

The view from the bridge

Robin Ramsay

*Thanks to Nick Must (in particular) and Garrick Alder
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new

Disinfo

So there was Ben Macintyre in *The Times* (18 April), regaling us again with the story of the Soviet disinformation in the 1980s about AIDS being a US Army germ warfare project. Macintyre sees this event as a forerunner of today's Russian disinformation projects.¹ What he omitted, of course, was that this AIDS nonsense was a response to the US disinformation at the beginning of the decade about the KGB shooting the Pope.

After I wrote that paragraph I was looking at volume 1 of Charles Moore's biography of Margaret Thatcher and noticed that he has it that the shooting of the Pope was *probably* the work of the KGB. *Probably?* Moore's caution is striking. Hadn't the KGB-dunit verdict been accepted by almost all and sundry in the West? Apparently not quite. When first arrested, the shooter (Mehmet Ali Agca) said the Bulgarians and KGB were involved.² Released from prison, in a recent autobiography, he has claimed that he was told to do it by Ayatollah Khomeini.³ It has also been argued that it wasn't the KGB but Soviet military

¹ A regular survey of Russian disinformation is at <<https://euvsdisinfo.eu>>. For a general historical account of Russian disinfo about diseases see <<https://tinyurl.com/r49d5gk>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/13/science/putin-russia-disinformation-health-coronavirus.html>>.

² 'Agca points the finger', Newsweek, 18 Jul 1983 archived (via the CIA reading room) at <<https://tinyurl.com/y6wvla2q>> or <<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00552R000505120014-5.pdf>>

³ <<https://tinyurl.com/yaczqo7s>> or <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/vatican-shoots-down-claim-that-iran-backed-john-paul-assassination-attempt/2013/02/01/bc0ae828-6caf-11e2-8f4f-2abd96162ba8_story.html>

intelligence, the GRU.⁴ The CIA, whose assets (Paul Henze, Claire Sterling) began the KGB-dunit thread in the 80s, has offered nothing since then and Vasily Mitrokhin, the KGB archivist, was silent on the subject in his book with Dr. Christopher Andrew, *The Sword and the Shield*.

Although the Russian state is the most active, it is not alone in the current disinfo game. A considerable effort is being made by the both the USA and China to apportion blame for the COVID-19 outbreak.⁵ More prosaically Craig Murray has recently identified a current British disinformation network.⁶ And all this talk of disinfo can encourage us to to forget about all the other ways that information is used – or not used – to sustain the psychological and intellectual powers–that–be.⁷

Twenty-five years or so ago I reported that I had been accused by a US intelligence official of running Soviet disinformation. Here is most of what I wrote in response in *Lobster 22*, .

Counterpoint

Once upon a time there was a magazine called *Counterpoint*, produced here in Canterbury, devoted to the exposure of Soviet disinformation (or alleged disinformation). Then a small article appeared in the now defunct British magazine *The Digger* pointing out *Counterpoint's* existence and wondering who was funding it. Now there is *New Counterpoint*, published not in the UK but in Washington DC, like its predecessor devoted to the exposure of Soviet disinformation, edited by – fronted by, at any rate – Stanislav Levchenko and Herbert Romerstein. *New Counterpoint* is very cheap – 11 issues per US\$25 – so is clearly still being subsidised by somebody not a million miles away from the US Government. PO Box 23721, Washington D.C., 20026-3751, U.S.A.

New Counterpoint's Herbert Romerstein is the author of the following paragraph.

'*Geheim* works closely with a network of publications in other countries that frequently carry Soviet disinformation themes,

⁴ <<https://spectator.org/trump-putin-and-pope-francis-and-the-plot-to-kill-pope-john-paul-ii/>>

⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/wro9xx2>> or <<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/03/12/chinese-official-says-us-army-may-have-brought-epidemic-wuhan.html>> and <<https://tinyurl.com/s83m68j>> or <<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/13/asia/china-coronavirus-us-lijian-zhao-intl-hnk/index.html>>.

⁶ <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/04/information-wars/>>

⁷ On this see Mark Curtis' survey of the British media's recent handling of British foreign policy. <<https://tinyurl.com/y9anp3wq>> or <<http://markcurtis.info/2020/03/26/how-the-uk-press-is-misinforming-the-public-about-britains-role-in-the-world/>>.

particularly directed against the CIA. These are: *Lobster* in Great Britain; *Intelligence Newsletter*, formerly *Intelligence/Parapolitics*, in France; and *Covert Action Information Bulletin in the United States*.’ – p. 34 of Romerstein’s *Soviet Agents of Influence*, Centre for Intelligence Studies, Alexandria, USA, June 1991.

This was bound to happen one day, and in a sense it is rather flattering to be of such interest to the US intelligence community. The comment makes it sound as though this quartet of magazines and newsletters are an active network: ‘*Geheim* works closely with . . . *Lobster*’. The truth is more prosaic. *Lobster* does exchange subscriptions with *Intelligence Newsletter*, *Covert Action* and *Top Secret (Geheim)*, and has plugged all of them in its columns over the years. I have been called once on the telephone by Olivier Schmidt in Paris and once by Michael Opperskalski from *Geheim*. When I remember, I send newspaper clippings to Olivier, few of which seem to be of any interest, to judge by what he prints. So close is *Lobster* to *Covert Action* that they waited until issue 33? 34? before referring to us at all.’

new

America’s opioid disaster

‘When a judge ordered the DEA to share the statistics, they revealed that the drug distributors had overwhelmed America with 76 *billion* oxycodone and hydrocodone pills from 2006 to 2012.’⁸

This theme will be familiar to anyone who watched the US TV series *Justified* (2010-2015)⁹ in which the use of a version of oxycontone – oxycontin, oxy or hillbilly heroin as it was then known – was a major plot line.

new

Lest we forget

This paragraph originally appeared in *Lobster* 64.¹⁰

⁸ ‘How Big Pharma Flooded Coal Country with Opioids’
<<https://undark.org/2020/04/03/book-review-death-in-muck-lick/>>.

⁹ <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1489428/>>

¹⁰ <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster64/lob64-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>> See subhead Leveson disappears Henderson

'Robert Henderson, who had Special Branch sicced on him and then was the subject of a press smear campaign for the sin of writing letters to Tony Blair (see *Lobster* 39) submitted evidence to the Leveson Inquiry about the way the media had treated him. Leveson did not call him to testify. (No celebrity value, perhaps.) When the Leveson report was published Henderson checked the list of those who had made submissions and discovered that he was not on it. See the Report's appendices, submissions, page 1839.

Henderson emailed on 6 April:

'[Keir] Starmer is my MP. Mmmm . . . I wonder if I should visit him at his surgery and remind him of the time when he was the Director of Public Prosecutions and how he refused to take action after Tony and Cherie Blair had attempted to have me prosecuted during the 1997 General Election campaign on grounds which as lawyers they must have known were bogus. That being so the Blairs must have been attempting to use their status to bully the police into acting against me, a clear case of an attempt to pervert the course of justice.'¹¹

new

Craig Murray under attack

Scotland's state is going after Murray – and also after a couple of other journalists who, like him, reported the Alex Salmond case. He has been charged with contempt of court and the trial is set for July. He has set up a defence fund. (Follow the url in the footnote at the end of the paragraph below.) He posted recently:

'I know of four pro-Independence folk who were last week phoned or visited by Police Scotland and threatened with contempt of court proceedings over social media postings they had made weeks back on the Alex Salmond case. Then on Monday, a Scottish journalist I know had his home raided by five policemen, who confiscated (and still have) all his computers and phones. They said they were from the "Alex Salmond team" and investigating his postings on the Alex Salmond case. He has not to date been charged, and his lawyer is advising him at present to say nothing, so I am not revealing his name [. . .] The purpose of this

¹¹ Henderson's full length version of the Blair event is at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9w35wsg>> or <<https://livinginamadhouse.wordpress.com/2010/10/26/when-tony-and-cherie-blair-tried-to-have-me-jailed/>>.

operation against free speech is a desperate attempt to keep the lid on the nature of the state conspiracy to fit up Alex Salmond. Once the parliamentary inquiry starts, a huge amount of evidence of conspiracy which the court did not allow the defence to introduce in evidence during the criminal trial, will be released. The persecution of myself is an attempt to intimidate independent figures into not publishing anything about it. The lickspittle media of course do not have to be intimidated. To this end, I am charged specifically with saying that the Alex Salmond case was a fit-up and a conspiracy in which the Crown Office was implicated. So I thought I would say it again now:

The Alex Salmond case was a fit-up and a conspiracy in which the Crown Office was implicated, foiled by the jury. If Scotland is the kind of country where you go to jail for saying that, let me get my toothbrush.¹² (emphasis in the original)

new

Hello Dolly

Derek 'Dolly' Draper was one of the hustlers (sorry: lobbyists) around the Blair government in its early days and was exposed by Greg Palast in what became known as 'lobbygate'.¹³ Draper retrained as a psychotherapist and these days is occasionally mentioned as the partner of the TV presenter Kate Garraway. At time of writing this he was seriously ill with COVID-19. Draper deserves to be remembered if only for his comment when asked if he had written the book *Blair's 100 Days* which appeared with his name on it. 'Write it?' he replied, 'I didn't even read it.'

new

The Mountbattens

Andrew Lownie emailed me a digital copy of his book, *The Mountbattens*.¹⁴ About the Mountbattens I know little. But I was curious to see what Lownie

¹² <<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/04/craig-murray-defence-fund-launched/>>

¹³ See, for instance, Greg Palast's recounting of how that all started (from July of 1998) at <<https://tinyurl.com/yd3cjmcf>> or <<https://www.gregpalast.com/lobbygate-there-are-17-people-that-count-to-say-that-i-am-intimate-with-every-one-of-them-is-the-understatement-of-the-century/>>

¹⁴ <<https://www.blinkpublishing.co.uk/the-mountbattens.html>>

offered about the 1968 Cecil King 'coup' event. It's pretty much the story as before, though firmed up a little. Yes, there was a meeting called by Cecil King, the Chair of the Mirror Group of newspapers. How far off the ground Cecil King's feet were at this point is illustrated by the fact that before meeting Mountbatten, he had gone to Paris to talk to Oswald Mosley(!), to sound him out as leader of a national government. In the received version, as soon as King made his intentions clear, Sir Solly Zuckerman (government Chief Scientist at the time) also at the meeting, left in outrage, taking Mountbatten with him. Other, subsequent accounts of the meeting suggested that this version was for the rubes, as Tony Frewin would say, and Mountbatten was considerably taken with the idea of being Viceroy of the UK, as it were (he had been Viceroy of India). This is the version that Lownie presents.

He also has convincing evidence that Mountbatten was bisexual and, rather like Jeremy Thorpe, behaved extremely recklessly in his pursuit of young men. Among those quoted are a couple of anonymous men who claim to have been at the Kincora boys home and were transported to Mountbatten's home and a hotel for his pleasure.

If anyone reading this wants to review the book – and remember it is a digital version – please get in touch.

All our yesterdays

Rummaging about in my computer I came across an undated note I had made in the late 1980s. I had met a TV journalist who told me that he had got drunk once with Cord Meyer, CIA station chief in London in the 1970s. Meyer had boasted about the wonderful operation the Agency had run creating the Social Democratic Party.¹⁵ Said journalist put three of his best people on this but they found nothing.

I don't remember who this person was and evidently he didn't want me recording his name. Chances are it was the late Ray Fitzwalter, erstwhile head of Granada TV's World in Action. I can't think of anyone else I might have met who had three employees to put onto a job and with whom I would have been discussing the CIA. There is still is no evidence of this operation to my knowledge.

¹⁵ For non-UK readers: a group of MPs on the centre/right of the Labour Party quit and formed the Social Democratic Party (SDP). This took millions of votes from Labour in the 1983 general election, enabling the election of Margaret Thatcher and thus preventing the election of a Labour government *formally* committed to scrapping its nuclear weapons – presumably the primary aim of any campaign run by the CIA. On the SDP and its American connections see Tom Easton, 'Who were *they* travelling with?' in *Lobster* 31.

Dom's the word

So I watched the BBC profile of Dominic Cummings, which boiled down to this: Cummings directed campaigns against the Euro, the proposed North-eastern Assembly and the EU. I don't remember the campaign against the Euro. Since Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown had made it clear he wouldn't support joining the single currency – which was about the only thing the *shmuck* got right – there was no chance of it happening. Similarly, campaigning against the North-eastern Assembly was kicking at an open door. Since Whitehall proposed to give said assembly virtually no actual power, it was going to be little more than a talking shop for professional politicians and their staff – with fewer powers than the county councils. A hard sell.

These led, ultimately, to his directing the unofficial campaign in favour of leaving the EU during the referendum. About which we could certainly say this: thanks to the barely regulated funding of political parties¹⁶ and campaigns – and the entirely unpoliced use of the Net for propaganda – Cummings and Cambridge Analytica did a competent job of flooding peoples' electronic devices with anti-EU messages. Many of them lies. Was this critical to the eventual outcome? Did Cummings/Cambridge Analytica make more of a contribution to the result than decades of hostility to the EU from most of the British newspapers? There is no data on this that I have seen.

Cummings has been portrayed as super-clever mainly because he has been operating among what used to be known as the Stupid Party.

By their omissions shall ye know them

In his *Times* column on 28 March, former Conservative MP Matthew Parris worried about the 'magic money tree' the Conservatives had discovered with which to pay employees and employers whose livelihoods had been shut down by COVID-19. Parris is worried (a) about the financial consequences of this huge expansion of public debt and (b) the political consequences of this apparent refutation of one of the Tories' central political planks: namely that *there is no magic money tree*. Curiously, he did not mention that the magic

¹⁶ <opendemocracy.net> is the best source on 'dark money' in UK politics. About which George Monbiot wrote this recently:

'Modern politics is impossible to understand without grasping the Pollution Paradox. The greater the risk to public health and wellbeing a company presents, the more money it must spend on politics, to ensure it isn't regulated out of existence. Political spending comes to be dominated by the dirtiest companies, ensuring that they wield the greatest influence, crowding out their cleaner rivals.'

At <<https://www.monbiot.com/2020/03/22/prescription-for-disaster/>>.

money tree had first been discovered to provide the half a trillion pounds for the collapsing banks in the aftermath of the big crash of 2008/9.¹⁷ (Not referring to this is particularly strange as it happened under a Labour government.)

Of course they did

One of the big historical scabs which still awaits a decent picking is the allegation that the United States used biological weapons against North Korea during the Korean War. In recent years this issue has been revisited and the evidence suggests the allegations were true – as was found by an international inquiry at the time.¹⁸

I was browsing through the blog of TV documentary-maker and investigative journalist Tim Tate and came across the section – currently at the foot of page one of his blog – where he talks about making a film in North Korea in 2010.¹⁹

‘That hour-long film investigated North Korea’s long-standing allegations that during the Korean War United States forces had used biological weapons, spreading anthrax, typhus and bubonic plague. It took me four years of patient requests to gain filming permission from Pyongyang. And, as the documentary made clear, we were dependent on the regime for transport (we traveled all over North Korea), on the ground translation and the choice of interviewees, including eye-witnesses to the alleged germ warfare. We had no way of independently verifying the identity of these elderly men; but the callouses and dirt deeply ground into their hands did appear to support their claims to be ordinary farmers rather than political bureaucrats.

One of the other interviewees we were required to film – an official state historian – was, however, even more intriguing. There was little doubt that his statements had been rehearsed with, and cleared by, the

¹⁷ John Booth tells me that prior to becoming an MP Parris had been Mrs Thatcher’s correspondence secretary – something that he omits from his *Who’s Who* entry in the editions of 1984 and 2002 that I have to hand. In that role Parris is referred to on p. 406 of Charles Moore’s *Margaret Thatcher: the Authorized biography* (London: Penguin, 2013).

¹⁸ See, for example, Jeffrey Kaye’s ‘The long-suppressed official report on US biowarfare in North Korea’ at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9fwjwln>> or <<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/the-long-suppressed-korean-war-report-on-u-s-use-of-biological-weapons-released-at-last-20d83f5cee54>> and Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, ‘United States Biological Warfare during the Korean War: rhetoric and reality’ at <<https://www.yorku.ca/sendicot/ReplytoColCrane.htm>>.

¹⁹ <<https://timtate.co.uk/category/blog/>>

regime's leaders. When I asked him what it would take to repair the relationship between Pyongyang and Washington, he said slowly and firmly that if the United States was prepared to admit having used biological weapons then North Korea could begin serious discussions.'

That was 10 years ago and things have changed since: Trump and the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un have met. The fact is that a North Korean government official said US acknowledgement of the use of biological weapons used half a century before was a condition of serious talks. This suggests to me that such weapons *were* used and that this wasn't just propaganda by the North Koreans and the Chinese

And why would they not be used? Biological weapons were used covertly throughout history²⁰ and chemical weapons openly during WW1; and at the end of WW2 the US military had acquired the Japanese biological warfare group Unit 731.²¹ What better testing ground than a war against Asians far away?

Labour's new leader

A couple of months ago somebody surfaced a picture of a young Keir Starmer with a copy of a short-lived lefty magazine of the 80s, *Socialist Alternatives*.²² Edition 144 of *The Spokesman*²³ has reproduced an essay Starmer wrote for said magazine about workers control. This is the concluding paragraph:

'In 1986 therefore, the objectives are to retain the autonomous character of trade unions neither integrated into the state or the company; but to broaden trade unions horizontally both into the immediate working enterprise and beyond. This necessitates the fullest internal democracy to avoid vertical hierarchies dominating the unions. Such resulting horizontalism will encourage and pave the way for increasingly ambitious challenges to management prerogatives, whilst enabling day-to-day defensive struggles to maximise their efficiency.'

²⁰ See <https://www.emedicinehealth.com/biological_warfare/article_em.htm> for a brief resumé of facts and allegations.

²¹ <<https://tinyurl.com/yx7v3yro>> or <https://www.umflint.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Research_and_Sponsored_Programs/MOM/b.altheide.pdf>

²² I saw this in *The Times* and you can see it via Google images. Search for Keir Starmer Socialist Alternatives.

²³ Produced in Nottingham by the Bertrand Russell Foundation. See <<http://spokesmanbooks.com>>.

After seven years of Mrs Thatcher, this is truly the triumph of hope over experience!

Kevin Coogan RIP

On 6 March I learned that Kevin Coogan had died. Coogan wrote several articles for *Lobster* which are included in the list of his publications at <https://tinyurl.com/t6st4eg> or <https://beyondthefringepolitics.com/2020/03/08/kevin-coogan-a-bibliography/>.

His book about the American national socialist, Francis Parker Yockey, *Dreamer of the Day*, was reviewed in *Lobster* 39.

I met Coogan once. He came to Hull and my partner and I took him to Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay, 50 miles up the coast. He arrived with a book about the Venerable Bede, who had been active in those parts over a thousand years before. It seemed a very Coogan-ish thing to do.

Before he died Coogan completed a manuscript about the fascinating Michal Goleniewski, who flits in and out of many of the big intelligence stories on the 1950s and 60s. That will be a treat when it appears.

9/11 as *casus belli*

John Booth sent me an interesting essay by David A Hughes, '9/11 Truth and the Silence of the IR Discipline'.²⁴ Hughes discusses the fact that international relations (IR) scholars have simply accepted the official verdict on 9/11, despite the evidence suggesting there might have been hanky-panky. This is hardly surprising. Doing anything but accepting the official 9/11 line would be bad for an academic career – in the same way that being interested in the JFK assassination would be. Being labelled a 'conspiracy theorist' is still a potential career-killer.

As a preamble to discussing 9/11 as a false flag attack, Hughes discusses the established historical examples of false flag events providing a *casus belli*. But here's the thing: the previous examples were all small beer. Attacking the twin towers and the Pentagon was a *huge* event. Let's say that an inter-service alliance within the US military-intelligence complex – and that's what would be required – decided that they needed a false flag event to provide the pretext for attacking the Middle East. A meeting is called. Is it conceivable that they would decide to attack the twin towers and the Pentagon? As a *casus belli*, that

²⁴ <http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/id/eprint/40161/>

was massive overkill. A bomb in a shopping mall in provincial America would have been enough. And why allow all those hi-jacker to have links to the Saudis (who were then and continue to be US allies in the region)? They are the last people anyone from the US government would seek to implicate. If you wanted a pretext to attack Iraq, Iran, Libya or Syria, the false flag would be accompanied by links to one (or several) of those countries, not Saudi Arabia.²⁵ This scenario is absurd. As, indeed, is the idea that the US military-intelligence people were good enough or ambitious enough to have pulled off something on this scale.

However, there is evidence that something odd happened to the buildings which collapsed. The trick is going to be separating the plane-bombings, which were as they appeared, and the collapsing buildings, for which we need some special explanation.²⁶

HMG – Her Majesty’s gophers

One of the important sites these days is *Middle East Eye* – especially the articles by former *Guardian* journalist Ian Cobain. For example, how’s this for an opening sentence?

‘The senior Twitter executive with editorial responsibility for the Middle East is also a part-time officer in the British Army’s psychological warfare unit. . . .’²⁷

There is a historical parallel to this. During the 1980s the BBC’s Assistant Director-General Alan Protheroe was a part-time information officer with the British Army. Then it was the BBC, now it’s Twitter.

And here’s another Cobain cracker:

‘A social media network for young people, launched around the term “woke”, is actually a covert British government counterterrorism programme, security officials have admitted.’²⁸

²⁵ The fact that the official inquiry into 9/11 tried to suppress one chapter, on the Saudi links of the hi-jackers, suggests that this was not a US operation. See <<https://tinyurl.com/hdvpnhl>> or <<https://theintercept.com/2016/07/15/saudi-ties-to-911-detailed-in-documents-suppressed-since-2002/>>.

²⁶ See, for example, ‘While Everyone Was Distracted By Covid-19, Final Report By UAF Concluded WTC 7 “NOT Destroyed by Fires”’ at <<https://www.ae911truth.org/wtc7>>.

²⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/y6swblv4>> or <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/twitter-executive-also-part-time-officer-uk-army-psychological-warfare-unit>>

²⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/y68wja5l>> or <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/revealed-woke-media-outfit-thats-actually-uk-counterterror-programme>>

I could almost feel some sympathy for anyone working on British psy-ops operations re the Middle East these days. It's a tough gig being allies of America. Nonetheless there are always bright young (and not so young) things willing to co-operate with HMG's shadow warriors. Consortiumnews reported that the *Huffington Post UK's* executive editor, Jess Brammar, is a member of the British government's Defence and Security Media Advisory (DSMA) Committee – the old 'D-Notice Committee' as was.²⁹ This goes some way, perhaps, to explaining why *HuffPostUK* has run 12 pieces smearing British academics who are sceptical of the government's role in Syria and, in particular, of the role played by the White Helmets.³⁰

Somebody tell Pat

'Last year, members of the Special Operations — Navy SEALs, Army Green Berets, and Marine Raiders among them — operated in 141 countries, according to figures provided to TomDispatch by U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). In other words, they deployed to roughly 72% of the nations on this planet. While down from a 2017 high of 149 countries, this still represents a 135% rise from the late 2000s when America's commandos were reportedly operating in only 60 nations.'³¹

So where's Trump-the-isolationist, so beloved of Pat Buchanan?³²

A fake arms race?

Larry Hancock is probably best known to readers of this column as the author of a very good book on the Kennedy assassination, *Someone Would Have Talked*.³³ But he writes on a wide range of issues and his perceptions of the geopolitical world are always interesting. In a recent column he suggests that Russia is manipulating the US military by pretending to develop super new

²⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/t3hvnym>> or <<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/02/10/huffpost-uk-editor-works-with-censorship-program/>>

³⁰ See below under subhead *More on Bellingcat and White Helmets*.

³¹ <<https://tinyurl.com/wsudto2>> or <https://www.salon.com/2020/04/01/americas-global-military-presence-skyrockets-under-trump-us-commandos-now-deployed-to-141-nations_partner/>

³² <<https://buchanan.org/blog/>>

³³ I reviewed one of his recent books in *Lobster 76* at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster76/lob76-creating-chaos.pdf>>.

nuclear weapons: spending enough to develop prototypes but 'not the huge amount to make them operational'.³⁴ This, he suggests, is the Russians doing to the USA what the Americans did to the Soviet Union in the 80s. Then the nuclear arms race pursued by the Americans helped destroy the Soviet system: too much was spent on the military. In the 80s the arms race was real. This time, thinks Hancock, the Russians are gaming the USA – assisted by the US military and its suppliers, who are always happy to discover/invent an excuse to upgrade their weapons.

Hancock thinks these Russian-inspired American upgrades will cost half a trillion dollars over the next decade; and that will be paid for by additions to the US national debt.

garrison

So I shelled out \$10.79 for the download version of edition four of *garrison, the Journal of History and Deep Politics* (and yes it is garrison with a lower case 'g'). This is 200 plus pages converted to PDF from the hard copy version. Here's a screen-shot of the text.

However, the FBI's investigation of the same issue, which was ironically buried in the commission's own volumes, commission exhibit 2585, contradicts the findings published in the report. The FBI report states simply, "Our investigation revealed that Oswald did not indicate on his application that others, including an 'A. Hidell,' would receive mail through the box in question."

This line-spacing is too compressed to be comfortable reading for my brain. For you it may be alright, of course. 200 pages is a lot to digest and I've skimmed only parts of it. Here are the first few essays as listed at the beginning of the magazine.

'Jeffrey Epstein, CIA's MK-Ultra, Drugs, Mick Jagger, & Courtney Love' by John Potash

'Guccifer 2.0, Seth Rich, & WikiLeaks: Finding the Ghost in the Shell' by Elizabeth Lea Vos

COVER STORY: 'On the Origins of Seditious Discourse' by Joseph E.Green

³⁴ <<https://larryhancock.wordpress.com/2020/02/22/putins-cold-war/>>

'Why Bush & Cheney Should Not Be Trusted on 9/11' by David Ray Griffin

'Nixon in the Jungle' by Jim Hougan

Did a pre-presidential meeting in the jungle between Nixon and a militaristic priest escalate 'Nam?

'A Call from Hunt: Inside the First Hours and Days of Watergate' by Douglas Caddy

'A Strange New Watergate Book: *Lamar Waldron & Watergate*' by James DiEugenio

So: this is some of the A-team as far as parapolitics or deep politics goes. And the other essays are similar. Worth \$11? Yes. (The hard copy is more, of course.) Access here <<http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/MidnightWriterNews>> or here <<https://tinyurl.com/sh9ow8w>> or <<https://midnightwriternews.com/order-the-pdf-e-version-of-garrison-the-journal-of-history-deep-politics/>>.

Could do better

Richard Norton-Taylor's book, *The State of Secrecy: Spies and the Media in Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), is being reviewed by someone else. But I can't resist commenting on a couple of pages on Northern Ireland about which I have some knowledge. First there's Colin Wallace, 'an information officer based at the British army headquarters in Lisburn, Northern Ireland [. . .] He had apparently adopted a rather too cavalier approach to his job'. (pp. 40/1)³⁵ Oh, really? The 'cavalier' story was part of the original disinformation put out about Wallace after he was forced out of Ireland.

Just beneath the Wallace material is a brief reference to the story about Maurice Oldfield

' . . . smeared by elements of the security services as a homosexual involved in rough trade. A story planted in the media by elements of the security services claimed Oldfield had spent an afternoon in a pub on the outskirts of Belfast, followed a man into the toilets and propositioned him for sex.'

'Elements of the security services'? He means MI5. And why not identify the story and its author? The book's subtitle, after all, is *Spies and the Media*. The story was 'Pub incident that exposed a spymaster' by Chris Ryder (*Sunday Times* 26 April 1987). Checking that story was the first thing I did when I was briefly at Channel 4 News the same year. I spoke to the staff of the pub

³⁵ Look at the *Guardian's* aversion to capital letters creeping in. Surely it's British Army not British army. Or did someone abolish proper nouns while I wasn't watching?

reportedly at the centre of the piece. The story was a complete invention. In the great MI5 vs MI6 battle of the period, the *Sunday Times*, then edited by Andrew Neil, was on MI5's side.

The lobby

In this column below I noted that there had been zero media attention given to the article written on the *Spectator* website by Geoffrey Alderman in which he denied that Jeremy Corbyn was an anti-semitic – citing some of Corbyn's work for British Jews. Alderman has subsequently been told by the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Stephen Pollard, that he will no longer be published by the *JC*. Alderman commented on the decision:

'I am saddened immeasurably by Stephen Pollard's decision, on which he refused absolutely to elaborate when we spoke on 31 January. I began writing for the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1974 and from 2002 until 2016 I wrote the paper's main weekly Comment column. Since then I have continued to contribute to the paper from time to time. Stephen's decision to ban me entirely from writing for the paper has come without warning and without any rationale that he has seen fit to share with me. I simply don't know why the decision has been taken, and can only speculate.'³⁶

And so can we. . . .

The right stuff?

So: Sir Keir Starmer, the new leader of the Labour Party, is a member of the Trilateral Commission. This hasn't been kept a secret: Starmer tweeted about speaking at a meeting sponsored by the Tris in 2017³⁷ and he is on the Commission's list of members.³⁸ Which means what? On the one hand it tells us that Starmer is the centrist he appears, the flirtation in his youth with Trotskyism notwithstanding. You don't get invited to join the Trilateral Commission notepaper without serious scrutiny. On the other hand, here we are – the world in general and the UK economy in particular – circling the drain

³⁶ <<https://tinyurl.com/u8o8j8d>> or <<https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/jewish-academic-no-platformed-by-jewish-chronicle/>>

³⁷ <https://twitter.com/keir_starmer/status/926777209095823361?lang=en>

³⁸ <<http://trilateral.org/page/7/membership>>

and the next leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition thinks it appropriate to publicly identify himself with some of the people who have created our current problems.

Not that long ago the Trilateral Commission seemed to be of some significance. After all it had helped to promote the hitherto barely known Governor of Georgia, Jimmy Carter, into the White House in the mid 1970s. In 1999 it was worthy of attention in these columns³⁹ and in *Lobster* 76 there was this:

Trilateralism

You don't hear much about the Trilateral Commission these days. For reasons unknown, the conspiracy buffs aren't greatly interested in it – despite the presence of a stellar cast of globalists, bankers and other black-hatted figures. What it has done, and what its leaders believe or believed (some are dead), is discussed in considerable detail in an on-line set of essays commenting on Dino Knudsen's *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance: Informal Elite Diplomacy, 1972-82* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).⁴⁰ Knudsen had access to the Trilateral archives.

With Bilderberg meetings reported by the *Daily Mail*, the Trilateral archives opened to a researcher, and even le Cercle (the Pinay Circle as was) the subject of academic inquiry, are there still *secret* gatherings of the global elite?⁴¹

More on Bellingcat and White Helmets

In this column in the previous *Lobster* I wrote this:

'Bellingcat is a puzzle to me. I ought to be in the chorus of liberal Western intelligentsia cheering them on but I'm not. Why? Because the vast majority of their reports have had the effect of bolstering Western/NATO policy objectives. When Bellingcat begins producing material which also *undermines* those objectives I will be less sceptical. Put it another way: if Bellingcat was producing reports which *didn't* support NATO aims would it have received the funding for its reported 16 full-time staff?'

³⁹ <<http://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/online/issue38/lob38-12.htm>>

⁴⁰ The essays are at <<https://tinyurl.com/yb6oujy8>> or <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/1712549/h-diplo-roundtable-xix-30-trilateral-commission-and-global#_Toc511425727>.

⁴¹ <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster76/lob76-view-from-the-bridge.pdf>>

Others – e.g. Wikispooks⁴² – are less circumspect and are sure it's a spook front. What appears to be evidence supporting the Wikispooks analysis is to be found in Dilyana Gaytandzhieva's 'Exposed: Bellingcat fabricate evidence, deliberately hide documents in new "Russian spy plot"'.⁴³ At least I think so. But, damn, that article is hard to follow.

On the question of the status of the White Helmets in Syria. . . at Consortiumnews, Caitlin Johnstone noted that one Chris York of *Huffington Post* had published no less than twelve articles attacking and smearing the small group of British academics who have been publicly sceptical about the White Helmets' role.⁴⁴ York's most recent (at time of writing) offering accused said group of claiming that the White Helmets were guilty of mass murder.⁴⁵ This they certainly didn't do, as far as I can see.

The vast majority of Mr York's output is entirely mainstream news - e.g. the Coronavirus outbreak, the effects of Storm Ciara and Phillip Schofield coming out as gay⁴⁶ – so why he's interested in such an esoteric issue is anyone's guess.

The party's over

'The West traded its industrial prowess for the joys of cheap, foreign-made pap'. Thus the headline to a Jeremy Warner piece in the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 January 2020.⁴⁷ Among the many things Warner doesn't discuss is the fact that it was the economic/political beliefs of people like the owner of the *Telegraph* which helped make this happen in the UK.

In a similar vein, though coming from a different place, Professor David Edgerton noted in the *Guardian*: 'Today there is no such thing as British

⁴² <https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Bellingcat>

⁴³ At <<https://tinyurl.com/ve2j2dt>> or <<http://armswatch.com/exposed-bellingcat-fabricate-evidence-deliberately-hide-documents-in-new-russian-spy-plot/>>.

⁴⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/txhwvp8>> or <<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/01/31/nobody-sets-out-to-become-a-war-propagandist-it-just-sort-of-happens/>> From the group of academics mentioned in the *Huff Post* articles, Bristol University's Professor David Miller is the best known. See <<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/people/david-miller/publications.html>>.

⁴⁵ <<https://tinyurl.com/rzaxls6>> or <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/the-useful-idiots_uk_5e2b107ac5b67d8874b0dd9d?fks>.

⁴⁶ See <<https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/author/christopher-york>>.

⁴⁷ <<https://tinyurl.com/sj8df6l>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2020/01/14/west-traded-industrial-prowess-joys-cheap-foreign-made-pap/>>

Warner's statement is clearly more relevant to the UK than it is to – say – Germany.

national capitalism. London is a place where world capitalism does business – no longer one where British capitalism does the world’s business.’⁴⁸

The relative insignificance of British national capitalism was illustrated when the leaders of Confederation of British Industry, the British Chambers of Commerce and the Institute of Directors – a.k.a. ‘the captains of industry’ – were *not* invited to hear PM Johnson’s speech on the future of EU trade talks.⁴⁹ Which sort of answers the question: what did Boris mean when he said ‘Fuck business’?⁵⁰ He meant fuck British domestic (or national) business.

These issues are among those discussed by Scott Newton in his ‘The Lexit Delusion’ in this issue of *Lobster*. To which let me add the obvious discomfoting extension: if Lexit – the left-wing desire to see the UK leave the EU – is a delusion because there is no longer ‘British national capitalism’ worth speaking of, then equally delusory is the notion of British (national) socialism. For what is the socialist project but – ultimately – to take-over, or control, British capitalism in the interests of wider society?

Nobody knows nuffink

In 2010 the *Daily Record* in Scotland reported ‘White House launches new website to debunk conspiracy theories’ and I was quoted in it as saying ‘It will have about as much effect as a site appealing for sexual abstinence amidst the internet’s oceans of porn.’⁵¹

Good to be right occasionally.

Also on the conspiracy theory beat, as it were, I noticed that the

⁴⁸ ‘Brexit is a necessary crisis – it reveals Britain’s true place in the world’ at <<https://tinyurl.com/y49wwbdw>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/09/brexit-crisis-global-capitalism-britain-place-world>>.

⁴⁹ Oliver Wright, ‘Johnson snubs captains of industry’, *The Times* 4 February 2020.

⁵⁰ See <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44618154>>.

⁵¹ <<https://tinyurl.com/v8f8934>> or <<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/science-technology/white-house-launches-new-website-1065680>> I think that what they are quoting is something I wrote in one of my columns for the *Fortean Times*.

The man in charge of this absurd project was one Todd Leventhal, whose official title was State Department Counter-Misinformation Officer. Leventhal’s beliefs and career were discussed in detail by William Kelly at <<https://tinyurl.com/v497nlf>> or <<https://kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/todd-leventhal-the-minister-of-diz-at-dealey-plaza>>.

This ‘Counter-Misinformation Team’ used to have their own sub-domain on the State Department website <<http://usinfo.state.gov>> but that has now disappeared, seemingly along with all of the public output.

Cambridge University project, Conspiracy and Democracy, has ended. The project ran for five years and they did blog intermittently during that time⁵² but there has been no formal announcement saying, 'Our conclusions are!'

Enigmas are us

Big story in the *Washington Post* ⁵³ (and everywhere else subsequently), 'The intelligence coup of the century', about the CIA secretly buying the company which made encryption devices and thus having access to the secret communications of most of the world's states which bought them. The story rang a faint bell: didn't the Brits do something similar at the end of WW2? Didn't they sell/give Enigma machines to other countries, enabling them to listen-in on their 'secret' communications? There is a bit of anecdotal evidence of this on-line⁵⁴ but I cannot find the source on this I read many years ago.⁵⁵

The *Post* story's ramifications will take years to digest. To take just one example: the article notes that US intelligence ' . . . fed intelligence about Argentina's military to Britain during the Falklands War.' OK: but did they feed the UK intelligence about Argentina's intentions *before* the conflict (it was barely a 'war')? Did the Thatcher government know what was coming? Because if they did, they allowed an armed conflict to happen for electoral advantage. Before the Falklands events, thanks to the deep economic recession she had caused pursuing her monetarism theories, Mrs Thatcher was set fair to lose the next general election.

At first glance this doesn't look too promising. The then Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, resigned when the conflict began. He obviously hadn't been given any advance notice of Argentine intentions. Is it possible that he was kept out of the loop? We simply don't know. This one might run and run but these days, who knows?

⁵² <www.conspiracyanddemocracy.org/blog>

⁵³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/national-security/cia-crypto-encryption-machines-espionage/>

⁵⁴ See, for example, <<https://tinyurl.com/wf28m3s>> or < <https://www.quora.com/Where-did-all-of-the-thousands-of-Enigma-machines-end-up-after-the-end-of-WW2>>

⁵⁵ Nick Must commented: It is mentioned, very briefly, in the 'After the War' section of the Enigma History page at Crypto Museum <<https://www.cryptomuseum.com/crypto/enigma/hist.htm>>.

'The captured Enigma machines ended up in the vaults of CG&GS (now: GCHQ) and the NSA, or were given to other countries with the message that they could not be broken.'

Bugs

The *New York Review of Books* ran an interesting piece about cyberwarfare in December.⁵⁶ The conclusion to be drawn from that essay is that the world's computer networks are full of bugs from geo-political rivals waiting to be triggered in the event of conflict. And there are always the accidents, such as the one which disabled chunks of the Red Sea area when one of the three underwater fibre-optic cables serving Yemen was severed.⁵⁷ From which (and similar stories⁵⁸) the obvious conclusion is that it is time to start reorganising society and taking its important services off-line. At present, food supply, energy, transport, banking and medical services are all running on-line; and all could be disabled on-line. Taking those things off-line would initially be a little inconvenient and certainly more expensive as it would require employing extra people. But it is only 20 years since *none* of this was on-line and we could return to those days. Chances of this happening? Nil, of course. At least not before we have a disaster of some kind.

Beams and notes

It was striking – if not surprising – that only one of the reports I read of the shooting down by the Iranians of the Ukrainian airliner referred to the occasion in 1988 when the USS Vincennes, a guided-missile cruiser of the United States Navy, shot down Iran Air Flight 655 killing, 290 people. Which led to the Lockerbie bombing

Not a million miles from which is the case of Kylie Moore-Gilbert, an Australian lecturer in Islamic Studies, being held by the Iranian authorities on suspicion of being a spy. Jeez, how dumb do you have to be to go to Iran as a Western student of Islam? Of course they're going to think you might be spy – or pretend to think that.

Why was Holroyd persecuted?

A Christmas greeting from Fred Holroyd included an (as yet) unpublished

⁵⁶ Sue Halpern, 'The Drums of Cyberwar' at <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/12/19/drums-of-cyberwar/>.

⁵⁷ <https://www.wired.com/story/yemen-internet-blackout-undersea-cable/>

⁵⁸ Most recently the cyber attack on Redcar. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-51504482>.

essay⁵⁹ about the circumstances of his being ousted from his job in Northern Ireland. As long-time *Lobster* readers will no doubt recall, those circumstances included Fred being placed in the British Army's mental hospital at Netley. Fred thinks he has finally found out why he was sacrificed and – surprise (not) – it was politics. The government of the Irish Republic was co-operating with the British Army and intelligence services in the struggle with the IRA. However for domestic political reasons didn't want this to be known. As a conduit between the Republic's state and MI6, Holroyd knew that these cross-border dealings were more extensive than could be publicly acknowledged and was therefore considered a liability that needed to be controlled. And I would add that MI5 had taken over the lead intelligence role in Northern Ireland from MI6 and probably saw Holroyd as 6's man.

That idea isn't new but this essay has pulled together material from various official sources and inquiries in recent years to demonstrate the likelihood of it being the reason for the persecution of Holroyd.

IRD and disinformation

There was another snippet about the operations of IRD on the BBC website.⁶⁰

'In 1969, Reuters agreed to establish a new office in the politically-volatile Middle East, at the secret request of the IRD. It would provide news copy in English and Arabic about local and world events, for reuse by newspapers and broadcasters in the region. [. . . .]

The Reuters service replaced a previous agency called Regional News Service (Middle East), which was directly funded and ultimately controlled by IRD as one of a number of such news operations around the globe. But the department regarded it as "not cost-effective" and had decided to dissolve it. [. . . .]

Reuters at the time faced major financial difficulties internationally and needed subsidy for the new service. But the Foreign Office did not want to fund it openly, as it felt that could damage the agency's reputation.

So an "unorthodox" plan was hatched which involved the BBC paying "enhanced subscriptions" to Reuters for access to its news copy, on the basis that the Treasury would then compensate the BBC's government-funded international services for the extra cost. [. . . .]

⁵⁹ The essay has no stated author but it is by Dr Stephen Dorril erstwhile co-founder of *Lobster*.

⁶⁰ <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-50637200#>>

The Foreign Office was also already paying a secret subsidy to Reuters for Latin American news reporting via a front company, but it did not want to replicate this arrangement for the Middle East.'

Regional News Service (Middle East) rang a very faint bell, so I went back to Paul Lashmar and James Oliver's 1998 book about IRD, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War 1948-77*,⁶¹ and there it was. In so doing, I was reminded what a wonderful book that is – and still available from Amazon and abebooks.co.uk.

Related to which is the wave of articles discussing and bemoaning the impact of disinformation and misinformation in society. The difficulty is distinguishing between the potential and actual impact of disinformation. McKay Coppins has a very good piece in *The Atlantic*⁶² discussing the prospect of a billion dollars being spent by the Republicans (largely on disinformation) in this year's presidential election. Or take Sean Illing's, "Flood the zone with shit": How misinformation overwhelmed our democracy'.⁶³ Did misinformation overwhelm American democracy? Despite the Trump campaign's best efforts; the Republican Party's widespread gerrymandering of electoral districts and suppression of the number of black and brown voters; some tiny influence ops by the Russians;⁶⁴ a presidential candidate many Democrats didn't want, and a poor Democratic Party campaign – despite all that Hilary Clinton still won the popular vote. Illing thinks that people are overwhelmed by competing narratives about events – that right and left are in self-reflecting, echo-chambers of sources; and that this is new. But wasn't it always this way? People in this country who read the *Telegraph* or *Mail* don't read the *Guardian* (and vice versa). And never did. A couple of my lefty friends are appalled that I read the *Mail* on-line regularly and think it shows that I am turning into a fascist.

At the bottom of much of this current churn in the US among some Democrats is the idea that Hilary Clinton lost the election because of Russian disinformation. (And it has echoes in the UK among Remainers who would like

⁶¹ Stround: Sutton Publishing, 1998

⁶² <<https://tinyurl.com/uvwucv8>> or <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-2020-disinformation-war/605530/>>.

⁶³ <<https://tinyurl.com/talj4c>> or <<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/1/16/20991816/impeachment-trial-trump-bannon-misinformation>>

⁶⁴ Russia's current output of disinformation and conspiracy theories is analysed regularly at <<https://euvsdisinfo.eu>>.

to find that Russian disinformation affected the vote in the EU referendum.⁶⁵) For neither proposition is there any evidence. Yes, there were Russian influence operations in both countries but they were minuscule compared to those of the big parties (in the US presidential election) and the main campaigns (in the referendum).⁶⁶ This, surely, is more likely:

'A Clinton or a Bush was president, vice president, or secretary of state in every year between 1981 and 2013, an era in which working-class incomes stagnated, offshoring devastated US and European manufacturing, the world suffered the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the US plunged into multiple disastrous wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. Trump became president by running against a Bush in the Republican primaries and a Clinton in the general election. The desire of many American voters to disrupt the quarter-century cycle of nearly identical versions of technocratic neoliberalism under alternating Bushes and Clintons is quite sufficient to explain the presidential election of 2016.'⁶⁷

And something analogous surely happened in both the Brexit vote and in the previously Labour seats which voted Conservative at the last election.

'In a delicious twist, Blairism proved populism's unlikely saviour. This sticky glue of managerialist verbiage sought to lead from the centre. According to its mythology, we were "all middle-class now", and those who didn't fit in were either victims or scroungers. In fact, its advocacy of sterile globalism, control freakish bureaucratic procedure and machinic political correctness left millions feeling like cultural "outsiders". When they converged in opposition, Brexit was the earthquakish outcome.'⁶⁸

Electoral politics and the truth have little to do with each other. The electorate is either not interested in politics, or largely incapable of assessing the claims of political parties. Did the electorate vote for Mrs Thatcher in the 1979 general election because they believed her central thesis that the way to reduce

⁶⁵ See, for example, <<https://tinyurl.com/ycts4945>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2018/10/17/russian-iranian-twitter-trolls-sent-10-million-tweets-fake-news/>>.

⁶⁶ More relevant in this country, perhaps, is the issue of barely regulated election spending. On which see the material collected at <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/>>.

⁶⁷ Michael Lind, 'The debunked "Russian influence" nonsense is infantilizing liberals' at <<https://tinyurl.com/v8ymcr9>> or <<https://www.salon.com/2020/01/26/the-debunked-russian-influence-nonsense-is-infantilizing-liberals/>>.

⁶⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/r9zkh2>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/01/31/brexit-day-marks-historic-peoples-victory-against-reeling-metropolitan/>>

inflation was to control the money supply? Did the Labour voters who switched to the Tories in the last election do so because they had considered the programmes of the two parties?

None of the accounts of the pernicious effects of dis- and mis-information on society I have looked at ever refer to the pioneers of both: the US and UK secret states. Take the most recent essay I glanced at, US Army officer Michael Ferguson's short piece 'The Evolution of Disinformation: How Public Opinion Became Proxy'.⁶⁹ (Proxy?) Ferguson reminds his readers that the Communist International ran propaganda against the West and that the KGB created the theory that AIDS was a virus engineered by the US military. But Ferguson doesn't tell us that the AIDS theory was done in retaliation for the KGB-shot-the-Pope theory which the CIA disseminated first. (He may not know this, of course. I doubt the reading of the US Army includes the likes of Herman and Brodhead who deconstructed the KGB-shot-the-Pope nonsense.⁷⁰) Nor does he mention that the CIA, following their British counterparts in IRD, spent the 50s and 60s portraying every movement that sought to rid a country of its imperialist overlords as Kremlin stooges. In IRD's case, this climaxed in Northern Ireland, where they did their best to portray the IRA as run from Moscow and Ireland as the 'next Cuba'.⁷¹

Mandarin-speak

Recently declassified documents include some comments from the British ambassador to Argentina in the 1980s, Anthony Williams.

'Five years of sobering military administration has made Argentina a much more possible country to deal with. . . . The need to be sufficiently active on the human rights front to satisfy public and parliament opinion in the UK will still be a continuing, though minor, irritation.'⁷²

'Sobering' is one way of describing a regime which murdered and 'disappeared'

⁶⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/yxyn4ppv>> or <<https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2020/1/14/the-evolution-of-disinformation-how-public-opinion-became-proxy>>.

⁷⁰ Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection* (New York: Sheridan Square, 1986)

⁷¹ On which see Rory Cormac's 'The Information Research Department, Unattributable Propaganda, and Northern Ireland: Promising Salvation but Ending in Failure?' at <<https://tinyurl.com/vqj8q9n>> .

⁷² <<https://tinyurl.com/wgpbso6>> or <<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-29-margaret-thatchers-secret-dealings-with-the-argentine-military-junta-that-invaded-the-falklands/>>

tens of thousands of people.

The corruption of Auntie

Thanks to my brother John for this, which appeared on Facebook. It's from Marcus Moore (an ex-BBC employee):

'A number of changes made during the last seven years or so, spearheaded by David Cameron, have led to the corporation's news and politics departments becoming little more than ventriloquists' dummies. Of particular note are the following:

- a) important posts at the BBC being filled by pro-government figures from the private sector (Rona Fairhead, David Clementi, James Harding, Robbie Gibb etc)
- b) direct links with the manipulative tabloid press being strengthened by Downing Street giving important positions to dubious characters like
- c) Andy Coulson and Craig Oliver
- d) the subsequent recruitment of people like Alison Fuller Pedley (of Mentorn Media), who is responsible for choosing who gets to be in the Question Time audience, and Sarah Sands (formerly of the Telegraph, Mail and Evening Standard) who now edits Radio 4's Today programme
- e) all of the above follows Cameron's appointment, in June 2010, of John Browne (Baron Browne of Madingley) to the post of 'Lead Non-Executive Director' for Downing Street, his role being that of 'recruiting business leaders to reformed departmental boards' – Browne's questionable history at BP notwithstanding (remember Deep Horizon!)
- f) how all of this quiet, underhand activity has been largely unreported, but has given the current Conservative government immense power
- g) within fashionable and influential circles.⁷³

Transparency

The journalist Anna Merlan is the author of last year's *Republic of Lies: American Conspiracy Theorists and Their Surprising Rise to Power*.⁷⁴ In an interview she said 'conspiracy theories would lose their hold if we were a more

⁷³ This and a great deal more is also at <<https://politicsandinsights.org/tag/marcus-moore/>>.

⁷⁴ New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019
<<https://www.amazon.com/Republic-Lies-Conspiracy-Theorists-Surprising/dp/12501590>>

just and transparent and democratic society'.⁷⁵

'Transparent' is the key term here. As I have commented before in these columns, the American political class is reaping the harvest of the cover-up of political conspiracies by the US state (with the connivance of the politicians) since the assassination of JFK in 1963. Alex Jones and his ilk are the distant offspring of the Warren Commission Report.

Politicians and war

With trumpets fore and aft, the *Washington Post* announced the publication of what it called The Afghanistan Papers (all similarities to the 1970s Pentagon Papers entirely intentional). Subtitled 'A secret history of the war', the article by Craig Whitlock begins:

'U.S. officials constantly said they were making progress. They were not, and they knew it, an exclusive Post investigation found.'⁷⁶

The *Post's* claim to have *found* this is laughable. Everybody and their cousin knew the war was unwinnable. The problem was politics: politicians of both main parties were unwilling to admit defeat – simply because they couldn't see how to handle it without electoral damage.⁷⁷ Mind you, some of the testimony the *Post* quotes is gobsmacking in the incompetence and venality it reports.

The lobby

The climax of the campaign by the Israel lobby against Jeremy Corbyn and his faction within the Labour Party was the report in the week before the general election – splashed across all the anti-Labour media – that the Simon Wiesenthal Centre had named Jeremy Corbyn 'top anti-Semite of 2019', as the

⁷⁵ 'The Decade Conspiracy Theories Went Mainstream'
<<https://gen.medium.com/the-decade-conspiracy-theories-went-mainstream-d9e1681373d0>>

⁷⁶ <<https://tinyurl.com/tccwbpt>> or <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-confidential-documents/>>

The database of documents to which the *Post* got access, interviews with participants in the war, is at <<https://tinyurl.com/r4fhtyp>> or <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/>>

⁷⁷ On the politicians' refusal to deal with the issue see <<https://tinyurl.com/uf7cwyl>> or <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/16/presidential-campaign-epidemic-afghan-war-amnesia-afghanistan-iraq-hillary-clinton-donald-trump/>>.

Times of Israel's headline had it.⁷⁸ For decades this operation will be studied as an example of a successful smear campaign run in a democratic society.

Attracting no attention from the anti-Corbyn media was a piece on *The Spectator* website that same week by Professor Geoffrey Alderman⁷⁹ – a self-described orthodox Jew – who denied that Corbyn was an anti-semite and listed some of the work he had done for the Jewish community.⁸⁰

Kennedys

(a) Whodunit?

After JFK was assassinated a disinformation campaign began to tie Lee Harvey Oswald to Cuba and the KGB. His history as a defector to the USSR and his role as the one-man branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans were public data. The rest of it, linking him to Cuba and the KGB, came from CIA officials and assets. This is what Peter Dale Scott called the Phase One theory.⁸¹

William Kelly shows from the archival record that what Scott called the Phase Two theory, that Oswald was a 'lone nut', was initiated by President Johnson between 8 and 9 pm on the day of the assassination.⁸² As Phase Two spread across Washington the American state ditched Phase One. The FBI did not want Phase One because it was supposed to be able to detect and prevent domestic 'communist conspiracies' and here was one apparently involving someone with whom the FBI had been in contact. Why the CIA abandoned the work spent establishing Oswald as the pro-Castro defector or KGB asset is a little more complicated.⁸³

In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, the Agency's dealings with Oswald were still secret; but, with Oswald alive, they were in danger of

⁷⁸ <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-group-names-uks-corbyn-top-anti-semite-of-2019/>>

⁷⁹ See <<https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/directory/professor-geoffrey-alderman/>>.

⁸⁰ <<https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2019/05/is-jeremy-corbyn-really-anti-semitic/>>

⁸¹ Discussed in some detail at <https://www.history-matters.com/pds/DP3_Overview.htm>.

⁸² <<http://jfkcountercoup.blogspot.com/2012/06/tipping-point.html>>

⁸³ Much of this involves Mexico City and it is complex. A decent introductory summary is at <https://www.maryferrell.org/pages/Featured_Oswald_in_Mexico_City.html>. A recent account of the area in all its intricacy is Paul Bleau's 'Oswald's Last Letter: The Scorching Hot Potato' at <<https://tinyurl.com/tze7onr>> or <<https://kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/oswald-s-last-letter-the-scorching-hot-potato>>.

exposure if he talked. However, given the need-to-know principle, who within the Agency did know anything of Oswald? In the received version of these events, not many: before the assassination he was a minor figure in the intricate games being played with the Agency's clients, the anti-Castro Cubans, and his identity was being used by CIA counter-intelligence in its hunt for Soviet 'moles'. However, in Chauncey Holt's⁸⁴ first-hand account of these events, a group within the CIA had organised a phoney (i.e that was *deliberately* supposed to fail) assassination attempt on JFK to change his policy of rapprochement with Castro.⁸⁵ And this group was using Oswald, creating



Lee Harvey Oswald (second left) pretending to be a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

Chauncey Holt is the figure on the right and that is his handwriting on the photograph.

the Oswald-commie-Castro-supporter figure, who was going to be blamed for the assassination attempt.⁸⁶ It was this *phoney* operation onto which the real assassination was piggy-backed.

Although on the need-to-know principle most of the Agency would have not known about the plan, it must have been approved by its upper echelon. Those in the know about the phoney attempt must have had a very anxious two days while Oswald was alive in custody. Fearing what an inquiry might reveal, even with Oswald dead, the Agency became enthusiasts for the 'lone

⁸⁴ I have written a lot about Holt in these columns and I am one of the few JFK buffs who takes him seriously. For an introduction to the man see the long interview he gave when he first appeared. <<http://www.jfkmurdersolved.com/holt1.htm>>

⁸⁵ This rapprochement policy is explained at <<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB103/index.htm>>.

⁸⁶ And in this scenario Oswald would have to be dead: alive he might talk. Why wasn't he killed? My guess is that in the panic caused by the real assassination, killing Oswald was abandoned.

nut' scenario.

If we further accept that the assassination was carried out by people working for Vice President Johnson, it then makes perfect sense that the Phase One – 'Cuba/KGB/communists' – theory had to be abandoned and official Washington fell in behind the Phase Two – 'lone nut' – theory. Firstly, it was advantageous for the FBI: they did not want to be blamed for failing to discover an apparent communist assassination conspiracy. Secondly, it was important for the CIA: a group of whom had organised a phoney assassination attempt which had led to the President actually being killed. Finally, it was essential for LBJ: his people were the ones who were really responsible.

(b) LBJ

Thanks to Robert Morrow for an extract from an article about Doyle Whitehead, a steward on Air Force One during the Kennedy presidency.⁸⁷ Whitehead tells us that after the assassination, with JFK's body and Jackie on board:

'Johnson and his people celebrated on the plane ride back to Washington. He was a heavy drinker. He drank about half a fifth [i.e. half a wine bottle] of Cutty Sark [Scotch] on the flight back. They were laughing and talking about "what we gon' do now." They were so loud we had to shut the door so Jackie wouldn't hear them.'

(c) The Tears of Autumn

Thanks also to Robert Morrow for a quote from Merle Miller's *Lyndon: an Oral Biography*⁸⁸ to the effect that senior CIA officer Richard Helms reported hearing LBJ, when president, saying that Kennedy's murder was retribution for the murder of President Diem of South Vietnam some weeks before. Do we believe Helms? As CIA's Deputy Director of Plans at the time of the Kennedy assassination he must have been privy to the plan described by the late Chauncey Holt to mount a phoney assassination attempt on JFK in Dallas. Thus he had a very good reason to encourage disinformation about the assassination; and attributing the Diem story to a dead President was risk-free.

Garrick Alder reminded me that another former CIA officer, E. Howard Hunt, was also involved in the Diem disinformation. During the Watergate affair he confessed that he had been engaged in fabricating State Department cables which appeared to show a link between the assassination of Diem and

⁸⁷ <<https://countryroadsmagazine.com/art-and-culture/history/doyle-whitehead/>>

⁸⁸ New York: Ballantine Books, 1981 – see <<https://tinyurl.com/uknuxmh>> or <<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lyndon-Oral-Biography-MERLE-MILLER/dp/0345296524>>.

JFK's death.⁸⁹ Hunt claimed that he had been ordered to do so by President Nixon's assistant, Charles Colson. To my knowledge Colson never admitted this. If we believe the report by Hunt's son, St. John, that Hunt confessed on his deathbed to playing a minor part in the Kennedy assassination conspiracy,⁹⁰ – and I have yet to see a good reason why we should disbelieve St. John on this – Hunt senior, like Helms, had good reason to promote the Diem disinformation.

The Diem nonsense was also used by former CIA officer Charles McCarry, who wrote a number of very good thrillers, one of which, *The Tears of Autumn*,⁹¹ has as its central theme JFK's assassination as revenge for Diem's death.

(d) Thane Cesar

When Thane Cesar died in the Philippines in September, Robert Kennedy Jr put out a message on his Instagram account about Cesar and the murder of his father, Robert Snr.:

'Cesar waited in the pantry as my father spoke in the ballroom, then grabbed my father by the elbow and guided him toward Sirhan. With 77 people in the pantry, every eyewitness said Sirhan was always in front of my father at a 3-6 feet distance. Sirhan fired two shots toward my father before he was tackled.

From under the dog pile, Sirhan emptied his 8 chamber revolver firing 6 more shots in the opposite direction, 5 of them striking bystanders and one going wild.

By his own account, Cesar was directly behind my dad holding his right elbow with his own gun drawn when my dad fell backwards on top of him. Cesar repeatedly changed his story about exactly when he drew his weapon.

According to the Coroner, Dr. Thomas Noguchi, all 4 shots that struck my father were "contact" shots fired from behind my dad with the barrel touching or nearly touching his body. As my dad fell, he reached back and tore off Cesar's clip on tie.

Cesar sold his .22 to a co-worker weeks after the assassination warning him that it had been used in a crime. Cesar lied to police claiming that

⁸⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/usbuqhw>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/1973/09/25/archives/hunt-says-he-fabricated-cables-on-diem-to-link-kennedy-to-killing.html>>

⁹⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/udjlegt>> or <<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/the-last-confession-of-e-howard-hunt-76611/>>

⁹¹ London: Hutchinson, 1975 – see <<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Tears-Autumn-Charles-McCarry/dp/071564503X>>.

he'd disposed of the gun months before the assassination. Cesar was a bigot who hated the Kennedys for their advocacy of Civil Rights for blacks.

I had plans to meet Thane Eugene Cesar in the Philippines last June until he demanded a payment of \$25,000 through his agent Dan Moldea.

Ironically, Moldea penned a meticulous and compelling indictment of Cesar in a 1995 book and then suddenly exculpated him by fiat in a bizarre and nonsensical final chapter.⁹²

Amen to all that. Cesar did it: that was obvious from the Noguchi autopsy report. No-one else could have fired the close-range shots behind RFK.⁹³

How did Moldea end up with the conclusion he did? His pitch to his publisher was that he would show that two guns were fired at the scene, not just Sirhan Sirhan's. In the course of his research he talked to Los Angeles police officers. Presented with the evidence which disputed the Sirhan-did-it verdict, the police dismissed it. This is Moldea's account of meeting LAPD detectives.

'The four of us met in a small interrogation room at the LAPD's Robbery-Homicide Division.

"Dan, I read your article," one of the detectives said, "and you don't have it."

"What do you mean I don't have it?" I asked defensively.

"You don't have it! You based nearly all of your research on eyewitness testimony. Eyewitness testimony? You talk about seventy-seven people in a room and twelve actual eyewitnesses to the shooting. These are people who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. You're expecting accuracy in their statements? Twelve different eyewitnesses will generally give you twelve different versions of a story."

"But in this case," I insisted, "especially with regard to muzzle distance, they're all saying the same thing: Sirhan never got off a single point-blank shot at Kennedy. There's no dispute here. There are not twelve different versions."

"Yeah, but eyewitnesses are not trained or experienced or qualified to make judgments about what they see in such situations. Don't get me wrong, eyewitness testimony occasionally makes convictions. But nothing

⁹² I made the same point. See footnote 1 at <https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster76/lob76-assassination-robert-kennedy.pdf>

⁹³ Recently analysed evidence of an audio recording made at the scene appears to show up to 13 shots fired and Sirhan's gun could only hold eight cartridges. <https://tinyurl.com/ybqgx7l2> or <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/true-crime/wp/2018/06/06/the-bobby-kennedy-assassination-tape-were-13-shots-fired-or-only-8/>.

beats physical evidence or a police official's expert testimony."

"So you're saying that only cops have the training, experience, and qualifications *to know truly what they saw.*"

"Essentially, yes, that's what I'm saying".⁹⁴ (emphasis added)

Moldea rebutted the police officer's statement that eyewitness testimony is usually contradictory. But instead of saying 'The agreement of the eyewitnesses in this case is very striking', the officer batted that away with the preposterous claim that only police training and experience enables people to *know what they saw*. Which nonsense Moldea, a self-consciously tough investigative journalist, inexplicably accepted. This plus Cesar passing a lie-detector test – which meant little⁹⁵ – led Moldea to conclude that Sirhan did it, despite all the other evidence.

⁹⁴ <<https://www.moldea.com/DEM-on-RFK.pdf>>

⁹⁵ There are videos on YouTube showing how to beat such tests. For example <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3fHkCFxgQQ>>.