

## Murder and the Kremlin

This past March, in the bucolic English country town of Salisbury - just 75 miles from London - two brazen murders were attempted. A 67-year-old man, Sergei Skripal, a former counter-intelligence agent and defector from Russia, and his daughter Yulia, were found collapsed on a park bench, foaming at the mouth and twitching. The two were rushed to the hospital, and - after hovering near death for weeks - were treated for chemical poisoning and survived. Toxicology tests confirmed that a nerve agent, Novichok - developed in Soviet Russia - was used in the poisoning.

Three months later, a British couple, Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley found a perfume bottle in the grass. Dawn tried the perfume, and immediately collapsed and died from Novichok poisoning. Charlie survived.

Months of investigation revealed that two Russian military intelligence agents - Colonel Anatoly Chipega and Dr. Alexander Mishkin - traveling on fake passports from Moscow had flown to London to kill the Skripals. After poisoning them, they threw the vial of nerve poison - disguised in a perfume bottle - into the bushes, and immediately fled back to Moscow.

Caught red-handed, the Russian government of Vladimir Putin treated the attempted and actual murder as a big joke. Putin paraded his two assassins on public television where they claimed to be "innocent tourists" just traveling to see Salisbury Cathedral - although they never even went to the cathedral. Both had been awarded "Hero of the Russian Federation" medals by Putin, for their recent military work against the neighboring Ukraine.

The Skripal poisonings are not an isolated incident. Vladimir Putin has made assassination - including in foreign countries - a regular part of his policy. Whether it was the 2004 poisoning of Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine in Kiev; or the 2006 poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in London; or the 2012 poisoning of Alexander Perepilichny in London; or countless other murders, Putin behaves less like the President of a normal country, than a terrorist. He has even praised the actions of Ramon Mercader - the KGB assassin sent by Stalin to kill Leon Trotsky in Mexico.

The reaction of the UK and the west to the Skripal poisonings has been pathetic: 150 Russian diplomats have been temporarily expelled. That's all... A sovereign country does not allow foreign countries to murder its citizens on its soil with impunity. The lack of serious response will only embolden the likes of Putin. Unless the West reacts with vigor - sanctions that hurt; attacks on facilities on Russian soil; and abduction and arrest of the assassins from Russia; or perhaps even the assassination of the assassins or their directors - then we are inviting - and can expect - more Mercaders from Putin.

*The Publisher*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: We encourage our readers to express their view regardless of opinion, through the Letters to the Editor column. Letters published represent the viewpoint of our readers. *They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Leader* and, in fact, may be of opposite viewpoint. Letters should be typed and mailed or emailed to the editor's attention. Letters will be edited for length, clarity and accuracy. All letters should be signed and contain author's address and telephone number for verification. Although it is discouraged, we will withhold an author's name if the subject matter is sensitive or the writer may be subject to intimidation or harassment. Letters that contain accusations or important "facts" must demonstrate knowledge in the area described or show evidence for their writing. *The Leader* will not return letters and reserves the right to publish them at a later time or not at all, due to lack of space or editor's discretion.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Leader* has received several unsigned letters to the editor. We will respect an author's request for anonymity, but must have your name, address, and phone number. We want to hear from you and publish your opinions, so in the future, kindly include the above requested information.

### AREA AIRBNBS

*To the Editor,*

No, it's NOT all fun at area Airbnb's!

While I was heartened to see Lorian Cody's article about the preponderance of Airbnb's in Bayville, Oyster Bay and Huntington, I was struck by the milquetoast position taken. NO mention was made of drugs having been offered to village youths by short-term Airbnb party renters. NO mention was made of the overabundance of automobiles that destroy our private roads, NO mention was made regarding the crowds of people who descend on our quiet village for a weekend of all-out debauchery, exceeding occupancy limits and taxing already challenged cesspools. And most glaringly, NO mention was made of the gunfire that emanated from an Airbnb rental in Bayville on September 9th.

Yes, these North Shore waterfront towns and villages offer a wonderful alternative to a Hamptons rental, and have been doing so for decades via long-term and seasonal rentals, but short-term Airbnb's address an entirely different demand, from a much different clientele. I am sure Ms. Cody enjoyed her Adirondack Airbnb rental, as have local residents who have leveraged Airbnb for overflow housing for extended family members visiting for the holidays, weddings, graduations and other such events. The bottom line however is that Airbnb's represent an illegal business, being operated right under our noses within residential neighborhoods.

There's been much consternation regarding 14 Ludlam Ave in Bayville, whose 2nd floor apartments are now quietly occupied by long-term tenants who respect our Village. There has likewise been much vitriol over the ever-changing development plans or the Steve's Pier site in Bayville, which has the potential to offer a "stay-cation" option for locals seeking a spa weekend, or a legal alternative for short-term rentals. But where's the anger regarding these illegal hotel rooms currently operating within our Village?

Something has to be done about Airbnb's, and we are looking to our elected officials to properly prioritize and control

this rapidly expanding scourge.

Charles Corso  
Bayville

### HOME OWNERSHIP IN NASSAU COUNTY

*To the Editor,*

Once not long ago we owned our homes. If bought and paid for, they were ours. It is horrific, and sick that our allodial ownership has been stolen from us.

We are now all RENTING from the county landlords in the form of preposterous and outrageous property taxes. Failure to pay the extortion (see definition of extortion) results in the confiscation of "your" home, and old or young, you are thrown out on the street, and no change is ever returned for the value seized. If you truly resist, in defense of what you think belongs to you, police are prepared to remove you. Even an old infirm couple that can't pay anymore are thrown out of "their" home and onto the street.

The Star Exemption is a joke, reducing the tax burden by almost nothing.

Our "property" is 1 quarter acre with an 1100 sq.ft. house. For that we are punished with an annual tax bill of 20,000 dollars county and village combined. That is the price of a new car every year. We can barely or no longer maintain the house because we can no longer afford to. In most cases it is impossible for a young couple to buy a home, and even if they did they wouldn't own it, they would merely be paying a huge sum for the privilege of renting from the county.

I am 70 years old and remember when property taxes were virtually nil, and everything ran just fine anyway. The schools were better, the police were great and roads got paved. One might think that without today's taxation nothing would work. That is a lie, perpetrated by those in power, and believed by those who don't know any better and those who think they can afford it. The words "property" and "tax" are a contradiction in terms.

This is NOT much needed revenue. It is much WANTED revenue, and it is never enough.

Those candidates running on capping

the taxes are another joke. Capping an already criminal and outrageous tax rate is nothing but an affirmation of it. No one I have ever spoken to about these property taxes isn't outraged or is happy with it, meaning that the "government" of Nassau County is "governing" against the will of the people. I do not hesitate to say that we no longer have a government of Nassau County. What we have is in no uncertain terms an extortion racket run.

It would behoove everyone to vote NOT for those promising (a lie to get elected) to cap the tax rate, BUT TO VOTE for the candidate who is as disgusted as we are, and promises a substantial and large reduction. Reducing taxes even slightly is unacceptable.

Name Withheld on Request

**Editor's Note:** *The cover of last week's issue showing an aerial view of Mill Neck Manor's Fall Harvest celebration was taken with a drone. Special thanks to Jeff Sellars, Locust Valley resident and owner of Gold Coast Powerwashing for his photo.*

### A CORRECTION

On Page 8 in our 10/10/18 issues, the photo of Heather Johnson and Liz Brown was incorrectly labeled. *The Leader* apologizes for any confusion.

### To our Subscribers

Several of you have called regarding issues either not being delivered on time, or not delivered at all. If you know your subscription is up to date, please call your post office. *The Leader* is sent out each Wednesday morning from the Locust Valley Post Office. Their number is 516.671.1559.

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