
From: Ed [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, August 2, 2013 1:33 PM
To: Epstein, Jeff
Subject: Alexander Chancellor Review of my book today in The Spectator

[//www.spectator.co.uk/books/8969551/the-annals-of-unsolved-crime-by-edw-rd-jay-epstein-review/](http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/8969551/the-annals-of-unsolved-crime-by-edw-rd-jay-epstein-review/)

The Annals of Unsolved Crime Edward Jay Epstein Melville House, pp.333, £12.99 Edward Jay Epstein is an American investigative journalist who has spent at least half a century trying to find answers to the troubling theories and nagging questions that always swirl around notorious crimes. The more famous the crime, the harder it is to get at the truth, especially if the crime has political consequences. For example, John Wilkes Booth, who murdered Abraham Lincoln in 1865, was quickly proven to have been part of a conspiracy involving leaders of the defeated Confederate states; but when a reunited country was later seeking reconciliation, it was found expedient to suppress this fact and portray him instead as a deranged individual who had acted alone.

In the case of the Reichstag fire of 1933, which brought Adolf Hitler to power, the opposite was the case. It suited the Nazis to blame it on a conspiracy by the communists, and the communists on a conspiracy by the Nazis; and most people believed in one or other of these two conspiracy theories. But it seems that in reality there may have been only one individual involved — the unbalanced Dutch arsonist Marinus van der Lubbe, who actually lit the fire and was later beheaded for doing it.

As for the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy, which Epstein himself investigated in depth, and about which he wrote the first of his 14 books, The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth, he still doubts the Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone and believes that he was following instructions from the Cuban intelligence service, which was bent on revenge for the CIA's attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro.

The 54 'unsolved crimes' analysed in this stimulating book range in time from the Lincoln assassination and the 'Jack the Ripper' prostitute murders of the 19th century to the 21st-century murder of Meredith Kercher in Perugia and arrest of Dominique Strauss-Kahn in New York for the alleged sexual assault of a hotel maid. Having carefully studied all the evidence, Epstein upholds the innocence of Amanda Knox and DSK (against whom the charge was anyway dropped), but is convinced that French intelligence deliberately exploited DSK's voracious sexual appetite to bring about his political downfall. His account of the DSK affair shows how thorough an investigator he is, for he not only managed to interview the man himself but watched hours of videotape from security cameras at the Sofitel hotel where the alleged assault took place.

Not all the crimes in this book are strictly speaking 'unsolved' — some just have peripheral mysteries attached to them — but the ones that tend to defeat investigators most often are air crashes (like those that killed Dag Hammarskjöld of the UN, Lin Biao of China, and General Zia of Pakistan) in which no witness survives and the condition of the plane's wreckage is such that it is impossible to tell if sabotage has been involved. Crimes perpetrated by government intelligence services are also extremely hard to crack because of the thoroughness and skill that has typically gone into their preparation and execution. While acknowledging this, Epstein comes nevertheless to the conclusion that the death in London in 2006 of the former KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko was not the consequence of a murder.

Litvinenko, a former KGB officer who had fled Russia for Britain to support the exiled Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky in his obsessive campaign against President Vladimir Putin, died on 23 November 2006, after ingesting a lethal dose of a rare radioactive isotope, polonium-210. On his deathbed he claimed to have been administered it on Putin's orders by a former KGB colleague, Anatoli Lugovoi. Britain demanded Lugovoi's extradition to face a charge of murder, but Russia refused, and Britain retaliated by expelling four Russian diplomats from London. It was like the Cold War all over again. After Litvinenko died, traces of polonium-210 were found on various people (including Lugovoi) with whom he had previously consorted in London, and in places such as bars, bedrooms and lap-dance clubs that they had frequented; but there was no evidence as to where the polonium came from or to who might have administered it to whom. Epstein flew to Moscow, interviewed Lugovoi, and even got access there to the British extradition request document, which he found uninformative and lacking in any incriminating evidence against Lugovoi.

What the polonium was doing in London nobody knows, but it is the sort of material that comes furtively into the hands of intelligence operatives from time to time, maybe for nefarious purposes but not usually for murder. It leaks easily and with potentially lethal consequences. Before Litvinenko, six people in France, Israel and Russia are known to have died from exposure to polonium-210, all as a result of accidental leakage. This, Epstein believes, is why Litvinenko died, too.

as ever

Ed

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