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OPERATION INTEGRITY INITIATIVE — BRITISH INTELLIGENCE CELEBRATES A CENTURY OF RUSSIA LIES AND SELF-DECEPTION

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By John Helmer, Moscow

There's a reason Albion is well-known as perfidious. Like leopards and spots, it's because he's always been that way.

In the 1920s the British secret services pursued Russians in the UK with the same zealous tactics and purposes as they have been doing in the past decade. The partial release of the 1920s archives, documented in a newly published **book** ^[1], reveals the same fabrications, false flags, contrived press leaks, meretricious politicians and journalists, sanctions, expulsions, and deep state deceptions as the British continue to pursue against Russia today.

Why is clearer then than now. A century ago, the British government, the country's military leaders, and media proprietors were all agreed on the necessity of hanging on to the British empire and its colonies, especially India; and to neutralize – if necessary, liquidate – the locals seeking national independence. There were also British business interests in maintaining cheap commodity imports of oil, rubber, wool, and other raw materials in exchange for over-priced machine and manufactured exports into captive markets. The threats of nationalism abroad, unionism and wage bargaining at home were real. Blaming Russia, Bolshevism and Communism for "meddling" then was an obvious expedient for the police and military measures, and for the state budget funds required to protect the *status quo*.

But now, without an empire of captive peoples and markets; without army or navy with global reach; without credible British political party alternatives for the domestic terms of economic exchange; and also without Russian ideology to contend with, what explains the revival of Russia-hating as Conservative Party politicians and the chiefs of MI6, MI5 and the Special Branch police practiced it one hundred years ago? This new book is written by an academic who is a true-believer in Russia-hating as British state policy, so he doesn't answer the question. What can be learned instead from his book are the many flashes of déjà vu — and also the way the flashes, repeated often enough, cause British blindness. For this, the author demonstrates by his own example, there is no cure.

Timothy Phillips (right), author of *The Secret Twenties, British Intelligence, the Russians and the Jazz Age* [2], doesn't have much of a background for this job, at least not in public. His publisher says he studied Russian at Oxford University, and since graduating "he has travelled widely in the former Soviet Union and has worked extensively as a translator." How he makes his living at that may be paid for, according to the publisher, by the BBC — a state propaganda unit in the 1920s, acknowledges Phillips himself. According to the newly released lists of British journalists and academics recruited by the secret services into what is nowadays called the Integrity Initiative, Phillips's name doesn't appear; more of those names in a moment, and the source of their pay.



Perhaps Phillips inherited his money or married it. The money shot isn't a personal matter; in British operations against Russia, the money which pays for writers and media — today no less than a century ago — tells the real story.

Phillips's book has dropped through the London market like a stone; sales are still stuck in the first printing. A newspaper in Scotland and a radio station in Australia gave it brief mentions. One London newspaper reviewed it positively; the Guardian reviewer also **added** [3] something Phillips had left out — that many of the 1920s files on secret service fake news and press plants have been "accidentally and mysteriously 'lost' by Home Office civil servants." The Guardian book review editor didn't notice how the rest of the Guardian newspaper has accidentally and mysteriously revived the same techniques of inventing Russia stories, then 'losing' the sources.

The Guardian isn't exceptional. There is no mainstream British newspaper or publishing house today which isn't. Phillips's book comes from **Granta** [4], a London publisher funded by the Tetra Pak family fortune of Sweden, and by the Russia-hating daughter of that family. The other minor, alternative and left-wing publishers in the UK sit on different sources of money, but say the same **things** [5]. Compared to the 1920s, today's media are more uniform and conformist in their sentiment towards Russia, and far less critical of the British secret service line. Nowadays only among a handful of internet websites and blogs can investigation be found at the standard of proof required by the British courts.

This, by the way, is an interesting circumstance Phillips reveals by not mentioning it. In his book the secret services and government ministries carefully avoided the courts. Search warrants,

arrests, interrogations, forensic examinations, confiscations and deportations were all implemented in secret by administrative fiat; so none of the evidence of Russian culpability was ever tested by cross-examination, conviction or acquittal by judge or jury. For the Litvinenko, MH17 and Skripal cases, it's the same now.

There's also an entertaining difference. In one of the longest-running British intelligence operations, starting in 1917 after the Revolution nationalized Russian crown and aristocratic property, the flow of diamonds and other gemstones was traced from Moscow and Leningrad through Poland and Estonia into cutting factories in Amsterdam, and the sales proceeds into London.



A US-published photograph of Russian crown jewels from an album issued in 1922 intended to stimulate buyer interest. The Russian valuation of the jewels for sale at the time was more than \$250 million. Source: <http://www.palagems.com/> [6]

From there the British authorities tried to track the money into left-wing organizations around the UK, also western Europe, and most "horrifying" – Phillips's judgement – to nationalist organizations in the Punjab. "A princess's tiara, glimpsed at a ball in 1916, really could turn into sticks of dynamite or machine guns in the hands of violent rebels who wished Britain ill... This was just one aspect of Soviet financial wrongdoing" – Phillips again. He also converts the sterling numbers in the secret files into current pounds – altogether, less than £100 million current equivalent.

This number is less than the proceeds removed to London in 2004 and subsequently invested in residential and commercial assets in the city by a single runaway Russian banker, Vladimir Chernukhin; on that individual the Home Office has **conferred** [7] citizenship and immunity from prosecution. Since 1991 the combined financial resources removed from Russia and invested in London by Russians with Home Office immunity runs into dozens of billions of pounds. "Horrifying" – but not to Phillips; not now; not even with High Court judgements of liability, perjury, or dishonesty, nor the threat of the Home Office's Unexplained Wealth Orders; for more details, **click** [8].

Among the successful, if minor, secret service operations identified by Phillips from the UK archives, one was the banning of Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 film, *Battleship Potemkin*. That was stopped by the British Board of Film Censorship (BBFC) in 1926 after a campaign started at the Admiralty characterising the film as "very objectionable propaganda against the discipline of the Fighting Forces." Secret briefings for the BBFC followed from Home Office officials and secret

service agents. The censorship board's criteria for banning Russian films included "Bolshevist propaganda", "realism in death bed scenes", "lampoons of the institution of monarchy", and "officers in British regiments shown in a disgraceful light". British support for releasing the film remained too weak to lift the ban for thirty years.



The two most successful operations of the decade were the Zinoviev Letter of 1924 and the police raid on the London office of the Russian Trade Delegation and the All-Russia Cooperative Society (ARCOS) in 1927. The first was purportedly a secret communication to British "comrades" from Grigory Zinoviev, then head of the Communist International (Comintern) organization in Moscow. "Typical Bolshevik prose", according to Phillips – "verbosity, didacticism and condescension". But as the archive he reports revealed, ideal material to demonstrate Russian intervention in British politics during the national election campaign of October 1924. Phillips concedes the document was planted in the press by the secret services and government officials to help the Conservative Party win the election. Because the Labour Party vote gained substantially in numbers, Phillips isn't sure the letter made any difference to Labour voters. But to Liberal voters who switched to the Tories, Phillips concludes "there can be no question that the scale of the [Conservative] triumph was boosted by the Zinoviev Letter. A year of scaremongering had culminated in the scariest tactic of all: the production of apparent proof that the first Labour Government in history had been in cahoots with a hostile foreign power."

Only the Zinoviev Letter was, Phillips admits, a forgery.

His research in the files isn't new on this point. His fresh evidence is less than clear on how the document "fell into the hands of SIS officers in Estonia". He thinks the forgers were White Russians. He concludes "there is no proof" that the forgery started in London; "nor of any...British spy actually being aware that the September letter was a fake." He records from the files that Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald was "absolutely sure that it was fraudulent". He reports the names and methods of the secret service officials who managed to force MacDonald's hand by deceptive official memoranda and false press leaks.

(If this sounds familiar — if it reminds you of the fabrication of the Golden Showers dossier by US and UK secret services and government officials to discredit Donald Trump's presidential campaign and the US election of November 2016, it deserves to; [click to compare](#) ^[9].)

The ARCOS police raid of 1927 (right) was an operation which started as a revenge by a disgruntled British employee at the Russian delegation office in London. His claim to have copied a British Army field manual on wireless signal training was turned by the Home Office, Foreign Office, MI5 and police into a 5-day search by more than 200 agents. The manual was never found, and no criminal court case prosecuted. Phillips doesn't consider the evidence that the manual and the source narrative were faked from the start.



The purported evidence of espionage and sedition, leaked to the press and in parliament, led to a majority vote for expulsion of several dozen Russians. That took place in June 1927. Regime change was one of the objectives of the parliamentary advocates of the ARCOS raid and the sanctions following. "The Communist state in Russia...will not continue," Phillips quotes one of the Tory advocates, "if we do our duty tonight [in parliament] and throw out Russian recognition." After the vote, he said he was able to "breathe quite differently now that we have purged our capital of these unclean and treacherous elements."

Phillips admits the operation was already underway before the prime minister and foreign minister were informed so that they were given no choice but to ratify it. He also acknowledges that several UK treaty commitments were violated, as well as the diplomatic immunity of the Russian premises, files, and staff. He concludes there were short-term political gains for Tory promoters like Winston Churchill and for secret service rivals. But the long-term outcome was the reorganization of all Soviet secret service codes, preventing British interception and decryption for thirty years. British agent networks in the Soviet Union were destroyed. Nothing Albion, er Churchill, said or signed later, when the British were desperate for Soviet support against Germany, was believed in the Kremlin.

Phillips winds up his book with an anachronism, not a comparison. "From the end of the 1920s onwards – no matter how bad crisis or how big the dispute – the United Kingdom never again tried to beat the Russians simply by ostracising them. Britain had discovered the futility of such gestures... As we are now only too aware, the Soviet Union's principal successor state poses new quandaries and threats for world leaders of the twenty-first century."

To have written a book like this required more blinders than a team of cart horses. If Phillips was the horse, who or what was his driver?

The answer is that the same British secret services continue to operate in the same way – the SS way; that's the Subsidization and Subversion of the British media to marshal parliamentary votes for operations; without the press, the services would become transparent liars, their accountability forced into parliament and the courts. Alongside the paid operatives, there are also what Phillips calls the Russian side's "fellow travellers" and "agents of influence". Fellow traveller, Phillips explains, is "an English translation of the Russian word *poputchik*, which initially referred to Russian citizens who sympathised with, but did not actively participate in, the Bolshevik revolution. British and other foreign fellow travellers tended to be men and women working in cultural and academic professions who supported the Bolsheviks' right to rule..."

Phillips documents intensive surveillance of these individuals at home, in hospital, at work, and on holiday; penetration of their organizations; interception of their letters; theft of their membership lists; and eavesdropping on their conversations. The rationale, Phillips reports (and endorses) was “an understanding that soft support for Bolshevism could be valuable to the Russian regime”, and the “belief that such soft support masked more dangerous and illegal types of assistance.”

The state budget required for this was never enough. Phillips reports the British services in the 1920s were “cash-strapped and perennially overwhelmed organisations.”

Money is not as short these days, as the release of the archives of Operation Integrity Initiative and its think-tank hub, the Institute for Statecraft, reveals. Its current annual budget amounts to about £2 million. It’s one of many such operations at British universities, think-tanks, and media organizations, the financing for which comes from British agencies such as the Foreign Office and Defence Ministry, as well as NATO offices, the US State Department, the Lithuanian Defence Ministry, and many other think-tanks funded from the same sources.

The Institute for **Statecraft** [10] calls itself “an independent body dedicated to refreshing the practice of statecraft, to improving governance and to enhancing national security.” Its money comes from “Government bodies; with Armed Forces and other agencies of national security; with International Organisations; with the corporate world; and with Academia.” The only government this institute is provably independent of is the Russian. *Poputchiki* is what a Russian might call them, but not Phillips.

The internal documents of Operation Integrity Initiative were first **disclosed** [11] publicly in November. In addition to the names of the academics on the Institute’s official **payroll** [12], the fresh disclosures revealed lists of British fellow travellers and agents of influence. Their job, according to the operational papers, is to amplify secret service fabrications in the mainstream press. The way this megaphone works now isn’t very different from the way Phillips reported from the 1920s archives. Groups of journalists, spies, soldiers, academics and lobbyists are paid to meet regularly for conferences at which they exchange information and publish papers to each other. The job of these media networks is to report the fabricated messages of these meetings; endorse and legitimize each other’s faking; as well as to attack and discredit critical or alternative views. Follow this story in the US-based Moon of Alabama website **here** [13] and **here** [14] and **here** [15].

A **report** [16] by a group of British academics has identified fresh details of operations and funding sources for Integrity Initiative, including the money Facebook is contributing. This report also traces the military and intelligence backgrounds of the operatives. Former UK ambassador Craig Murray has **identified** [17] names and roles in the operation of Foreign Office analysts on Russia, and the MI6 case officer for Sergei Skripal.

OPERATION INTEGRITY INITIATIVE 2018

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Source: <https://www.cyberguerrilla.org/> ^[11] and <https://www.moonofalabama.org/> ^[18] For the record of faking and lying by Neil Buckley of the Financial Times, read this [archive](#) ^[19]; for James Nixey of the Chatham House think-tank, [click](#) ^[20]. For Edward Lucas of The Economist, read [this](#) ^[21]; and Anne Applebaum, the Polish freelancer, [here](#) ^[22]. Bobo Lo and Andrew Wood are ex-Australian and British diplomats who sell their fabrications through think-tanks and commercial consultancies. Wood's operations have included fabricating, then amplifying the [Golden Showers dossier](#) ^[23]. The two Russian names on this list are those of [Vladimir Ashurkov](#) ^[24], a former Alfa Bank employee then fund-raiser for Alexei Navalny; and [Igor Sutyagin](#) ^[25], whose Russian conviction and imprisonment for espionage ended with his expulsion to the UK in 2010. For responses by the named journalists, read section 7.1 of this [report](#) ^[16].

The Institute for Statecraft's official response has been to acknowledge the truth and blame the Russians for revealing it:



Image Source: II

COMMENT

Statement on Russian media publication of hacked II documents

It is inevitable that a programme tackling disinformation in Europe finds itself spending much of its time addressing the activities of the Russian State, including those carried out through its intelligence services. The Kremlin has invested more operational thought, intent and resource in disinformation, in Europe and elsewhere in the democratic world, than any other single player. We note both the attempts by Russian state propaganda outlets to amplify the volume of this leak; and the suggestion by a major Anonymous-linked Twitter account that the Kremlin subverted the banner of Anonymous to disguise their responsibility for it.

It is of course a matter of deep regret that Integrity Initiative documents have been stolen and posted on line, still more so that, in breach of any defensible practice, Russian state propaganda outlets have published or re-published a large number of names and contact details. We have not yet had the chance to analyse all of the documents, so cannot say with confidence whether they are all genuine or whether they include doctored or false material. Although it is clear that much of the material was indeed on the Integrity Initiative or Institute systems, much of it is dated and was never used. In particular, many of the names published were on an internal list of experts in this field who had been considered as potential invitees to future cooperation. In the event, many were never contacted by the Integrity Initiative and did not contribute to it. Nor were these documents therefore included in any funding proposals. Not only did these individuals have nothing to do with the programme – they may not even have heard of us. We are of course trying to contact all named individuals for whom we have contact details to ensure that they are aware of what has happened.

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URLs in this post:

[1] book: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Secret-Twenties-British-Intelligence-Russians/dp/1847082513>

[2] *The Secret Twenties, British Intelligence, the Russians and the Jazz Age:*

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/general-books/history/The-Secret-Twenties-Timothy-Phillips-9781847082510>

[3] added: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/07/the-secret-twenties-by-timothy-phillips-review>

[4] Granta: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/17/europe-help-georgia-armenia-russia-will?INTCMP=SRCH>

[5] things: <http://johnhelmer.net/challenging-a-kremlin-taboo-resuscitating-lenin/>

[6] <http://www.palagems.com/>: <http://www.palagems.com/russian-crown-jewels/>

[7] conferred: <http://johnhelmer.net/private-blind-eye-how-the-last-british-investigative-journalist-turns-one-on-russia/>

[8] click: <http://johnhelmer.net/unexplained-wealth-opera-oleg-deripaska-vladimir-chernukhin-and-lolita-danilina-sing-in-london/>

[9] click to compare: <http://johnhelmer.net/?s=orbis>

[10] Statecraft: <https://www.statecraft.org.uk/about-us>

[11] disclosed: <https://www.cyberguerrilla.org/blog/operation-integrity-initiative-british-informational-war-against-all/>

[12] payroll: <https://www.statecraft.org.uk/fellows>

[13] here: <https://www.moonofalabama.org/2018/11/british-government-behind-secret-anti-russian-disinformation-campaign.html>

[14] here: <https://www.moonofalabama.org/2018/12/new-integrity-intitiative-papers-include-proposal-for-a-large-disinformation-campaign.html>

[15] here: <https://www.moonofalabama.org/2019/01/integrity-initiative-new-documents-from-shady-ngo-released.html>

[16] report: <http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>

[17] identified: <https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2018/12/british-government-covert-anti-russian-propaganda-and-the-skripal-case/>

[18] <https://www.moonofalabama.org/>:

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2018/11/british-government-behind-secret-anti-russian-disinformation-campaign.html>

[19] archive: <http://johnhelmer.net/?s=neil+buckley>

[20] click: <http://johnhelmer.net/?s=james+nixey>

[21] this: <http://johnhelmer.net/?s=edward+lucas>

[22] here: <http://johnhelmer.net/?s=anne+applebaum>

[23] Golden Showers dossier: <http://johnhelmer.net/glenn-simpson-chases-his-shadow-into-a-black-hole/>

[24] Vladimir Ashurkov: <http://johnhelmer.net/the-level-playing-field-according-to-reform-financier-vladimir-ashurkov/>

[25] Igor Sutyagin: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor_Sutyagin