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Why we need anti-SLAPP law

By Hamish Monk

On October 15, in the bowels of Westminster Hall, the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition met with campaigners, lawyers, lobbyists and reporters in a cloistered side-chamber – the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) Room – to make the case for a structured response to strategic defamation litigation.

Formerly known as a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP), this mechanism is not as well-known as it should be – precisely because it is so effective in leveraging legal intimidation to restrict public, free expression and inquiry. The UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition – an informal working group comprising freedom of expression, whistleblowing, and anti-corruption bodies – seeks to redress the imbalance, by researching, monitoring and highlighting the damage created by SLAPP cases.



Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament, photo by Tim Crook

Who can be targeted?

According to the Anti-SLAPP Coalition, SLAPPs are often brought by "the powerful and wealthy" to prevent the publication of unfavourable information – or encourage its removal from the public domain. Such threats can be levied against almost anyone; be it academics, journalists, whistleblowers, sexual abuse victims, environmental defenders, newspapers, and so on.

The Anti-SLAPP Coalition's brochure, which peppered the tables of Westminster Hall's IPU Room, acknowledges that few SLAPPs "actually reach a full trial" since they often "lack legal merit." But this is not given as reason to accept the litigation. Even before a SLAPP has hit the courts, it can achieve its aim – which is to wrestle defendants into submission with the associated legal fees and psychological distress of a drawn-out battle.

For these reasons, SLAPPs are seen by the Coalition as "an abuse of the litigation process" and must be countered in the name of democracy and public interest. Readers need only cast their minds to scandals and coverups such as those surrounding Jimmy Saville, the Post Office's Horizon software, or Grenfell's cladding, to appreciate why.

The UK as a jurisdiction of concern

The United Kingdom is particularly exposed to litigation of the SLAPPs nature – and it is borne out in the figures. In the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) – a sponsor of the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition's October lobby – the UK is ranked 23rd out of 180 countries. For some time, anti-SLAPP laws have been enjoyed by 34 states in the United States; three regions of Canada; and in the Australian Capital Territory.

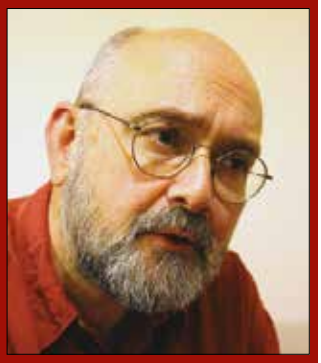
In a 2022 report conducted by the Foreign Policy Centre (FPC) – another of the event's sponsors, along with the APPG on Anti-Corruption & Responsible Tax – the UK was found to be an especially "claimant friendly" environment, where libel and defamation litigation lean in favour of those suing. To the same effect, the Anti-SLAPP Coalition argues: "The role London plays as a global hub for the super wealthy appears to have compounded the SLAPPs problem."

The wider continental blocs of which the UK is still a member, however, are racing ahead – and cracking down on SLAPP-like litigation. In April 2024, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers approved a recommendation which lays out a set of minimum standards for member states to tackle SLAPPs. It provides robust principles, a framework to identify SLAPPs, and encourages non-EU member states to build their own protections.

Unfortunately, the recommendation is not legally binding in the same way the new and comparable EU Directive – due to be transposed into national law on May 2026 – will be for member states, the Anti-SLAPP Coalition points out. Of course, the UK surrendered its obligation to observe such directives on January 31, 2020.

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Andy Smith
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Journalism under attack

President-elect Donald Trump is no fan of the press. In all three of his presidential election campaigns, and during his first term in the White House, he frequently ranted against the "mainstream media" and the journalistic profession. Newly empowered by a decisive victory at the polls, what does "Trump 2.0" mean for journalism in America? There is no doubt that Trump's "MAGA" movement places its faith in the internet and social media, rather than the traditional press and broadcasters, and subscribes to a raft of conspiracy theories about its political opponents and "liberal media" critics. But will a new Trump Administration actually be reckless enough to move against the journalists on The Donald's constantly growing "enemies list" – or is this all, as we must hope, just rhetoric and bluster?

Authoritarian politicians, of Left and Right alike, often have the media in their gunsights. China under the Communist Party is the world's largest jailer of journalists (over 100 are currently incarcerated). Most of what remains of the Chinese media is directly owned and controlled by the state. According to RSF (Reporters Without Borders), the Beijing regime routinely uses "surveillance, coercion, intimidation and harassment to keep independent journalists from reporting on issues it deems sensitive."

In Russia, journalists critical of Vladimir Putin have been persecuted throughout Putin's long rule, but the situation now is worse than ever. Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, there has been no press freedom for Russians at all. As RSF reports in its latest Press Freedom Index, "almost all independent media have been banned, blocked and/or declared 'foreign agents' or 'undesirable organisations'. All others are subject to military censorship."

Meanwhile, Putin's friend Viktor Orban has turned Hungary into the European Union's least free country and has "built a true media empire subject to his party's orders." While there are still a few independent media outlets "they are subject to political, economic, and regulatory pressures." Hungary continues to slide down the Press Freedom Index.

Middle Eastern and Asian countries are among the worst places to be a journalist; in Saudi Arabia, for example, "independent media are non-existent" and "Saudi journalists live under heavy surveillance, even when abroad." Iran is "one of the world's most repressive countries in terms of press freedom," in Pakistan "the political-military elite retains broad control over the media," and in Egypt "the hopes for freedom that accompanied the 2011 revolution now seem distant" as the regime tightens its grip on the press and joins China among the world's leading jailers of journalists.

Even in India, the world's largest democracy, "press freedom is in crisis," says RSF, and there has been "violence against journalists" and "highly concentrated media ownership" under the premiership of Narendra Modi. As India and Hungary show, not all suppression of the media takes place in totalitarian, Communist or Fascist, dictatorships. Democratically elected governments can just as easily drift towards authoritarianism, especially when they "win big". Moves to restrict the press are an early warning sign of a looming dictatorship.

Journalism is the lifeblood of democracy and we must guard against any erosion of our free press.

Topsy-turvy world

When the British garrison at Yorktown, Virginia, surrendered to George Washington's forces on October 19, 1781, the defeated soldiers marched out of the town with their bands playing an old Royalist tune from the English Civil War, *The World Turn'd Upside Down*. Well, it seems to me that we certainly live in a topsy-turvy world now! To give one example, how is it that self-styled "progressives" here in Britain and throughout the West celebrate brutally repressive Islamist regimes and terrorist movements in the Middle East while denouncing that region's one and only liberal democracy?

After Hamas butchered more than a thousand Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023, and took hundreds more captive, demonstrators took to the streets of London and other Western cities – not to protest against the massacres, but to proclaim their adoration of the murderers. For years, "progressives" have been preaching against "victim-blaming", but, as Brendan O'Neill points out in his new book, *After the Pogrom: 7 October, Israel and the Crisis of Civilisation* (reviewed in this issue of *The Journal*), there is one exception to this rule: the Jews. According to this incredible logic, the Israeli civilians slaughtered on that terrible day must be held responsible for their own deaths, because of the State of Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

Hidden in woodland on Box Hill in Surrey there is a strange little grave-marker that bears the following description: "Major Peter Labelliere, aged 75, an eccentric resident of Dorking, was buried here, head downwards, on 11 July 1800." It seems that this old soldier believed that, as the world was topsy-turvy, he needed to ensure he'd be the right way up in the afterlife. He might have a point.

Andy Smith

CIoJ Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Chartered Institute of Journalists and the Institute of Journalists (TU) was held at The Reform Club in London's Pall Mall on Friday October 24. Members heard a series of presentations by the President of the Institute, Gerald Bowey, the Chairman of the Professional Practices Board, Prof Tim Crook, Treasurer Navin Kukadia, and CIoJ Chief Executive Dominic Cooper outlining key achievements and activities of the past year, and highlighting current issues of concern.

The financial report sadly showed another dip in our resources, but the President felt we should be "cautiously optimistic" about membership recruitment and retention. Reporting on the outcome of recent judicial reviews and tribunal hearings, the PPB Chairman said that legislation had "opened the floodgates for judicial activism" and as a result we are currently threatened with "yet more reporting restrictions".

Prof Crook thanked "friends of the Institute" who had provided support and advice to the CIoJ over the past year, such as Fiona O'Brien, the new London Bureau Director of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), and Brigadier Geoffrey Dodds OBE, Secretary of the Defence & Security Media Advisory (DSMA) Committee, who had given excellent and timely presentations about their work at recent webinars for CIoJ members.

Two motions were debated and passed unanimously. The first was proposed by the President on behalf of the Council of the Institute:

"The Chartered Institute of Journalists calls on all governments to acknowledge and confirm their commitment to the principle that no journalist should be targeted for attack while reporting on the front lines of conflict areas. The Institute deplores and condemns all such attacks and urges the international community to hold perpetrators to account."

The other, proposed by James Wims:

"Given that the Institute's three Royal Charters – provided by Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II – are unique worldwide to the Chartered Institute of Journalists, are profound in themselves, and relevant to journalism in any age, are providing us with our entitlement to have the word 'Chartered' in our name, are most definitely not secret or anything to be ashamed of, and are among the valued and cherished assets we hold that set us apart from any other organisation, [therefore] each of the three Royal Charters, and also the Supplemental Charter, be displayed in a readable form on the Institute's website, for the benefit of members, potential members and students of journalism."

Mr Wims commented that the Charters, "which are masterful works of art in their own right" as well as being "historically significant", are nonetheless "almost invisible" in that we do not currently promote, publicise or display them. The Chief Executive agreed to examine the options for getting the Charters professionally photographed so that they can be published on the website, and the *Journal* Editor undertook to write a history of the Royal Charters.

An election was held for membership of the Professional Practices Board. The following were duly elected to the PPB: Paul Leighton, Stuart Littleford, Janice Shillum Bhend, Karim Ngobi and Tom Magner.

Artificial Intelligence

Following the formal proceedings of the AGM, members enjoyed a drinks reception in the Reform Club library, after which the President introduced The Rt Hon Baroness Stowell of Beeston MBE, Chairman of the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, who spoke about the committee's inquiry into the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the media industry.

"There is lots of doom and gloom," Baroness Stowell said, "but actually we remain optimistic. AI is often seen as a threat but it is already playing a role in the newsroom. There is evidence that it frees up valuable time, allowing journalists to spend more time on investigations and analysis."

However, she added, "we must ensure that AI enhances rather than undermining journalism." She was concerned, she said, that "trusted original journalism may be harder to find online when there is so much content that is AI-generated." Her committee, she said, "is focused on how to keep a fair and thriving news industry in the digital age."

Baroness Stowell concluded, "AI is here now and shaping the way news is produced and consumed." The Committee's report will be published before the end of the year. The CIoJ has provided regular input to the House of Lords Communications Committee on this and numerous other topics.

Andy Smith



Clockwise from top left: Prof Tim Crook receives his Fellowship of the Institute from President Gerald Bowey; Our guest speaker, Baroness Stowell; Our speaker with the CIoJ President; and (left to right) CIoJ Vice-President Caroline Roddis, CIoJ President Gerald Bowey, Baroness Stowell, CIoJ Chief Executive Dominic Cooper and Past-President Prof Tim Crook

Photos by Jonathan Phang

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Freedom of Information Act is not fit for purpose

By Prof Tim Crook

Journalists and historians pursuing serious public interest research depend on Freedom of Information giving respect to the word 'freedom' and the Information Commissioner's Office not substituting the word 'Information' with 'censorship'. This is because the freedom deficit and the reality of censorship has been the experience since the FOI regime, via FOI 2000 legislation, was introduced in 2005.

Next year will be the 20-year anniversary. I would argue there is nothing to celebrate.

How does the Censorship Commissioner's Office (CCO) – as opposed to Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) – work in practice? And why is it not fit for purpose?

In one year up to October 29, 2024, the ICO issued 2,199 decision notices on FOI and Environmental Information requests that had been turned down by public bodies; 1,368 complaints were not upheld, 1,135 complaints were upheld, and 105 complaints were partly upheld. The percentage breakdown of about 52% failure when appealing reflects the pattern of decision-making since it was set up to handle FOI appeals from 2005.

Perhaps this does not appear so bad. The fact that the complaints and appeal process is cost-free up to the First Tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal looks generous.

What is not fully understood is how the government body nexus has successfully rigged the system to block access to large areas of information which are effectively sealed from public scrutiny. A range of absolute exemptions has created a no-go area where the *abracadabra* mantra of "national security" with any connection to a long list of security bodies means the doors will be closed forever.

In 2016 the European Court of Human Rights ruled strongly that under Article 10 there is a standing right of access to state information. It's qualified in terms of public interest on the part of journalism, NGO campaigning and historical research and gave the green light to unlock absolute exemptions where seeking information came up against absolute forms of government censorship.

But it counts for nothing in Britain. The ICO and information rights tribunal system refuses to recognise this freedom of expression right and draw down the authority and precedents from the ECtHR in Strasbourg. It does not even recognise powerful jurisprudence identifying a long-established English common law right to information.



National Archives at Kew by Tim Crook

'Scandalous'

The reason this is happening is scandalous and brings our legal system into disrepute. The ICO and tribunal system is a creature of the 2000 FOI statute and wholly subject to the rule of precedent.

Believe it or not, we have the BBC to blame for the impasse. It was so arrogantly determined to keep secret an independent report into its journalism coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict that it spent hundreds of thousands of pounds defending a freedom of information request to make it public.

According to my sources, the Balen Report of 2004 did conclude that BBC reporting was biased against Israel. But the BBC fought tooth and nail all the way to the UK Supreme Court to stop this being known and to preserve the exclusion they had under FOI. And they won. Sadly, the ruling in 2012 stated Strasbourg law could not be taken into account in the FOI system. This was repeated in another UK Supreme Court ruling in 2014.

This is why all my efforts in fighting six FOI Tribunal, three Upper Tribunal hearings and one application for judicial review came to nothing. It is a ludicrous situation where freedom of expression is effectively bricked behind a wall of censorship. Only Parliament through legislation could sort this out, or a powerful and wealthy litigant prepared to pay for a case to go to High Court judicial review, then to the Appeal Court and win a new UK Supreme Court ruling.

It is not just the absolute exemptions where higher court rulings have shackled and gagged the FOI system. The same has happened to the many more qualified exemptions where freedom of expression is balanced with other rights in terms of the public interest.

A hero GP of the Blitz in Chelsea who lost his first wife and son in the bombings, and rescued and saved countless lives, was murdered in 1961. Over sixty years later I wanted to find out why the Met Police were unable to arrest, charge and bring his killer to justice.

The files are at the National Archives, but closed to public access.

I wanted to find out why Dr Richard Castillo and his family were denied justice. Why was he tricked into employing a KGB defector who had been given a fake identity, who then left to set up a rival practice and began poaching Dr Castillo's patients by smearing him? And why was this man briefed by detectives to journalists as the prime suspect and never arrested?

Just saying No

Under the qualified exemptions the National Archives and ICO presented three reasons to say 'No'. The first was that by letting anyone look at the files, this could compromise any future police investigation. The second was that it could adversely affect the mental health of somebody. The third was that it could breach the privacy of third parties identified in the files.

I looked at the FOI legislation and the language was as clear as night follows day, or so I thought. The risks had to be likely, and as I do have several law degrees, I

understood this to mean "more likely than not", "reasonably probable", and cannot be based on the grounds of mere possibility.

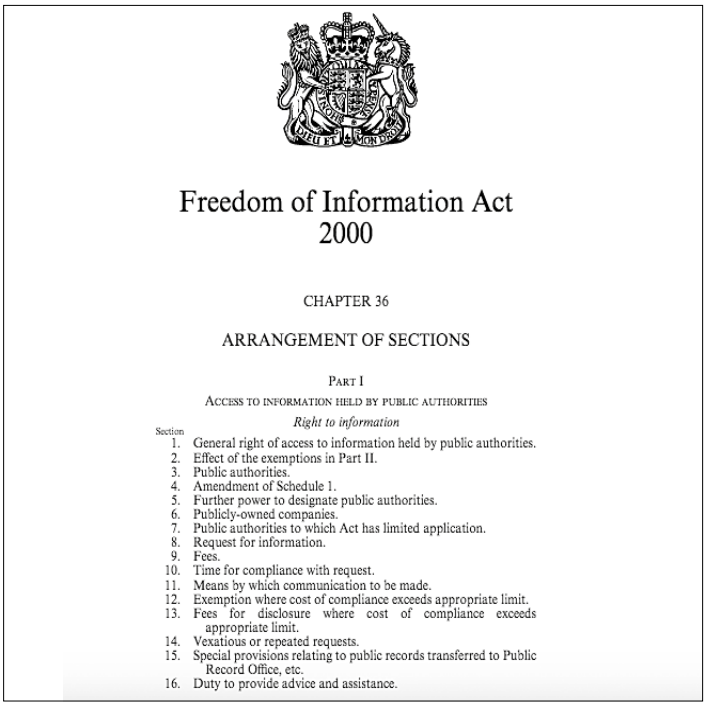
Surely as Alice said to the March Hare and Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* we are talking about "would" not "could" and "must" and not "might". I prepared yet another appeal to the First Tier Tribunal but discovered that night does not follow day. Day does not even follow night.

The ICO admitted they could not even be bothered to read Dr Castillo's Met Police files to find out and discover if there might be public interest in disclosure. And they had trump cards in the form of High Court rulings binding on the FOI tribunal system.

According to the High Court "likely" means just any risk "even if the risk falls short of being more probable than not." And risk means the minimum of just one "very significant and weighty chance."

This means we really are in the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. "Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on. "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least – at least I mean what I say – that's the same thing, you know." "Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!"

This is why I withdrew my FOI appeal because there was no point in pursuing an appeal which had no chance of any success. Much that I like re-reading Alice in Wonderland I did not want to experience a sequel in the FOI tribunal system. It is not fit for purpose. But there is something much worse.



Freedom of Information Act 2000

CHAPTER 36

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

ACCESS TO INFORMATION HELD BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Right to information

Section

1. General right of access to information held by public authorities.
2. Effect of the exemptions in Part II.
3. Public authorities.
4. Amendment of Schedule 1.
5. Further power to designate public authorities.
6. Publicly-owned companies.
7. Public authorities to which Act has limited application.
8. Request for information.
9. Fees.
10. Time for compliance with request.
11. Means by which communication to be made.
12. Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit.
13. Fees for disclosure where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit.
14. Vexatious or repeated requests.
15. Special provisions relating to public records transferred to Public Record Office, etc.
16. Duty to provide advice and assistance.

Brutal murder

There is no justice for Dr Richard Castillo. This brave, kind and much-loved man gave and lost so much during the Second World War and then served his community faithfully as an NHS general practitioner until at the age of 72 when he was brutally murdered in the dark at midnight.

The police may have known who killed him. But they did not bring him to justice. The fact we are not allowed to find out why is a cover-up. There are no legitimate reasons for the continued secrecy.

The National Archives and Met Police could have easily negotiated access for me so that I could read and report on the files from 1961 in a way which did not generate any significant risk of preventing future arrest, damage to mental health, or breach the privacy of even one third party.

What has happened is undemocratic, authoritarian, a grotesque abuse of my Article 10 freedom of expression rights, and an insult to the memory of Dr Richard Castillo.

SLAPP law

Continued from page 1

Recourse for SLAPP victims

Sadly, there are currently no universal statutory protections to counter SLAPPs in UK law. The Anti-SLAPP Coalition notes that "while limited provisions to protect reporting on economic crime were included in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA), which received Royal Assent in November 2023, these are yet to come into force and would not protect everyone who speaks out in the public interest." Indeed, some of the highest-profile cases – surfaced in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for the purposes of manipulating discourse on the war – are not covered by these measures.

In May 2024, a reformative anti-SLAPPs Bill – brought forward by Labour MP, Wayne David – passed the committee stage in the House of Commons. Just two weeks later it fell apart because of the General Election and the dissolution of Parliament. In July, *The Guardian* reported that Labour was delaying on all "proposals to tackle spurious lawsuits brought by oligarchs and others aimed at intimidating journalists, academics and campaigners."

Justice Minister Lord Ponsonby said: "We support the principle behind the [anti-SLAPPs] Bill and we do believe there are outstanding questions which need to be properly balanced to prevent the abuse of the process of SLAPPs, but also we need to protect access to justice for legitimate claims." And so, the campaign rages on.

A roadmap for reform

Due to the continued lobbying of the Anti-SLAPP Coalition, plans for reform remain underway.

Certainly, the latest anti-SLAPPs Bill is imperfect, and requires textual amendments. This is recognised by the Coalition, as well as media lawyer, Hugo Mason, who in March labelled it "deeply flawed" and called for pause: "[The anti-SLAPPs Bill] I fear is being rushed through in response to a mere handful of cases. These few bad apples do not justify setting fire to the orchard." What Mason overlooks is that the few SLAPPs cases which do surface into the public eye are merely the *tip of the iceberg* – and are hardly representative of their true number.

The Anti-SLAPP Coalition, for its part, argues the solution must go beyond legislative and regulatory reform. It is about instigating cultural change, too. Its brochure touts a 'Model UK Anti-SLAPP Law' – first presented in November 2022 – as the most "meaningful and robust" blueprint for a structured response: "The amendments made to the draft SLAPPs Bill highlighted similar, pre-existing flaws in the ECCTA. As we await their implementation into civil law procedures, the introduction of a new standalone anti-SLAPP law, superseding these flawed provisions, would relieve concerns in this area and create certainty as to the UK's course to address this issue."

Key features of the Model UK Anti-SLAPP Law include a filter mechanism that empowers courts to swiftly dispose of SLAPPS; penalties that are sufficient to deter their use; and protective measures for victims, such as cost protection and safeguards.

Onward mission statement

As individuals, reporters, or even victims of SLAPPs, the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition's Westminster event invites us to lobby MPs, push the issue into public spaces, and, above all else, campaign for a standalone anti-SLAPP law with universal protection for speech.

The note the Coalition departed on before it cleared that cribbed room off Westminster Hall was an immutable truth: "Expression is only free when it is free for everyone."

Essex Police – the new Stasi?

By Andy Smith

The idea that two police officers can turn up on your doorstep at the weekend and demand to talk to you about a year-old "Non-Crime Hate Incident" (NCHI) is an indication of just how crazy things have become in this country. This is just what happened to *Telegraph* columnist and best-selling author Allison Pearson, who was suddenly visited at her home on Remembrance Sunday by a team from Essex Police who refusing to divulge why, beyond the fact that a "victim" (which is how the police insisted on describing the complainant) had reported the journalist to them for writing something that they regarded as potentially constituting "hate speech".

As it transpired, the "hate speech" of which Allison Pearson was accused was contained in a message she had posted on Twitter/X more than twelve months earlier, and which she had long deleted. In fact, the 'tweet' had been about double-standards in relation to policing anti-Israel protests, but whatever Ms Pearson had said back in October 2023 the idea that the police can suddenly descend on a journalist's home a year later, when no actual crime has been committed, can only have a chilling effect on freedom of speech in this country. The whole concept of NCHIs is about controlling and regulating what we think, say or do. The message of this sort of heavy-handed policing is simple: if you say something "politically incorrect", the police could come knocking on your door. As the campaigner Alka Sehgal Cuthbert, who runs the pressure group Don't Divide Us, says, the Pearson incident was "an appalling use of hate speech legislation against a straight-speaking, courageous journalist."

What is an NCHI?

An NCHI is an incident perceived by *anyone* ("the victim") to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a "protected characteristic" such as "race or perceived race", "religion or perceived religion". And yes, NCHIs really are as sinister and Orwellian as they sound. Once recorded by the police, NCHIs will sit alongside the names of the alleged perpetrators for ever, without any real investigation having taken place, or right of appeal been permitted, and will show up on an enhanced criminal-records check, which could prevent someone from getting a job. Although the Pearson case has drawn heavy criticism from MPs on both sides of the House of Commons, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has resisted calls to end the use of NCHIs and has publicly defended them. The previous government had at one point proposed raising the recording threshold for what constitutes an NCHI, but did not actually do away with them, and Labour since coming to power has recommitted to NCHIs.

After a week-long furore in the press, and following the intervention of top criminal lawyer Luke Gittos, hired on Ms Pearson's behalf by the Free Speech Union (FSU), Essex Police finally decided they would take no further action against the *Telegraph* journalist. But they should never have investigated this tweet in the first place. And it was only because Ms Pearson refused to be intimated that the case came to public attention. She described the police officers who visited her home as "unthinking commissars of wokery and censorship" and pointed out that, as a journalist and FSU member, she has the ability to fight back, while others might not be so fortunate. "A person who was more vulnerable and unsupported than I am would have been very scared by what I experienced. A visit from the police has a chilling effect on free speech, and that's exactly what NCHIs are designed to do."

Waste of police time

There were, astonishingly, more than 13,000 NCHI investigations in Britain last year. With so much police time taken up pursuing NCHIs, it is no wonder the constabulary seem to have little time to investigate actual day-to-day crimes such as burglary, vandalism, drug-dealing or shoplifting. Police officers knocking on someone's door and warning them they could be in trouble about things they may have written in the press or online is the sort of thing we might expect in a totalitarian state. It is eerily reminiscent of the old days of the Stasi in Communist East Germany.

A growing number of NCHI accusations are directed at people who publish, write or broadcast things that merely offend woke sensibilities. This can then be wrapped up as "hate speech" even when it is nothing of the sort. The notion that here in the United Kingdom the police can be used by the State to silence journalists whose comments might simply give offence to someone makes a mockery of our claim to be a free country. It subverts Britain's long-established tradition of free speech and a free press. We in the Chartered Institute of Journalists must be ready to oppose all such challenges to our liberty. Writers and broadcasters must have the Right to Offend.

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Online training for exiled journalists

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has launched a new online training course for exiled journalists in the UK, in partnership with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). The free e-learning course, which covers areas like UK media law, public affairs, writing styles and an introduction to the UK media industry, will help journalists forced to relocate to continue reporting.

Announcing the new training programme, Fiona O'Brien, UK Director of RSF, said: "Journalists forced into exile by repressive regimes have a vital role to play in continuing to report on their countries of origin, which might otherwise become information black holes. But to do so, they face a raft of challenges, including the struggle to navigate an industry which may look very different to journalism back home. We hope that this course will help journalists resettling in the UK to find their feet, so that they can find personal and professional fulfilment, and keep up their crucial reporting for audiences at home."

The course was developed as part of a project to help journalists who fled Hong Kong because of the Chinese Communist crackdown on independent media there. Many of these journalists have resettled in Britain. Covering everything from public affairs to public perception of the trade, it delivers the essential information newly arrived journalists need to understand British journalism, putting them in a much stronger position to secure work and remain in journalism.

It was developed in partnership with the NCTJ, a charity which delivers the UK's leading training scheme for journalists and will be hosted in a private section of the NCTJ's Journalism Skills Academy e-learning platform. Laura Adams, head of the NCTJ's Journalism Skills Academy, explained: "The training focuses on specific areas which are unique to the UK media industry, such as media law and public affairs. We also wanted to provide a flavour of newsroom culture in this country and useful guidance on how to find work in the UK. We hope this will be a highly impactful training course which will support journalists from across the globe."

If you are an international journalist who would benefit from this course, contact Fiona O'Brien, email fobrien@rsf.org.

The Law Commission's latest proposals: Time for journalists to put on our 'tin hats'?

By Prof Tim Crook

The Chartered Institute of Journalists has been invited to address 137 different questions over the Law Commission's proposals to reform the law of contempt. (The Commission's report on the matter runs to 475 pages.)

It is welcome that the Commission is showing some willingness to decriminalize media contempt law but other proposals in the same report are rather more worrying. These include shifting the time of the liability for media contempt prosecutions from the arrest of a suspect to the time of charge.

The Commission recommends giving courts the power to order news publishers to remove archives that might prejudice future trials.

Judicial activism

These proposals risk creating many more problems for journalists.

'Judicial activism' in the UK Supreme Court case of ZXL v Bloomberg in 2022 has already made it virtually impossible to identify crime suspects at the time of arrest on privacy grounds. It severely hampers police inquiries and creates the vacuum in which false information on social media precipitated the riots after the murder this summer of three children in Southport.

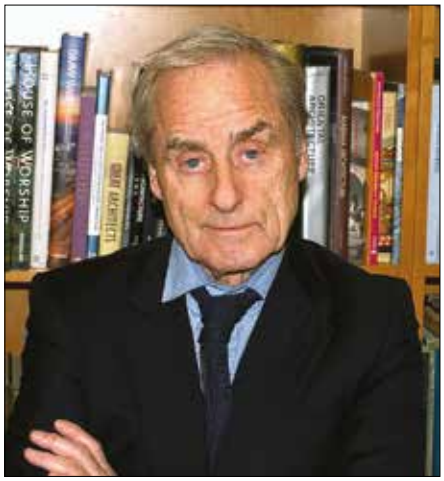
On behalf of the Institute, I attended a consultation seminar with other journalists, editors and media lawyers on October 18. I am not sure if the Law Commission had a full grasp of the crisis in open justice and growing censorship of criminal investigations and trials. Those present looked rather nonplussed when I explained that the UK media contempt laws are unnecessary, undemocratic, based on historical lies, authoritarian, and should be abolished.

Media contempt laws are continually being abused. Take the case of former BBC presenter Huw Edwards. The Metropolitan Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and, indeed, the BBC, all knew that Huw Edwards had been arrested and charged with serious indecent child image offences, but these vital public interest facts were concealed and covered up for months until only a few days before his first court appearance.

Southport killings

It is more than likely that the police, the CPS and the Labour Government knew that the man arrested for murdering the three young girls in Southport was in possession of a terrorist Al Qaeda training manual and quantities of biological toxin ricin (a terrorist or warfare agent), but they concealed this information from the public.

Media contempt laws were used to prevent publication of the fact that Chris Kaba, shot by a police officer eventually acquitted for his murder, had himself shot a man in both legs at a nightclub only a few days before. He was a major figure in London gangland warfare and had serious previous criminal convictions since he was 13. His family wanted media contempt laws to keep this secret until the end of any future inquest.



Sir Harold Evans
Photo: David Shankbone CCBY 3.0

At the seminar, I argued that the administration of justice does not need to give courts censorial powers extending beyond their courtroom walls. There is no compelling empirical evidence that reporting the truth, or even prejudicial commentary about legal cases, whether civil or criminal, disrupts and disables the administration of justice. There never has been.

There is the clearest proof that our judges and legal system know this. The retrial of Lucy Letby proves that if she can be properly and fairly convicted, having already been convicted of seven murders of infants and several attempted murders, then contempt by publication is a misnomer, an anachronism, superfluous, unnecessary and purely an abuse and exercise of censorial power.

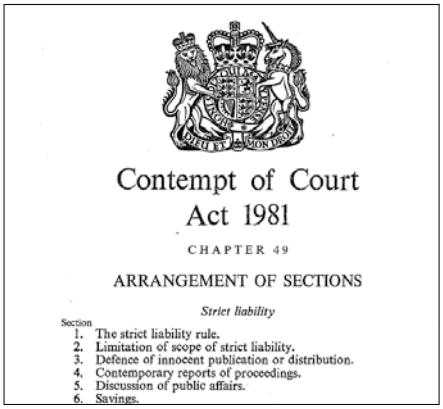
There is additional proof with the examples of Max Clifford and Rolf Harris who after being found guilty of serial sexual offences and while in prison were subject to subsequent jury trials for similar offences and acquitted. This is the clearest evidence that through judge direction, jury respect for a trial process where decisions are made on the evidence before them, that so-called media prejudice, however intense and overwhelming, does not deny people the right to a fair trial under Article 6 of the Human Rights Act and ECHR.

I have always argued that we need to adopt the US First Amendment approach which recognises justice can be protected



'Cato Street Conspiracy' by Samuel William Fores, May 1820 (Public Domain)
This print shows establishment figures dancing around a maypole; a reference to the date of the conspirators' execution, May Day 1820. On top of the maypole are the heads of Brunt, Davidson, Ings, Thistlewood and Tidd

Continued on page 8



Contempt of Court Act 1981

CHAPTER 49

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Strict liability

Section
1. The strict liability rule.
2. Limitation of scope of strict liability.
3. Defence of innocent publication or distribution.
4. Contemporary reports of proceedings.
5. Discussion of public affairs.
6. Savings.

Continued from 7

by *voir dire* in jury selection and judge directions. Contempt powers need to be restricted to judges being able to control their own proceedings, not media coverage outside.

The CIoJ has established that the Law Commission did not ask for any data on the number of media contempt orders made by courts in the England and Wales legal system, and under the 1981 Contempt of Court Act they can prohibit media publication under Section 11 forever and can postpone under Section 4(2) the reporting of trials.

This information was requested by the Institute under the Freedom of Information Act in relation to just one year and was told that it would be too expensive to obtain. At the seminar, it was suggested that the information was not available to find.

Secret justice

This is beyond outrageous. The judges are out of control in imposing secret justice court orders with barely any scrutiny or challenge. It seems they and their courts are not even keeping proper and easily accessible records of their censorship orders.

Media contempt law in Britain is based on the most disreputable case histories of judicial and state abuse of power and authoritarianism. It is based on untruths and lies- that there existed real risks of prejudice and unfair manifestation of harmful communication justifying punishment for publication.

The concept of media contempt law started with the 1820 Cato Street Conspiracy trials at the Old Bailey, when five men were arrested for plotting to blow up the government. The *Observer* newspaper ignored a judge's direction not to report the first and second of three trials and its editor Mr Clement was fined £500 for contempt of court. The conspirators were found guilty and hanged, drawn and quartered.

This is the origin of the false idea that reporting the first of a series of jury trials for the same offence or even the same defendant(s) can prejudice later ones. Media contempt law books have developed this mythical notion on an entirely false premise. Six jurors had in fact deliberated in two of the succeeding trials. The reporting ban was about covering up the fact the government had been using paid *agent provocateurs* to entrap the conspirators.

In 1949, national newspaper editor Sylvester Bolam was focusing on a strategy of sensationalism, and was able to make the *Daily Mirror* into Britain's best-selling daily newspaper. He approved publication of an article that an unnamed man (who was serial killer John Haigh, known as the acid bath murderer) had confessed and drunk the blood of one of his victims with the headline: "The Vampire Will Never Strike Again."

There was no provable and actual prejudice. The Jigsaw identification was remote. John George Haigh had been arrested and was later convicted of murder. But he was not named in the newspaper. It was absurd to suggest that publishing this material might have prejudiced his trial; particularly when at the trial Haigh admitted everything he had told the police but pleaded insanity.

I think Mr Bolam was unfairly and unjustly jailed for three months for contempt of court. By 1953, he had fallen out with the paper's editorial director and resigned. He died a few months later at the age of 48. His widow said this was largely due to the stress and humiliation of being sent to Brixton Prison by a terrible Lord Chief Justice, nicknamed 'Tiger' Goddard.

Goddard provided the biased summing-up which led to the wrongful conviction and hanging of Derek Bentley in 1953. Derek was 19 with learning difficulties and had given himself up to the police before his burglary accomplice Christopher Craig shot and killed a police officer on a warehouse roof in Croydon.

Victims of Thalidomide

We now come to the 1979 *Sunday Times* victory at European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in their campaign for the victims of Thalidomide. The ECtHR ruling gave no justification for creating a statutory framework for reporting suppression powers with no rights of appeal. But this is what happened when Parliament approved the oppressive 1981 Contempt of Court Act.

The case was all about a court injunction in 1972 gagging the *Sunday Times*, then edited by Sir Harry Evans, from looking into the cause of birth defects linked to Thalidomide. The High Court dispute over legal settlements was not before any jury. The injunction was not lifted for four years until 1976.

Strasbourg said the right to freedom of expression guarantees not only the freedom of the press to inform the public but also the right of the public to be properly informed, and the "Thalidomide disaster was a matter of undisputed public concern."

Instead of respecting the court's decision, the government and judiciary cooked up the 1981 Contempt of Court Act. This created statutory media contempt with unlimited fines and two years' imprisonment for publications which were proved beyond reasonable doubt to create a substantial risk of serious prejudice to the administration of justice.

As it was 'Strict Liability', intent did not have to be proved. Giving judges formal powers to prohibit and postpone reporting through court orders had never been done before. There was no right of appeal provided for. The increase in controlling and limiting freedom of expression was unprecedented.

I fear the Law Commission's proposals will lead to yet more restrictive powers through legislation. In the end, censorship and secret justice will lead to the public losing respect, faith and confidence in police, judiciary and the courts system. Surely this is the very opposite of the laudable aim of protecting and preserving the administration of justice?



Daily Mirror

FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE

VAMPIRE WILL NEVER STRIKE AGAIN

One of the five

LEAVING MURDER BASEMENT

THE Vampire Killer will never strike again. He is safely behind bars, powerless ever again to lure his victims to a hideous death.

Front page of Daily Mirror, March 4, 1949 'The Vampire Will Never Strike Again'

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Spotlight on Iran

The Chartered Institute of Journalists has joined with other press freedom campaigners in calling for the release of dozens of journalists currently imprisoned in Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist, with heavy restrictions on the press and broadcast media, and an appalling record of human rights abuses including brutal repression of writers and broadcasters.

Persecution of journalists has continued throughout 2024 despite a recent decree by the new Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian, instructing government departments and agencies to withdraw their complaints against members of the press. The decree from the supposedly "reformist" President has little weight, however, as ultimate political power in Iran rests with the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, an Islamic fundamentalist hardliner, who controls the military, judiciary and other key institutions.

According to Reporters Without Frontiers (RSF), more than 100 journalists have been interrogated, detained, or imprisoned in the past two years alone, since the wave of anti-regime protests that followed the death in September 2022 of Kurdish student Mahsa Amini in police custody in Tehran. Sixteen of these journalists remain in prison to this day, alongside 19 other journalists who were imprisoned before the protests began.

Jonathan Dagher, Head of RSF's Middle East Desk, told The Journal: "The fragile hope sparked by President Pezeshkian's decision in August was short-lived. The persecution of journalists in Iran – their arrest, interrogation, sentencing, and intimidation – continues undisturbed. RSF calls for the liberation of all journalists currently imprisoned in Iran – 16 of whom were imprisoned since the 2022 protests – and an end to the legal harassment of reporters. The President should ensure his request is respected, and that it extends to all authorities and agencies in Iran, without exception."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bias on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Dear Sir,

Your editorial in the Spring 2024 issue of *The Journal* quite rightly criticises the British media for taking too partisan a position on the Israel-Palestine dispute. However, in doing so, you yourself take a partisan position. You take the side of Israel and not of Palestine. You try to make it sound as if Israel is a normal democratic country, attacked by terrorists from Palestine. It is not. While Israel is democratic, it behaves like the Nazis to the Palestinians. It treats them as third-class citizens, and it is constantly throwing Palestinian families out of their homes, which it then either destroys or if one is good enough, gives them to Jewish families.

Is there really a difference between Israeli soldiers or police waking a Palestinian family at four o'clock in the morning and ordering it to get out of its home within three or four hours, and the SS or Gestapo waking a Jewish family and forcing them out of their home during WW2? Yet this is what the Israelis have done to many hundreds of Palestinian families. And it is contrary to normal civilised behaviour as well as to United Nations resolutions.

It is no surprise that such behaviour has resulted in a ferocious hatred for the Israelis in the hearts and minds of many Palestinians. It is logical and rational that many Palestinians should attack or bomb Israelis. Many Palestinians have also been deprived of their living. They have had their shops and businesses taken away, with no suggestion of compensation. Of course, the October 7, 2023, raid on Israel was wrong and evil. But is not bombing and destroying Palestinians' homes not wrong and evil? It is no surprise that the Hamas government of Gaza is releasing fantastic figures for men, women and children killed by Israeli bombing. Just as the figures of damage done and people killed in the Ukraine-Russia war are also incredible.

If the people of Israel want to live in peace, they should get their government to start behaving decently to the Palestinians. Mutual confidence should then be established and negotiations started on some way they could live alongside each other in peace. Because it can be done. The two states solution is one way out of the problem, but it is not the only way. The Israelis should show some statesmanship and invite the Fatah and Hamas governments to meetings to find common ground, leading to peace.

John Szemerey

The Editor replies: *I cannot accept Mr Szemerey's criticisms in this case. Nazi Germany had a deliberate policy of exterminating those of a different race (or, more accurately, those perceived to be of a different race). Whilst Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories have sometimes been excessive, there is clearly no equivalence among the Palestinians to the Jewish experience under the Nazis, and Palestinian suffering is in no way comparable to the brutal persecution and, later, systematic extermination, of Jewish people in Nazi-occupied Europe. As to 'race', Israeli Arabs have full citizenship rights within the State of Israel and are represented in the Knesset. How does this compare with the Hitler regime's treatment of the Jews?*

Furthermore, I would ask Mr Szemerey how precisely a Western liberal democracy like the State of Israel, where individual liberties and democratic rights are respected, is supposed to defend its citizens from the savage terrorism directed against them on a daily basis by a repressive Islamic-fundamentalist regime or movement like Hamas, or Hezbollah, or the mullahs who control Iran. There may be greater complexity to this saga than I had the opportunity or space to address in my Editorial comment, but the tone of Mr Szemerey's letter suggests that he is engaged in a game of "victim-blaming", in effect saying that the Israeli people should put up with being attacked, raped and murdered by Hamas. Worse, it suggests a tendency towards appeasement of dictators, and a reluctance to rally in defence of freedom – which I am sure was not Mr Szemerey's intention.

Andy Smith

NOW, more than ever, is the time to be able to demonstrate your professional credentials as a journalist...

Right now, more than ever, it is important to maintain your membership of the Institute. Especially at this time when the industry is facing a tough examination.

Membership of the Institute provides access to advice and support on situations and circumstances that may affect you.

No other organisation can offer the protections we offer, including our unprecedented support through tough financial times.

If you have any queries or need support, please get in touch with head office on 020 7252 1187 or memberservices@cioj.org .

The Westminster Gazette: London's lost evening title and the "pea-green incorruptible"

By Professor Tim Crook

If the decline in reading newspapers could be reversed by printing on green, surely the London *Standard* would have tried this before becoming a weekly. Between 1893 and 1921, London's *Westminster Gazette* did exactly that with a liberal hubris.

Francis Carruthers Gould was one of the paper's assistant editors and cartoonists, and self-styled the evening title as the "pea-green incorruptible". In reality, it was more sea-green, and vintage copies now have the yellowish hue of a desiccated leek. Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone liked the green. George Orwell in his essay 'My Country Right or Wrong' recalled a childhood memory of "the pile of peagreen papers" to capture the idea of London's evening newspapers long past.

Actually, *The Westminster Gazette* was the only one. The US George Bain news agency has in its archives a photograph of a wizened woman newspaper seller in London with a crumpled *Westminster Gazette* banner poster declaring: "Bishop of London on Divorce."

We can put the green in the black and white photograph by dating it to the edition for May 25, 1910, when the Gazette reported a speech in which the Bishop of London did indeed rail against divorce. He condemned it as "a curse to society, a menace to the home, an incitement to married unhappiness, an evil thing for men, and a still more hideous evil for women."

The Westminster Gazette was competing in the London evening paper market with the *Evening Standard*, the *Globe*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Evening News* and the *Star*. It was third and not so badly placed in the advertising columns league table.



John Alfred Spender in 1919 – Bain News Service


LATE EXTRA EDITION.

THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE

DUCO LEAF SPRING GAITERS

BURROW'S MALVERN WATERS

No. 7,983.—Vol. LII. MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1918. Price Twopence.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING.

PICCADILLY CIRCUS VIRGINIA CIGARETTES

25 for 1/8½ 50 for 3/5 100 for 6/10

Westminster Gazette front page, November 11, 1918

The paper was founded by Liberal publisher George Newnes, and when it first appeared on January 31, 1893, the decision to go 'green' was to make it easier to read for commuters peering at their evening papers under the dull gas and electrical light of Southern Region railway carriages, London underground trains and red double-decker buses.

Newnes said: "Evening papers are largely read by people going home in badly lighted railway carriages, omnibuses etc. White paper and black ink may do very well for a reader sitting at home on a steady floor and with sufficient light; but to try and read by the gloomy thing in the roof which railway companies are pleased to call a light while jolted about in a railway carriage is very injurious to the eyesight."

When the paper became a daily in November 1921 it decided to appear on white newsprint coincidentally only a few weeks before the Financial Times turned to 'FT peach'.

The Institute has acquired the *Westminster Gazette*'s historic edition for Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, with its front-page headline 'The End and The Beginning.'

Momentous day

The copy we have is folded, creased and rolled up as though it remained in the coat pocket of its buyer since that momentous day 106 years ago. Had its owner been among the crowds in front of Buckingham Palace cheering King George V and the Royal Family celebrating the end of such a terrible war on their famous balcony?

The late extra edition cost two old pennies and was adorned with adverts for 'Duco Leaf Spring Gaiters', 'Piccadilly Virginia Cigarettes', and 'Burrow's Malvern Waters.' Selfridges took out an advertisement promoting the sale of books such as *The Echoes of the War* and *The Love of an Unknown Soldier*.

The paper carried no photographs, only illustrations for adverts including for the West End Scala theatre putting on 'The Purple Mask'. The end of a world war which in its last year had taken more lives of British service people than any other was reported economically but evocatively.

The *Gazette*'s journalists had been in the Law Courts and the West End to see how London reacted. In the Court of Criminal Appeal when Mr Justice Darling read out the Prime Minister Lloyd George's announcement, everyone in court applauded enthusiastically.

Mr Justice Bailhache in the King's Bench Division presided over a more solemn gathering where calmness prevailed and

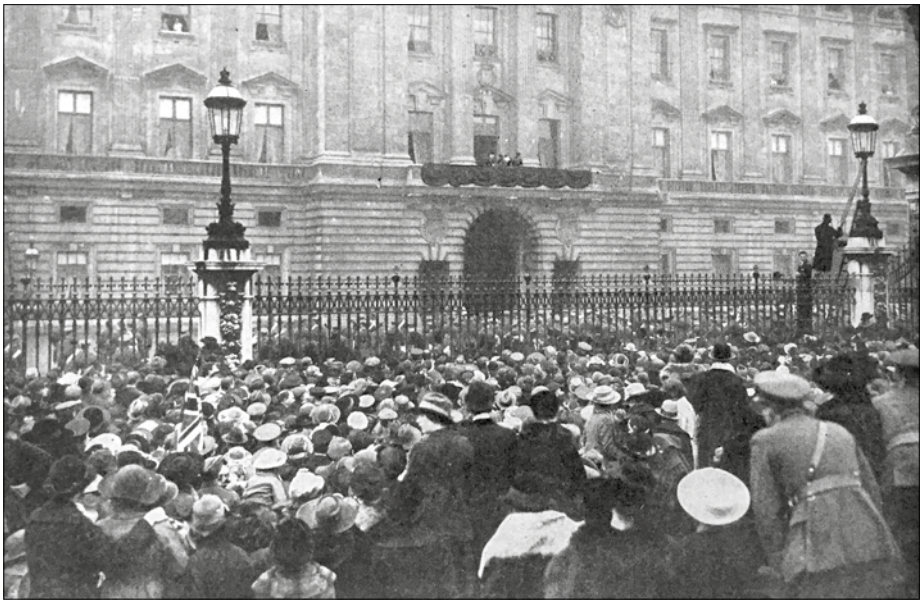
when completing the announcement added: "If I may venture to say so, 'Thank God!'"

Gazette reporters outside on the streets were having more fun: "Something very much like mafficking is proceeding in earnest in the West End. The favourite form of rejoicing seems to be to mount motor vehicles of all descriptions, and to proceed wildly cheering, with flags, bells, hooters, trumpets, and indeed with anything that will make a noise."

The intransitive verb 'mafficking' originated from 'Mafeking Night' 18 years before when there were wild and boisterous celebrations after the lifting of the siege of Mafeking during the Boer War in South Africa.

The paper reported that "Young people are having the time of their lives" and in another report 'Let There Be Light' there was news that the Home Office had relaxed restrictions on the masking of street lights and use of fireworks and bonfires.

London had experienced a First World War 'Blitz' of air raids and just under one and a half thousand people had been killed from bombs dropped by Zeppelins and long-range bombers. This was the reason for 'the black-out.'



Armistice day outside Buckingham Palace, November 11, 1918 (Public Domain)



London newspaper seller May 25, 1910 – Bain News Service

There was also a General Election going on. This became known as the 'Khaki election' because so many of the voters were still in uniform, but there was a ban on officers, non-commissioned officers, or privates from appearing "in uniform as candidates, agents, members of election committees, or canvassers." The War Cabinet was determined to enforce 'King's Regulations' though officers or soldiers on leave and stationed at home could attend election hustings in their uniform.

My favourite one-line report in this historical edition is: "Eggs were sold at Reading on Saturday at the record price of ninepence each."

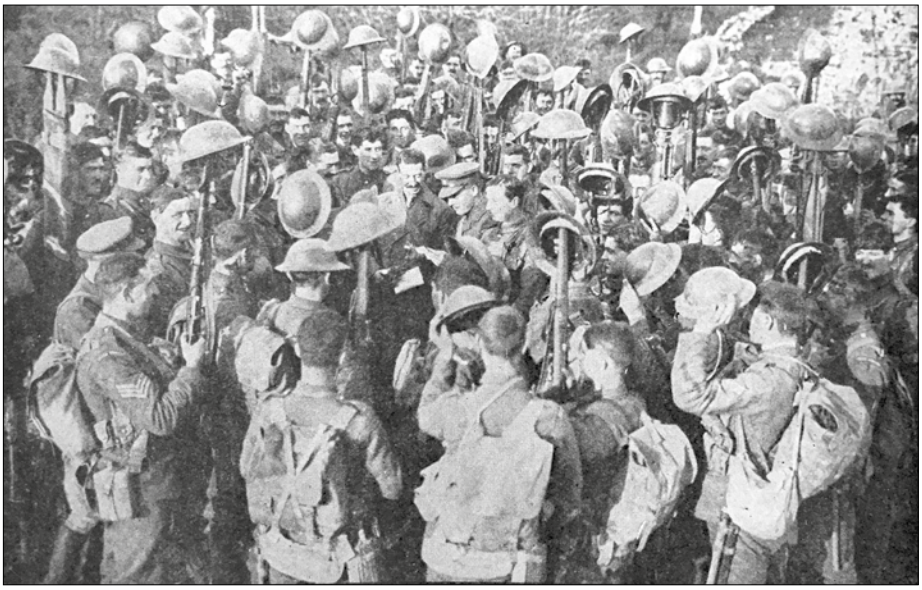
The Westminster Gazette was a significant promoter of literature in terms of short stories and serials and in its short history the authors D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Raymond Chandler, and Saki graced its pages. It even commissioned travel writing by the poet Rupert Brooke.

The *Gazette*'s most famous and longstanding editor was John Alfred (J.A.) Spender from 1896 to 1922. He will be remembered for immortalising the most poignant quotation of the dread and madness that the Great War would bring.

In August 1914, he stood before the large window of the Foreign Office in the company of Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey. As they watched the sun set on St James's Park and the lamps being lit in the streets below, Spender scribbled down in shorthand Grey's lamentation: "The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

In 1928, mergers and consolidations were all the rage in Britain's newspaper industry and the *Westminster Gazette* combined with the *Daily News* adding 300,000 readers to 600,000 with no subsequent loss of readership. The binding together of the country's liberal papers continued in 1930 when the paper absorbed the *Daily Chronicle* to become the *News Chronicle*.

The future for evening newspapers in London is certainly not in green newsprint, though it may well be digital. The contraction of the *Standard* into one giveaway weekly almost magazine format has left a vacuum where there are now digital online news titles competing in an online market with titles such as *The Londoner*, *London Centric* and *London Spy*.



Armistice on front line – (Public Domain)

Would you like to write for The Journal? We are always looking for new contributors. Please email editor@cioj.co.uk if you would like to get involved in producing the CIoJ's journal.

Mallorca, 40 years on

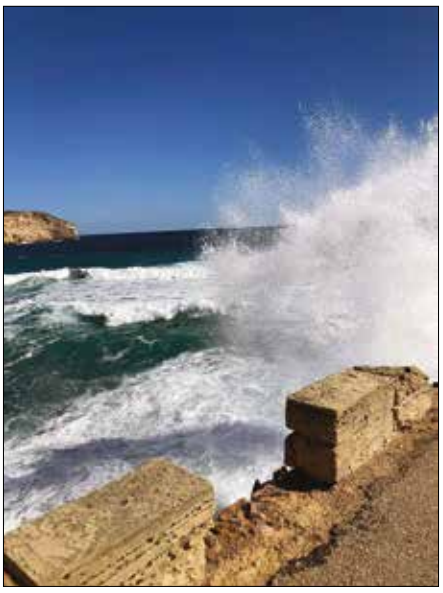
Richard Dove returns to the popular holiday island of Mallorca for his Ruby wedding anniversary and ponders the impact of what some locals call "over-tourism".

"Tourists Go Home!" It is not the welcome we were expecting but in a back street of Palma's Old Town just behind the magnificent cathedral, the white painted old billboard message is both blunt and surprising. Mallorcan nationalists have been marching through the city. They complain that so-called "over-tourism" is creating multiple problems from housing, environmental impact, and strains on public services. In the first half of this year around 15 million tourists visited the island. The demonstrators want the tourist tax doubled to eight euros a day and the use of that money to diversify the economy away from tourism.

It is a complex situation for a beautiful holiday island. Whilst sympathising with the consequent housing shortages for young Mallorcans, we were not going to be distracted by local politics. It was our Ruby wedding anniversary and we were on our way to the hotel in Puerto Pollensa where we had our honeymoon four decades ago. But first Palma. The Santa Maria Cathedral is worth queuing for. It occupies a prominent position on the seafront and is spectacular sight when illuminated at night. We were on our winding way to the Arab Baths in the old town – a remarkably preserved 11th century relic of the Moors occupation. The central hall has a hemispherical brick dome with skylights and is surrounded by 12 columns with horseshoe arches. You are transported back in time. There is a screen display with a multi-lingual presentation. As we awaited the English version, we occupied the only two chairs. We watched as visitors disappeared through arches and along walkways. It was a play without words – a Samuel Beckett or Pinteresque production. We made up the life stories of people who passed by and almost missed the (fairly indistinct) English explanation. Mrs Dove's natural German bent came in most useful. There is a garden sanctuary in the centre of the baths, a perfect place to contemplate the contradictions in the Mallorcan nationalists' anti-tourism arguments. The peace and tranquility seem to embrace you, and I recalled a previous visit when a percussionist had made gentle bell sounds amidst the bougainvillea blossom.

Forget your map and just wander through the Old Town, buy a souvenir tea towel and an ice cream, and ignore the "No Tourists" graffiti. Just below the cathedral and along the seafront is the El Pesquero tapas restaurant. It is a Palma institution having been established in 1956 (the year of my birth but the two events I think are unrelated). That was our evening destination. A table overlooking the harbour. There is an art to ordering tapas. You order a few plates of whitebait, mussels, tumbet and then assess what you need next. We ignored that rule and massively over-ordered. The plates kept coming and coming until a tabletop rearrangement was essential. We began to falter around plate eight or nine. The local beer both helped and hindered in equal measure. We paid and left leaving enough food to pass a pleasant weekend. Mrs Dove wanted to walk and I wanted a taxi. So we walked. The Hotel Catalonia Majorica is wonderful but unfortunately located at the other end of the sweeping bay of Palma. It is around 3km away from the restaurant and taxis rarely go anywhere near it, it would appear. I was sustained by a dolce leche ice cream and quite a bit on moaning. The next morning the sun shone golden and the cruise ships were in harbor. The light sparkled in the gentle waves and I cured my aches and pains with one of the best showers I have ever experienced. I opted for the rainfall variation with pungent unguents.

It is easy to hire a car in Palma but our advice is to go by local bus. The Mallorcan government has invested hugely in the bus network with brand new red and yellow buses all running on hydrogen. They have also built the Estacio Intermodal, a hub for trains and buses. It rather spoils this





multimillion construction that you find it via a scrappy notice on the door on the tourist information office. It is not well signposted. Find the escalators and descend to a transport network. The trains to Soller go from here, rather than the quaint little station in the north of the city. You can get a bus to anywhere in Mallorca. And if you pay by plastic (any debit card will do) it is much cheaper than a cash transaction (we only much later found out). We get the 301 to Puerto Pollensa via Sa Pobla. You get an engaging elevated view of this picturesque island as you glide along new EU funded roads in an EU co-funded bus.

We met in Puerto Pollensa when Sara was doing a spell as a nanny and I was on holiday. So it was an obvious location for a honeymoon forty years ago at the Hotel Sis Pins. As we wheel our suitcases from the bus station to the sea front we wonder how the hotel has endured over four decades. Hopefully a few younger staff have been taken on otherwise room service could be lengthy. The Hotel has had a coat of paint or two but is just as we remember it. The rooms are delightfully old-fashioned and we have the luxury of a private terrace. A step-up from the room where we stayed all those years ago.

Full English

Puerto Pollensa is a small town in the north of the island. It is located around a bay and the scenic Boquer Valley (of which more later) that runs north-east of the town. Many years ago there was a road adjacent to the beach along the bay but this has now become a pedestrian-only zone and is much better for it. The hotel is situated on the wonderful Pine Walk stretching all the way to a military base where the unusual sight

of a seaplane is very evident outside the hangar. We watched the seaplane swiftly take off and swoop over the bay on several occasions. Why it remains useful over so many years eluded us. A few hotels, villa rentals and restaurants align along the Pines. But it is a low-rise development that has been fiercely protected over the years. We can experience that unmatched culinary export, the Full English if we want to but our first stop has to be the old bakery shop that my father first visited half a century ago on his bicycle runs from our rented villa. The bakery is still owned by the same family we are told with the daughter of the grandfather we knew now running the enterprise. It has to be ensaimadas with fresh cream (although they are always the first to sell out). The bakery remains unchanged, and the smell of the place gives me a Proustian moment. I can almost see my dad's bike leaning against the wall.

We head to the back streets for our restaurant. There are many and varied restaurants on the seafront but wander away from them and you get real local cuisine at good prices. El Posito is our choice. What about some John Dory with Mallorcan-style vegetables. But first olives, garlic cream and homecooked bread.

The next morning we tackle the Bocquer Valley walk over to Cala San Vicente. We soon leave the town behind and we are clambering up the path of an old stream surrounded by purple-hued mountains. It is steeper and more difficult than we remember. Or is it the effects of age? The mountain limbs don't leap with the same agility. We descend to the bay and watch ferocious white waves splatter and spray on the rocks. I have carried our swimming gear but the red flags are on display and lifeguards on patrol. Again, in honour of my father, we rest and recuperate at Pepe's Bar. He had a theory that he could tan from the inside out by drinking the strongest expressos. I order one in deference to the theory. That night we dine at Ca'an Ferra and have the house speciality, Paella. It is served with a flourish and we consume more than we should (a theme for the holiday).



Mrs Dove has not ridden her bike for over a year, so persuasion has to be employed as we hire bikes for the day and amble around the town and its outskirts. It really is the best way to experience a town or location as you can just about stop and pause anywhere. We find the place where we had a first evening meal together (it's now a private villa) and I buy a Mallorca Bulletin that has an unusual front-page story – the new president of The Restaurants Federation of Mallorca says that the time has come to reduce restaurant prices. Good luck with that.

A bus trip to the ancient fortified town of Alcudia rounds off the holiday. It is a glorious place to wander around and with a walk atop the city walls. I find a shop that has been specialising in anything and everything to do with almonds since 1775. That is the point of this place, it never fails to surprise even after 40 years and frequent visits.



ON THE RECORD

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https://fromalandalustotheamericas.com
RRP £18.00

Journalists need their restorative tonics, but sometimes the imagination can be just as powerful as a real press trip. Newly minted by the imaginative Meridian CD label comes a recording which is best played, late in the evening, ideally on a warm night, with a glass of Rioja to hand and candlelight flickering in the corner of your room. In the absence of actual Iberian surroundings, this disc — From Al-Andalus to the Americas — takes the listener from the times of the Moorish domination of Spain from the 8th century; to the fall of Granada in 1492 to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella; to the late-19th/early-20th centuries, the times of composers Granados, Turina and the Argentinian, Ginastera.

The motivating force for this recording was the acclaimed American soprano, Christine Moore Vassallo, whose mother, of Arab-Levantine ancestry, inspired the singer to delve into the richly-textured, heady, overlapping mix of Muslim, Spanish, folk, religious, pastoral music and lamentations — fanned, like seeds in the air, to the New World, but rooted in the hills and gardens of Al-Andalus (the name for Spain during Umayyad rule). For this Meridian recording, Christine's collaborators are Philip Arditti, an expert in Sephardi culture and an exponent of Darbuka, Riqq and Frame drums; Rachel Beckles Wilson, a writer and composer who is one of the West's foremost authorities on the music of the oud; the guitar virtuoso, Pablo Gimenez; flautist, Anthony Robb; and the Spanish pianist, Jorge Robaina. Each musician contributes to this fascinating hour-long time-travel through the history of the Iberian Peninsula.

An anonymous pre-15th century piece begins the journey — Lamma bada yatathanna — from a poetic genre of the Arab language which scholars have identified as appearing in about the 10th century. The song, though, is ageless, describing a gentleman's interest in the 'swaying hips' of a woman, and bemoaning his malady of love. Sephardic songs then follow (arranged in 1975 by Manuel Valls); leading on to three anonymous 15th-to-17th century items, collected by the poet, Lorca (1898-1936) Canciones antiguas espanoles; the first ballad, Las morillas de Jaen, telling the tale of three Moorish girls, converts to Christianity, gathering olives and apples on dusty terraces, but earning, too, admiring glances from a nearby farmer. The Iberian climate clearly inspires "youth, mirth and warm desire."

In Canciones del Jardin Segreto, a composer of modern times, Anton Garcia Abril (1933-2021) sets old Arab texts, including the lament of Boabdil (or Abdullah, the last Moorish king) for his lost fortress of Alhambra:

Longed-for Alhambra, your castles are weeping
About what happened to me, Lord Abu-Abdullah
Give me my stallion and white blade
And let us go and take back the Alhambra…

The collection ends with the colours and magic of Ginastera's Five Popular Argentinian Songs, taking us to the New World, to the frontiers of the Latin civilisation founded by trade, exploration, conquest, yet tinged and underpinned by the cadences of a culture — that of Islam and the Moors — which itself formed one of the world's mighty empires.

Stuart Millson

OBITUARY

Cyril Bainbridge (1928-2024)

A long and distinguished career in journalism (including more than a quarter of a century on *The Times*) and a longstanding active involvement in the Chartered Institute of Journalists (which he joined in 1975, a refugee from the NUJ) made Cyril Bainbridge a familiar face and voice in Institute circles during the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

A proud Yorkshireman, hailing from Bradford, Cyril was the son of a printer – actually, a 'compositer' (for those who remember traditional printing techniques!) who worked for the local rag, the *Bingley Guardian* – and so Cyril could be said to have grown up "with the smell of printing ink in his nostrils". As a young trainee reporter, he soon joined the paper where his dad worked. Cyril's starting salary was 15 shillings (75p) a week!

Soon, however, he was off to greener pastures, and double the salary, at a rival paper, the *Keighley News*, where he also had the opportunity to write for other titles in the same stable, including the *Yorkshire Observer*, the *Bradford Telegraph* and *Argus*. But his career in Yorkshire newspapers was interrupted by National Service, where his writing skills got him a plum job on Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery's personal staff at the War Office. He returned to journalism as soon as he was 'demobbed' and was with the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* for the next eight years, before relocating to London and joining the Press Association in Fleet Street. During his time at the PA he covered all the major Old Bailey trials of the 1950s and early '60s including that of Ruth Ellis (the last woman to be hanged for murder) as well as party conferences and the Budget. In 1963 he went from the PA to *The Times* and was a *Times* reporter for the next 26 years under a succession of Editors – William Haley, William Rees Mogg, Harold Evans, Charles Douglas Home, Charles Wilson and Simon Jenkins – progressing from General Reporter to Assistant News Editor, then Regional News Editor, Assistant Managing Editor, and, finally, Editorial Data Manager, where was responsible for the introduction of 'IT' into the newsroom.



Cyril Bainbridge presides at an Institute dinner in 1978, with guest speaker The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP, Leader of the Opposition. Pictured in the foreground John Stanley MP, later Sir John and a Minister for Defence and Institute general-secretary Bob Farmer.

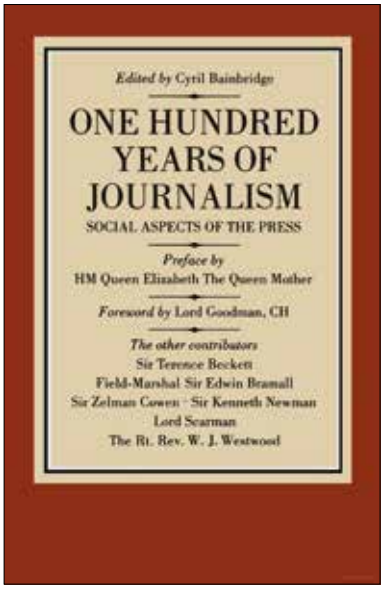


Cyril Bainbridge, Times journalist and proud Yorkshireman

It was in 1975 that, with the encouragement of *Times* Editor (and former Institute President) William Rees Mogg that Cyril 'defected' from the National Union of Journalists to the Institute of Journalists, a reaction to the increasingly left-wing political tendencies within the NUJ. In 1978/79, Cyril became President of the Institute. He was elected a Fellow of the Institute in 1986. Those of us who came into the CIoJ in the 1980s remember his speeches at conferences and the wise counsel that he offered at meetings of the Institute Council during those years. From 1980 to 1990 Cyril was also member of the Press Council (forerunner of the Press Complaints Commission). His book, *One Hundred Years of Journalism: Social Aspects of the Press*, was published in 1984, celebrating the first 100 years of our Institute. He also wrote a book about the *News of the World* to mark the paper's 150th anniversary in 1993, and a history of British seaside piers.

Even after retiring from a full-time staff position at *The Times*, Cyril continued for many years as one of the paper's obituary writers, and when not writing and editing he enjoyed country walks, painting, listening to classical music and being an active member of Probus. He was also, for many years, a Guildsman at St Bride's, the journalists' church in Fleet Street.

Andy Smith



The cover of One Hundred Years of Journalism

OBITUARY

Peter Jay (1937-2024)

The 1970s were in some ways a "golden age" for Fleet Street journalism, and journalist-broadcaster Peter Jay who passed away recently at the age of 87 was a "golden" young man who blazed his way across the firmament at that time, until his lustre faded somewhat.

Peter Jay left his mark, for better or for worse, on all those who knew him, and I count myself fortunate to have worked alongside him on *The Times* from 1968 to 1976 where he was then economics editor. He was an intellectual elitist with a passion to "educate" those who could rise to his own level.

I must admit that I rarely succeeded in doing so at the time but his aversion to dumbing down economic journalism and making it "business reporting" rather than economic and financial affairs commentary, is something I have shared during my 60 years in the profession.

Jay's loftiness could be explained partly by the fact that he was exceptionally bright academically and seemed unable to understand that others were not similarly gifted, especially those in his chosen profession of journalism.

He was, as *The Guardian* noted in an obituary, born into the Hampstead Labour aristocracy, the son of Douglas Jay (later Lord Jay), a sometime fellow of All Souls, Oxford, and briefly president of the Board of Trade in Harold Wilson's first cabinet. Educated at Winchester School (where he was head boy) and, after service in the Royal Navy, Jay went on to Christ Church College in Oxford where he took a first in philosophy, politics and economics and became president of the Oxford Union debating society, thereafter spending time working in the Treasury. That might go to anyone's head.

Much more so if, as in Peter Jay's case, he was dubbed "the cleverest young man in England by one of his Oxford tutors. That might cause anyone to value his own abilities above those of others. And to go on later to become Britain's youngest ambassador to the United States after marrying the then prime minister James Callaghan's daughter might excuse anyone from holding himself in high esteem.

This perhaps helps explain what one fellow journalist saw as Jay's arrogance. A *Times* sub-editor once complained that he could not understand what Jay had written, and was summarily informed that the column was not meant for people like him but intended to be understood by only three people – two Treasury civil servants and the governor of the Bank of England.

We, Peter's colleagues, would joke sometimes that he wrote his columns with only one other person, Samuel Brittan, then economics editor of the *Financial Times* in mind as a reader – and that Brittan likewise cared only about what Jay thought of his own writings.

Nevertheless, Peter Jay set standards by which other people on *The Times*, including his then deputy Frances Cairncross (later Dame Frances Cairncross, a distinguished public servant) sought consciously or unconsciously to match. His aura helped brighten even further the image of an already gifted group of colleagues on *The Times*.

I ran afoul of his editing only once when his red pen scythed through some of (what I saw as) my golden prose in a *Times* leader I wrote, after then Times editor William Rees Mogg had marked my previous offering as being "good". But we all learn from experience.

There was another occasion when Peter captained an ad hoc *Times* cricket team in a match against the FT. I was last man into bat and instructed by Jay to play a defensive wicket while my fellow batsman (a bit of a star) made all the runs. I couldn't resist the temptation to lash out at one slow ball, sending it to the boundary for a four, only to earn a reprimand, rather than praise, from Captain Jay.

If I had any occasion to disagree privately with Peter it was over his apparent support for the National Union of Journalists which in the mid-1970s took to holding "mandatory" meetings of its *Times* 'chapel', which members (of which I was one at the time) were obliged to attend. This dictatorial stance persuaded me to quit the NUJ and to join the Institute of Journalists instead – a decision I have certainly never regretted and indeed have had reason to be thankful for.

As the BBC observed in a tribute, "in the 70s, while still at *The Times*, Jay had been the first presenter of the LWT Sunday morning politics programme Weekend World and became a friend of its ambitious young producer John Birt, pioneer of the "mission to explain" approach, which suited Jay's lofty tendencies. Back in London from Washington, in 1980 he became chairman and chief executive of the new TV-am channel, set up to introduce breakfast television with other celebrity luminaries such as David Frost, Angela Rippon, Anna Ford and Michael Parkinson.

The BBC hurriedly set up its own breakfast programme and "Jay and his colleagues soon found that their mission to explain was not what the British public wanted in the mornings." This was a great pity because Jay was once a young Apollo-like torchbearer for higher standards in economic journalism and his light shone brightly for a time. He deserves to be remembered with respect.

Anthony Rowley

Simon Cowell MBE (1952-2024)



Broadcaster, writer and conservationist Simon Cowell, a longtime member of the Chartered Institute of Journalists, died at his home in Leatherhead, Surrey, on June 9, surrounded by his daughters, his partner and dogs, after a brave battle with cancer. Best known for the long-running television documentary series *Wildlife SOS*, and as producer of the BBC series *The Bionic Vet* which brought the pioneering veterinary surgeon Noel Fitpatrick to public attention, Simon was the founder-director of the Wildlife Aid Foundation, which started as a small back-garden hobby but grew into one of the UK's leading wildlife rescue charities with an army of more than 400 volunteers.

Starting in 1997, Simon created, produced and presented *Wildlife SOS* for Channel Five and Discovery Channel 'Animal Planet', initially by covering his own adventures as a wildlife rescuer but later the series began looking at animal welfare and nature conservation news stories throughout Britain and eventually also reporting on the plight of animals internationally, including mountain gorillas in the Congo, wolves in northern Russia, and moon bears in Vietnam. As well as writing extensively for television, he wrote a novel, *The Owl with the Golden Heart*, and his autobiography *My Wild Life*. In 2005 he was awarded the MBE for services to wildlife. He was a frequent media commentator on environmental matters, sharing his knowledge and promoting the conservation of wildlife species and habitats.

Andy Smith

Million-word author honoured by Battle of Britain Memorial Trust

Historian and author Dilip Sarkar MBE has accepted the position of Honorary Vice-President of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust to mark his outstanding achievement in creating an official history of the battle that changed the course of the Second World War.

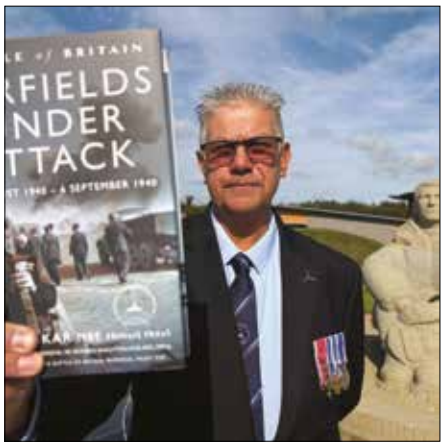
Dilip Sarkar's eight-volume history of the 1940 aerial battle is being published by Pen & Sword. Volumes one to four are already in print and have been well received by Battle of Britain students and enthusiasts. The work consists of around one million words and marks the climax of a career that has seen the author devote many years of his life to researching the 1940 aerial conflict between the Royal Air Force and the Luftwaffe.

A meeting of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, which considers the work to be the 'official' history of the Battle, voted unanimously to invite Mr Sarkar, a Fellow of both the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Aeronautical Society, to become an Honorary Vice-President in recognition of the "monumental" work. The Trust's Secretary, Group Captain Patrick Tootal, said that the position would "show the gratitude of the Trust and allow you a more formal association with the Memorial."

The author commented: "Having spent a lifetime dedicated to commemorating 'The Few', many of whom I knew personally as friends, it has been the pinnacle of my career as an historian to see all that brought together in the eight volume, one million word, official history completed for the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust. The Trust's work in maintaining the National Memorial to The Few on the clifftop at Capel-le-Ferne in Kent is vital, and the invitation to become an Honorary Vice-President was a complete surprise and an enormous honour."

The eight-part history takes a detailed look at the lead-up to the Battle and covers global events, the political situation and other aspects of the background to the fighting itself, as well as the contributions made by Bomber and Coastal Commands and the Royal Navy.

Charles Hewitt, managing director at Pen & Sword, said: "Dilip has passionately pursued the recording of Second World War history, and the Battle of Britain



in particular, for a number of decades, during which he has traced survivors, recording their memories, and contacted the families of casualties to reconstruct the all-too brief lives of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. He has dedicated himself to publishing, exhibiting and raising awareness of the human experience of war, all the while undertaking the important task of preserving the record for future generations."

CIoJ Young Journalist Awards 2025

In updating you on the progress of the Chartered Institute of Journalists' inaugural Young Journalist Awards, I am delighted to begin with the exciting news that the award presentations will feature as part of next year's Society of Editors Annual Conference, due to take place in London on Tuesday March 25, 2025.

The Young Journalist Awards entry hub is now available for members to view on the CIoJ website, www.cioj.org – simply follow the links for full details. We have endeavoured to ensure that the judges represent the breadth and diversity of the UK news industry as well as having extensive experience of the news media landscape.

Nominations closed on October 31 just as this issue of *The Journal* went to press, and judging is currently underway, but the other key dates are as follows:

Online longlist judging concludes:

Monday December 2, 2024

Shortlist judging: January/February 2025



Nominations announced: February 2025

Awards Presentations: Tuesday March 25, 2025

In total we received more than 150 nominations, across eight categories. The awards were open to any young journalist (aged 30 or under), whether working inhouse or freelance.

There will be a reception, to which all members of our Institute will be invited, prior to the presentation of the awards at the Leonardo Royal Hotel, City. Please put the date of this event in your diary: Tuesday March 25, 2025.

I look forward to seeing you there, so that we can all join together in celebrating the work of young journalists.

Gerald Bowey, President, CIoJ

CIoJ Funds in numbers...

132 - years of support

£52,000 - total support provided in 2023

14 - people in receipt of support in 2023

£3.7m - the value of Institute charitable funds

13 - families helped in 2023

Chartered Institute of Journalists
CHARITIES CIoJ

BOOKSHELF

Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder

By Salman Rushdie

Published by Jonathan Cape, 2024

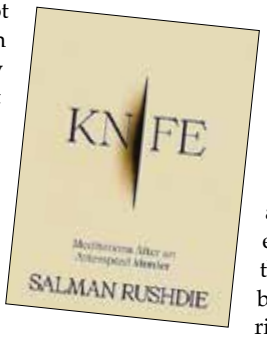
Hardback £20

Salman Rushdie was never a journalist, but as a writer of fiction he has been persecuted like a journalist in a perpetual war zone with one side determined to get him at any time and in any way.

After the unjust condemnation of his novel *Satanic Verses* throughout the Muslim world in 1988, he has been a perpetual target of Islamist extremists. This has included a fatwa calling for his death, issued by Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran and the banning of his book in 20 countries.

I last saw Rushdie in 1991 when he appeared with round-the-clock armed Metropolitan Police protection at a Writers' Guild of Great Britain awards ceremony at Park Lane's Dorchester Hotel.

On the morning of 12 August 2022, Salman Rushdie was standing onstage at the Chautauqua Institution in upstate New York, preparing to give a lecture on the importance of keeping writers safe from harm.

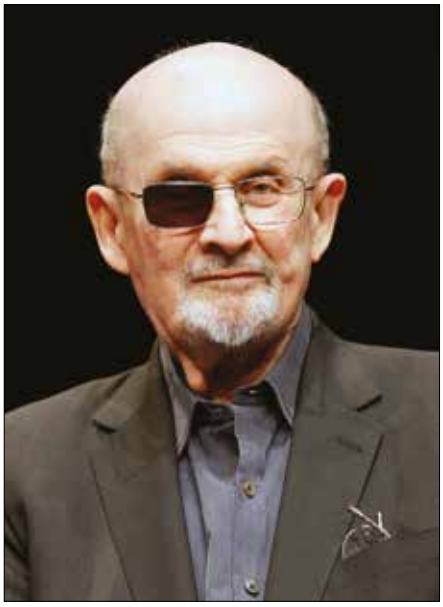


Nemesis had caught up with him. The irony did not need over-stating when he recalled: "on that day the amphitheatre was not a safe space for me." It came in the form of a man in black. Twenty-four-year-old Hadi Matar of Fairview, New Jersey, was wearing black clothes and a black mask when he rushed down the aisle towards him knife in hand. Rushdie's first thought was: "So it's you. Here you are."

Rushdie explained: "I can still see the moment in slow motion. My eyes follow the running man as he leaps out of the audience and approaches me. I see each step of his headlong run. I watch myself coming to my feet and turning toward him. (I continue to face him. I never turn my back on him. There are no injuries on my back.) I raise my left hand in self-defense. He plunges the knife into it."

Matar savaged the 75-year-old writer, who was repeatedly stabbed in the face, neck and abdomen, and would lose the use of his left hand and the vision in his right eye.

In *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*, Rushdie relives the horrors of that day and the aftermath. He uses the power of words to triumph over the nihilistic evil of Islamist terrorism which sought to destroy



Salman Rushdie in Berlin 2024 by Elena Ternovaja

him. He more than survived, physically and psychologically.

This is a moving journey of recovery and healing. Rushdie reflects that his attacker had 27 seconds to damage him his so grievously. He gives tribute to the love and support of his wife, Eliza, his family, his physicians and therapists, and his global readership. The dedication is to the men and women who saved his life.

He creates fictional conversations with his assailant, named only as 'A' – which could stand for assassin, albeit a failed one. Rushdie writes that "a knife attack is a kind of intimacy, a knife's a close-up weapon, and the crimes it commits are intimate encounters. Here I am, you bastard, the knife whispers to its victim. I've been waiting for you. You see me? I'm right in front of your face. I'm plunging my assassin sharpness into your neck. Feel that? Here's some more, and some more after that. I'm right here. I'm right in front of you."

The knife which he saw coming towards him is turned into a transformative metaphor, because, as Rushdie explains: "During those empty sleepless nights, I thought a lot about The Knife as an idea. Knife was a tool, and acquired meaning from the use we made of it. Language, too, was a knife. It could cut open the world and reveal its meaning, its inner workings, its secrets, its truths. It could cut through from one reality to another. It could call bullshit, open people's eyes, create beauty. Language was my knife. If I had unexpectedly been caught in an unwanted knife fight, maybe this was the knife I could use to fight back."

Rushdie quotes Samuel Beckett: "We are other, no longer what we were, before the calamity of yesterday." In 1938, Beckett had also survived a senseless knife attack from a pimp hustling for money who had the improbable name of Prudent. This was long before Beckett had written his famous works.

Rushdie writes about the Nobel prize-winning Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz having survived a savage knife attack in Cairo in 1994. He was 82 years old. His attacker fled and was never caught. Mahfouz was being punished for criticising Islamist fundamentalists.

Rushdie's memoir and the literature he has created out of this attempted murder now dictate and determine the course of justice for 'A' whose lawyers have delayed the trial because of its publication. The literature is exhibit 'A' – not the knife; nor the scarred and still recovering victim.

One of the world's greatest living novelists has created unforgettable literature out of something so ugly, evil, senseless, unthinkable and brutal. And we know the good in humanity can always endure through art, beauty and literature.

Tim Crook

The Village News: The truth behind England's rural idyll

By Tom Fort

Published by Simon and Schuster UK

Hardback £14.99



The English village is not dead, declares Tom Fort in the introduction to his new book. It is "simply too strong to fail." Journalist, author and broadcaster Tom Fort is perhaps best known to many of us for his engaging BBC television documentary, *The A303: Highway to the Sun*. In his new book *The Village News*, he takes us on a tour of rural England, dropping in on several dozen different English villages, starting with his childhood home of Twyford in Berkshire, and taking in such diverse locations as Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire, Troutbeck in Cumbria, Myddle in Shropshire, Foxton in Cambridgeshire, North Moreton in Oxfordshire, and Luccombe in Somerset – looking at what makes each one of these villages special, and finding out how the inhabitants are

coping with changes, both good and bad.

Tom grew up in the "largish village" of Twyford and admits that during his childhood neither he nor his parents played much of a part in village life. His father was a Member of Parliament and his mother the headmistress of Roedean, and during his parents' regular absences from home "everything was organised by my grandmother, who lived next door" and it was grandma who was the pillar of the local community, the Women's Institute and the parish church, and a familiar face to everyone in the village. For Tom it was only after returning from university and joining his brother in the village cricket team that he started to feel the pull of his rural roots. Fifty years later he still plays cricket for Twyford.

The author uses the history of a cluster of villages near Farnham, Surrey – Upper Bourne, Middle Bourne and Lower Bourne – to chronicle such processes as the decline of traditional agriculture, the twentieth century rediscovery of English folk songs, and the rise of the WI. He also notes "the creeping spread of suburbia" in the 1930s and cites the successful campaign against this threat by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE), "enlisting writers and campaigners to denounce these evils", including journalists J.B. Priestley and Beverly Nichols.

As well as being a history and commentary on English rural life, *The Village News* is a powerful plea for better-planned, better-executed new development, where such development may be needed. Tom Fort advocates greater use of local building materials and appropriate vernacular styles, instead of identikit "executive homes". He castigates the volume housebuilders for their "boring" designs, calling their influence on modern housing "malign", and raging that if action is not taken yet more villages "will be squeezed and suffocated by housing estates pushed through the planning system by the power of the volume builders".

All is not lost, however. In the author's view, Neighbourhood Planning is one way to stop English villages being wrecked by soulless developers and short-sighted planners. Through the creation of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs), "Localism … can be made to mean something", writes Tom, and by energising our rural communities we can "head off the frontal assaults of the land predators". Sonning Common, for instance, the Oxfordshire village where Tom lives now, had been "a juicy target for developers" but the Neighbourhood Plan has enabled locals to head off some of the threats.

So, Tom's final clarion cry is for villagers the length and breadth of England to take up the challenge of Neighbourhood Planning, and for district and borough councils to welcome the role of "well-meaning amateurs" in shaping the future of our villages. After all, he writes, "we are here in greater numbers than before, active for longer than before, ready and able to do what people have always done, which is to serve our communities."

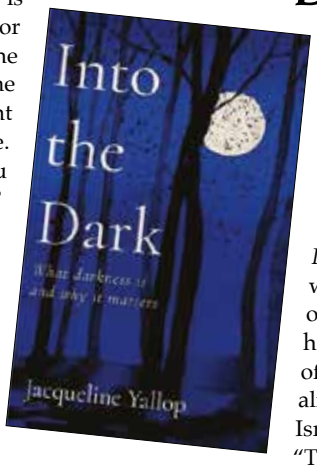
Andy Smith

Into the Dark: What darkness is and why it matters

By Jacqueline Yallop

Published by Icon Books

Hardback £16.99



"A sad tale is best for winter," or in the case of Jacqueline Yallop's recent title, a *dark* tale. But how do you define darkness? What is it? Why do we need it, and sometimes fear it? Jacqueline, a teacher of creative writing at the University of Aberystwyth, begins her intriguing quest, not in a seminar or laboratory, but in the realms of early memory: a family holiday to a country Bed & Breakfast, an unfamiliar, rather remote place, where the deepness of a dark night took hold of her young imagination. From this "strange meeting" with true, enveloping darkness, the author takes the reader to a world of moonlight (incidentally – the book has a beguiling cover illustration), to the recesses of sleep, to the disorientation faced by hatching turtles when confused by artificial light, and the techniques of the Old Masters of the 15th century as they applied light colours to backgrounds of darkness.

Cultural ideas, negative connotations of darkness, are also discussed, but we should not forget that phrases such as "in the black" denote good things, such as financial rectitude, and that in today's socio-political environment, one can sometimes read too much into what should be straightforward, dictionary-based and ultimately neutral terms.

Nevertheless, the author discusses other cultural connotations, such as darkness and the erotic – "the pleasant darkness of eroticism" – and gives the reader some genuinely memorable phrases concerning "illuminated splinters of the past" and "the spluttering dark-light materiality of a world experienced through glimpses… fragments."

If Radio 4 hasn't already thought of it, *Into the Dark* could be a strong contender for *A Book at Bedtime*.

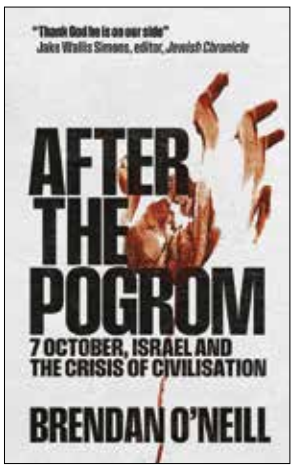
Stuart Millson

After the Pogrom: 7 October, Israel and the Crisis of Civilisation

By Brendan O'Neill

Published by Spiked

Paperback £11.99



Brendan O'Neill is the chief political writer, and former editor, of *Spiked*, as well as a regular columnist for *The Spectator* and the *Daily Mail*. He is a fierce of opponent of wokery and 'cancel culture'; his last book was *A Heretic's Manifesto: Essays on the Unsayable*, but while his previous writings have often been noted for their sharp wit and appropriately spiky sarcasm, *After the Pogrom* lands its blows in a very different way, reminding us of the sheer horror of the October 7 massacres but showing how the Western World, including much of its news media, swiftly 'moved on' and almost immediately started blaming the Israelis themselves for Hamas savagery. "The bodies were barely cold," O'Neill writes, "the hostages not yet shackled in Gaza's dark tunnels, the rape victims still reeling from their vile defilement, when a cruel, taunting cry came from the West: 'Well, what did you expect?'"

Within hours of news breaking that more than a thousand Israel civilians had been butchered (including teenagers partying at a pop festival) and hundreds more abducted, protestors took to the streets across the Western World, and commentators to the airwaves and internet, not to condemn the savagery of Hamas but to blame its victims. Within hours, university students were staging anti-Israel sit-ins on American and British campuses, thousands of Palestinian supporters were taking to the streets of London chanting "From the River to the Sea", and activists from Black Lives Matter, a supposedly *anti*-racist movement, were voicing their full-throated support for the perpetrators of the massacres.

The protest marches that blocked the centres of our cities were the most visible display of

this madness. As O'Neill writes, "In the weeks following Hamas's orgy of murder, legions of England's middle classes idly marched alongside radical Islamists who were chanting for 'jihad' – that is, holy war – against the Jewish state. One pogrom wasn't enough, it seems."

In a powerful, insightful, yet – one has to admit – incredibly depressing book, O'Neill lays bare the vile hypocrisy of many in the chattering classes who proclaim their adherence to a multitude of "progressive" causes, from pacifism and veganism to LGBTQ+ Pride and gender-identitarianism, but who, when it comes to Israel-Palestine, side with the least progressive and most barbaric of politico-religious ideologies – Islamic fundamentalism – and pour down a torrent of irrational hatred against the Jewish state which is far and away the most liberal and tolerant country in the whole Middle East (and perhaps the world). Nowhere is this absurdity made clearer than in the frequent appearance of "Queers for Palestine" placards at anti-Israel protests, the placard-carriers seemingly oblivious to the fact that in both Gaza and the West Bank homosexuality is a criminal offence.

As O'Neill writes, "the suicidal alliance of Islamism and leftism is now a wholly mainstream thing. A yearning for holy war on Israel and everything it is seen to represent – Western ideals, post-colonial confidence, Jewish pride – is what unites the Islamic extremist and the genderfluid leftist in this strange, unstable century."

This bizarre Islamo-leftist alliance, in which self-styled "progressives" align themselves with the cause of a fascist death-cult, is one of the most sinister and destructive forces at work inside the Western democracies. "The best pushback against this carnival of bigotry," says O'Neill, "is a full-throated defence of the thing that both the pogromists and their Western sympathisers hate: freedom. Freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and freedom of speech. That might mean a world where people are free to say 'Kill all Jews', but it also means a world where many more of us are free to say 'No, never again!'"

Andy Smith

Newsmongers: A History of Tabloid Journalism

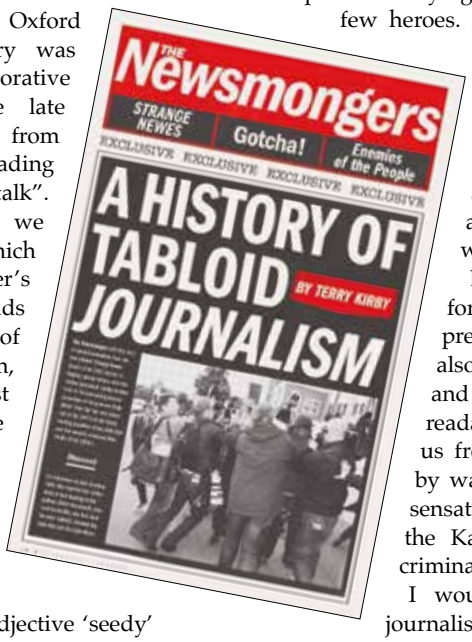
By Terry Kirby

Published by Reaktion Books, 2024

Hardback £20.00

Terry Kirby is a much-respected Senior Lecturer in Journalism at Goldsmiths, University of London and with a long-established career in print journalism as a working editor and crime correspondent with the *Independent* and London *Standard*. He has written a very well-researched and written critical history of popular journalism and over 391 pages he provides a well-informed and entertaining chronicle of the development of 'newsmongering.'

The common theme throughout stems from the origin of the word 'newsmongering', which according to the Oxford English Dictionary was coined as a pejorative adjective in the late 1700s and stems from the idea of "spreading gossip or idle talk". In the process, we have a history which in the publisher's promotion "unfolds the seedy history of tabloid journalism, from the first printed 'Strange Newes' sheets of the sixteenth century to the sensationalism of today's digital age."



The use of the adjective 'seedy' does not do justice to the depth and quality of Kirby's history writing. There is a more than creditable narrative covering the Regency gossip writers, New York's 'yellow journalism' battles, recognition of the importance of the women readers in "See That You Secure A Copy For Madam" and the Press Baron struggles with the political establishment of the 1920s and 30s in "The Prerogative of the Harlot". The founder of the London *Star* (and Fellow of our Institute) T.P. O'Connor even gets a one-page honourable mention.

It is from Chapter 5 that the full flavour and imperative of his history becomes clear. Kirby is still the investigative crime reporter intent on identifying the moral and legal wrongs of the popular hacks whose trade remains gossip and idle talk. His perspective is very much that of the Goldsmiths Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies. Journalism is to be problematized as a seedy competitive capitalist gold rush often going bust or reinventing the next 'holy grail' of prospecting to exploit.

There is focus on the 'sex and sleaze' *Sun* of the 1970s and Brexit-backing populism of the *Daily Mail* and a celebrity-obsessed Mail Online of the 2000s. The central characters are of course larger than life, ripe for criticism as well as celebration for their excess and these include Daniel Defoe, Rupert Murdoch, Robert Maxwell, Lord Northcliffe, and Hugh Cudlipp.

Kirby mines the criminal scatology of the Leveson Inquiry and all the dirty tricks of the grubby hacks' trade from phone hacking to bribery. He adopts the Nick Davies denunciation of so much journalism as 'churnalism' and in chapter 13 with "Three Exits, Three Court Cases" analyses the campaign by Prince Harry and others to apply litigious revenge on the tabloids of today for their alleged sins of yesterday.

The Morning Star's review of this book is spot on in saying it has many villains and few heroes. As the UK's communist daily makes clear this book argues that "British tabloid journalism bears no relation to the news and has two primary aims: making money and wielding political power."

Brian Cathcart, the former director of the pressure-group Hacked Off, also endorses the approach and content as "a highly readable story that whisks us from the age of deference by way of scandal, sleaze and sensation to the era of clickbait, the Kardashians and rampant criminality."

I would argue that popular journalism deserves a more impartial and rounded investigation in narrative history. Kirby titles his book "A History of Tabloid Journalism" but his "further reading page" has some conspicuous omissions. There is, for instance, no reference to any of the work of Dennis Griffiths, or indeed Tim Luckhurst's masterful history of print journalism during the Second World War: *Reporting the Second World War: The Press and the People 1939-1945*.

Nevertheless, Kirby's book is an achievement in identifying and indicting the common sins of journalistic impropriety over the centuries and he does it with style and journalistic panache.

William Mulder

CIoJ election

Elections for the Welfare Fund Committee of the Chartered Institute of Journalists take place in January 2025.

Nominations are invited. Please contact the Chief Executive on charities@cioj.org, or call Head Office on 020 7252 1187.

Ukraine: 1,000 days later, journalists continue their fight

November 19, 2024 marks 1000 days since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Marking this grim milestone, Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), a pan-European partnership project that tracks press freedom violations in Europe, is remembering those journalists who have lost their lives reporting on Russia's war of aggression. MFRR also expresses its solidarity with those who continue to risk their lives to bring us critical news and information on this invasion.

Since the invasion on February 24, 2022, 13 journalists have been killed while reporting on Russia's full-scale invasion – highlighting the risks and dangers faced by Ukrainian and international journalists covering this war. Some, such as Arman Soldin, Oksana Baulina and others were killed as a result of Russian shelling, indiscriminate or targeted, while others, like Maks Levin and Mantas Kvedaravicius, were likely killed in extrajudicial executions. Dozens of other journalists have been wounded while reporting on the war. Countless editorial offices, TV towers and other media infrastructure have been destroyed.

Victoria Roshchyna, a Ukrainian journalist who set out to report in Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine in July 2023, died in unclear circumstances in Russian custody, with the news of her death having only been made public on October 10, 2024. To date, Russian authorities have refused to investigate the circumstances of her death and have refused to return her body to her family in Ukraine. The news of Roshchyna's death serves as a reminder that at least 13 other Ukrainian journalists continue to be held in Russian captivity, with hardly any legal guarantees that their safety is being ensured by Russian authorities. Among Ukraine's media community, fears mount that as with Roshchyna, their lives are in danger too.

Cyber warfare

In addition to physical attacks, Ukrainian journalists and media are facing increasing digital threats with hacking attempts, spoofing and DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attacks intensifying at an alarming rate since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian outlets are regularly targeted by cyber-attacks that knock major news websites offline, with disruptions lasting several hours on average. Such disruptions have strong negative consequences for Ukrainian media, who are exposed to losing their readership and thus also commercial revenue.

Perhaps an even more dangerous development is the appearance of so-called Doppelgänger (clone) websites. MFRR has demanded a reaction to by European authorities and 'big tech' platforms. These cloned pages, which are disguised to resemble those of news outlets popular in Ukraine, attempt to influence Ukrainian public opinion by propagating ideas serving Russian interests. For example, misinformation is being spread about Ukraine losing the war, that it is lacking ammunition, and that the Ukrainian government is corrupt.

While not comparable to the devastation created by the Russian military, the war has also become a pretext for Ukrainian authorities to introduce a certain level of censorship on the country's media. The most striking example is the continued production of the highly controversial "united news" broadcasts on Ukraine's main television channels, which have been accused in Ukraine's media community of producing unduly biased coverage supportive of the Ukrainian government. These "united news" broadcasts were also recently criticised by the European Commission which urged Ukraine to "reassess" the validity of the project.

In addition, several Ukrainian investigative journalists have been subjected to surveillance and intimidation by officials in connection with their work. As an example, investigative journalist Yuriy Nikolov was intimidated in January but, to date, no-one had been held accountable for this intimidation. Similarly, no results have been communicated in the investigations related to the surveillance reported in January of investigative outlet Bihus.info and the attempt in April to serve investigative journalist Yevheny Shulhat with a military summons in retaliation for his work.

Resilience

Additionally, in October, independent news outlet Ukrainska Pravda (UP) said in a statement that it was experiencing "ongoing and systematic pressure" from President Volodymyr Zelensky's office.

Despite mounting challenges, says MFRR, the country's media sector has shown incredible resilience throughout a war that has now lasted almost three years. In an open letter co-signed by MFRR partners they express their solidarity with the journalists and independent media in Ukraine and commit to continue to support them in doing their work, for as long as it takes. The letter is signed by the International Press Institute, ARTICLE 19 Europe, the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Free Press Unlimited, European Federation of Journalists and Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa.

Jewish BBC journalists resign from the NUJ

It has been reported that "more than a dozen" Jewish members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) working at the BBC have resigned from the union in protest at being required to participate in a "Day of Action for Palestine" by "wearing something red, green, black, or a Palestinian keffiyeh to visibly show solidarity." The NUJ is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) which originated the Day of Action directive, requiring NUJ members, including those at the BBC, to comply.

One BBC staffer called the requirement to participate in the Day of Action "hypocritical and antisemitic," telling *The Times*: "BBC journalists, who pride themselves on impartiality and who fought to keep their NUJ free of politics, are being encouraged to break the BBC's editorial guidelines by supporting a political cause". According to a report in the *Jewish News*, NUJ leaders have been "alarmed by the response and the resignations."

The TUC directive referred to Palestinian journalists killed by Israeli forces in Gaza in the last 12 months but made no mention at all of the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, that precipitated Israel's military response. One of those who has quit the NUJ, freelance journalist Charlotte Henry, said that the NUJ had become "a hostile environment for Jews, and I can no longer be part of that."

The TUC, reported the *Jewish News*, was "unable to say whether it had ever previously asked workers to wear the national colours of one side or another in a conflict. It did confirm, however, that it has never asked members to wear Ukraine coloured clothing during the country's conflict with Russia."

Andy Smith