

Another *Searchlight* smear job Open Eye, the major media, and the New Age anti-semites

Matthew Kalman and John Murray

Earlier this year, as editors/producers of the radical-green magazine *Open Eye*, we found ourselves investigating and trying to expose in the major media far right involvement in the Green and New Age movements. This included links to anti-semitic conspiracy theorists, Holocaust revisionists, the British Israelite and Christian Identity Movements, the US militias and so on. David Icke, the magazine *Nexus* and the London-based magazine *Rainbow Ark* attracted particular attention. But we found ourselves undermined by smears and rumours circulated by the very people who should have been most supportive.

The Independent on Sunday

Only days after we had discovered that David Icke planned to follow up on his use of the Tzarist forgery the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' in his book *The Robots' Rebellion*, by including Holocaust revisionist material in its successor, the first interest was shown from the *Independent on Sunday*. The IoS were interested in running something using this and other information about Icke - for example that he had been helped to write a chapter on the Holocaust by Marcus Allen, the UK agent for *Nexus*. (Icke calls *Nexus* 'incomparable' and promotes it in his books and lectures.) Interviewed by us in December 1994, Allen spoke admiringly of David Irving (a shelf of whose books he had in his office) and displayed a copy of the 'Protocols'. Almost as soon as a journalist from the IoS began writing up the Icke/Holocaust revisionism/*Nexus* material, it suddenly expanded into a potential major exclusive with the April 19 bombing in Oklahoma. For in the months before the Oklahoma bombing, *Nexus* had been giving the US militia publicity with articles by militia advocates Mark Koernke and Linda Thompson. A 2000-word investigation of *Nexus* magazine and its links to the militias was written by IoS journalist Cole Moreton. All reference to the initial focus of interest, David Icke, was dropped the editor, Ian Jack.¹ The article was read out to us by phone, as agreed, on Friday afternoon at 6. It was ready and on the page, libel-checked, with photo-graphs. At 8 pm we received another call telling us the article had been pulled by the paper's out-going editor, Ian Jack. (Jack now edits *Granta*.) Devastated that our week of photo-shoots, meetings and research had ended in this way, we looked for another outlet.

Private Eye

We left a message for Paul Foot at *Private Eye*. He phoned us, very interested in the whole story and eager to run it. "Got to have it today..." He was especially happy about a chance to attack Ian Jack for spiking the story. We spent a day writing out what had happened and his secretary confirmed that the

story would be in the next issue. But nothing appeared in *Private Eye*.

The Guardian

We next contacted the *Guardian*. They spent a week working on the story and journalist Paul Brown drove to Glastonbury to listen to David Icke. After a three-week wait, an article, 'Ex-nutter rails at New World Order mind benders' (9 May), finally appeared; but only after author Paul Brown had had a 'tremendous row' over the continual delays. Despite the research done by the *Guardian* and the material we had provided for them, the article was essentially a surprisingly uncritical review of Icke's lecture. All the connections with the militias and the wider picture had disappeared. Brown had apparently tired of getting to the bottom of the New Age/far right/ militia network.

The Jewish Chronicle

We also contacted the *Jewish Chronicle*. They were very interested in the anti-semites we were discussing, and their journalist also said, cryptically, 'some of them are close to home'. We turned over our material to them and described our discovery of Holocaust revisionism in Icke's then forthcoming book. We asked who these 'close to home' anti-semites were. The editor informed us it was a reference to Larry O'Hara, one of our sources on the story. *Searchlight* had warned them to avoid O'Hara, putting forward a ridiculous conspiracy theory that Icke's exposure by Green Party member O'Hara, amongst others, was a ruse to increase the power of some imagined far right grouping of O'Hara's within the Green Party.

The *Jewish Chronicle* did write about Icke but avoided any mention of *Open Eye*, carefully ensuring that any information that we had given them was obtained from other sources, bypassing the written agreement we'd drawn up with the editor guaranteeing credit for our material.

The Evening Standard

We were then contacted by the London *Evening Standard* journalist, Mark Honigsbaum. Though wary at first because of vicious smears on the Green movement which had appeared in the *Standard*, Honigsbaum seemed refreshingly aware of the seriousness of this novel guise of New Age anti-semitism. A hard-hitting piece, which added to our knowledge, appeared, 'The dark side of David Icke' (26 May 1995). Our fear that Honigsbaum would have been briefed with the same *Searchlight* rubbish as the *Jewish Chronicle* was unfounded. Indeed, Honigsbaum was scornful of *Searchlight's* past role in playing up the nazi group Combat 18.

The *Searchlight* smears reached Radio 4's Sally Hardcastle who had contacted *Open Eye*, and it took a long meeting to get across to her that we were not in any way connected to nazis, Third Way, the Third Position, imagined manipulators of the Green Party etc. A radio interview with *Open Eye* was recorded but never used.

The New Statesman

At this point, suspecting that *Searchlight* was planning to attack *Open Eye* and perhaps even the whole Green movement, we were asked to write a piece for the *New Statesman*, whose

¹ The paper was embarrassed that a couple of months earlier, they had featured 'author and mystic' David Icke in the 'Ideal Homes' column of the paper's magazine, allowing him to plug *The Robots' Rebellion*.

editor Steve Platt seemed to comprehend our view that there was a vast new audience that could be attracted to right-wing conspiracy theories and anti-semitism in a new guise. He gave the article the title 'New Age Nazism' and made it the cover story for the issue which appeared in time for Glastonbury festival (23 June). It was a long piece and we had few complaints. Larry O'Hara's name was cut from at least one piece of research, the National Front's Libya connection, though an attributed quote of his did remain in our conclusion.

Enter Searchlight

In its July issue, which appeared days after the *New Statesman*, *Searchlight* sought to claim the credit for the work we had done with their own article which focused mainly on the Australia-based magazine *Nexus*. 'Here *Searchlight* reveals for the first time (sic) in Britain, not the unimportant sideshow that is Icke, but the facts about the man whose magazine Icke promotes, his international connections and the response to his activities in Australia...' Icke had 'attracted a disproportionate amount of media attention', they complained, and was a 'fringe lunatic with no political influence'. A muddled introduction to the article did not mention any of the links between Icke, Don Martin (British League of Rights), Rainbow Ark and *Nexus*'s UK agent, and even claimed that the 'Protocols' were to be a source for Icke's next book when it was in fact his previous book, *The Robots' Rebellion*, in which it was used.

The anticipated smear on us appeared in the August edition of *Searchlight* which partially credited *Open Eye* with doing much of the work to expose Icke's far right connections while simultaneously fingering it as part of the very far right network we had been struggling for months to expose! The article was titled 'Fascists step up fight to take over the Green and New Age movements'. Under this title appeared photos of three far right activists, some contents pages from *Nexus* and a reprint of part of a page from the current issue of *Open Eye*. Next to the reprinted pages of *Nexus* and *Open Eye* the magazines were described as 'political bedfellows' - about as accurate as saying that Simon Wiesenthal is a bedfellow of David Irving. In support of this smear was the claim that both *Nexus* and *Open Eye* have 'promoted the views of Joe Vialls'. *Nexus* have published a series of articles by Vialls, as, on one occasion, did the magazine of ex-Aryan Nations' representative Robert Pash, *New Dawn*. On the third page of their piece *Searchlight* continued, 'If *Open Eye* wishes to discover the far right, it need look no further than its own publications', claiming that we had published a 'book' by Vialls, 'who has a long connection with the far right'. The only evidence offered of this 'long connection' was the Vialls articles in *New Dawn* and *Nexus*. In fact the *Nexus* articles were Vialls' fictionalised account of his experience of being a mind control victim; that in *New Dawn* was Vialls' analysis of the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher. None of them contain any of Vialls' political opinions; indeed, we have no idea what Vialls' political opinions are. Neither, manifestly, does *Searchlight*.²

The Vialls 'book' we are supposed to have published is a 22-page, A5 pamphlet about the politics of oil during the Gulf and

Falklands war - Vialls was a petroleum engineer by profession - which is copyrighted to Vialls, not *Open Eye*.

Further down the text, after this attempt to label us as far right for distributing Vialls' pamphlet, *Searchlight* claims that an article in *Open Eye* was 'based on the same bullshit that Harrington and Griffin were peddling around town six years ago'. Most of the offending article (*Open Eye* 3, p. 5) was about the *agent provocateur* Tim Hepple who worked on behalf of *Searchlight* and was, according to them, meant to be infiltrating the BNP. Hepple, however spent a lot of time infiltrating green and anarchist groups, urging them towards violence. The Hepple episode took place in the last 2-3 years and is unrelated to anything Harrington or Griffin could have been talking about six years ago. Most of the rest of the offending article was about the intelligence-gathering activities of the US Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a controversy which was covered last year by many journals, including the *Covert Action Quarterly*. This can have nothing to do with Harrington or Griffin either.

This leaves one final paragraph in the piece we published which simply reflected the continuing suspicion of some left-wingers and anarchists that *Searchlight* publisher Gerry Gable may be continuing the activities outlined by Duncan Campbell *et al* in his 1980 *New Statesman* piece which first revealed the existence of the 'Gable memorandum', and included a quotation from a profile of Gable in the *Jewish Chronicle* which mentioned his 'contacts....in the security services'.

The allegation that our article is 'based on' whatever former NF members Harrington and Griffin were writing or saying six years ago is totally untrue. We have never met nor spoken to Harrington and Griffin, and have no idea what they were saying six years ago. This is potentially highly damaging to *Open Eye*, a magazine publicly committed to anti-racism and anti-fascism, which had spent the previous few months helping the media with information on fascists and racists.

In an article in *The Big Issue* (August 21) about the *Searchlight* attack on us, Paul Anderson, acting editor of the *New Statesman*, was quoted as saying that '*Searchlight* has a tendency to label anyone who disagrees with it as Nazis. To suggest *Open Eye* is anything but anti-racist...is ridiculous.' Other sections of the Jewish community, which did not rely on *Searchlight*'s disinformation about us, were willing to meet us and we have since been published on Icke and anti-semitism in the New Age movement in the London-based Jewish community affairs magazine, *New Moon*.

Searchlight has no letters page and has never replied to letters from *Open Eye*. We did attempt to communicate with publisher Gerry Gable, but he told us to 'fuck off' before we could finish what we had to say. We complained to the Press Complaints Commission (who reject 95% of complaints) about the *Searchlight* article. They responded that the PCC 'takes the view that the entire content of a magazine such as *Searchlight* will be seen as partisan comment'. This apparently releases them from the duty in the PCC code 'not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted material'.

* * *

Open Eye, PO Box 3069, London SW9 8LU

² *Nexus* and to a lesser extent *New Dawn* cleverly mix articles from the far right with other from non-right sources. *Nexus* has been successful in attracting both a readership and contributors who are unaware of this.

Combat 18 and MI5: some background notes

Larry O'Hara

Observers of the activities of the neo-Nazi Combat 18 (C18), otherwise known as the National Socialist Alliance (NSA), have been treated to some bewildering documents and allegations recently. In an attempt to clarify who is saying what, and why, I will examine the origins and initial purpose of C18, the role (if any) of alleged state agents within it, and accounts of its current status and purpose. The interpretations examined are those of C18 themselves, the British National Party (BNP) and others on the far right, *Searchlight* magazine, and my own.

The origins of Combat 18

For its leaders, the origins of C18 have hitherto not been a subject of dispute. The trigger is said to have been the events surrounding a fracas at a League of Saint George meeting in Kensington in May 1991.¹ Their initial aim was to provide strong arm defensive and then offensive protection for the far right, the first publicly admitted 'action' being an incendiary attack on a Communist Party premises in March 1992.² The gap between the events that were the catalyst (including a failed November 1991 Fred Leuchter meeting in London), and the first admitted 'action' accounts for my earlier description of C18 as having been founded in early 1992.³ John Tyndall, leader of the BNP, has written about C18 on a number of occasions. His first treatment, in the 14 December 1993 *Organiser's Bulletin*, did not actually dwell on the origins of C18, perhaps because he himself had been publicly photographed with people, later said to be prominent in C18, acting as stewards. His more recent (September 1995) *Spearhead* article concentrates on the role played by US Nazi Harold Covington, discussed below. This later emphasis is not inconsistent with his earlier treatment, more an elaboration of it.

Consistency cannot be claimed for the analysis of *Searchlight* magazine, the importance of whose views should not be underestimated. The Third (May 1994) report of the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee into Racial Attacks gave *Searchlight's* opinions on the organisation equal ranking with those of the Home Office and police, counterbalancing the views of the authorities against their thesis.⁴ In the written evidence submitted by *Searchlight* in 1993 they dated C18's arrival back to Autumn 1991 (p. 3), and elaborated on this in a paper 'The Genesis Of Combat 18' which was another part of their evidence. A crucial role was attributed to Harold Covington, described as the 'outside influence to bring together several disparate factions and groupings into C18' (p. 2). There was speculation of a possible intelligence input, that of the 'South African state security services' (p. 3), though the only evidence

offered was the presence of some anti-Apartheid individuals on the Redwatch hit-lists. The contribution by *Searchlight* publisher Gerry Gable to a recent book on European fascists is similar, in that Covington's role was still seen as central (p. 261), although the South African aspect had been dropped without explanation.⁵ Nonetheless, Gable was clear in describing C18 as being in part a response to the Leuchter meeting getting turned over: 'Such a disaster could never be allowed to happen again. An effective group of bodyguards and stewards had to be formed.'⁶

Speaking of a hypothetical ban on C18, *Searchlight's* 1993 Commons evidence argued that 'MI5 and the police should find no problem in dealing with such groups' (p. 6). *Searchlight's* written evidence was followed up by the verbal evidence given by Gerry Gable, on 8 December 1993 in which he called for investigation of C18 to be turned over to MI5, in particular because of C18's links with groups such as the UDA.⁷ This was followed in the *Searchlight* January 1994 editorial, hostile to Special Branch, by a call for 'the investigation of nazi terror groups either to be put into the hands of a special police unit...or to be turned over to MI5 and MI6'.⁸ All this changed in April 1995 when, in an astounding about turn, *Searchlight* (pp. 2 and 3) announced that MI5 had in fact *set up* C18, in order to 'know the extent of such joint operations' between the UDA/UVF and British fascists. This theme has been intermittently repeated since, for example in the assertion in the issue of October 1995 (p. 4) that 'perhaps there is some truth in claims that C18 has come near to achieving the aims set for it by its original creators and is running down many of its activities'. The reasons for *Searchlight's* abrupt change of tune I have already analysed and it need not concern us here.⁹

Harold Covington revisited

I have summarised elsewhere the available evidence on the possibility of his being an FBI asset, since when there have been three published references to Covington which carry the debate forward.¹⁰ The first is *Searchlight's* statement of April 1995 that when 'C18 was formed some of its key players had links to the intelligence services. They included Harold Covington, a US Nazi and long time asset of the FBI' (p. 2). Given that I had castigated *Searchlight* eight months before for building him up without ever mentioning this possibility, this admission is almost as amazing as their about turn concerning

⁵ 'Britain's Nazi Underground' in L. Cheles (ed) *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, (Longman, second edition, London, 1995).

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 262.

⁷ See *Evening Standard* and the *Independent*, 9 December 1993.

⁸ Gable's contribution to the 1995 book, discussed above, was somewhat similar, saying the 'vital question is whether or not the British government and its instruments of law and order will step in to end such dangerous operations and to stop those who control them' -- by clear implication and earlier analysis, not the state (p. 266).

⁹ See my piece in *Green Anarchist* 38, June 1995, pp. 13-14. *Red Action*, issue 71, Summer 1995, pp. 1-3, was the only other publication to comment in detail on this change of line.

¹⁰ *Turning Up the Heat*, (Phoenix, London, 1994), pp. 68-71. But see *National Socialist Vanguard Report*, Vol. 12, no. 4 (Oregon, USA) October/December 1994, which makes a careful and spirited defence of Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance against charges of state collaboration laid against them by Covington. Not having seen yet the primary sources to which the NSV report refers, my mind is still open on this episode. If their case against Covington here is correct, then his hurling of false accusations would be just the sort of thing he would do were he an FBI asset, although of course there might be other (sectarian) reasons for doing so.

¹ Interviews given to *The Order*, issue 1, April 1993, p. 9 and *Terreur d'Elite*, issue 4, Autumn 1994.

² *Terreur d'Elite* *ibid.*

³ In my *At War With The Truth*, October 1993, p. 28.

⁴ See p.xxvi, paragraphs 71 and 72.

C18's origins.¹¹ The second published reference to Covington comes from the BNP's John Tyndall. He cites an unnamed US leader as telling him that Covington is a long time FBI employee. While careful not to endorse this opinion as necessarily true, he then makes the same point as I did a year earlier: *viz.* 'large numbers of people in Britain who have written off to his mailing address in response to C18 literature would have had their names and addresses passed on straight away to the FBI, who would in turn have supplied them to the political police in this country, whether MI5, Special Branch or both.'¹² The third mention of Covington recently has been in an anonymous pamphlet titled *C18* distributed this summer to all BNP and selected other right-wing PO Boxes. This also comments on Covington's mail being monitored, and results passed back to MI5, but Covington is presented as an innocent party who let his PO Box be used 'as a favour'.¹³

The current situation in C18: various theories

While not really alleging that any of the British C18 leadership were originally state plants, John Tyndall has long been of the opinion that they have operated under some kind of implicit state license, making them immune from prosecution for the distribution of inflammatory literature.¹⁴ By introducing Covington into the picture Tyndall has deepened this criticism, while careful (no doubt partly because of the sympathies of some BNP members) not to unequivocally condemn the current C18 leadership on the question of their ultimate allegiance (as opposed to political strategy or ideology). Thus he asks, 'Does this mean that the chief operatives of C18 are conscious and willing agents of the state, deliberately working against the nationalist cause?' And answers, 'Not necessarily.'¹⁵

Searchlight's account of current developments is contradictory. On the one hand they stated 'that C18 is controlled by the security services and has become a no-go area for decent police officers who wish to halt its activities',¹⁶ and have reported 'claims that the NSA [National Socialist Alliance] is trawling for information on nazi activists, which could end up on MI5's computers'.¹⁷ On the other hand an unusually lucid article in the July 1995 issue described the NSA 'as a network of semi-autonomous groups united by their *modus operandi* and certain core beliefs' (p. 2). But if C18 was set up, and is controlled by, MI5, can it also be a semi-autonomous network?

A highly intriguing and imaginative account of current C18 developments is contained in the anonymous *C18* document discussed above. Authorship has been widely attributed to a well-known BNP member, who has denied it,¹⁸ and the text is written as if it comes from within C18/NSA ranks. It

¹¹ The 1995 book contribution by Gable doesn't refer to Covington being an FBI asset, when it would surely have been relevant.

¹² *Spearhead*, September 1995, p. 10. Cf my *Turning Up The Heat*, p. 70.

¹³ This text is un-numbered, but taking inside front page as page 1, this quote is from page 7.

¹⁴ *Organiser's Bulletin*, December 1993, and *British Nationalist*, January 1994, p. 7, texts analysed in my *Turning Up The Heat*, pp. 79-82.

¹⁵ *Spearhead*, September 1995, p. 9.

¹⁶ October 1995, p. 3.

¹⁷ October 1995 p. 6.

¹⁸ *Spearhead*, October 1995, p. 10

alleges that those who originally set up C18 are more or less conscious or unconscious MI5 assets. The aims are stated to have been 'using C18 to wreck/disrupt the BNP and entrap national socialists in militant activities that carry big bird'. (p.3) Evidence for these allegations is less than overwhelming, and in one case, concerning the leaking of details about a January 1994 'Blood and Honour' concert in London, contradicts existing information.¹⁹

What is fascinating for our current purposes is that in line with my thesis of October 1994, that it was within MI5's game-plan to supplant the original leadership for their own purposes, this anonymous pamphlet alleges that the original C18 leadership are state agents, and should be replaced. I am not saying this means that the pamphlet is a state production, merely that the call for an internal coup is redolent of my earlier analysis. My view of C18 remains that it was *not* set up by MI5, but they have sought to influence it, at all levels, so far without signal success.²⁰

The opinions offered by *Searchlight* on the key issues are the most contradictory of any available, and that includes those offered by fascists themselves. This is particularly disturbing given the serious nature of the issues involved and *Searchlight's* continuing grip on media analyses of the far right. For their part, C18 still declare themselves to be 'At War With The British State'.²¹

¹⁹ Pp. 4-5. Tyndall makes the same point in *Spearhead*, September 1995, p. 10.

²⁰ We should take note of a general downturn in media coverage of C18 recently, and the comment by Duncan Campbell that as far as Scotland Yard Anti-Terrorist Branch is concerned 'Far-right neo-fascist groups such as Combat 18 are not regarded as posing big threats'. *The Guardian*, 21 August 1995.

²¹ Title of an article in *The Order* issue 12, July 1995, pp. 5-8, an article which *Searchlight* (September 1995, p. 4) absurdly and despicably 'speculated' was written by me.