

# The view from the bridge

**Robin Ramsay**

*My thanks to Garrick Alder and Nick Must for help with  
the production of Lobster.*

*\*new\**

## **'Intelligence' you call it?**

On Quora there are interesting posts by one Thierry Etienne Joseph Rotty, who describes himself as having been a member of Central Planning at NATO.<sup>1</sup> Thus far no-one has been able to stand that claim that up. This post of his caught my eye. Asked 'What surprises did American intelligence learn after the fall of the Soviet Union when Russia shared KGB information with the US?', he replied:

There were several:

1. The most shocking was the existence of Biopreparat, the agency running the enormous clandestine biological weapons program. The US had no clue this even existed.
2. The existence of two secret Main KGB Directorates: the 10th and the 14th. The job of the 10th was to protect Biopreparat and the 14th had to spy and check up on the 12th Main Directorate of the Ministry of Defence which was in charge of guarding nuclear weapons. "Who guards the guards?" ... well, the 14th did.
3. When the KGB gave a copy of the East German Stasi files to the CIA (just to stick it to the Germans one last time), it turned out that at any time, the Communist Bloc had some 200,000 spies in Western countries.
4. These files showed that the USAF had been hopelessly infiltrated by communists in the 1950s and 1960s. The US already knew this, but not the massive scale.
5. The old joke that NATO defence information ended up in the Kremlin before it filtered down to the various NATO countries

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.quora.com/profile/Thierry-Etienne-Joseph-Rotty-2>>

turned out to be true. Only nuclear planning had not been infiltrated.

6. The US had not been able to keep anything a secret from the Warsaw Pact. It turned out they knew exactly what kind of weapons the US was developing and what the military capabilities were. It was clear counterintelligence had been a huge failure (the same applies to the other NATO countries as well).
7. The Soviets did not plan on hitting most US cities with nuclear weapons, something military planners had suspected. Instead, they would have gone for the major conventional army and national guard bases. The idea was that food shortages and race riots might destabilize the US government. Since invading was never an option, internal strife was the only hope of bringing down the US government. Agitators would have been instrumental in trying to achieve this.
8. There had been a KGB plan to kill Pope John Paul II. It was abandoned as the Soviet Leadership feared a PR disaster and worldwide reprisals.<sup>2</sup>

If true, items 3, 4, 5 and 6 reduce much of the US (and NATO) intelligence effort since WW2 to little more than an expensive farce. However, *if true* . . . What about the claim in item 3 that there were 200,000 Soviet bloc spies in the West?<sup>3</sup> I can't find a gross total but there is this about the East German secret police, the Stasi.

One consists of the so-called Rosenholz (Rosewood) records. Two card indexes of people who were subjects of the HVA's [HVA = Main Department for Reconnaissance] interest in 1988 were microfilmed. These F16 and F22 indexes include, among other people, the service's agents. As the GDR was collapsing, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency obtained a copy of the indexes, which it made available in 1993 to the BfV. The indexes state the real name and codename of each spy. In the 1990s, they enabled the foreign intelligence network of the HVA and the Stasi's security departments to be uncovered. They enabled the size of

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<sup>2</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/ztVJZ>> or <<https://www.quora.com/What-surprises-did-American-intelligence-learn-after-the-fall-of-the-Soviet-Union-when-Russia-shared-KGB-information-with-the-US?share=1>>

<sup>3</sup> And the figure is not a mistake. He repeats it elsewhere on Quora: 'Now in practice, there were so many communist spies in the Western World, at least 200,000 at any one time . . .' At <<https://shorturl.at/ure2a>> or <<https://www.quora.com/Whose-Cold-War-spies-were-better-the-Soviet-Unions-or-the-Wests>>. In a post below that one he attributes the figure to 'Warsaw Pact archives'.

the HVA's agent network to be established: between the early 1950s and the late 1980s the service ran approximately 6,000 spies in West Germany. The Stasi's security departments ran a similar number of spies in the Federal Republic in the same period. These 12,000 agents were supported by a network of approximately 40,000 East German couriers, instructors, and intermediaries. The ministry's foreign intelligence network consisted of approximately 52,000 people in all.<sup>4</sup>

In total that gives the East Germans 18,000 agents over the period of the 1950s to late 1980s in Germany. At any one time, who knows how many were active? Even so, did the other members of the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union itself really have another 180,00 agents?

*\*new\**

## **Labour Together**

The group which funded Keir Starmer's run at the leadership of the Labour Party, Labour Together, was discussed in *Lobster* 88.<sup>5</sup> The essential *Open Democracy* reported recently:

. . . it is still pulling in major sums from the party's big donors. Labour Together has received more than £850,000 since the election – including more than £320,000 each from hedge fund boss Martin Taylor and Lord David Sainsbury, plus £200,000 from Gary Lubner, the boss of Belron, a firm specialising in vehicle glass repair.<sup>6</sup>

*\*new\**

## **Like a bat out of . . . Wuhan?**

There was a striking piece in the *Daily Telegraph* by Matt Ridley, 'The explosive

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Maddrell, 'The Triumph of HUMINT: The GDR Foreign Intelligence Services' Collection of Defense Intelligence, 1951–1989'

<<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08850607.2024.2340955#d1e254>>

<sup>5</sup> Under the subhead **Labour and the Israel Lobby at**

<<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/88/the-view-from-the-bridge-51/>>

<sup>6</sup> 'Dark Arts Dispatch: SW1 is a 'safe space' for lobbyists' <<https://shorturl.at/vkTNh>> or <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/justin-madders-goring-employment-rights-meeting-business-lobbyists-peter-mandelson-donald-trump-jeffrey-epstein/>>

truth about the origin of COVID-19 may finally be about to emerge'.<sup>7</sup> Alas, this is behind a pay wall. However, Ridley has a blog and you can read similar material there.<sup>8</sup> He shows how Chinese money – in this country, e.g., into British universities and publishing – has prevented an honest assessment of the evidence about the origins of the COVID outbreak in Wuhan.

I nibbled at the story in this column (put 'Wuhan' into the search facility on *Lobster's* site) but seem to have got the major threads correct: viz. that the Wuhan lab story was initially being suppressed in the Anglosphere because of the American money funding Chinese biological warfare research. Not that it was difficult to follow if you had no vested interest in the story. It was only people with careers, income and status at stake who were inclined to ignore the data.

The day I wrote the lines above, the new (Trump-appointed) Director of the CIA announced that the Agency believed it was probably a lab leak – a major move from its previous sitting-on-the-fence position. Evidently the new Trump administration is not nervous about antagonising China.

Back at the COVID outbreak . . . on the principle of never letting a crisis go to waste:

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. military launched a secret campaign to counter what it perceived as China's growing influence in the Philippines, a nation hit especially hard by the deadly virus.

The clandestine operation has not been previously reported. It aimed to sow doubt about the safety and efficacy of vaccines and other life-saving aid that was being supplied by China, a Reuters investigation found. Through phony internet accounts meant to impersonate Filipinos, the military's propaganda efforts morphed into an anti-vax campaign. Social media posts decried the quality of face masks, test kits and the first vaccine that would become available in the Philippines – China's Sinovac inoculation.<sup>9</sup>

This resulted in a very low take-up of the vaccine in the Philippines and thousands of unnecessary deaths.

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<sup>7</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/EAVwf>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/us/comment/2024/12/06/explosive-truth-about-origin-covid-19-emerge/>> Ridley is the former Viscount Ridley.

<sup>8</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/tP9rw>> or <<https://www.mattridley.co.uk/blog/there-is-now-very-little-doubt-that-covid-leaked-from-a-lab/>>

<sup>9</sup> <<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-covid-propaganda/>>

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## **Dallas again**

**M**eanwhile, back at the LBJ-dunit branch of the JFK assassination research, mid January saw what may prove to be a major step forward. At the centre of the LBJ-dunit thread is the late Billie Sol Estes, a Texas businessman-cum-con artist who was defrauding the US government of tens of millions of dollars a year through bogus agricultural subsidies; and feeding some of that back to then Vice President Johnson.<sup>10</sup> When the Johnson-Estes link was threatened with revelation, witnesses to the fraud in Texas began dying. Estes later claimed that he had made tape recordings of his conversations with various people involved and that it was the threat of these recordings being released which was keeping him alive.

In chapter 27 of his memoir,<sup>11</sup> Estes reported a conversation in 1971 with LBJ's no. 1 assistant, Cliff Carter, in which they discussed the JFK assassination and the role in it of LBJ, Carter and their gopher-cum-hitman Malcolm 'Mac' Wallace. What is allegedly part of the tape recording of that conversation has been made public by Estes' grandson.<sup>12</sup> We can apparently hear Carter talking to Estes about Wallace and the assassination.

The putative witness to that meeting of Carter and Estes, one Kyle Brown, unnamed by Estes in his memoir, had previously confirmed the conversation's existence and some of its content.<sup>13</sup>

## **IRD**

**R**ory Cormac is one of the British academics working on the Information Research Department (IRD), now that some of its official files are open to

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<sup>10</sup> There is a very good summary of all this at  
<<https://spartacus-educational.com/JFKestes.htm>>.

<sup>11</sup> *Billie Sol Estes: A Texas Legend*, on-line at <<https://shorturl.at/e5yWE>> or  
< [http://www.narrowbandimaging.com/incoming/Billy%20Sol%20Estes%20A%20Texas%20Legend%20by%20Billie%20Sol%20Estes%20\(2005\).pdf](http://www.narrowbandimaging.com/incoming/Billy%20Sol%20Estes%20A%20Texas%20Legend%20by%20Billie%20Sol%20Estes%20(2005).pdf)>

<sup>12</sup> Tape recording and transcript at  
<<https://robertmorrowpoliticalresearchblog.blogspot.com/2025/>>.

<sup>13</sup> See my review of *The Lone Star Speaks: Untold Texas Stories about the JFK Assassination* by Sara Peterson and K. W. Zachry in *Lobster* 80 at <<https://shorturl.at/0yIIn>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/80/the-lone-star-speaks-untold-texas-stories-about-the-jfk-assassination-by-sara-peterson-and-k-w-zachry/>>.

inspection.<sup>14</sup> Cormac recently wrote an essay with the provocative title 'In defence of the Information Research Department'.<sup>15</sup> He writes:

At its peak in the mid-1960s, it [IRD] had a staff of 390 and operated as a semi-secret entity with a straightforward goal: to counter hostile narratives by raising awareness of conditions behind the Iron Curtain and by exposing competitors' activities particularly in what is now commonly referred to as the 'global south'.

Professor Cormac has read the declassified documents and I haven't; but even from the fragments we knew before declassification, this is a very generous description. I would put it like this: IRD's aim was to keep the left down at home and prevent/obstruct the rise of nationalism in the British colonies and former colonies. When it came to its last big operation in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, it went as far as smearing Labour MPs who were perceived as sympathetic to Irish nationalism.

## Briefly

**D**avid Aaronovitch has a Substack called 'Notes from the Underground'. He is self-described there as 'Writer, broadcaster, author, editor, producer and former *Times* columnist for 18 years'. Very underground!

**CAFCA**, Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa [New Zealand], has been going at least as long as *Lobster* and its newsletter has reached issue 167.<sup>16</sup> There will be something there of interest if you are reading this.

**O**wen Jones has an important piece about the pro-Israel bias of BBC reporting of the assault on Gaza.<sup>17</sup> It has been followed by a detailed analysis of the BBC staffer at the centre of this, 'BBC Middle East Editor Collaborated With CIA, Mossad'.<sup>18</sup> Big stuff.

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<sup>14</sup> In this column in *Lobster* 87 I mentioned two of his recent essays which are online. They are 'UK "Black" Productions: Forgeries, Fake Groups, and Propaganda, 1951–1977' at <<https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/output/6295895>> and 'The Information Research Department, Unattributable Propaganda, and Northern Ireland: Promising Salvation but Ending in Failure?' at <<https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/index.php/output/807819/>>.

<sup>15</sup> <<https://www.britainsworld.org.uk/p/the-memorandum-25-2024>>

<sup>16</sup> <<http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/67/index67.html>>

<sup>17</sup> <<https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/bbc-civil-war-gaza-israel-biased-coverage>>

<sup>18</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/mrxvf436>> or <<https://consortiumnews.com/2025/01/07/bbc-middle-east-editor-collaborated-with-cia-mossad/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=36a2df11-11e4-461a-aa6b-5baabc4e44e5>>

Dick Russell you may know from his JFK research.<sup>19</sup> He has a new Substack site on which there is a very odd – very odd – story about Chinese and US drones using ‘gravitic propulsion systems’.<sup>20</sup> Reading that I was reminded of the first law of conspiracy: if you can imagine it, it’s been tried already.<sup>21</sup>

## **All together now . . .**

In this column in *Lobster* 87, *apropos* the then developing economic crisis, I wrote:

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?

The first small step in the national government direction was taken when Health and Social Secretary Wes Streeting said, after announcing another inquiry into social care:

We will have cross-party talks next month. And I’m really encouraged by the fact that since the election, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Reform have all said that they want to work across-party on this, and those talks will begin next month.<sup>22</sup>

It makes obvious political sense to have unpopular decisions taken by a cross-party consensus: the government may avoid carrying some of the blame. And if a party declines to take part, or blocks the creation of a consensus position, they can be attacked for being obstructive etc.

Next target for cross-party talks? My guess would be pensions, the so-called triple lock. Within the economic framework apparently accepted by this government (and the opposition parties), the triple lock is not affordable.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Most notably *The Man Who Knew too Much* <<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Man-Who-Knew-Much-Assassination/dp/0786712422>>.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, <<https://vocal.media/earth/gravitic-propulsion-system>>.

<sup>21</sup> Have forgotten which wag came up with that. I think it was in one of the excellent espionage novels by Olen Steinhauer.

<sup>22</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/MR8KP>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jan/03/uk-adult-social-care-cross-party-talks-casey-commission>>

<sup>23</sup> <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-53082530>>

## Daniel Finkelstein on RFK's assassination

It was inevitable that a member of our political commentariat would move from Robert Kennedy Jnr's – let's be generous – *eccentric* views on vaccination to his belief that his father was killed in 1968 by a conspiracy. In the event it turned out to be Daniel Finkelstein – Baron Finkelstein – associate editor of *The Times* and columnist for that paper. Finkelstein devoted the first part of his piece in *The Times* on 10 December to RFK Jnr, Sirhan Sirhan and the RFK assassination. This was his opening sentence.

Sirhan Sirhan was standing right by Robert Kennedy on June 5, 1968, when he shot and killed the senator with a .22 revolver. The whole thing could have hardly been more clear-cut.

Finkelstein has got the basics wrong: in fact Sirhan Sirhan wasn't 'standing right by Robert Kennedy'. He lunged towards RFK firing his pistol. A little more reading – say of the memoir of the man who did RFK's autopsy<sup>24</sup> – would show that RFK was killed by a contact wound to the base of the skull and that the bullets in RFK didn't match Sirhan's gun.<sup>25</sup> The actual shooter must have been the late Thane Cesar, a temporary security guard who was standing behind RFK.<sup>26</sup> It was Cesar's clip-on tie which RFK pulled off before he collapsed.

Finkelstein knows nothing about the event and here's the striking thing: he doesn't feel a need to know anything about it before offering his opinion. There is something about the designation 'conspiracy theory' which obviates the normal requirement that you know whereof you speak.

## Faking it

I have been working my way through the back copies of *Lobster*, checking for lay-out errors which happened when the first 56 issues were digitalised in a hurry by me, Jane Affleck and Ian Tresman. In the process I have been reminded of the content of said back issues, much of which I had forgotten about.

One of the things that struck me is the way *Lobster* – and many others, of course – documented an endless series of economic and social disasters as the free market, neocon view of the universe was implemented here. And yet our

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas T. Noguchi, M.D., *Coroner to the Stars* (London: Corgi, 1984)

<sup>25</sup> <<https://justiceforrfk.com/evidence/ballistics.html>>

<sup>26</sup> A reasonable summary of the story is at <<https://shorturl.at/c0pyj>> for <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7456521/Robert-F-Kennedy-assassinated-Thane-Eugene-Cesar-Sirhan-Sirhan-says-RFK-Jr.html>>.



political system – our state – carried on regardless.

With the free market nonsense came a belief that if the public sector couldn't be abolished, it needed a kick up the backside and its expenditure reduced. Target-setting was imposed throughout by management. When this didn't produce the results it was supposed to, rather than admit it didn't work – the rational move – the political system preferred that the public sector fake results showing success. In *Lobsters* 43 and 44 I discussed such faking in public financing, long-term sickness, the numbers rough sleeping, schools, Oxbridge research, medical stats, school league tables, poverty, hospital waiting lists, street crime, ambulance response times, doctors' working hours, unemployment figures and welfare fraud figures. I'm sure you know of other examples.

So why could the political system – the politicians – not admit that the neocon ideas had failed? I think there are two parts to the answer. The first is the general point that many – perhaps most – people are reluctant or unable to change their minds. The older we get the more difficult we find change; and, the more important those ideas are to us, the harder we find it. The second point is the particular difficulty perceived by politicians in admitting mistakes. After all, they present themselves as leaders and, they seem to believe, they lose credibility if they acknowledge mistakes. In the case of the current Labour Party, having abandoned most of what it believed in adopting Thatcherism (in all but name), how can it now say 'Everything since 1979 has been a mistake'?

## **Pennies dropping**

**V**ery striking piece in *The Observer* on 29th December by Will Hutton, 'Britain will never be great again until we stop flogging our top companies to the US'.<sup>27</sup> This column is essentially a paraphrase of – and a great plug for – Angus Hanton's *Vassal State: How America Runs Britain*.<sup>28</sup> All well and good Will, and I am happy to see you've still got the odd radical impulse left in you. But can you see Starmer's Labour signing up for anything even vaguely resembling this? Their big idea seems to be rather than taxing the wealthy, they will sell

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<sup>27</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/Lp9Bo>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/dec/29/britain-great-again-stop-flogging-our-top-companies-to-the-us>>

<sup>28</sup> Reviewed in *Lobster* 89 by John Booth at <<https://shorturl.at/dOaAJ>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/89/vassal-state-how-america-runs-britain-by-angus-hanton/>>.

off more of the UK to global asset management companies like Black Rock.<sup>29</sup>

## INQUIRY INTO THE DEATH OF DAWN STURGESS

### PENAL NOTICE

IF ANY PERSON DISOBEYS THIS ORDER, THE MATTER MAY BE CERTIFIED TO THE HIGH COURT WHICH MAY HOLD THAT PERSON TO BE IN CONTEMPT OF THE INQUIRY AND THAT PERSON MAY BE IMPRISONED, FINED OR HAVE THEIR ASSETS SEIZED

ANY PERSON WHO KNOWS OF THIS ORDER AND DOES ANYTHING WHICH HELPS OR PERMITS ANY PERSON TO BREACH THE TERMS OF THIS ORDER MAY ALSO AFTER CERTIFICATION TO THE HIGH COURT BE HELD TO BE IN CONTEMPT OF THE INQUIRY AND MAY BE IMPRISONED, FINED OR HAVE THEIR ASSETS SEIZED

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### DRAFT RESTRICTION ORDER UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005: HMG NAMES

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JPON the Chair having considered:

- An application made by HMG dated 31 May 2021 for a restriction order in respect of the names and designations (if appropriate) of:
  - a. all staff below Senior Civil Servant ("SCS") grade and the military equivalent of below one star rank;
  - b. all SCS not officially publicly linked to the 2018 events;
  - c. all UK Intelligence Community staff ("UKIC staff"), unless publicly avowed such as the Chief of SIS and MI5's Director General, including any cover names used by such staff; and

[REDACTED]

to continue indefinitely. That application comprised OPEN and CLOSED submissions, a Damage Assessment and a certificate issued by the Secretary of State for the Home

## The Skripal inquiry

Or, more accurately, the inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess, who died after absorbing novichok in Salisbury. Some of the inquiry's proceedings are available. As you would expect, most of it is of little interest but there was this oddity. On the left is part of the text of a restriction order in which there is a redaction. What – who – do you suppose was redacted?

## And yet . . .

We are told every day that the social media companies of Mr Musk and his ilk

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<sup>29</sup> See 'The BlackRock letters: inside Labour's "close partnership"' at <<https://shorturl.at/RcdMx>> or <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/the-blackrock-letters-inside-labours-close-partnership/>>.

are enormously powerful. And yet Albania – population two and a half million – has recently announced it will shut off TikTok to Albanian citizens for a year because of fear about the app’s effects on children.<sup>30</sup> In September 2024 Brazil cut off the X app to Brazilian citizens and, faced with this, X paid an admittedly small fine of \$5 million dollars to have it switched back on.<sup>31</sup>

So who has the power? Apps or states

### ***The Sun* reveals . . .**

**I** don’t often quote *The Sun* newspaper but it published a very good analysis of the networks of people now at the higher end of the Starmer government: ‘SPOUSE OF CARDS Astonishing “new aristocracy” of couples, relatives and nepo-babies run Labour Government, *The Sun* reveals’.

. . . . More than two dozen ministers including Rachel Reeves, Pat McFadden and Wes Streeting all have spouses or relatives on the taxpayer or Labour Party payroll, analysis shows.<sup>32</sup>

Definitely worth a look.

### **The Economic League**

**I**n *Lobster* 28 I reviewed Mike Hughes’ *Spies at Work*, in which he pulled together the fragments of information then available about the Economic League. Thirty years later Hughes has had another crack at it. In the intervening years, largely thanks to campaigners like Hughes, a great deal of information about the League has become available. In his new *Inside The League*, Hughes has written a detailed history of the organisation, its activities, its personnel and its decline and fall.<sup>33</sup>

### **Dallas again**

**T**wo pieces have recently appeared about D. H. Byrd, the Texas oilman, friend

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<sup>30</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/dOogj>> or <<https://www.itv.com/news/2024-12-22/albania-to-close-tiktok-for-one-year-after-fears-app-promotes-violence>>

<sup>31</sup> <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5y06vzk3yjo#:>>>

<sup>32</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/5dEOB>> or <<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/32234495/labour-nepotism-rachel-reeves-wes-streeting-mcfadden/>>

<sup>33</sup> Available from <<https://www.lulu.com/shop>>.

and supporter of Lyndon Johnson. Byrd owned the Texas School Depository Building from which Lee – ‘I’m just a patsy’ – Oswald is supposed to have fired on JFK’s motorcade. The first essay, by Russ Baker,<sup>34</sup> points out that Byrd established an elaborate alibi for himself, big game hunting in Africa, when the assassination took place. This alibi is duly unpicked by Baker.

Byrd is also the central subject of the second essay, by *CovertAction Magazine’s* editor Jeremy Kuzmarov. This shows, as the title has it, ‘LBJ Insiders D.H. Byrd and James Ling Bought 132,000 Shares of Stock in Defense Contractor LTV in November 1963 Around Time of the JFK Assassination’.<sup>35</sup> This is significant because, shortly after Johnson became president, LTV was awarded a contract to build military planes and the LTV shares, which Byrd had bought at around \$16 each, rose to \$169. This share deal may suggest that Byrd knew about the assassination plot in advance.

And others in Dallas were apparently in the know. In the 1995 *The Men on the Sixth Floor*, Glen Sample writes on p. 178:

During the research and investigation phase of this book I had the opportunity to communicate with a retired member of the intelligence community, who told me about an event he once attended, a luncheon at the Petroleum Club in San Antonio, in 1973.

‘I couldn’t pass up the chance to ask Texas oil guys their view of the Hunt family being involved in JFK’s death. After much laughter my host said, “Hell, half of Dallas was in on it!”’<sup>36</sup>

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In his essay Russ Baker (see above) also writes this:

As for the TSBD [Texas School Depository Building] company itself, several former employees have described to me and others company activities, including the apparent covert shipment of things other than books in book cartons, that made clear to them the outfit had its own connections with the intelligence world. In addition, Elize Glaze, a reporter for the *Austin American-Statesman*, researched and interviewed Bill Shelley, Oswald’s supervisor, and later noted, “Mr. Shelley claims to have been an intelligence officer during World War II

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<sup>34</sup> <<https://whowhatwhy.org/justice/jfk-assassination-60-years-later-crucial-alibi-dismantled/>>

<sup>35</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/gBhOI>> or <<https://covertactionmagazine.com/2024/11/21/lbj-insiders-d-h-byrd-and-james-ling-bought-132000-shares-of-stock-in-defense-contractor-ltv-in-november-1963-around-time-of-the-jfk-assassination/>>

<sup>36</sup> Text available at <<https://zoboko.com/book/roepjme3/the-men-on-the-sixth-floor>>.

and thereafter joined the CIA.”<sup>37</sup>

If it is true that the TSBD was the cover for military/intelligence operations – and the evidence presented by Weston in note 37 is suggestive rather than conclusive – it would explain why Oswald, *qua* intelligence operative, took the badly paid job there: it was another part of his cover story. And as he was apparently steered towards the job by Ruth Paine, it is another hint that Paine, as many suspect, was herself CIA.<sup>38</sup>

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I was looking through posts on John Simkin’s JFK Assassination Debate<sup>39</sup> and noticed some discussion of Joachim Joesten and decided that since I think LBJ-dunit (or was one of those who done it), I’d better read Joesten’s *The Dark Side of Lyndon Baines Johnson*, even though it is over fifty years old. It is apparently available free on-line<sup>40</sup> but I was unable to open the file there and bought a copy at abebooks. The version I got is a 2013 reprint and I simply cannot tell if this is the same as the original edition. I presume it is. It has no index and no notes, though there is some documentation within the text when he quotes newspaper articles. Considering he wrote it in 1965/6, it is a very striking run through all the then available information about LBJ and his corruption – Billy Sol Estes, Bobby Baker etc – and what little was then known about the murders surrounding the Estes events.

There are three items which suggest that Joesten was being run by the KGB. Joesten had been a member of the German Communist Party before the war and had his first book on the assassination published by a small New York outfit, Marzani and Munsell, subsidised by the KGB.<sup>41</sup> The second is the report on the JFK Assassination Debate site by Brigette Wilke that a 1958 Joesten book in German, titled *CIA*, described the National Security Agency (NSA)’s

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<sup>37</sup> That was all new to me but not, of course, new to the serious JFK buffs. Shelley, the TSBD and Glaze are the subject of a long essay by William Weston, ‘The CIA and the Texas School Book Depository’ at <<https://shorturl.at/E4I2A>> or <<https://www.kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/the-cia-and-the-texas-school-book-depository>>. See also <<https://www.theotheroswald.com/post/the-other-schoolbook-depository>>.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, <[http://www.jfkpage.com/Paine/Occurrence\\_in\\_Nicaragua.pdf](http://www.jfkpage.com/Paine/Occurrence_in_Nicaragua.pdf)>.

<sup>39</sup> <<https://educationforum.ipbhost.com/forum/126-jfk-assassination-debate/>>

<sup>40</sup> <<https://www.box.com/s/8b408e6999f8799dfd0a/file/1702837045629>>

<sup>41</sup> KGB officer Oleg Kalugin wrote in his memoir *Spymaster*: ‘he [Marzani] had close ties to the Soviet government and the KGB, which secretly kept his publishing house afloat. KGB officers frequented his parties.’ (London: Smyth Gryphon, 1994) p. 85.

There are a couple of documents on the CIA’s site about Joesten, one of which looks like a bad scan and is jumbled and partly unintelligible. The readable piece is at <<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80B01676R000600120027-6.pdf>>.

work in some detail and even named its then director, Ralph Canine.<sup>42</sup> As the existence of the NSA was not publicly acknowledged until the 1970s, this came from an intelligence source, presumably the KGB. The third is the fact that Joesten's writing about the assassination echoed the KGB's view of the event. When the KGB thought it was probably the CIA and/or the oil millionaires behind it, Joesten's book said the same. When the KGB acquired information in 1965 that LBJ was behind it, Joesten switched to writing his LBJ book.<sup>43</sup>

## Twixt lip and cup (or something)

A classic of the headline-and-text-differing genre was on the *Daily Mail* site of 2 December. In 32 point the headline proclaimed:

The secrets of Vladimir Putin's riches and the Salisbury poisoning:  
Russian president ordered hit on Sergei Skripal 'because he feared he  
would expose how he stole his vast fortune'.<sup>44</sup>

The opening sentence of the text begins:

Vladimir Putin *may* have ordered the bungled . . . (Emphasis added.)

## Kincora

Steve Dorril wrote about Kincora in the first issue of *Lobster*. We continued to cover the subject through many subsequent issues, especially after we made contact with Colin Wallace. Because the scandal has never been properly examined officially, the story keeps cropping-up. The latest instalment is a kind of memoir by Roy Garland, a member of William McGrath's Tara organisation, who blew the whistle on McGrath in 1973 to the RUC but was ignored. The first part is 'Roy Garland on corruption in high places'<sup>45</sup> and the second is 'Tara and Kincora, the RUC link'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See the post of August 20, 2008 on the page at  
<<https://educationforum.ipbhost.com/topic/6089-joachim-joesten/#comment-54197>>.

<sup>43</sup> <<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/docid-32204484.pdf>> We don't know the source of the Soviets' belief that LBJ was involved in the assassination. One possibility is Robert Kennedy, who got to know Soviet diplomatic personnel during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

<sup>44</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/sJpXm>> or <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14148343/salisbury-poisonings-sergei-skripal-putin-kremlin-embezzlement-putin.html>>

<sup>45</sup> <<https://thebrokenelbow.com/2024/10/27/roy-garland-on-corruption-in-high-places/>>

<sup>46</sup> <<https://thebrokenelbow.com/2024/11/24/tara-and-kincora-the-ruc-link/>>

## Changing times . . .

In one of his (now deleted) YouTube pieces Professor Jeffrey Sachs mentioned a book about US covert action: Lindsey A. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018). (Be warned: there are apparently free PDF copies of this available on-line, but my computer's system flagged the sites I checked as potential sources of malware and/or viruses.) There have been many positive reviews and this, from a review by David S. Foglesong in the *Journal of American History*, sums it up quite nicely.

Drawing on a wide reading in secondary sources supplemented by research at the National Archives and presidential libraries, O'Rourke analyzes sixty-four covert interventions from 1947 to 1989. After examining the causes, conduct, and consequences of the covert actions in chapters 3–5, O'Rourke turns to case studies of U.S. actions in Eastern Europe, Vietnam, and the Dominican Republic. She finds that more than 60 percent (39 of 64) of the efforts failed and most did not remain secret; yet policy makers continued to resort to covert actions and to overestimate their ability to keep the U.S. role hidden.<sup>47</sup>

Not only is an American academic writing this, she is getting good reviews and lots of attention. This is another example of the climate changing. Would she have found an academic publisher willing to handle it twenty years ago?

I noted in the previous *Lobster* that *Foreign Affairs*, house journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, had recently published this:

For decades, American presidents have waged illegal wars, plotted to assassinate foreign leaders, unlawfully detained and tortured people, toppled democratic governments, and supported repressive regimes without any possibility of legal accountability in either domestic or international courts.<sup>48</sup>

*Foreign Affairs* also published Paul Krugman's review of Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman's *Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World Economy*.<sup>49</sup> While he's no Marxist, Krugman is what passes for a radical economist in corporate America and here he is in one of their house journals.

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<sup>47</sup> *Journal of American History*, Volume 106, Issue 3, December 2019

<sup>48</sup> See <<https://shorturl.at/Z074G>> or <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/rest-world-us-president-has-always-been-above-law>>.

<sup>49</sup> <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/american-way-economic-war-paul-krugman>>

## **UAPs, UFOs – whatever**

**A** very striking, massively detailed article by former State Department analyst Marik von Rennenkampff on the subject of the US state's knowledge of UFOs has appeared on *The Hill*.<sup>50</sup> The 50 links in the text go to recent admissions – official and unofficial – by US military and intelligence sources on the subject. Taken individually, some of the recent statements are striking. Pulled together, as they are in this essay, the effect is overwhelming. Essentially the US military and intelligence services know – and have known for some time – that the earth, and its military installations and equipment in particular, are being regularly visited by vehicles from . . . somewhere else . . . vehicles whose performance the Pentagon can't understand, let alone replicate.

## **Politicians and economics**

**F**ew politicians bother to learn elementary economics and the monetarist idea of the mid 1970s – control the money supply and you can control inflation – appealed because it was so simple. It took hold, particularly in the Conservative Party, where what became the Thatcherites adopted it and wrecked the British manufacturing economy with it between 1980 and 1984.

Margaret Thatcher was a politician who knew no economics. John Hoskyns, a businessman recruited to join the Thatcher team as Head of the Policy Unit, records in his memoir:

I had been concerned since before the election [of 1979] that the pound was too high. Margaret [Thatcher] seemed to be convinced that 'the higher the pound, the better for the economy'.<sup>51</sup>

(As a high value pound makes imports cheaper and exports more expensive, it is bad for the domestic manufacturing economy.)

This brief trip down memory lane was prompted by a very good essay in the *New Statesman* by Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'The Thatcher delusion'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/em8EJ>> or <<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/5024900-true-anomalies-pentagon-finally-admits-its-baffled-by-ufos/>>

The author's other articles in this field are listed at <<https://muckrack.com/marik-von-rennenkampff/articles>>.

<sup>51</sup> John Hoskyns, *Just In Time: inside the Thatcher revolution* (London: Aurum, 2000) p. 107. He records (on p. 159) Anthony Barber, Ted Heath's Chancellor, with the same belief that a highly valued currency is good for the economy.

<sup>52</sup> This is subtitled 'The Labour Party have swallowed the Iron Lady myth. Rachel Reeves must abandon it for good'. <<https://www.newstatesman.com/ideas/2024/10/the-thatcher-delusion>>



Alas, we don't live in a world in which the leader of the Labour Party will stand up and say that the free market moves since 1979 have all been a mistake. Even if Mr Starmer thought it, this would entail criticising Mrs Thatcher's acolytes, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, and he won't do that.

To judge by Chancellor Reeves' Mansion House speech in November, she isn't going to entertain any deviant ideas.<sup>53</sup> It was all pretty standard stuff and might have been delivered any time in the last 45 years. The financial services sector, she told her audience, is:

. . . the crown jewel in our economy. It employs 1.2m people, from London to Edinburgh, and from Manchester to Belfast. It is one of the country's largest and most productive sectors, accounting for 9% of our economic output.

Of that 9% about half is in London – that's 'the City', the real 'crown jewel'. The rest is retail banking and insurance spread throughout the UK. So this 'crown jewel' is about 4.5% of economic output. At 9.1% of economic output, and thus twice the size of 'the City', is manufacturing.<sup>54</sup> But the word 'manufacturing' is not in Reeves' speech. What *was* in her speech was a promise to reduce the regulation of the City, imposed after the last financial crash. What could possibly go wrong?<sup>55</sup>

## The Israel lobby

According to *Lobster's* search engine, AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, was first mentioned more than 20 years ago in issue 49 by Tom Easton, and has been referred to fairly regularly since. Its activities are now a feature on several leftish sites. The best recent essay I have seen is by Branko Marcetic at *In These Times*.<sup>56</sup> It documents current AIPAC activity against Democratic Party politicians who are less than enthusiastic supporters of Israel. The equivalent UK site is the UK subsection of Track AIPAC.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/mansion-house-2024-speech>>

<sup>54</sup> According to the House of Commons library.  
<<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8353/>>.

<sup>55</sup> The excellent Richard Murphy made some similar comments. See  
<<https://shorturl.at/Ehnc5>> or <<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2024/11/17/all-rachel-reeves-has-to-do-now-is-wait-for-the-crash/>>.

<sup>56</sup> <<https://inthesetimes.com/article/squad-aipac-israel-corporate-dark-money>>

<sup>57</sup> <<https://trackaipac.com/united-kingdom>>

*Dropsitenews* is carrying a very striking account by an American journalist of an Israeli-funded press junket to Israel. Of course the American hacks got a ton of anti-Hamas and anti-Muslim propaganda. That was the point of the exercise. What is striking is the absurdity and crudity of the material offered by the Israelis. Evidently the Israelis involved think American hacks are stupid and gullible.<sup>58</sup>

## **Trouble at NED**

*The Grayzone* is much too sympathetic towards Russia for me but it produces some interesting material. An example is a long account – based on leaked emails – of recent events at the US government’s National Endowment for Democracy (NED).<sup>59</sup> NED is evidently having difficulty dealing with the contemporary world. Part of this flap is the result of the arrival of younger personnel, who are apparently as concerned with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda as they are with promoting democracy and US interests.<sup>60</sup>

Among the leaked emails is one from senior NED staffer Michael Allen which includes this paragraph:

During the NED’s first compulsory DEI training (conducted by an external provider) I asked why social class was not being considered alongside ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation etc.; questioned the term “micro aggression”; and observed that social justice movements have historically sought equality of opportunity, not equality of outcomes. I raised other questions at a DEI training on the 1619 Project, not least that it was an ideological, not historical project. After each session (and a couple more) certain colleagues – including my line manager – suggested that such interventions were “not helpful” and, in essence, reflected my white male privilege.<sup>61</sup>

And if you were wondering how far into the US state DEI has penetrated, you can read the CIA’s version in their publication *2020–2023 CIA DIVERSITY AND*

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<sup>58</sup> <<https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/israel-gaza-amepa-palestine-genocide-iron-dome>>

<sup>59</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/810Ak>> or <<https://thegrayzone.com/2024/07/30/grayzone-pr-fiasco-us-govt-regime-change-leaked-emails/>>

<sup>60</sup> Obviously this was written before President Trump began his assault on DEI in January 2024.

<sup>61</sup> <[https://thegrayzone.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NED-Master-Files\\_Redacted.pdf](https://thegrayzone.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NED-Master-Files_Redacted.pdf)>

## Streeting ahead

In *The Observer* on 17 November Phillip Inman had an article with the headline 'Streeting's reforms could save the NHS from the private sector. He must not fail'.<sup>63</sup> Inman omitted – or is unaware of – the fact that Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting has taken £175,000 from private healthcare companies<sup>64</sup> and thus is highly unlikely to save the NHS from the private healthcare sector.

## Havana Syndrome

Anomalous Health Incidents (AHIs), discussed in this column in the previous *Lobster*, is the official US euphemism for a wide range of symptoms up to and including brain damage, referred to by all but intelligence bureaucrats as Havana Syndrome, since the first incidents happened at the US embassy there. Re-reading some of the reporting and comment on this, two things struck me. The first was the quite extraordinary lengths to which the agencies of the US state have been willing to go to publicly deny the reality of what is staring them in the face. More than 1500 US state employees connected to its foreign policy organisations<sup>65</sup> have been assaulted by *something* invisible. And this began almost 10 years ago. Yet this is the official US position as of 2023.

Since US officials first reported AHIs in Havana, Cuba in late 2016, the IC [Intelligence Community] has sought to understand whether these events can be attributed to a foreign actor and a deliberate external mechanism. The IC pursued three separate lines of inquiry: the first encompassed work determining whether available data points to the involvement of a foreign adversary in the incidents; the second focused on the feasibility and existence of deliberate mechanisms that an

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<sup>62</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/w0zxz>> or <<https://www.cia.gov/static/c26da464843c5aee8217ef3919b19638/2020-2023-DI-Strategy.pdf>>

<sup>63</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/8uPRQ>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/nov/16/streetings-reforms-could-save-the-nhs-from-the-private-sector-he-must-not-fail>>

<sup>64</sup> <<https://tinyurl.com/2uj32ew3>> or <<https://www.thenational.scot/news/24250557.wes-streeting-takes-175k-donors-linked-private-health-firms/>>

<sup>65</sup> The 1500 figure comes from <<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/01/havana-syndrome-cia-intelligence-00085021>>.

adversary might use against US personnel to cause AHIs; and the third evaluated whether medical analysis can help determine if an outside actor is involved in the broad range of phenomena and symptoms associated with AHIs. **Based on the results of these three lines of inquiry, most IC agencies have concluded that it is “very unlikely” a foreign adversary is responsible for the reported AHIs. IC agencies have varying confidence levels, with two agencies at moderate-to-high confidence while three are at moderate confidence. Two agencies judge it is “unlikely” an adversary was responsible for AHIs and they do so with low confidence based on collection gaps and their review of the same evidence.**<sup>66</sup> (Emphasis in the original.)

When a lawyer for one of the victims made the obvious point that the CIA was covering things up, a CIA spokesperson wrote:

The Intelligence Community Assessment on anomalous health incidents released by ODNI [Office of the Director of National Intelligence] reflects years of rigorous, painstaking collection, investigative work, and analysis by IC agencies, including CIA. We applied the Agency’s very best operational, analytic, and technical tradecraft to what *is one of the largest and most intensive investigations in the Agency’s history*. The CIA remains committed to ensuring continued access to care for affected officers and to fully investigating any reports of health incidents. (Emphasis added.)<sup>67</sup>

And yet they still managed to disregard the experience of over a thousand US federal employees.

The second striking feature of the reporting is the complete absence of any back story. You will not learn that the US military itself has a long history with this technology. In the 1980s the so-called peace camps at Greenham Common in the UK and Seneca in New York State were subjected to what was then called ‘zapping’ – electromagnetic radiation – producing effects similar to those reported by the current victims of Havana Syndrome.<sup>68</sup> But then most of

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<sup>66</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/sy6B7>> or <[https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Updated\\_Assessment\\_of\\_Anomalous\\_Health\\_Incidents.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Updated_Assessment_of_Anomalous_Health_Incidents.pdf)>

<sup>67</sup> <<https://shorturl.at/7Cf6z>> or <<https://www.salon.com/2024/09/16/active-suppression-of-witnesses-cia-lied-about-havana-syndrome-whistleblower-documents-reveal/>>.

<sup>68</sup> This was discussed in Steve Armstrong’s ‘Microwave Wars’ in the now defunct *City Limits*, August 1990. The background was detailed by Armen Victorian in his ‘The military use of electromagnetic, microwave and mind control technology’ in *Lobster* 34.

the research and writing on the subject was done before the Internet and there's only a few of us who can pull old cuttings from our filing cabinets.

My guess is that the US state is publicly denying the reality of Havana Syndrome because, while the US is happy to fight Russia to the last dead Ukrainian, its politicians are afraid and/or unwilling to confront the reality of Russia's hybrid warfare against them and their allies. As to why they are afraid/unwilling, I have no idea.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> One attempted explanation is at <<https://shorturl.at/e0ISh>> or <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/1981229/on-the-gerasimov-doctrine-why-the-west-fails-to-beat-russia-to-the-punch/>>.

