

What We Stand For

The "free" world is not free; the "communist" world is not communist. We reject both: one is becoming totalitarian; the other is already so.

Their current power struggle leads inexorably to atomic war and the probable destruction of the human race.

We charge that both systems engender servitude. Pseudo-freedom based on economic slavery is no better than pseudo-freedom based on political slavery.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be eliminated. Government itself, as well as its underlying institutions, perpetuates war, oppression, corruption, exploitation, and misery.

We advocate a world-wide society of communities and councils based on cooperation and free agreement from the bottom (federalism) instead of coercion and domination from the top (centralism). Regimentation of people must be replaced by regulation of things.

Freedom without socialism is chaotic, but socialism without freedom is despotic. Libertarianism is free socialism.

• WIRELESS - SYNDICALISTS •

The Arrogance of Uncontested Power



Laurens Otter

The arrogance of uncontested power.

Recently three men, arrested almost by mistake, under suspicion, were found first to be falsely posing as police. They were carrying a false police warrant card. Normally that would suffice to get them locked up. But that was not all. Police investigation showed that they had at home a number of other police warrant cards, of identification cards for security services and for varying government ministries under a number of aliases.

It also emerged that they had a number of confidential state documents, from the Ministry of Defence and other Governmental departments; and a number of other papers falsely purporting to be such state documents; and that they were engaged in a conspiracy to kidnap political refugees legally resident in this country.

Any one of these charges would normally have been more than adequate to bring a prosecution and a lengthy spell in gaol. On far thinner evidence people believed to have leaked confidential governmental matter have been prosecuted. Masquerading as police or governmental officials is normally an offence which is speedily prosecuted and heavily punished but was not this time.

It was announced that the Public Prosecutor, despite all the papers that the police held, despite the open conflict of evidence, - for Mr Larsen the leader of the the three claimed before a Magistrate that he worked for MI5 & the Government denied this, - had not sufficient material to sustain a prosecution. When later, an attempt was made to bring a private prosecution, the Government hurried through a deportation order.

This placed Mr Larsen and his accomplices outside the jurisdiction of the court, and so prevented the case ever being tried.

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The Arrogance of uncontested power

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The first edition was published as a Wrekin Libertarian publication, a group that years ago published "Wrekin Anarchist Voice", though little of it still remains. Given that the name Libertarian - until recently synonymous with Libertarian Socialist or anarchist - is now usurped by people who are opposed to Liberty throughout the world, the name is changed.

Front cover picture donated by Tristan Hill

In the pamphlet I suggest that the police either turned a blind eye, in investigating Hilda Murrell's death, or - more charitably - there must be doubts as to their competence. The speed that the same team cleared up the M 50 murder, demonstrated their competence beyond doubt.

Noone seriously disputes that Mr Larsen committed crimes on British soil. Indeed a Tory Minister and many of his backbench supporters claimed when the deportation was hurried through that the Labour members who protested were trying to cover up Larsen's illegal acts, rather than that they were demanding that he be brought to trial.

Why then was he not tried? More to the point, why is it that Government has grown so arrogant that it can openly ignore demands for an enquiry, openly flout the Law.

We have a government that professes to be a government of Law & Order. We have a Prime Minister who lectures trade union pickets who fall foul of the laws limiting their rights she has just introduced on their duty to obey the law; who similarly hectors the municipal and other local elected governments who try and cushion their constituents against the effects of her harsh measures about the evils of their defiance of the law.

We have seen people imprisoned or otherwise hounded before the courts, because their consciences would not allow them to remain silent when they saw government actions they believed immoral; and these most certainly were branded as those who put themselves above the law. Yet when these three men - whom the Government disowns, denying that they are governmental officials - break a large number of laws - are likely to be brought to Court; extraordinary measures are taken to ensure that this does not happen.

Few people can be such fools as to doubt that the Government knows it has something disgraceful to hide. Though none can only speculate as to what. But the amazing thing is that the Government did not in fact really take the trouble to hide. Though it went through the form of denying that the Public Prosecutor's decision was politically dictated, & then that the deportation was to prevent a trial, it did not take the trouble to do this in a way which would be likely to be believed.

When Governments cannot even take the trouble to hide their misdeeds, when despotism does not need the cloak of hypocrisy, then this amounts to a statement that their power is absolute, the regime is total & its philosophy totalitarian; it is assumed that either all opposition is crushed or what remains soon will be.

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This arrogance of power is not new. Given that Wright, in Spycatcher, accuses prominent associates of Mrs Thatcher's of having committed Treason. (Of having deliberately conspired with members of the security services to damage the then democratically and lawfully elected government.) Given that not merely the Wilson Government, but probably also the Heath one, was so undermined; would one not expect a Government which makes such an hullabaloo about the duty of others to obey the Law, (however much individuals might dislike them) and to abide by the mandate of the polls; to show just a little embarrassment?

But what do we have; the issue is deflected, & half the country believes that the question at stake is the shameful way an ex-British spy is betraying his oath and revealing secrets. The fact that what is being revealed is that - at the very least - the present Prime Minister was closely associated with those who were complicit in Treason, and that she is the beneficiary of that Treason, & that therefore there are prime facie grounds for demanding that she clear herself of complicity is held irrelevant.

The case is as if someone having evidence of a burglary, should be told that the only person he has a right to reveal it to, is the official who just happens to be sitting furnished with the goods he knows to be stolen.

The mediaeval writer who said:

"Treason doth never prosper,
for what's the reason,
for an it prosper,
none dare call it treason;"
described our situation.

There can of course be reasons why the Secret Services may have acted treasonably off their own bat, without reference to or encouragement from Tory politicians. Such agencies may well have thought - and who will doubt it? - that they might flourish best in the sort of society that Mrs Thatcher would introduce. But given the evidence that Airey Neave at the very least knew what was afoot and encouraged it, and the fact that he master-minded the campaign in the Tory Party (both in the Commons & elsewhere) to oust Heath and replace him by Thatcher; one might have expected the Prime Minister to be anxious for an Inquiry Court to establish her own, & her Cabinet's innocence.

Where past Governments beset by scandal have been at pains to have Judicial Inquiries to establish right and wrong in the clear light of day, we have had an endless series of Judicial actions to suppress inquiry. It was said at the time of Watergate, that British Law is such that had Richard Nixon been a British Prime Minister, the facts could never have been published.

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It should not be thought that Heath and Wilson come out of the affair merely as wronged innocents. As one former Cabinet Minister with partial responsibility for security services has said on Radio. "It is the essence of Secret Service work that they act illegally. Governments cannot of course condone this. But they cannot function unless it is done. Therefore ministers take good care not to know what is going on; and do not therefore try to exercise supervision."

In the past, - when there has been suspicion of security service skulduggery (for instance in the Littlejohn case), - enquirers have been assured that though all the facts cannot be revealed in the full light of day, there is tight Cabinet supervision; that in a Democracy things are very different from totalitarian states, since here elected officials have supervisory powers.

It appears that either the powers are mythical or that the holders of these powers have been totally negligent in their exercise; for both Wilson & Heath have been responsible for that supervision; - between them for over a dozen years; - & both were undermined by such agencies.

If Mrs Thatcher, was not - as Wright appears to suggest - complicit in the subversion of these two previous governments (in one of which she held Cabinet Office); then she too must have been kept in ignorance of the past actions of the security services. So it may be that she, too, is being hoodwinked; and is failing in her supervisory role.

There are three possibilities:-

Mrs Thatcher has all the facts, & has proof which she cannot reveal that the Wright allegations are baseless; There is no way that the Prime Minister can possibly ascertain all the facts;

Mrs Thatcher is at the very least involved through association with those who conspired against the Heath & Wilson governments.

All of which possibilities carry worrying implications about the nature of power in our society.

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Given the ferocity with which Wright has been pursued in the courts, given the way that the state tried to prosecute Clive Ponting and did imprison Sarah Tisdall; if the doctrine of deterrence ever has any validity at all, we can safely assume that for everyone who reveals cases of the abuse of power, there are many who know of such, & who are too frightened to reveal them; quite apart from others who support the abuse, & so would not consider revealing it.

If organizations take steps to prevent knowledge of their activities being published, & if despite this there are occasional reports and all of these suggest immoral or illegal acts; it is reasonable to assume that what remains hidden is worse than what is published.

A few courageous individuals radicals, (some of them M.P.s), have made serious attempts to get at the truth. A few people like Peter Wright have revealed matters when in an huff. The odd official - Ponting, Tisdall, Masseter, - has been shocked by abuses of procedure into making revelations; but there has not been either an investigation, or a serious attempt to campaign for one.

This is partly because the Labour Party is the political equivalent of a company union. Just as commercial companies that can get away with it set up staff associations manned by their appointees, which pretend to perform the tasks of unions, but which ensure the workers' needs are not safeguarded as against the bosses' desires; so it is useful for authoritarian Rightist governments to have a supposedly labour party to deflect workers' aspirations away from resistance. It is debatable whether Labour was intentionally created for this purpose, but there can be no room for doubt that that is what it has become over the years.

Given the lack of any effective resistance it is hardly surprising that Government can feel that it may allow the security services, (or in Larsen's case those of South Africa,) not only to flout the Law, but to do it in a way that amounts to a boast "we can do what we like, & noone can stop us".

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It is in this context, that, nearly four years after her death, I should like to return to the case of the murder of Hilda Murrell. Since - if the case had ever come to court - I should have been a material witness; I have not previously published a statement; though material in a play has been taken from my statement to the police.

I will not attempt to write a full account of what happened, that is too much in debate, & I am not an investigative journalist, but a record of how the case impinged on my consciousness.

Though I did not, during her lifetime, know her name; I knew Hilda Murrell by sight, from meetings of the Shropshire Peace Alliance. This is & was the CND sub-regional federation for the county, but had been initially founded with links to the 1979 call for a Freeze and with the specific intention of making Salop a nuclear free zone. It had, at first, members who were not necessarily unilateralist.

Within the alliance Miss Murrell & I were in consequence generally opposed; she represented the United Nations' Association, & though herself unilateralist wished to keep the S.P.A. open to non-unilateralists; and put great faith in continued cooperation between unilateralists and multilateralists. Views which I do not share.

It is not quite true, as Judith Cook thought, that she never went on demonstrations. I can recall being next but one to her on a "die-in" in the middle of Shrewsbury; on that occasion while we waited for the crucial moment she was talking to the members of the the then Shrewsbury Women's Peace Group, who had just returned from Greenham. I could not help over-hearing the conversation. It was evident that Miss Murrell had not, on that occasion, been to Greenham, but was conversant with the general lay-out of the various peace camps there.

Thus I knew her by sight, & broadly knew her opinions on internal CND matters.

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Two of us at that time used regularly to represent the Telford Anti-Nuclear Group at the meetings of the SPA; Paul Wolfe - the other one - was at the time Convener, & edited a bulletin on behalf of the alliance. Neither of us drove, & so we needed to leave early to catch the last train; so we tended not to stay chatting at the end of meetings, and did not come to know the other representatives.

I had not therefore ever talked directly to Miss Murrell, until the SPA meeting held during the Winter of 82-83. On that occasion, to my surprise, as Paul & I were leaving she hurried over to ask a question. (Indeed in the light of her age, & apparent frailty, she appeared, positively, to rush over.) The question was not memorable, her desire to ask it was.

Somewhere around 11.00, on the morning of Wednesday, March the 21st., while in the garden, I heard the telephone ringing. (I had just been into Shrewsbury, looking in the Local Studies' Library, for what was known about gold mining in Shropshire in the Middle Ages, for a piece I was writing for the local Civic Society.) I can't remember if I heard the 'phone before I actually came through the gate, but I can clearly remember hurrying to unlock the front door. The 'phone had ceased ringing by the time I picked it up, but almost immediately started again.

For a long while after I lifted the receiver there was continued ringing, then a **buzzing**, & a more or less inaudible voice. There'd been a recent series of hoax anonymous calls, & at first I assumed this was another such; then the fact that there was a voice there, even though I couldn't make out what was said, made me wonder if this was the trial call of a budding "Phone Freak". (Hilda Murrell's nephew has since told me that it was out of character for his aunt to use a public call box, & this may have been the first time she ever used one in her life.)

Then, suddenly audible, the voice said: "ah that's better." The speaker identified herself by referring to that hurried discussion at the end of the last S.P.A. meeting. (If she mentioned her name it must have been before she was audible, but it would have meant nothing to me.) She briefly asked me whether I use the correct Continental pronunciation of my Christian, or whether I anglicise it; said I probably didn't know she was writing a document on nuclear power. (She named a collaborator on the work -

not Dr Arnott - whose name unfortunately I have never been able to recall.)

I gathered from what she said that she had unearthed matter that was covered under the general label of official secrets.

She wanted advice as to who would publish material that Governments wanted suppressed. I gave in fact a list of six papers, but said that for her purposes Peace News seemed the best. She asked if I was to be at the SPA meeting that evening, & would I be prepared to collect the papers & deliver them personally to PN.

She had done a considerable amount of research, had reason to think she was being watched, that her 'phone was being bugged (which for her was evidently a new experience,) that she was being followed wherever she went, & that there had been at least one attempt to break into her house. She deduced from this that someone was anxious to prevent publication, and, as it turned out correctly, assumed that whoever it was would go to considerable lengths to prevent publication.

Briefly she changed her mind saying would I go immediately into Shrewsbury to collect the papers, but when I said I would look up the times of the next train she was flustered & could not wait. She had a lunch appointment, before which she had to return home to see a police inspector, who was coming up from London to see her. So we went back to the original arrangement. Her last words were: "bring a stout bag; there are a lot of papers; it's not only about Sizewell."

She had told me in the course of the conversation that her research had been in preparation for the Sizewell Enquiry, & a paper she wrote for it was indeed found and was delivered to that enquiry by her nephew. That paper was only

about Sizewell. (It is reproduced at the end of Judith Cook's book.) It was not bulky, it would indeed have easily have been folded to go into my anorak pocket. It would certainly not have necessitated a stout bag, & its author would not have described it as "a lot of them", (papers;) & so, clearly, other papers have not survived.

(One report has it that the children who found her car said that the rear seat was covered in papers; but I take the evidence here out of their correct order.)

No papers, that anyone might wish to prevent being published, have surfaced since her death, unless the Sizewell document is counted, and that, - though a clear exposition for non-scientists of the problems, - says nothing not frequently said previously.

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The meeting, as it turned out, was not quorate; and in consequence was never officially begun; Paul & I had travelled in only to find Allen Day, (of the Shrewsbury Group,) the Chairperson, present. The first train back to Wellington would have meant the TANG members leaving after only quarter of an hour; but because I was expecting to meet the mystery caller, the three of us sat, not conducting a formal meeting, for an hour and an half.

I tried - obviously unsuccessfully - to describe my caller to Allen so that the Shrewsbury group could identify her, & either collect the papers or let me know where to go. That said I did not appreciate the immediacy of the danger, (let alone that it was already too late.)

Though I was certainly aware that the state, here as well as elsewhere, may act in a bullying manner to frighten, or in a frankly brutal one to disable or eradicate, dissenters; it is obvious that no radical could work effectively, if he or she did not to some extent turn a blind eye to dangers.

If you, as a radical, allow yourself to be too over-awed by state threatening actions, - & it is always difficult to distinguish between the genuine threats of state agents & the big mouth ravings of right-wing nuts, - you would never do anything. Therefore though most active radicals have sometimes experienced such threats, we do not give them much attention. Even when our knowledge of past events tells us that we ought logically to take the threats more seriously; - naturally in such circumstances everyone goes through periods of justifiable paranoia.

Consequently though I did not doubt that Hilda was being watched in a way that was being made deliberately obvious, and was more to intimidate than observe; I felt that this is a condition that every peace movement activist has to take in his/her stride, (however elderly & otherwise unsuited to such matters the activist might be,) & so it did not seem an issue of over-riding importance. I did however mention the call to people at the Action 84 meeting that weekend.

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That was Wednesday the 21st March; on the following Monday the local paper was full of the murder of a Shrewsbury former businesswoman, giving the impression that she was a notable socialite. (There was a photo that didn't look in the least like the woman I had met, - her family have subsequently said that they could not imagine where it originated.)

Thus though it did flash through my mind that there could be a connection, it only made me decide that it was I that was being paranoid. "One old lady rings me on Wednesday in evident fear, another one, mixing in an entirely different social set, looking very different, is reported the following Monday as having been killed; to think there's a connection is to let imagination & fear of the state run riot."

The press reports had led me to gather that the murder had happened over the weekend. Otherwise I might have made the connection.

Reports, of the murder, then & immediately afterwards, to the extent that I read them, (& as a rule I do not bother to read crime reports,) certainly produced a mystery. The intruder, whom the police described as a chance burglar, had for an unexplained reason chosen to abduct Hilda Murrell, perhaps in a semi-conscious state; (though later reports said that on the contrary there was evidence of fierce fighting within the car.)

This chance burglar had driven her north west from her house, through a lot of traffic, into the centre of Shrewsbury, so that she was seen by many people who knew her, then cut north eastwards, round an hill on the N.E. edge of Shrewsbury, ending up on its East. That would have entailed at least three turns across the line of traffic (a police spokesman later said seven) all in the lunchtime rush hour.

Which since the murdered woman lived just near the by-pass leading directly to the A5 (the main London road) from which it would be much easier to reach the hamlet where the body was found seemed curious. The car was taken in Hunkington down a side road, which comes off the lane at a blind turn, & so would only have been found by a driver who knew the area; so why go the longer and busier way round?

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Then there were the reports of the curious coincidence that not only the 'phone in the house from which the victim was abducted, but also one in an entirely different house belonging to her, elsewhere in the county, had both been out of order on the day of the murder. The argument as to whether the 'phone had been ripped out of the wall, or sabotaged in a more sophisticated fashion, with both police & post office contradicting themselves. With the later information that her nephew had 'phoned both houses from Dorset, getting the ringing sound, that morning.

But it was not until Anthony Tucker had an article on her in the Grauniad, that I realized that Hilda Murrell had

indeed been an active opponent of nuclear power. I was still far from certain that she was the same person who had rung me, but I sent my first note, (written on a post card, though because of second thoughts enclosed in an envelope,) to the police at that stage.

It would have been a far from informative note, as I did not at that stage remember much of the conversation; I probably said no more than that I'd had a 'phone call from someone whose name I did not know, but who, from the published material, I judged to be Hilda Murrell, on the morning that she was abducted. I wasn't surprised therefore that it was ignored.

There were reports of more surprising failures by police to interview witnesses. Rumour had it that some twenty people who knew Hilda and had seen the car, and had gone forward after appeals for witnesses, had not been interviewed and that indeed the police were shying away from witnesses who were in CND.

Perhaps more surprising, I subsequently met a taxi driver, whose car had at one stage been impounded by the police, as being suspected of having been used, and then was returned to him without explanation; Later still I learnt that a Telford teacher, the wife of a former colleague of my wife, had been on Haughmond Hill with a class of children; she & her class had twice seen a running man - once close up - conforming to the picture the police had circulated, & had volunteered their names as potential witnesses. Like the taximan, the police never bothered to contact them again.

A little after the rumours of police ignoring CND potential witnesses; a large number of revelations began to come out; and then I became certain that that 'phone call had come from Hilda. However by then I'd had a letter in the local paper making a contrast between the way the Jaruzelski government had hurried to investigate the killing of Fr Popieluzko & Hilda's case.

This inevitably prejudiced my standing as a witness & so I confined myself to dropping a note to Judith Cook, (after seeing her article in the New Statesman,) whom I had known twenty years ago. Judith had however had a lot of mail go astray at that stage & mine never arrived. I still didn't remember enough to make the 'phone call to me a matter of importance and so did not mention it, in an article I published on the case in the local CND newsheet; though did add mention of it as one - out of six - footnote additions when I passed on a copy to Linda Churnside for the Green CND paper.

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It was not therefore until Tam Dalyell came up to speak in Shrewsbury, and something he said made me remember Hilda's last words, "bring a stout bag...it's not only about Sizewell", and my own rejoinder query, did she mean the Belgrano? (that was the issue radicals were trying to establish at the time and on which much seemed to hang;) that I realised that what I knew was relevant, and that the 'phone call I'd had was of more than casual significance. (I was not then aware that Judith had not had my letter, & that none of those investigating the matter knew of it.)

I wrote to Dalyell and he 'phoned me in response, saying he would pass on a copy of my letter to one of two researchers, I chose Judith, but realizing that I ought to renotify the police, asked him to pass on a copy. Soon after Judith rang me, & I elaborated a little; but even then, I only was conscious of a few scraps of memory of the 'phone call. It was a month later; when the police had finally contacted me and arranged to call, that I sat down the night before they arrived & typed up an account for the police with copies for Judith and Tam. To my surprise it came to four A 4 pages, (and I added a series of post-scripts to the police copy after posting the other two, so that when I later, again wrote it up, this time for my solicitor, it was nearer six.)

I had by then of course read a number of accounts, and knew - or thought I knew, (since some of the accounts were at times mistaken,) - more of the background information

than formerly. "Death of a Rosegrower" had come out, like the later "Who killed Hilda Murrell" it elaborated what the author had earlier published in article form. (Soon thereafter the professional investigators decided that they had exhausted the work that they could usefully do on the subject; so that soon after I realised that I was involved the investigation was left in the hands of Rob Green, Hilda's nephew, & Dr Don Arnott, an expert on radiation-related medicine, who had initially explained the basic principles of nuclear physics to Hilda.)

I had heard - I now know incorrectly - from the early published articles that:

a police inspector had said to a Greenham Woman, "we'll get you, as we got that stupid old bat in Shrewsbury"; (in fact he'd said that like her Greenham women were obstinate.)

that an handbag with money was left in the kitchen; (in fact only a cheque book, but there were untouched valuables elsewhere in the house.)

the family were not allowed to see the body to identify it, nor to see the Pathologist's report; (in fact Rob Green was allowed to identify it.)

the body was supposed to be in the wood on a Wednesday but both its owner and a poacher denied that it was there on the Thursday, it was found on the Saturday; (in fact the poacher appears not to have existed, the owner's evidence stands.)

More reliably that:

the abandoned car was reported twice before the police investigated;

that the car - apparently with Hilda in the passenger seat - had been driven erratically by a strange man through the town and though it was obviously driven dangerously, no policeman had stopped it;

when the police did at last investigate, they found the back door of Hilda's house open and shut it .

not looking further;

the evidence fits the intruder already being in Hilda's house when she returned there; (Rob & Don do not agree at this point, as to whether the intruder was already there, or whether she let him in, but as she parked her car in the drive, then went over to call on a neighbour, & only then entered the house there was ample warning to any intruder that she was coming, and so either way the murderer meant to meet her & was not caught by surprise.)

Moreover, the police had briefly altered their story, for a moment it not just been a casual burglar only interested in money, but there was an account of a rape. It turned out that the evidence for this was that a man's handkerchief was found in the house with on it faint traces of semen.

None of the pathologist's evidence, (suspect though this was,) was compatible with rape, & this alternative story was fairly rapidly dropped. Though to this day, when the police are criticised for their refusal to follow up suggested lines of inquiry, they confuse the issue by talking of the evidence of perverse sex being "the worst factor in the case".

I had therefore begun to gather, & have learnt subsequently in greater detail, from these and other facts, that there is an abundance of evidence that contradicts the picture of a casual burglar. That the theory of the burglar necessitates accepting a number of coincidences, the odds against any two of which are astronomically large.

The whole was complicated by side factors which it was difficult not to see as deliberately set false trails: (the abduction at the vernal equinox, immediately after a full moon, the body found in a wood, & in an hamlet, about both of which there were already local superstitions;

(these blended with the fact the nuclear power authorities employ a firm of detectives run by a man with an active fascist record, a known criminal past, linked with obscure satanist cults;

(& a fascist cell which rents an house and lands from a nephew by marriage of the victim, (one who had opposed Rob Green's investigatory efforts.)

The whole issue further complicated by the fact that six months after the murder, the police announced that they had solved the case and were within weeks of making an arrest. (169 weeks have passed since then as I now write.) Even more by the police inquiry into the conduct of the case which was not even released to the members of the police authority.

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The police came, the first two read the account I had typed out, decided it was too much for them. Two higher rank officers came and tried to get me to back down by threatening me with prosecution for wasting police time and constructing false evidence. (Which is why I wrote a second account of Hilda's 'phone call, to my solicitor.) A Cabinet Minister announced that I had not been able to add anything to what I had already told the police without mentioning that there was rather a lot of that. Though I suggested a way that the police could check my account, they evidently did not bother so to do.

So we are left with retrospect, the need to ask questions in the light of hindsight, to try and understand what happened.

Whereas people have asked, and loudly debated, as to what secrets Hilda could possibly have had? & tried to trace her lines of knowledge? I would rephrase it as what were the papers that necessitated that stout bag?

Hilda's forte was an ability to plough through deadly dull government papers & keep awake. Where others would have given up through boredom, she searched sub-sub-clauses, & found buried in the verbiage revelations that governments had neither wanted to publish, nor risk being said to have suppressed. It may well be therefore that a by-product of her research on Sizewell, was information about other matters that the Government did not want publicised.

But I do not believe that that was the primary motive for her murder.

If either government or big business (at whom the finger has been pointed) had really wanted to silence an inconvenient "meddler", with an academic style, who persisted in asking too many questions, & publicising any answers she found; then no doubt an "accident" (perhaps on the roads where one more in 6,000 per year would hardly be noticed) could have been arranged.

If, for some inexplicable reason, it was necessary to commit the murder after interviewing the victim in her house; it could still be done more discreetly. There was hardly there a reason for the public parading of the victim through her own home town.

The real question is not why did the state (or whomever) murder Hilda Murrell? But why did the murderers apparently bungle it so badly, making everyone think it was murder? & then, - despite this apparent bungling, - leave the police looking such fools that they could not catch a bungler?

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Peter Wright in his book, and many other writers on state security, demonstrate clearly that if & when the state wishes to commit a crime, it has to hand highly trained agents, & the job is done subtly.

If such agents had been ordered to eliminate Hilda Murrell there is ample evidence that they could have so done in a way which would have left noone suspecting that her death was anything other than an accident or natural causes.

But as it is, virtually noone acquainted with the case, & who has actually thought about it, doubts that there has been a state murder. There are a very few charming exceptions, - genteel middle class "county" Tories in Shrewsbury, who argue: "Mrs Thatcher has a degree in Chemistry, therefore she must know all about nuclear power, & nuclear weapons, therefore they are no real danger, for she would hardly otherwise imperil her children, therefore why would she want to harass an amateur student of nuclear physics, who had a cranky opposition to such power?"

But those are exceptional. Here, in the more proletarian end of the county, the Tory response is more usually: "Of course Hilda Murrell was murdered? & by the state, she was a communist wasn't she? ... what she wasn't, well that hardly matters, she helped them ... if you don't shut up you'll be next & a good thing"

One has only to consider police activities; - the failure to stop a car being driven erratically and dangerously through the streets, - the failure to investigate for a considerable time the reports of an abandoned car in a very remote lane, - the failure to do more than shut the door when they did at last go to Hilda's house, - the refusal to let the family see the pathologist's report, - the refusal to publish the internal police inquiry which was alleged to have vindicated the local police's conduct.

Unless the police say they normally allow people to drive

dangerously through the streets of Shrewsbury, without interference;

they normally fail to investigate reported abandoned cars;

they normally, told by a worried nephew that he had reason to think that his aunt was in trouble, & knowing that a car with her number has been reported abandoned, fail to do more than shut the back door of her house when they find it open;

they normally refuse to let families see pathologist's report;

they normally suppress internal police reports which they claim answer criticisms made about them;

then surely they ought to explain such departures from their normal practise. While if this is their normal practise; is it not amazing that noone in a position to sack them has made a move in that direction.

If the police case were credible it would amount to a plea of "not guilty, just incompetent."

...

But what is the alternative? It cannot be less than complicity. It is possible that someone might drive - veering from side to side - through the centre of a provincial city in the rush hour and not be stopped. But it is not possible that someone with criminal intentions to abduct could have assumed that there was no danger of the car being stopped, even though it was to be so driven.

It is likewise possible that someone might leave a car as was done, and rely that it would either not be reported or that the police would be too inefficient to check; but it is not possible that someone who had obviously planned where they were taking the car, (remembering that blind turn,) would then take such a stupid risk.

It is possible that after singularly failing to interview witnesses, & having also failed in elementary ways earlier in a crime investigation, that a police might be content just to look fools; rather than display any real eagerness to investigate; but it is not possible that a criminal would in the normal course of events have relied on this.

One can only make sense of the case if it is assumed that at the very least there was an "old boy" level communication. "We'd like a blind eye turned". That shortens the range of the possible perpetrators. It doesn't exclude big business, or limit us to the Security Services, but it would need to be very big business, with influential connections.

So we get back to the question; why was it done so openly? Why a display that makes so many people assume that it was murder? that not only that it was murder, but that the police and authorities know more than they are saying? (for it is not only political radicals who stop one in the streets of Wellington to discuss the Murrell case, & does one really think that it was the police, or other governmental agencies who did it? was there anyone else who could have done it that way?)

It has to be a very arrogant power that can so parade its victim before slaughter, that can so neglect its elementary duties and refuse to answer for this neglect, or show its own answer. The arrogance can only be its own reason.

...

"Pour décourager nous autres"? Was Hilda's murder an attempt to put the frighteners on other, otherwise conventional, intellectual, middle class liberal critics of the government?

The manner of Hilda's abduction bears all the hall-marks of the practise of army snatch squads in Northern Ireland. There it is not unusual, when a Republican is arrested, (perhaps also when a Loyalist is,) for someone disguised as the arrestee to be driven in his/her car, as publicly as possible, by the police.

There are many known instances, when arrested Republicans have been recorded as seen by their friends, so being driven, and it has later turned out that at the time, they were elsewhere being interrogated. Such arrests are frequently recorded in many areas, sometimes there are cases when simultaneously, two friends in differing places report seeing someone in police custody, & it turns out that the person so "seen" though indeed arrested, was in neither place.

There were at the time, troops who had been used to perform such snatches, quartered at the Sir John Moore Barracks in Shrewsbury. Hilda normally wore an hat, pulled down over her face, to cover up a blind eye. It was a fairly distinctive hat, & in the front of a car it would have obscured most of the face. But anyone seeing the hat would naturally suppose that they saw the owner.

It would not therefore have needed much disguise for a woman - or indeed a man - seated in Hilda's car, & supplied with her (or a similar) hat, to have posed as her. If there was a desire to interrogate her, she could easily have been moved, wherever it was desired to do it, in another car, (and in the early days some mention was made of a Range Rover-type vehicle,) while the charade-parade was on in the Shrewsbury traffic. Especially since all reports describe her as having been slumped in the passenger seat.

That at face value suggests that they really were wanting to interrogate her, that she knew, or was suspected of knowing some official secret. But the Northern Irish

parallel does not necessarily confirm this. Very often the point of interrogation is not to elicit information, but to intimidate, confuse, &, even more, demonstrate that the army (or police) have untrammelled power.

...

Hannah Arrendt, commenting on the Eichmann trial, and the endless record of cruelty said that the overwheening impression gained was just the sheer banality of evil. Much the same comment was made by commentators on the Watergate revelations, (so much so that pundits tend to attribute the origin of the comment to this latter event.)

Reading Spycatcher has much the same effect. Here was a man, evidently a gifted scientist, almost a brilliant engineer, whose moral code seemed to be limited to my country right or wrong.

He gives an endless record of criminal acts, betrayals, & general dirty dealing, and the only sign of moral disapprobation is of the fact that the Government cheated him out of the pension that it had promised him. It really never seems to have occurred to him that states ought to observe the same moral code that they would expect of individuals; let alone that people might find government actions morally improper.

He paints, in considerable detail, a picture of government agents relentlessly pursuing the aim of doing down the supposed enemy. He takes no trouble to consider, and it is obvious that nor did his colleagues, whether the enemy is real or supposed. When, by accident, his department discovers a jewel thief, he is immediately allowed to escape, and helped, because that is not the enemy. There can be no doubt that a force as amoral as he describes, with the single minded pursuit of what it believes is the national interest, and the freedom from close supervision also described, would be perfectly capable of doing the murder.

The question is would anyone else have been able to get

away with the same actions. If the answer is no, then all other possible suspects are eliminated. The Security Services, we know, are not questioned about their conduct; have a mono-maniac approach, and so conceive themselves as the final judges of the national interest, that they are prepared to commit treason for it; this approach could make them think they had a motive; & they are probably the only people in a position to arrange everything as it was done.

Oh for a Zola to write a new J'Accuse.

Now, as in the time of the Dreyfuss episode, the military-minded elite which exercises real power, conceives of itself as an aristocracy, which alone has the qualities, for judging what are the real interests of the country.

This, in their view, gives them the right to decide what the commonality shall know about the running of the nation's affairs. It gives them carte blanche to falsely accuse (and so fix the appointment of judges that they can normally ensure conviction) whom they wish. It gives them power to suppress, under the guise of state secrets, any accusations against themselves.

When prominent Cabinet Ministers say that Watergate could not have happened here, since we have a different system, there is an ironic echo, since it was stressed at the time of the Watergate Enquiry, that the British Law, (libel as well as sub judice,) is such that the revelation could never have been made; so that a British Nixon would never have been exposed.

Various Media pundits have claimed that there is nothing new in Wright's book. No doubt to those media men who

have access to information, whose publication D Notices prohibit there wouldn't be.

Nor indeed is there much that has not appeared, in less detailed form, in one or other of the many small peace movement papers. But given that these latter are dismissed, not least by those who have access to D Notice informations as "the ravings of the loony Left" the information can be said to be new.

It is new insofar as it appears with greater authority & greater detail than prior publication in pacifist or libertarian socialist journals achieved. It is new insofar as the Quality Nationals refrained from publishing, (though their journalists have access to the facts,) until someone else has said it first.

It is only the lack of scruple that makes it appear turgid and old hat. Had Zola had one tenth of Wright's information as to governmental infamy, how magnificent would have been what he wrote; or for that matter had Wright got one tenth of Zola's ethical code.