DIS analysts were circumvented through a deception apparently perpetrated on their own colleagues by MI6 and senior Cabinet Office intelligence officials. They claimed to have new intelligence that overcame our reservations, but were not prepared to disclose it to us.

Almost unnoticed, the Chilcot inquiry has recently published important evidence from a senior MI6 officer, identified as SIS4, which strongly indicates that the undisclosed intelligence did no such thing. According to SIS4, that intelligence report merely promised that the required "golden bullet" would, hopefully, become available within a few weeks – but unfortunately too late for the dossier. It never materialised.

It may well be that Gen Laurie was not in the loop when these matters were a hot issues in the DIS in September 2002, or in 2003 when they hit the headlines in the Hutton inquiry. However, it worries me that the Chilcot committee appear to have asked him nothing about this issue. Perhaps they already know the answers. Perhaps they will at last publish the intelligence report that did not provide the "golden bullet", or give us a clearer idea about how inadequate it really was.'

Former ambassador Craig Murray also commented on the publication of this letter on his blog:

'It is five years since I published in *Murder in Samarkand* and this FCO insider account, given to me in 2002 while I was Ambassador in Tashkent:

"You're wondering why we signed up to it? Well, I can promise you it was awful. The pressure was unbelievable. People were threatened with the end of their careers. I saw analysts in tears. We felt, as a group, absolutely shafted. Actually, we still do. You know, I think that we are all a bit ashamed that nobody had the guts to go public,

resign and say that the WMD thing is a myth. But MI6 really hyped it. The DIS tried to block it, but they couldn't."²⁶

More accurately: the DIS tried to block it but could not do so without someone damaging their career and no-one thought thousands of dead people more important than their careers.

We knew that Campbell and Blair had lied. If the purpose of the dossier wasn't to make the case for war, what was its purpose? The denials by Campbell and Blair were absurd and insulting.²⁷

Obama as CIA?

While the 'birthers' are still trying to prove that President Obama was not a legitimate candidate for president, and other sections of the American right believe Obama to be a communist/socialist/Muslim, former US intelligence officer, Wayne Madsen, has had a second, more detailed go at showing that, *au contraire*, Obama is a creature of the CIA.²⁸ Madsen tries to show Obama's parents were either sponsored by the CIA (father) or worked for the agency (mother) and that Obama himself worked for a company with CIA links. This last is true but we don't know any more than that. My problem is that while making one of the guilt-by-association moves, which is what his evidence mostly consists of, he describes someone as CIA because they were so named in the 1968 *Who's Who in the CIA*, published by East German intelligence (or the KGB). Madsen does not want to acknowledge the book's provenance and tells us that the book was published in West Berlin. This book is well known enough to have its own Wiki entry (even I have a photocopy of it somewhere). Not good enough, Mr Madsen. A lot of his material is very interesting but I never trust it.

Ignoring that, Madsen doesn't quite succeed in showing us that Obama is some kind of CIA agent/recruit but he certainly shows that Obama's parents were by no means some vaguely black-radical-hippy couple, but good corporate citizens, who were around a number of American state operations in the cold war (as the US saw it; imperialism as the rest of us saw it) in the developing

²⁶ <www.craigmurray.org.uk> Entry for 13 May.

²⁷ Also worth reading on this was the comment by former BBC chairman, Sir Christopher Bland, 'A gross media manipulation that has eroded public trust in Government', *The Independent* 14 May 2011.

²⁸ <www.veteranstoday.com/2010/08/18/wayne-madsen-obamas-cia-connections-part-i-and-ii/>

world. As for Obama – he’s followed in their footsteps, has he not?

More bad news about mobile phones

There is a paper, ‘Electromagnetic fields from mobile phones: health effect on children and teenagers’, by the Russian National Committee on Non-ionizing Radiation Protection.²⁹

This contains enough data to make any mobile phone user, of any age, nervous. But this is pissing into the wind, isn’t it? Even if irrefutable proof that mobile phones – say – caused cancer was provided to and accepted by the governments of the world, there is no way that their use is going to be significantly curtailed. We are addicted – in many cases, literally addicted – to our hand-held devices. Personal observation of friends and teenagers suggest that they might be as addictive as cigarettes to some people.

Meanwhile British scientists have shown that ‘brain activity increased significantly after using a handset for 50 minutes, in the area closest to the antenna.’³⁰ As far as I can see, this report was ignored by the mobile phone industry which had hitherto claimed that the only impact on the brain was a slight heating effect.

²⁹ <http://iemfa.org/images/pdf/RNCNIRP_Resolution_2011.pdf>

³⁰ Martin Beckford, ‘Mobile phones do affect brain activity, study finds’, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 2011.