

NO ORDINARY DAY by Matt Johnson (with John Murray)

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My latest book recommendation is 'No Ordinary Day' by Matt Johnson. It is a startling exposé of secret service deals and government duplicity behind the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher, and her friend and colleague's determination to get justice for her.

MY REVIEW

On April 17th, 1984, during an anti-Gaddafi demonstration outside the Libyan embassy in London, a burst of automatic gunfire suddenly rained down upon the crowd. Among the eleven wounded protesters was a female police officer, WPC Yvonne Fletcher, who later died in hospital.

Like many people of my generation, I can vividly remember the shooting. It was an incident that shocked the nation. Although the public had unfortunately become used to bombings by the IRA, nobody expected people to be blatantly mown down in a hail of bullets on the streets of London ... particularly in broad daylight. However, although there was an immense feeling of sadness for the tragic death of one so young, none of us had any knowledge of the fact that it could have been avoided.

At the time, Thatcher's government was locked in a bitter battle with the National Union of Mineworkers. With no end in sight for the strike, and coal supplies rapidly dwindling, negotiations had begun with the Libyans to obtain their oil, therefore the shooting of a police officer posed them a serious problem. If the police were allowed to investigate the murder it could risk upsetting the Libyans and jeopardise the oil deal, especially given the volatile nature of Muammar Gaddafi, whose increasing demands were becoming difficult to satisfy. So, to protect the deal and force the NUM into submission, plans were set in motion to prevent this from occurring.

None of this, however, deterred Yvonne's colleague PC John Murray who, moments before the shooting, had swapped places with her. Cradling his friend's head in his lap as she lay dying, he vowed he would not rest until those responsible had been brought to justice.

Determined to carry out his promise, when Yvonne's killers were suddenly allowed to go free without explanation or accountability, his anger at the decision drove him to take matters into his own hands. However, as he set about knocking on doors and asking awkward questions, he was constantly

blocked at every turn by the powers that be, who quoted the excuse of it being ‘in the interest of national security’.

Despite this, John refused to give up, and after almost four decades he has finally fulfilled that promise. This book is an extremely moving and eye-opening account of his long, and often dangerous, quest to not only discover the truth behind his friend’s death and bring her killers to justice, but also in the process expose the despicable behaviour and decisions of a self-serving government, who cared – and continue to care – more about their own agenda than the wellbeing of those who serve them.

I don’t often read non-fiction books, but I found this one totally engrossing and completely absorbing. The depth of research undertaken is obvious right from the first page and is a testament to the commitment and talent of Matt Johnson as an author. The result is a compelling account of secret service deals, government duplicity and political intervention, all designed to prevent the police from spoiling a plan to end the miners’ strike by denying their right to pursue the Libyan killers – all under the guise of ‘national security’. With their hands continually tied behind their backs because of government interference and restrictions, it’s little wonder that policing in this country has become the uphill struggle it is today.

In my opinion, everyone should read this book. The revelations will shock you but, sadly, they may not surprise you. If the government was capable of such despicable conduct and immoral decisions back then, what other secret dealings are they harbouring now?

THE AUTHOR

Matt Johnson served for twenty-five years, first as a soldier then as an officer in the Metropolitan Police, until he was forced to retire due to PTSD. While undergoing treatment, Matt was encouraged to write as part of his therapy. The result was his 2016 debut novel, ‘*Wicked Game*’, which was shortlisted for a Crime Writers’ Association Dagger Award. This was followed by ‘*Deadly Game*’ and ‘*End Game*’. Matt’s fourth novel, ‘*Crow 27*’, was published in 2022. ‘*No Ordinary Day*’ is his first non-fiction book.

Retired police officer John Murray worked closely with Yvonne Fletcher and held her as she lay dying. For 37 years he has campaigned and fought resolutely to bring those responsible for her death to justice.

'No Ordinary Day' is published by Ad Lib Publishers Ltd and is available in ebook, paperback and audio book format from Amazon. It is also available to order in paperback from Waterstones, Foyles and Hatchards.