



**Jon
Ronson**

**The
Secret
Rulers
of The
World**

ColdType

An excerpt from
**THEM: Adventures
With Extremists**



AN EXCERPT FROM

THEM

ADVENTURES WITH EXTREMISTS

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WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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THE AUTHOR

Jon Ronson is a writer and documentary film maker. His book, **Them: Adventures With Extremists**, was a UK bestseller and is now available in North America in paperback. His three-part Channel 4 series the *Crazy Rulers of the World* was broadcast on Channel 4 throughout November 2004. **Them** was longlisted for The Guardian newspaper's First Book Award, until it was disqualified for not being, strictly speaking, his first book.

He grew up in Cardiff and began his journalistic career as an award-winning columnist for the magazine *Time Out*. He also wrote the popular *Human Zoo* column for *The Guardian* and produced the BBC Radio 4 documentary *Hotel Auschwitz*. For Channel 4, Jon has made the five part series the *Secret Rulers of the World*, multi award-winning *Tottenham Ayatollah*, *New Klan*, *New York to California (A Great British Odyssey)*, *Dr Paisley, I Presume*, the four-part series *Critical Condition*, and the late-night chat show *For The Love Of...* For BBC2 he made the six part series *The Ronson Mission*. In the US, he is a contributor to National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and *This American Life*.

His latest book, **The Men Who Stare At Goats**, reveals extraordinary - and very nutty - national secrets at the core of George W. Bush's War on Terror.

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For years, Jon Ronson had heard tales of a clandestine band of dizzyingly powerful politicians and industrialists who were said to be the real rulers of the world, making and breaking presidents, contriving wars. Surely they could not exist. Could he find them? The trail took him – and his newfound companion, an oddball Washington reporter who had made the quest his life’s mission – to a luxury resort in Portugal . . .

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A

t the National Press Club on Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington DC, Big Jim Tucker left a coded message on the answer-machine of a friend. “Mother. Your dutiful son is playing kick the can on Pennsylvania Avenue, Tuesday morning, 10.30am, thank you.”

Big Jim replaced the telephone receiver. He lit a cigarette and glanced around the lobby with a routine vigilance. Even here at his club, his gentleman’s *club*, he considered himself not entirely safe. Anyone could discover that this was where he had breakfast every day: three strong black coffees and some pastries on the side.

“If they ever got me,” he said, “they’d make it look like a typical Washington mugging. A mugging on the sidewalk. Killed for a couple of dollars. Another three paragraphs in the newspaper.”

Jim paused. He pulled on his cigarette. His heart is not strong due to his habit of smoking unfiltered Camels at all times, pack after pack. He is quite huge, an elderly southern gentleman in a crumpled suit and a newshound trilby. He has a voice like gravel (a result of cigarette-induced emphysema, which, by a happy accident, gives his speech an enigmatic rhythm, like a charismatic Sam Spade

down on his luck) and an office downtown with Venetian blinds.

He said, “The thing is, we don’t know how much time we’ve got left. And suppose I just so happen to ‘drop dead’ in my office on Tuesday afternoon. It could be the following Monday before someone says, ‘Where *is* that boy?’ I don’t want to be burnt bacon when they find me. I guess I’m just too vain to be found that way.”

Big Jim laughed in a hollow manner. “So I phone my friend every day just to announce I’m still kicking the can and still hunting the macaroon. Still breathing, see? The day she doesn’t get that call is the day she makes enquiries.”

Here at his private members’ club, Big Jim could pass for a venerable commentator for a heavyweight daily newspaper, but he isn’t. He works for an underground journal called the *Spotlight*. Mainstream journalists keep away from him. This is, Jim said, because certain high-ranking members of the overground media, even some members of his own club, are in league with the secret rulers of the world. And it is they who would make his death look like a typical Washington mugging.

When I began hearing about the Bilderberg Group – about the notion that a tiny band of insidious and clandestine powermongers meet in a secret room from which they rule the world – I was sceptical. But I kept hearing about them, and I finally decided to try to settle the matter once and for all. Which is why I visited Big Jim Tucker. Within anti-Bilderberg circles, Big Jim is considered a pioneer, a trailblazer, risking his life to attempt to locate the geographical whereabouts of the secret room.

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“They exist all right,” said Big Jim, “and they’re not playing pinochle in there.” Big Jim Tucker has spent 30 years documenting the facts. He’s been after them since the 70s when he first got the hunch that they existed. He abandoned a good career in sports journalism on a big city paper. It has been cat and mouse ever since, he said. Good against evil.

“Those sick luminaries are always on the move,” said Jim. “They never come together in the same place twice, so as to evade detection. They only meet once a year, for a long weekend in May or June.”

They have been ruling the world in secret since 1954, Jim said, when a man called Joseph Retinger, whose name rarely appears in the history books, decided to create them. One of many mysteries is how Retinger – a Polish immigrant employed as secretary to the novelist Joseph Conrad – had the wherewithal and the contacts to organise such a mighty endeavour. Their first meeting took place in the Bilderberg Hotel, Holland, which is why the secret rulers of the world go by the name of the Bilderberg Group. Big Jim said that I happened to have caught him at a very good time. He was ready to take things further, to turn up the heat and cause some trouble.

“So you’ve actually managed to obtain the address of the next Bilderberg meeting?” I asked Jim.

“Yes, sir,” he said.

“You know *exactly* where it is?” I asked.

“Yes, I do,” he said.

Big Jim said he fully intended to thwart their security and barge

in unannounced to catch them red-handed going about their covert wickedness. I was welcome to tag along, he said, “Just so long as you don’t step on twigs or fall off walls while we’re on the prowl.

“The plan is this,” said Jim. “We’ll leave Washington on the last day of May, and we’ll arrive at the target destination on the Sunday morning. We’ll start patrolling that same afternoon. Patrol Sunday and Monday. Develop sources. Waiters, chambermaids . . .”

“So they still meet in hotels?” I said.

“Yes, sir,” said Jim. “The chambermaids will be gun-shy at first. They’ll know something big and spooky is going on, but they won’t know what. But then they’ll begin to realise that whatever’s happening at their hotel is evil. And that’s when they’ll open up.”

“So what else will we do on the Sunday and Monday?”

“Scout around the resort. Figure out ways to penetrate.”

“Scout around looking for what?”

“Where the short wall is,” said Jim. “Where the big drainpipe is.”

“So we’ll actually be climbing up drainpipes?” I asked.

“Climbing up drainpipes,” said Jim, “trying not to sneeze or cough or step on twigs. Trying to avoid the guard dogs.”

“What’s the name of the hotel?”

“I’ve – uh – got it written down here somewhere,” said Jim. He riffling through his pockets. “Here it is. The Caesar Park golfing resort, Sintra, Portugal.”

I looked quizzically at Jim. “Are you *sure* about all of this?”

“They are evil and their evil occurs in the dark shadows,” replied Jim, emphatically. “Behind closed doors. Ruling the world from a

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room. Imagine that. Let's get a drink."

Jim took me to the Men's Bar upstairs. We drank beers and watched sport on the TV above the bar. Framed front pages of big news stories of days gone by lined the walls. "War in the Persian Gulf!" "Thatcher Resigns!" Jim said that both acts were orchestrated by Bilderberg. "Margaret Thatcher is one of the good guys," said Jim. "Bilderberg ordered her to dismantle British sovereignty, but she said no way, so they had her sacked."

Big Jim said he once found himself at a drinks party with Thatcher and he took the opportunity to sidle up to her. "How does it feel to have been denounced by those Bilderberg boys, ma'am?" he growled. She whispered back that she considered it a "great tribute to be denounced by Bilderberg".

I considered the significance of the endeavour we were about to undertake. For the other people I had met, Bilderberg was an inviolable almighty. Big Jim was the first man to have the tenacity to discover the address, and to plan on going in, and damn the consequences. This might change everything. Jim wouldn't tell me how he discovered the room's whereabouts, but a few moments later, as we sat at the bar, a tall man with a moustache bounded over and cheerfully introduced himself to me as Jim's mole from inside Bilderberg.

"I'm an accountant," he explained. "Some very big clients use our firm. One guy happened to mention to me that he was on his way to somewhere near Lisbon in June for a very private meeting."

Jim appeared a little annoyed by his mole's instantaneous candour,

but then he shrugged and joined in with the story. “We know,” said Jim, “that the Bilderberg Group always meet in May or June.”

“So Jim,” said the mole, “started telephoning every five-star hotel near Lisbon.”

“They always meet at a five-star hotel with golfing facilities,” explained Jim.

“Always golfing facilities?” I asked.

Jim picked up on my subtext at once. “Believe me,” he said, “they’re not there to play golf. They’re too busy starting wars.”

“They may play golf when they’re *there*,” clarified the mole, “but they’re not *there* to play golf.”

“Okay,” I said.

“So,” said Jim, “I finally got around to calling a hotel up in the hills, and I said to the receptionist, ‘I’ve been invited to the Bilderberg conference in June, but I’m afraid I’ve been very silly and lost my invitation. Could you confirm that this is the correct venue?’ And she said, ‘Why, of course, sir. Oh yes, sir. This is exactly where you’re supposed to be, and we’re very much looking forward to serving you.’”

Jim and his mole laughed. A nearby barfly heard their laughter and came over to join us. Jim and his mole stopped laughing. They turned their backs on the new guy and myself. There was a moment’s awkwardness.

“So what’s all this about?” asked the new guy.

“Well,” I whispered, “that big old man in the trilby has tracked down the tiny group of people who rule the world in secret. Anyway,

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the two of us are going to Portugal next week to confront them.”

“Oh, right,” he said, unimpressed. “What do they do, these secret rulers of the world?”

I shrugged. “Everything, I guess,” I said. “They’re called the Bilderberg Group.”

“Can’t say I’ve heard of them,” he said.

“Jim’s dedicated his life to exposing them,” I said.

“It’s not so surprising that I’ve never heard of them,” said the new guy. He scanned the room. Every bar stool was occupied. Retired newsmen in suits stared into their beer glasses. The Men’s Bar seemed to be where the Washington press corps went when there were no more deadlines, no stories left to file. “It’s not so surprising,” he said. “Pretty much everyone here has dedicated his life to something or other that nobody’s ever heard of.”

The next morning, Jim took me to the office of the *Spotlight*, just around the corner from Capitol Hill. It is pristine from the outside, gleaming white, on a lovely tree-lined street. But it is dark and dusty inside, and there are boxes everywhere. He introduced me to Andy, his editor. We sat in the courtyard and drank iced tea. “Jon,” said Jim to Andy, “thinks those Bilderberg boys are just playing pinochle in there.”

“Well, first off,” said Andy, impatiently, “you get a lot of people, including newspaper editors, who say there is no Bilderberg Group, that it doesn’t even *exist*.”

“They’ve kept the vow of silence like they’re going to nun school,” said Jim.

“This is after you’ve had Prince Charles attend,” said Andy. “This is after you’ve had Bill Clinton attend. And still people say it doesn’t exist. Not that it’s just a social meeting, but that it doesn’t exist.”

“If they’re just going to play golf and swap lies and chase girls,” said Jim, “why the armed guards? Know what I’m saying?”

“They exist all right,” said Andy.

“Prince Charles and Bill Clinton,” explained Jim, “are small-fry. The rulers of the world are the ones who *do* the inviting. The steering committee. Clinton was just a small-fry from somewhere called Arkansas when he got his invitation back in ‘91. Yeah, they had big plans for that boy.”

“You be careful,” said Andy. “You’re dealing with dangerous forces.”

“MOTHER,” SAID BIG JIM TUCKER, “your dutiful son is playing hunt the macaroon at the Paris Hotel, Portugal, Monday morning, 10.30am, thank you.”

It was a week later, and our first working day in Portugal. Our plan was to scout the target five-star golfing resort situated six miles north, develop sources and look for the short wall and the big drainpipe in preparation for the midnight penetration later in the week. Jim lay back on his bed. Our hotel was built on a busy roundabout. The ocean glistened in the distance, beyond a railway track and a couple of main roads. Even up here on the sixth floor

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you could hear the never-ending roar of the traffic.

“Unlike the Bilderberg luminaries,” said Jim, ruefully, scanning the dirty walls of this bad hotel, “some of us are working on a tight budget.” Jim lit a Camel. He is a large, elderly man, and I am not athletic. Our agility levels were impeded by our smoking habits, and we wheezed in the Portuguese heat. I was unsure as to how successful the two of us would be in climbing up drainpipes. I pictured slapstick scenarios that would be hilarious to onlookers but not to us.

Jim was acting breezily, but I could sense his nervousness. “I’m a quarterback,” he said, “gearing up for the Superbowl.”

By Jim’s reckoning, the Bilderberg Group was not scheduled to arrive in Portugal until Wednesday night. He said he had heard reports that their private security guards had already set up camp at the Caesar Park and were planning to operate a shoot-to-kill policy for all penetrators. This somewhat diminished the potential for slapstick hilarity. I was not feeling cocksure.

We had that morning fruitlessly scanned the news-stands for references to the meeting. “Surprise, surprise,” growled Jim. “Media black-out.”

There was, however, one notable exception. The *Weekly News*, a tiny English-language parish newspaper, circulation 8,000, for Algarve tourist workers and regular English visitors such as Sir Cliff Richard, had gone big on the story. Very big: *“As speculation on the internet runs rife, the News checks it out and it does seem that . . . secret world government group is meeting here!”*

The *Weekly News* made me feel less vulnerable down here on the ground. Jim said he wanted to touch base with its editorial team later in the week. “If the *Weekly News* boys can help us expose those Bilderberg jackasses,” he said, “I’m all for pooling information.”

I had rented a car from Budget. We drove into the mountains, away from the boisterous, good-time package-tour Estoril, towards the more serene and ancient pastures of Sintra, seven miles up the road. On the way, we discussed cover stories in case we incurred suspicion. We elected to be holidaymakers, getting a drink at the poolside bar because we’d heard so many good things about the resort, which was undoubtedly the finest around.

The Caesar Park is situated three miles from the main Estoril-Sintra road – two and a half miles down a narrow country lane, through the wilderness of a national park, followed by another half-mile private driveway. It became evident, as we approached the big peach gates that led into the resort, that the midnight penetration would be an even more formidable task than we had anticipated. The hotel is surrounded on all sides by dense undergrowth and sheer mountains.

Jim silently pondered these obstacles from the passenger seat. He photographed the mountains. We drove through the gates (the gatekeeper let us in with a wave) and down the half-mile-long driveway. And then the hotel appeared – a peach-coloured resort of purpose-built luxury.

“The civilians haven’t been shifted out yet,” muttered Jim, as we left the car and wandered towards the colossal marble reception

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area. Jim whipped out his camera and photographed the tourists. These photographs would later appear in the *Spotlight* as “unaware civilians”.

We were not inconspicuous, Jim and I, strolling around the Caesar Park in our open-necked shirts. We were, in fact, an unlikely holidaymaking duo. At a very big push, Jim could resemble a benevolent, wealthy, southern sugar daddy and I his gawky, early-30s toy-boy. But I doubted the persuasiveness of the scenario. “I don’t think,” I murmured, as we wandered out to the swimming pool, “that the holidaymaking cover is a convincing one. I think we should think of something else.”

“We’re salesmen,” said Jim. “We’re just salesmen getting lunch.”

“What do we sell?” I asked.

“We don’t like to talk business when we’re having lunch,” said Jim.

We sat on stools at the poolside bar. Unaware young women sunbathed in bikinis.

“Ma’am,” said Jim to a young passing waitress, bowing slightly, his newshound trilby now replaced by a tourist’s straw sunhat, “I’m a little confused. I tried to book a room here for Thursday, and they told me that the whole hotel had been closed down for some big meeting. Must be a pretty damned big important meeting if you ask me . . .”

The waitress shrugged. “I don’t know,” she said. She smiled slightly and left us.

Jim got out his notepad. He wrote notes and then he read them out to me:

Dateline Portugal

Tension filled the air inside the posh Caesar Park resort on Monday. At the poolside bar, the pretty barmaid's face filled with tension when asked to speculate on the big important meeting taking place from Thursday. She shrugged her shoulders and feigned ignorance, but the tension on her face spoke volumes.

Jim put down his notepad. "Is that accurate?" he said.

"I don't know," I said. "We may be imbuing her with our own feelings of tension."

"Still," said Jim, finishing his iced tea, "now we know what the drinks of the rich taste like."

We paid and patrolled the resort some more. I was disappointed with the Caesar Park, its Eurotrashy aircraft-hangar spaces, its cold approximation of luxury. The lobby shops have names such as "Fashionable". I would have assumed that Bilderberg would meet somewhere classier. Jim explained that I still hadn't quite got it. They are not there for classy holidaying. They are there to start wars. Also, Jim added, there is a finite number of international hotels that can transform themselves into walled fortresses, that have their own helicopter pads and nearby military air bases.

Jim and I split up. I looked at the prints on the wall outside the upstairs bar. A half-hour passed. I wandered aimlessly through the lobbies and the bars. There were other aimless wanderers, too: a woman in a red dress and a man in his 30s wearing a tweed jacket.

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It struck me that we all seemed to be wandering aimlessly in some kind of unison, but it didn't cross my mind – right up until the moment that the man in the tweed jacket marched across the room and began questioning me in an angry whisper – that I was being tailed.

“We've watched you for an hour. I'm the hotel manager. You take pictures. You ask questions about some big important meeting. Who are you?”

“I . . .” I paused. Then I clumsily announced, “I'm from England.” It was the only thing I could think of. This works, of course, in other circumstances abroad. But it didn't work here.

“What do you *want*?”

I stared blankly at him.

“What is your *business* here?”

I continued to stare blankly. And then another man appeared. This new man was older, with a tan, and he spoke with a smooth European accent. “It's okay!” he laughed. “Everything's fine! There's no problem!” He gave the hotel manager's shoulder a little squeeze. “I am your servant,” he said to me. “If there's anything you'd like, please be my guest. Think of this hotel as your home. If I can be of any service to you, any service whatsoever, don't hesitate to ask.”

I glanced over with anxiety at the hotel manager, who was now standing a little way off; overruled, slighted and silent. “I mean,” he smiled, “what could you possibly be doing here that could cause any harm to anybody?”

“Are you . . .” I paused. There was something indistinctly alarming

about the things he was saying to me. I could not imagine that he really did want me to think of this hotel as my home. So why did he say that? I presume, in retrospect, that the message he was sending to me was: “We have noticed you, you are not welcome, but we are allowing you to leave without incident, just so long as you don’t come back.” At the time, however, the message I picked up was: “I am extremely sinister and powerful. This is so evident that I can afford to feign generous subservience.”

“Are you with the Caesar Park?” I asked the charming man.

“Oh, no,” he laughed. “No, I am not with the hotel. So, as I say, think of this hotel as your home. Really, everything’s fine and there’s no problem. What problems could there be?”

What problems could there be? I wanted the young hotel manager to intervene. I suddenly felt that he could be my ally in this situation. But he remained impassive.

“Don’t feel as if you have to go,” said the charming man, his arms outstretched. “Stay as long as you like. Enjoy the facilities. Have a swim!”

“So if you’re not with the hotel,” I said, “who are you with?”

“I am with . . .” he paused “. . . another organisation.”

“Which is called . . .?”

He laughed and looked at the ground. “Enjoy your afternoon,” he said.

I waited for Jim down in the lobby, right by the revolving doors that led outside to the car park. The hotel manager stood nearby, watching me with a constant, even gaze. After five minutes, Jim

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ambled towards us. When he noticed the hotel manager, he slowed his gait to the laziest of strolls – a little gesture of southern gentlemanly defiance.

There was something new in the car park now, a dozen police motorcycles lined up by the revolving doors. “The big shut-down is beginning,” whispered Jim. He pulled out his camera and photographed the police. “We’re lucky,” he said. “An hour later, we wouldn’t have gotten near the place.”

“What did that man say to you?” I asked.

“Oh,” said Jim, “he would just love to be of service and provide any help I needed, blah blah blah.”

“How can you say blah blah blah?” I said. “That wasn’t blah blah blah. That was actually fucking sinister.”

“Those Bilderberg boys can be pretty sinister,” said Jim. We climbed into our car. I started the engine.

“So I told him that I didn’t need any help wandering around the hotel, thank you all the same,” said Jim. “Then he asked where we were staying . . .”

“Did he?”

“And I said, ‘Oh, just some flea-pit down the road.’”

THAT EVENING, when I went for dinner, I put a sliver of paper in the crack between my hotel room door and the frame, as I had seen James Coburn do in *Our Man Flint*. Actually, Coburn put a single

hair in his door. But my door crack was too large for single hairs, and they kept falling on to the floor and disappearing into the carpet. I was standing there in the corridor tugging my hair out. So I switched to a sliver of paper. When I returned from dinner, the sliver was still there. There was always a possibility, of course, that they'd taken a look around and put the sliver back where they'd found it. I slept fitfully that night, but nothing happened.

“Mother.” It was Tuesday morning. Jim was leaving his regular answerphone message with his friend back in Washington DC to confirm he had not been murdered during the previous 24 hours. “Your dutiful son is playing kick the can in Portugal. Thank you very much.” This was supposed to be an easy day. Jim simply wanted to verify that the complete shut-down of the Caesar Park had been accomplished. We would drive up there and be turned away at the gate. Jim would ask why, for the record, and document the response in his notepad. Then we would turn around and drive back to our hotel for a leisurely afternoon by the pool and in the bar.

But this was not to be. We arrived at the Caesar Park to discover no police, no cordon, no shut-down. The gatekeeper lifted the barrier and waved us on with a cheerful smile. For the first time, Jim appeared sidestepped. “That’s surprising,” he admitted. “That’s surprising already.”

“Do we drive in?”

“I’m confounded,” murmured Jim. “We saw the shut-down begin yesterday. We saw it with our own eyes. And now no shut-down. This is not what’s supposed to happen.”

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The gatekeeper approached the car. “Just drive in,” said Jim urgently. Impulsively, I took my foot off the brake and we cruised up the drive. This was a disconcerting new twist. We were venturing into a place where it had been made perfectly clear that we were not welcome, and we didn’t even want to be there. We were accidental agents provocateurs, simply because we had been waved on at the gate.

“The hotel is deserted,” I said, as we pulled into the car park. “We’re the only people here.”

“Let’s get lunch,” said Jim. “Just two guys getting lunch.”

We wandered through the now-deserted marble lobby. There were no more civilians. We walked out into the silent grounds and sat at the poolside bar, the only two customers in a hotel designed for thousands. A young waitress appeared.

“Ma’am,” said Jim, raising his trilby.

“Sir?” she said.

“What time do you get off work?”

The question seemed to startle her.

“Nine o’clock,” she said, cautiously.

“And what bars do you like drinking in?” said Jim.

“There are some nice bars in the village near the cathedral.”

“Any bars in particular?” Jim laughed. “Don’t worry. I’m buying.”

“Just lots of nice bars in the village,” she said, evenly.

“That’s good information,” said Jim. “Thank you, ma’am,” he called after her.

He turned to me. “Now we know where the waiting staff drink.

Could be good contacts.”

“So,” I said, “shall we try the bars near the cathedral?”

“Sure,” he said.

“Will we go, then?”

“Okay,” said Jim.

We walked back to the car and began driving the half-mile towards the exit. I glanced into my rear-view mirror. A dark green Lancia had pulled out behind us.

“Jim,” I said.

“Mmm?”

“I think we’re being followed.”

Jim turned around. “No shit,” he grinned. “Don’t worry. Once we’re on the public highway, they’d be pretty foolish to try anything.”

“Okay,” I said.

“They’re not going to want to have a fat old dead reporter on the side of the road,” said Jim. “That’s too big a news story.”

“Okay,” I said.

“But here they could say, ‘Oh, we thought they were armed. They looked threatening. We told them to stop but they didn’t stop.’ Bango!”

“I get the picture,” I said.

A flock of geese wandered idly up the drive in front of me. I honked my horn. We finally reached the peach gates.

“You watch,” said Jim. “He’ll turn around now. He’s done his job. Poor fool.”

But the Lancia didn’t turn around. It began to follow us down the

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deserted lane. “Uh oh,” said Jim.

“BRITISH EMBASSY.”

“Okay,” I said, “I’m a journalist from London. I’m calling you on the road from Sintra to Estoril . . .”

“Hold on.”

“Press office.”

“I’m a journalist from London,” I said. “I’m calling you on the road from Sintra to Estoril. I’m being tailed, right now, by a dark green Lancia belonging to the Bilderberg Group.”

There was a sharp intake of breath. “Go on,” she said.

“I’m sorry,” I said, “but I just heard you take a sharp breath.”

“Bilderberg?” she said.

“Yes,” I said. “They watched us scouting around the Caesar Park Hotel and they’ve been following us ever since. We have now been followed for three hours. I wasn’t sure at first, so I stopped my car on the side of a deserted lane and *he stopped his car right in front of us*. Can you imagine just how chilling that moment was? This is especially disconcerting because I’m from England and I’m not used to being spied on.”

“Do you have Bilderberg’s permission to be in Portugal?” she said. “Do they know you are here?”

“No,” I said.

“Bilderberg are very secretive,” she said. “They don’t want people

looking into their business. What are you doing here?"

"I am essentially a humorous journalist," I explained. "I am a humorous journalist out of my depth. Do you think it might help if we tell them that?"

From the corner of my eye, I saw Jim wind down his window. He leant his head out and blew an antagonising lady-like kiss at the Lancia.

"Hold on a second," I said. "Jim!" I said, sternly. "Please stop that." I lowered my voice. "I'm here with an American," I said, "called Big Jim Tucker. He's an agent provocateur. That might be the problem. Perhaps you can phone Bilderberg and explain that I may be in the car with Jim Tucker, but I'm not actually with him."

"Listen" she said, urgently, "Bilderberg is much bigger than we are. We're very small. We're just a little embassy. Do you understand? They're way out of our league. All I can say is go back to your hotel and sit tight."

"I'm actually just pulling into our hotel car park right now. The Paris Hotel in Estoril. He's right behind me. He's pulling up on the street right next to the hotel. He's getting out of his car . . ."

"Sit tight," she said. "I'll make some phone calls. Whatever happens, don't incite them in any way. Don't fan the flames."

Before the chase had begun, Jim was lumbering and supine. Now he jumped out of the car with the agility of a young deer. The man from the Lancia climbed out of his car and took up a position behind a tree. He was young, in his 30s, with short black hair. He wore sunglasses and a dark green suit.

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“I can see you!” sang Jim. “You’re behind the tree. Peek-a-boo! Smile pretty for my idiot-proof camera.”

“Jim,” I said, “will you *stop* that.”

But everything was beyond my control. It was as if the invigoration of the chase had transformed Jim into a sprightly teenager.

A one-sided game of peek-a-boo ensued, during which the chaser maintained a steely expression behind his sunglasses, Jim performed a little ballet dance, and I sidled towards the swimming-pool area, attempting to distance myself from the unfolding crisis. Jim wandered over to me.

“Am I being paranoid,” he said, “or did Bilderberg set a trap for us? No, listen. Yesterday, we saw the shut-down begin. We saw it with our own eyes. Today, surprise surprise, no shut-down. They let us in with a smile . . .” Jim trailed off.

Jim said he needed a lie down. He may have twisted something when he leapt out of the car. He retired to his bedroom. I sat by the pool. The man behind the tree shrugged and paced around and adjusted his tie and busied himself there behind the tree. Holidaymakers splashed all around us. From time to time I made eye contact with the chaser, which meant, “Can I come over and tell you who we are and what is going on?” But he waved me away with a flick of his hand.

Sandra from the British Embassy called me back to say that she had spoken to the Bilderberg office at the Caesar Park and they said that nobody was following us and how could they call off someone

who didn't exist?

"He is," I said, in a staccato whisper, "behind the tree."

"The good news," said Sandra, "is if you know you're being followed, they're probably just trying to intimidate you. The dangerous ones would be those you don't know are following you."

But this was scant comfort. What if these men were the dangerous ones, and I just happened to be naturally good at spotting them? What if I was adept at this?

"But that isn't logical," I said. "Big Jim Tucker is obviously not intimidated. I don't think they'd waste their time trying to intimidate us when it is quite obviously failing."

"You sound a little intimidated, if you don't mind me saying," said Sandra.

Two hours passed. Jim and I reconvened at a hotel bar down the road. As I wandered through the lobby, two men in dark suits immediately grabbed brochures and began scrutinising them. I found Jim some yards away, staring into his beer glass. "There are two men by the door," I said, "reading brochures."

"I see them," said Jim.

"They're only pretending to read brochures."

"How do you know?" said Jim.

"You can tell by their demeanour," I said.

"Here's the plan," said Jim. "We leave the bar together. When we get within earshot of the chasers, I say, 'I'm gonna meet my Bilderberg contact at the Tiny Bar.' You say, 'Shhh.' Say it urgently, as if you don't want them to overhear. Feed them disinformation."

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“I’m not going to do that,” I said. Jim and I left the bar together.

“Jon,” said Jim loudly, “I’m gonna meet my secret Bilderberg contact at the Tiny Bar.”

I scowled, said nothing and marched ahead.

“Very good,” murmured Jim outside.

We split up. I walked down to the beach and found a seafood restaurant. I do not think I was followed there. When I returned some hours later to the bar of the Paris Hotel, Jim was drunker than any man I’ve ever seen.

He was surrounded by four Danish ladies and they were all singing *Yes, We Have No Bananas*.

“Jim,” I said, urgently, “are you still being followed?” I coughed. “Sorry, ladies,” I said.

“Excuse me, ladies,” said Jim, bowing graciously. He turned to me.

“So what happened?” I said.

“I went to the Tiny Bar,” he said. “They call it the Tiny Bar because it is a tiny bar.”

“And did they follow you there?”

“... *We have string beans and onions/Cabbages and scallions* ...”

“I’m a superstitious old boy,” said Jim.

He paused. “Abe Lincoln was a good man. Shame he was an abolitionist. Well, I guess nobody’s perfect. I’ve lost my train of thought.”

“You went to the Tiny Bar,” I prompted.

“So, I’m a superstitious boy and I never sit with my back to the door. Don’t want to end up like old Abe Lincoln. But I didn’t want

them to know, see, that I knew they were there.”

“And were they there?”

“I don’t know,” said Jim. “I had my back to the door. Ha ha ha ha!”

Jim nearly fell off his chair laughing.

“Jim,” I said, sternly, “when you left, were you followed?”

“Who’d want to follow an old boy like me?” said Jim. “The amount of pills they make me take for my plumbing, anyone would think I was FAG positive.”

“Jim!” I said, startled. “That’s a terrible thing to say.”

“I’m a Neanderthal,” said Jim. “Grrrrr.”

Early the next morning, a Do Not Disturb sign hung on Jim’s door, and sounds of typing echoed down the corridor.

A frosty atmosphere had developed between Jim and myself this past day or so. The tension was driving us apart. I was ready to sell Jim out to save my own skin, and I felt that Jim, invigorated by the chase, was grabbing my hand and jumping blindly into dangerous waters. We had an appointment with Paul Luckman, the editor of the tiny English-language *Weekly News*, the Algarve parish newspaper that had stuck its neck out and gone big on the Bilderberg story. Paul’s was the only newspaper in Portugal – indeed, the only newspaper in the world, as far as I could tell – that was reporting the Bilderberg story.

Paul is an ex-pat from England, 15 years an Algarve resident. He is not a journalist by trade. He runs a small telephone company. The *Weekly News* is a hobby for him, his wife, Madeline, and their two friends from church, Fred and Brendan. Paul told me he was

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perplexed that their parish journal had stumbled on to a world exclusive on this explosive, baffling story. “I do not consider myself one of the world’s greatest thinkers,” he said over the phone, “but it doesn’t take much to work out that this is something genuine. And no other newspaper will *touch* it. Nobody. The conversation dies as soon as you say the word Bilderberg. I mentioned it to an editor on the *Daily Express* yesterday, and he immediately changed the subject. I said, ‘Did you hear what I said?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Do you know about Bilderberg?’ ‘I’ve, uh, *heard* of them.’ And that was it. The conversation died.”

“How did you hear about Bilderberg?” I asked him.

“From a little newspaper on the internet called the *Spotlight*,” he said. “Have you heard of them?”

“I’m actually here in Portugal with Big Jim Tucker,” I said.

“Oh!” he said. “He’s a hero. Bring him along.”

PAUL HAS A LITTLE OFFICE in a modern glass building in central Lisbon where he conducts his telephone business. He’s a committed born-again Christian. Church posters decorate the walls. “I find myself out of my depth,” he said, twisting an elastic band around his fingers. “If what they’re up to is perfectly innocent, why don’t they say what’s going on? But they don’t. Not even a little bit. Not even a hint. Nothing.” Paul paused. “Maybe my head’s gone,” he said, “but the Book of Revelation speaks of a one-world order, one financial

order, a one-world religion. There'll be a sense of disorder, of children not respecting their parents, and then a very powerful group will form. So it does all fit together."

"I know they're bad guys," said Jim, "and I hate them, but I don't believe they're satanist."

"I believe that Paul's not saying they're satanist," I said. "He's saying they're actually Satan."

The next morning, Paul sent Fred and Brendan, his fellow *Weekly News* editors, to meet Jim and me outside the gates of the Caesar Park. This was the day Jim said the limousines and the helicopters would arrive. If any of us still had doubts, Jim said, if any of us still didn't believe, today was the day we would realise that the world was nothing like we had been told it was, that it turned on a sinister axis. The four of us waited out in the heat. A Gypsy caravan trotted past, then a few hikers. An hour trundled slowly by, and we filled in the time with small talk. "So, Paul thinks Bilderberg represents the fulfilment of the Book of Revelation," I said to Fred. He chuckled. "Well, *that's* where Paul and I part company." We both laughed.

"You see," said Fred, "I believe that all the prophecies have already been fulfilled." There was a small silence.

"Oh," I said.

Another hour passed. We ran out of mineral water. We kicked the gravel.

"They'll be here," said Jim, but now even he seemed unsure. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with a silk handkerchief. Our shirts were soaked. We stopped talking to each other and just stood

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there. Portugal is not an eventful country. There is tourism and there is football and there are golfing tournaments. It was, then, all the more extraordinary that, at around four o'clock, many of the world's most powerful people really did begin to roll past us in taxis and anonymous town cars. There was David Rockefeller, net worth \$2.5 billion, chairman of the Chase Manhattan bank, huddled into the back of a local cab.

"Good afternoon, Mr Rockefeller," murmured Jim. The gatekeeper bowed and lifted the gate. Rockefeller waved, and the taxi disappeared up the drive.

Then came Umberto Agnelli of Fiat, Italy's de facto royal family, net worth \$3.3bn, barely noticeable in the back seat of some old sedan. "Big Bilderberg family," said Jim. He was trying to remain matter-of-fact, but pretty soon he was grinning broadly.

"Jim!" I said.

"Damn right, soldier," he beamed. "Pretty overwhelming, huh?"

There was Vernon Jordan, Bill Clinton's close friend, his unelected unofficial adviser and golfing partner - Vernon Jordan, who plucked the president from Arkansas obscurity and nurtured him to the White House, and who is widely credited with pulling strings to get James Wolfensohn his job as president of the World Bank.

There was James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. "Incredible," murmured Fred. "Unbelievable."

And there was Henry Kissinger, possibly the most powerful individual the postwar world has known: Dr Kissinger, who sanctioned the secret bombing of Cambodia and later won the

Nobel Peace Prize, who revealed to the press his heart attack with the words, “Well, at least that proves I have a heart” – and here he was trundling up the drive of the Caesar Park in the back of an old Mercedes.

“I’ll tell you one thing, I bet you didn’t know about Henry Kissinger,” said Jim. “His accent is as American as mine. Creep up on him at a bar, as I once did, and whisper that you know exactly what he’s up to, and he’ll splutter and shout at you in an accent as American as Mom’s apple pie.”

I attempted, for a moment, to judge rationally whether there was any truth to this startling claim – whether Kissinger really had throughout his life adopted a fake European accent to camouflage his American one. But I couldn’t. My rationality had suffered a tremendous blow, and I now no longer knew what was possible and what was not.

The taxis kept coming. There were CEOs of pharmaceutical giants and tobacco companies and car manufacturers, the heads of banks from Europe and North America. Some, like Richard Holbrooke, America’s United Nations representative, gave us friendly smiles, which Jim returned with a glare of undisguised loathing.

“Who *are* these people?” said Fred. “Why does nobody want to *know*?”

“They’re the masters of the universe,” said Jim. “The rulers of the world. You know their names now.”

There was Conrad Black, the world’s third biggest media magnate, the owner of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Jerusalem Post*

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and the *Chicago Sun-Times* and 40 Canadian dailies and 447 other newspapers around the world. Conrad Black, who, when asked what epitaph he would like, replied, “Just my name and dates. The more exalted a person, the less is written on their tombstone. Charles de Gaulle just has his name and dates, Winston Churchill has the same, Otto von Bismarck has only his last name, and Napoleon Bonaparte has only the letter ‘N’ with no dates at all. This was a man sure of his place in history, and now I felt that perhaps I understood why.”

An old bus cruised up the drive. I paid it little attention, assuming it was full of hotel workers. Only Brendan scrutinised the occupants. I glanced over. Brendan seemed frozen to the spot.

“Brendan?” I said.

“Brendan!” said Fred, sharply. “What is it?”

“I looked through the window,” he explained, finally, “and I focused on one person, and he was staring back at me. I was standing with my camera in hand, and this person . . . just stared.”

“What kind of stare was it?” I asked.

“It was a strange stare,” he said. “It was a different type of stare. Yes. He looked *down* at me. As if he was staring right through me.” There was a pause. “I couldn’t even lift my camera.”

“And who was it?” I asked.

Then Brendan said, softly, “It was Peter Mandelson.”

Peter Mandelson was the architect of Tony Blair’s New Labour Party. He was the image-maker, a wily spinner and a fixer, masterminding Tony Blair’s ascent to power, the quintessential

man behind the man in front. But times had turned bad for Peter Mandelson. He had, six months earlier, been forced to resign from government amid allegations of financial sleaze. His Machiavellian back-room dealing had afforded him, among British journalists and politicians, the nickname, “The Prince of Darkness.”

There was a long silence. “Peter Mandelson?” I said.

“I’ve never seen a stare quite like it,” said Brendan.

“Who’s Peter Mandelson?” said Jim.

There was nothing left for us to do, so we got lunch. We lavished praise upon Big Jim, who grinned with satisfaction. He had, indeed, uncovered something extraordinary. Fred half-joked that Jim should win a Pulitzer, except Pulitzer was probably in Bilderberg’s hands. We went back to our hotels to freshen up, and after a while Jim called to ask, if I had a moment, would I mind meeting him in his room?

There seemed to be something on Jim’s mind.

“We can only wonder what evil things they’re doing in there right now,” he said, lighting a cigarette.

“They’ve only just arrived,” I said, lighting one. too. “They’re probably showering.” There was a pause. “So what is it, Jim?” I said.

And then Jim dropped his bombshell – he was calling off the midnight penetration. “When I was at the Tiny Bar last night,” he explained, “I met this taxi driver. Local guy. Knew the terrain. I said I’d give him a hundred dollars to escort me through the undergrowth and up the drainpipes. ‘One hundred crisp American dollars,’ I said to him. ‘Buy the wife that red dress she’s always wanted.’ ”

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Jim paused to cough. He had a coughing fit. He lit a cigarette. I lit one, too.

“Anyway,” resumed Jim after he had drunk a glass of water, “the taxi driver called just now. He said his wife wasn’t going to let him go. Too dangerous, she said. She didn’t want him killed. Poor fool.”

Jim looked out of the window. “I’m sorry,” he said.

Jim gazed out at the traffic and the ocean beyond. He pulled on his cigarette. As I watched him, I considered the cancellation of the midnight penetration. Jim was never without a cigarette. He didn’t like to admit it, but his lungs were shot. His health was no longer a match for drainpipes and guard dogs and armed security. Bill Clinton’s best friend Vernon Jordan was there, 13 years a director of America’s second-largest cigarette manufacturer, RJR Nabisco. I was sure that it was Jim’s rattling, cigarette-induced emphysema that had put paid to his midnight penetration. I went back to my own room and lay on my bed. I drifted off for a while, and then I was woken by the telephone. It was Fred from the *Weekly News*. He said he had something of great importance to tell me. Could I meet him at once at his hotel?

“Just come as fast as you can,” said Fred. “I’ll meet you by the pool. And don’t bring your friend Jim Tucker.”

AT THE POOLSIDE of the Hotel California, Fred held a document. The document was screwed up in his hand and damp with sweat. Fred

said that he had discovered something terrible in the hours that had passed since our lunch.

“Okay,” said Fred, “I returned to my hotel and I had a swim and then I went to my room and began surfing on the internet. And after a while I found this . . .”

Fred passed me the document. I uncreased it and laid it on the table.

Bilderberg material is fascist hoax!

Dear friends,

I am writing to you urgently to warn you about material being circulated about a ‘Bilderberg Conference’ due to take place in June in Portugal. The Washington-based journal Spotlight is quoted as a source of information on the Bilderberg Conference. Spotlight is published by the fascist Liberty Lobby. The purpose of the material appears to be to make people imagine there is a sinister Jewish conspiracy that is trying to dominate the world. You may find much information on Spotlight by contacting any major anti-fascist organization.

**Against fascism and against capitalism, Lisa Taylor
(International Solidarity with Workers in Russia).**

“What do you think about that?” said Fred.

There was a long silence.

“Well,” I said. “I should tell you that the other night Jim told me

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it was a shame that Abraham Lincoln was an abolitionist.”

“Did he?” said Fred, clearly startled.

“But I can’t really think of anything else Jim said that might be construed as . . . oh, he did say that with the amount of pills they make him take for his plumbing, anyone would think he was . . .”

“We’re getting all our information from neo-Nazis?” interrupted Fred. “We’re publishing a newspaper all over Portugal and our sources are neo-Nazis?”

“You might be,” I said. “But that doesn’t mean . . .” I paused.

Fred looked out at the pool. Children were splashing around. It was a lovely day. He put his head in his hands.

“What,” he said, “have we got ourselves into?”

IN MY ATTEMPTS to find out whether the world really was being secretly ruled from inside the Caesar Park golfing resort that June weekend, I later contacted dozens of Bilderberg members. And, of course, nobody returned my calls. Nobody even wrote back to decline my request and thank me for my letter, and these are people whose people always write back and decline requests – Peter Mandelson’s office, for instance – which is why I began to envisage these silences as startled ones.

I did manage to speak to David Rockefeller’s press secretary, who told me that Mr Rockefeller was thoroughly fed up with being called a 12ft lizard, a secret ruler of the world, a keeper of black

helicopters that spy on anti-Bilderberg dissenters, and so on.

The Rockefeller office seemed to have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the conspiracy theories. They troubled Mr Rockefeller (his press man said). They made him wonder why some people are so scared and suspicious of him, in particular, and global think-tanks such as Bilderberg in general. Mr Rockefeller's conclusion was that this was a battle between rational and irrational thought. Rational people favoured globalisation. Irrational people preferred nationalism. I asked him why he thought no Bilderberg member had returned my calls or answered my letters. "Well," he shrugged, "I suppose it's because they might want to be invited back."

I persevered. I wanted the information. I felt I deserved to have the information, and I simply couldn't believe that there was certain information that I couldn't get my hands on. It was driving me crazy. I learnt that being followed around by a man in dark glasses was tame in comparison with the indignities suffered by some of the few prying journalists who had travelled this road before me. In June 1998, a Scottish reporter tracked Bilderberg to the Turnberry Hotel in Ayrshire, and when he started asking questions he was promptly handcuffed by Strathclyde police and thrown into jail.

Bilderberg members continued to ignore my enquiries through the end of 1999 and into 2000. I continued dutifully to write to Bilderbergers, although I held out no hope of a breakthrough. And then, one Tuesday morning, the phone rang. It was the instantly recognisable voice of a Bilderberg founder member, for 30 years one

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of their inner circle, their steering committee, a Bilderberg agenda setter, a head-hunter – a secret ruler of the world himself, should you choose to believe the assorted militants I had spent the past five years with.

It was Denis Healey.

Denis Healey was one of Britain's most powerful political figures during the 1970s. He was the deputy leader of the Labour Party and Chancellor of the Exchequer during the dark years of spiralling taxation and inflation. Despite his fearsome budgets – he once promised to “squeeze the rich until the pips squeak” – he was remembered as a jovial and scrupulous moderate, with a tremendous laugh and vast eyebrows, two great hedgehogs nesting on his forehead. It was a surprise to find Lord Healey at Bilderberg's heart.

“How can I help you?” he said.

“Well,” I said, “would you tell me what happens inside Bilderberg meetings?”

“Okay,” he said, cheerfully.

There was a silence.

“Why?” I said. “Nobody else will.”

“Because you asked me,” he said. Then he added, “I'm an old fart. Come on over.”

Once Lord Healey had agreed to talk to me – and I had circulated this information far and wide – other Bilderberg members became amenable, too (albeit on the condition of anonymity). These interviews enabled me to piece together the backstage mechanics of this most secret society.

So this is how it works. A tiny, shoe-string central office in Holland decides each year which country will host the next meeting. Each country has two steering committee members. (The British ones have included Lord Carrington, Denis Healey, Andrew Knight, the one-time editor of *The Economist* magazine, and Martin Taylor, the ex-CEO of Barclays Bank.)

They say that each country dreads their turn coming around, for they have to raise enough money to book an entire five-star hotel for four days (plus meals and transport and vast security – every packet of peas is opened and scrutinised, and so on). They call up Bilderberg-friendly global corporations, such as Xerox or Heinz or Fiat or Barclays or Nokia, which donate the hundreds of thousands of pounds needed. They do not accept unsolicited donations from non-Bilderberg corporations.

Nobody can buy their way into a Bilderberg meeting, although many corporations have tried. Then they decide who to invite – who seems to be a “Bilderberg person”. The notion of a Bilderberg person hasn’t changed since the earliest days, back in 1954, when the group was created by Denis Healey, Joseph Retinger, David Rockefeller and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands (a former SS officer while he was a student – ironic that a former Nazi, albeit a low-ranking and half-hearted one, would help give birth to an organisation that so many would consider to be evidence of a Jewish conspiracy).

“First off,” said a steering committee member to me, “the invited guests must sing for their supper. They can’t just sit there like church mice. They are there to speak. I remember when I invited

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Margaret Thatcher back in '75. She wasn't worldly. Well, she sat there for the first two days and didn't say a thing. People started grumbling. A senator came up to me on the Friday night, Senator Mathias of Maryland. He said, 'This lady you invited, she hasn't said a word. You really ought to say something to her.' So I had a quiet word with her at dinner. She was embarrassed. Well, she obviously thought about it overnight, because the next day she suddenly stood up and launched into a three-minute Thatcher special. I can't remember the topic, but you can imagine. The room was stunned. Here's something for your conspiracy theorists. As a result of that speech, David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger and the other Americans fell in love with her. They brought her over to America, took her around in limousines, and introduced her to everyone.

"I remember when Clinton came in '91," he added. "Vernon Jordan invited him along. He used it as a one-stop-shop. He went around glad-handing everyone. Nobody thought they were meeting the next president." (Of course, Jim Tucker would contend that they *all* knew they were meeting the next president – for they huddled together that weekend and decided *he* would be the next president.) At times, I become nostalgic for when I knew nothing. There are so few mysteries left, and here I am, I presume, relegating Bilderberg to the dingy world of the known. The invited guests are not allowed to bring their wives, girlfriends or – on rarer occasions – their husbands or boyfriends. Their security officers cannot attend the conference and must have dinner in a separate hall. The guests are expressly asked not to give interviews to journalists. Rooms,

refreshments, wine and cocktails before dinner are paid for by Bilderberg. Telephone, room service and laundry bills are paid for by the participants. There are two morning sessions and two afternoon sessions, except on the Saturday, when the sessions take place only in the evening so that the Bilderbergers can play golf. The seating plan is in alphabetical order. It is reversed each year. One year Umberto Agnelli, the chairman of Fiat, will sit at the front. The next year, Norbert Zimmermann, chairman of Berndorf, the Austrian cutlery and metalware manufacturer, will take his place. While furiously denying that they secretly ruled the world, my Bilderberg interviewees did admit to me that international affairs had, from time to time, been influenced by these sessions.

I asked for examples, and I was given one: “During the Falklands war, the British government’s request for international sanctions against Argentina fell on stony ground. But at a Bilderberg meeting in, I think, Denmark, David Owen stood up and gave the most fiery speech in favour of imposing them. Well, the speech changed a lot of minds. I’m sure that various foreign ministers went back to their respective countries and told their leaders what David Owen had said. And you know what? Sanctions were imposed.”

The man who told me this story added,

“I hope that gives you a flavour of what really does go on in Bilderberg meetings.”

This is how Denis Healey described a Bilderberg person to me: “To say we were striving for a one-world government is exaggerated, but not wholly unfair. Those of us in Bilderberg felt we couldn’t go

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on forever fighting one another for nothing and killing people and rendering millions homeless. So we felt that a single community throughout the world would be a good thing.”

He said, “Bilderberg is a way of bringing together politicians, industrialists, financiers and journalists. Politics should involve people who aren’t politicians. We make a point of getting along younger politicians who are obviously rising, to bring them together with financiers and industrialists who offer them wise words. It increases the chance of having a sensible global policy.”

“Does going help your career?” I asked.

“Oh *yes*,” he said. Then he added, “Your new understanding of the world will certainly help your career.”

“Which sounds like a conspiracy,” I said.

“Crap!” said Denis Healey. “Idiocy! Crap! I’ve never heard such crap! That *isn’t* a conspiracy! That is the *world*. It is the way things are done. And quite rightly so.”

He added, “But I will tell you this. If extremists and leaders of militant groups believe that Bilderberg is out to do them down, then they’re right. We *are*. We are against Islamic fundamentalism, for instance, because it’s against democracy.”

“Isn’t Bilderberg’s secrecy against democracy, too?” I asked.

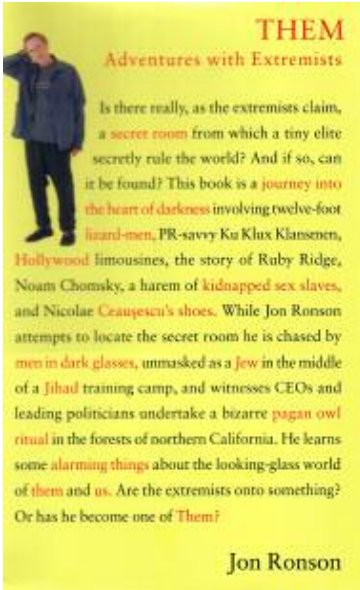
“We aren’t secret,” he snapped. “We’re private. Nobody is going to speak freely if they’re going to be quoted by ambitious and prurient journalists like you who think it’ll help your career to attack something that you have no knowledge of.”

I noticed a collection of photo albums on his mantelpiece. Denis

Healey has always been a keen amateur photographer, so I asked him if he'd ever taken any pictures inside Bilderberg. "Oh yes," he said. "Lots and lots of photographs." I eyed the albums. Actually seeing the pictures, seeing the set-up, the faces, the mood - that would be something.

"Could I have a look at them?" I asked him. Lord Healey looked down at his lap. He thought about my request. He looked up again.

"No," he said. "Fuck off."



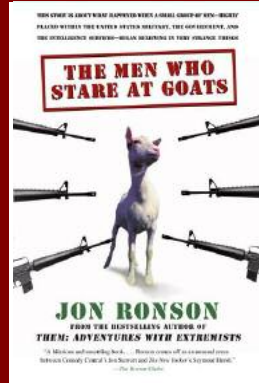
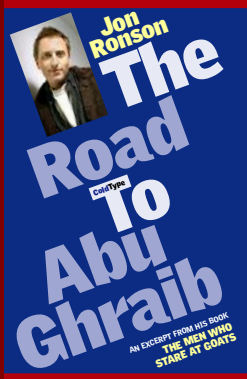
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