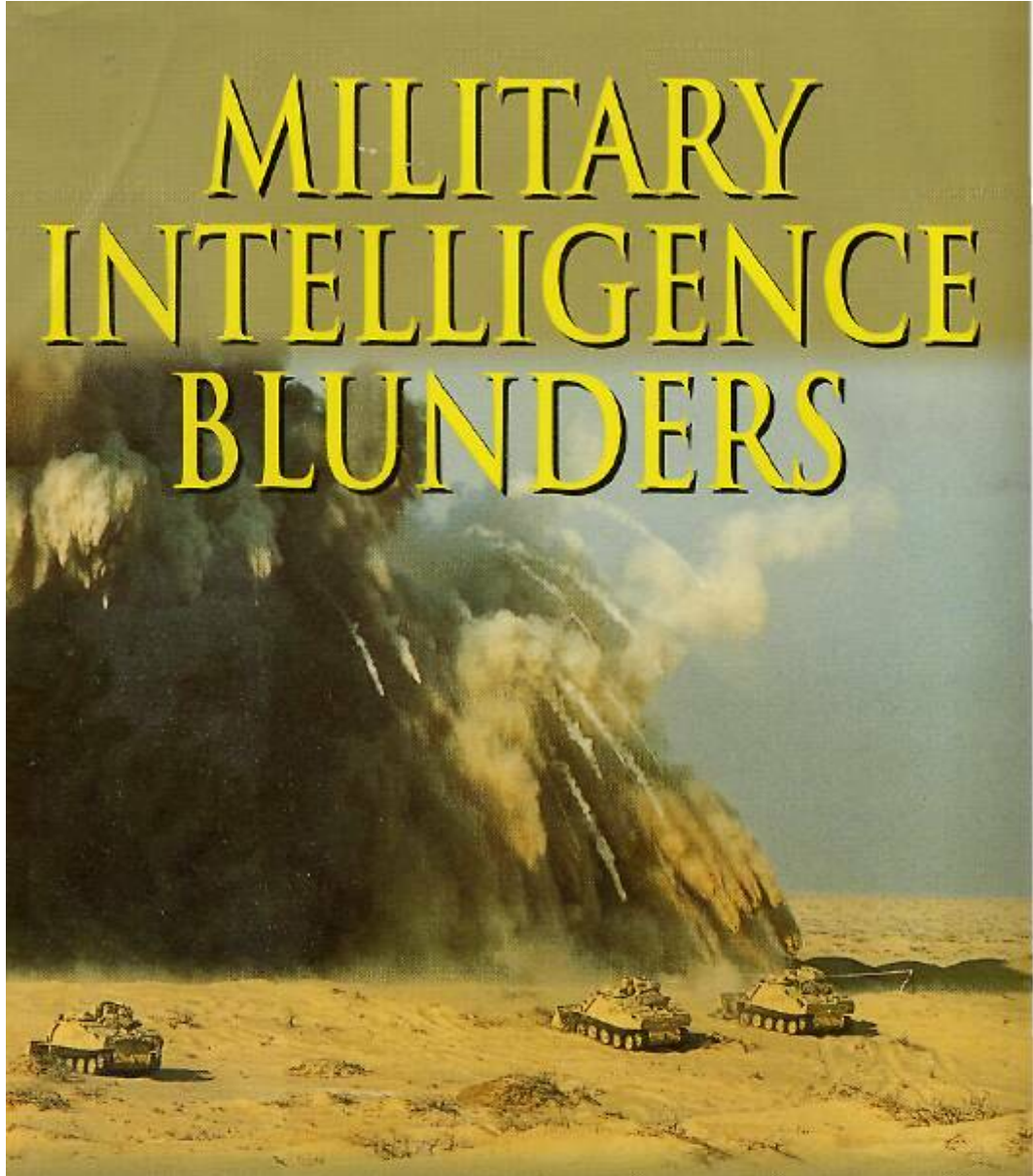


MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BLUNDERS



COLONEL JOHN HUGHES-WILSON

“The Falklands, Yom Kippur, Tet and Pearl Harbor?
Avoidable intelligence blunders or much worse?
Altogether a compelling read from someone who
knows the business.” *Nigel West*

Military Intelligence Blunders

Colonel John Hughes-Wilson

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For
Victor Andersen +
of the British Intelligence Services

And
Val Heller +
of the US Defense Intelligence Agency
Who both made it possible

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 On Intelligence	1
2 The Misinterpreters - D-Day, 1944	16
3 "Comrade Stalin Knows Best" - Barbarossa, 1941	38
4 "The Finest Intelligence in Our History" - Pearl Harbor, 1941	60
5 "The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms" - Singapore, 1942	102
6 Uncombined Operations - Dieppe, 1942	133
7 "I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?" - The Tet Offensive, 1968	165
8 "Prime Minister, the War's Begun" - Yom Kippur, 1973	218
9 "Nothing We Don't Already Know" - The Falkland Islands, 1982	260
10 "If Kuwait Grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn" - The Gulf, 1991	308
11 Will It Ever Get Any Better?	353
<i>Suggested Reading List</i>	361
<i>Glossary of Terms</i>	365
<i>Index</i>	367

Maps and Diagrams

The Intelligence Cycle	6
An Intelligence Collection Plan's Essential Elements of Information	11
Dispositions June 1944	22
The Allied Deception Plans for D-Day	30
Operation Barbarossa	45
Pearl Harbor - Japan's Grab for Empire, 1941/2	75
Malaya and Singapore, 1942	112
Disaster at Dieppe, 19 August 1942	153
The Vietnam War, 1956-75	182
The Tet Offensive, South Vietnam, 30-31 January 1968	199
"Greater Israel", 1967-73	232
Yom Kippur, 1973: Suez and Sinai	255
The Falklands War, 1982: relative distances	276
The South Atlantic, 1982	293
A Threat Curve	306
The Gulf War, 1990/1	324

Preface

This is a book that tries to tell the story of some recent events, all within living memory, from a different angle: intelligence. Most of us have read press accounts and books about the events that unfold on these pages. But very few of us have seen the events from the *inside*. The inside implies knowledge: and knowledge means *power*.

By "inside", I do not mean the views of politicians or other self-satisfied classes like those senior civil servants or even very grand journalists who write memoirs on the lines of, "Well, as Margaret said to me . . ." The real "inside knowledge" is always the intelligence available at the time. It was that secret intelligence that shaped events and made the people who took the decisions heroes or villains. This book tries to lift the veil on what really happened behind the scenes in the intelligence world during some of the most well-known military events of the last half-century. It tries to show why decisions were made, for good or ill, by a number of famous and not so famous characters, based on the intelligence and the secrets they had to work with at the time. This book concentrates on intelligence mistakes and blunders for the simple reason that they are more interesting than the far more numerous *successes* of intelligence, and in many cases the intelligence disasters have often been concealed from the taxpayer who funded them.

The book also identifies numerous deceptions, lies and cover-ups. Not all of these were committed to deceive the enemy. This will not make the stories outlined in its pages

Preface

universally popular. Turning over stones invariably lets a hard sunlight onto some creatures of the shadows. There are many intelligence officers and government officials, in all regimes, who prefer to keep their role and decisions secret, and thrive on secrecy in order to protect their careers and way of life. It guarantees their income, their status and their pensions. Secrecy is everything to them.

In this they are only outclassed by their bosses, those very senior civil servants of every country's administration, who equally thrive and prosper in the sure and certain knowledge that access to secret intelligence gives them the ultimate benefit of the harem: power without responsibility, mistakes without consequences. Like their political masters, good intelligence officers should always have the courage of their convictions, and be ready to show moral courage. Intelligence is, after all, about predicting the most likely future, not just regaling concerned decision-makers with recent events. CNN and the BBC World Service do that far better, as every professional modern intelligence officer knows. When careers are at stake, however, the past always seems easier to explain than the future.

The various case-studies are intended to provide an accessible and readable narrative of the events they describe, accompanied by some professional intelligence insights into how those events came about and unfolded. They tread a delicate path between the laboriously footnoted and exhaustive detail of the academic tome, and the trivial, flippant (and often inaccurate) "popular history" of cheap journalism. Where possible, quotations are clearly indicated. For those who would like to delve into the stories in more detail, a short reading list is provided at the end of the book so that they can be better informed about events and individuals. History is, after all, "a never-ending argument".

In putting together this book I have been aided enor-

mously by the Director and staff of the Royal United Services Institute in Whitehall, and in particular by their patient and helpful librarian, John Montgomery. For details of Vietnam I owe a considerable debt to my many American friends and colleagues over the years, especially Colonel John Moon and Colonel John Robbins of the United States Army for their perceptive comments on my drafts of American events and also for their previously unpublished memories of the Tet Offensive. The staff of the Conflict Studies Centre at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, have also been invaluable allies over Barbarossa and the Byzantine details of Stalin's court, while Peter Shepherd's astonishing re-evaluations of his meeting with a drunken Japanese engineer who revealed the secrets of Pearl Harbor really deserves a book of its own.

On the Falklands and the Gulf I should declare a personal interest, having been intimately involved in both wars. However, the best recollections of the intelligence organization and operations "down south" during the Falklands War have invariably come from those who fought the war directly. Many others in the intelligence world of several nationalities have helped me, both on and off the record, and I could not have done this without their help and guidance.

Mrs Hughes-Wilson made an important contribution to the book too - she typed up most of it, and only Cathryn Corns' skill and patience with the computer made the maps possible. The book also owes much to refinements to the manuscript by the eagle-eyed, tactful and patient editor, Mark Crean: to distort the old military truism, "there are no good authors: only good editors." Any errors and omissions are, however, mine, as are the opinions expressed. They represent the broad overview of twenty-five years working with, and thinking about, "military intelligence". Having said that, this is most certainly *not* a heavy, theoretical text about international

Preface

affairs. Instead I have tried to provide an accessible collection of true stories for the interested outsider that will, I hope, add weight to the idea that "history is a novel that has already been written", based on a sound blend of fact and comment. Above all, this is a book that is meant to be read and enjoyed by the general reader and the intelligence professional alike; I genuinely hope both gain something from my labours.

John Hughes-Wilson
June 1999

1

On Intelligence

"Military Intelligence", runs the old saying, "is a contradiction in terms". This weary old joke has about the same impact on professional intelligence officers as jokes about striking oil have on drilling dentists. It is a commonly held view, however, because history is littered with disastrous intelligence mistakes. From the earliest recorded times down to the Gulf War, soldiers of all kinds have been taken by surprise. How could the military be so stupid?

Yet surprise is one of the cardinal principles of war. Every military academy and staff college in the world teaches the need to achieve surprise - and to guard against it - to every single student of the military art. Despite this, the military appears to have been caught out with almost predictable regularity. Is the failing one of endemic stupidity or of an opponent's cunning?

The answer is both. Just as every military commander hopes not to be taken by surprise, potential adversaries strive equally hard with every trick and resource to mislead, to deceive and to catch their enemy unawares. To avoid being surprised, commanders rely on intelligence and their intelligence staffs. Sometimes they are successful, sometimes not. On the success of intelligence hinges a military commander's decisions and his reputation; and very often the future of his country and its population as well.

Therein lies our fascination with the decisions of the military professional, and the difference between his and other

On Intelligence

callings. Military decisions simply carry more weight than those of other professions.

For while other professionals in a host of occupations make key decisions, none of them, with perhaps the exception of a politician in war, carry such an awesome responsibility. If a banker makes a fatal error, economies crash and people lose their savings and jobs. If a surgeon makes a dreadful mistake, a patient dies. But when a general, admiral or air marshal blunders, soldiers and civilians alike die, sometimes in appalling numbers. To take just one example: Hitler and von Paulus sent no less than quarter of a million men to their doom around Stalingrad. Of that number, only 5,000 broken men ever came back from Russia. Would Hitler have ordered the 6th Army to stand fast had he had accurate intelligence about the Soviet generals' plans?

Although intelligence can help, it cannot make a commander's decisions for him. Even when confronted with crystal-clear reports, accurate, up to date and supported by first-hand evidence, history has shown us over and over again that a stubborn, ambitious or misguided commander will simply ignore the cast-iron proof before him. We do not have to go very far to find an example.

In September 1944, General "Boy" Browning disregarded Major Brian Urquhart's black-and-white aerial intelligence photographs clearly showing the presence of German SS panzer divisions refitting before Arnhem. *Not only that; Browning promptly dismissed his unfortunate intelligence officer on the grounds that "he was mentally disturbed by stress and overwork"*. Urquhart was escorted out of the headquarters by a grim-faced Director of Medical Services and sent off on convalescent leave. Days later, the paras dropped.

The consequences of Browning's orders led to the catastrophic loss of the British 1st Airborne Division on the ill-fated Operation Market Garden. It need never have happened but for Browning's decision, which seems to have been based

primarily on a desire not to be left out of the action when the war's end was thought, wrongly, to be in sight. The soldiers of the British and Polish airborne brigades paid a terrible price for the conceit and arrogance that motivated Browning's refusal to acknowledge the accurate information put before him by his intelligence staff.

Ironically, years later, when Urquhart was the senior advisor on security operations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, he recounted the story of that fateful wartime autumn in sad, almost humorous terms, ending with, "But I don't really blame General Browning; in his shoes, what else could he have done?"

By and large, military commanders are not stupid. Even the most intellectually challenged general has always understood that war is a matter of at least two sides and wants, understandably, to be on the winning team. Victory will bring him honours, riches, rewards and the applause of his countrymen. Why then, with such incentives, do approximately 50 per cent of them get it so consistently wrong?

In the great majority of cases, defeat can usually be traced back to a lack of knowledge of the enemy. Whether from overconfidence, ignorance, gullibility or just a failure to comprehend the facts, military defeat is almost invariably associated with an *intelligence* defeat. In Malaya in 1941, British and Imperial commanders believed that the Japanese were puny little Asiatics, incapable of fighting in the jungle let alone operating modern combat aircraft, who posed little or no threat at all. They were wrong.

It is hard in hindsight to grasp how such misjudgments ever became part of a nation's military policy. We must therefore look closely at the actual mechanisms of intelligence itself, long regarded as a black and mysterious art practised by anonymous men and women far from the limelight. Are their failings and failures the true reason behind so many military

On Intelligence

blunders? How can "intelligence" ever get it so badly wrong?

We should not be too surprised. Considering how important good intelligence is, the military has traditionally not been lavish in its support for an operation that can sometimes save an army's skin. In many an army, navy or air force, the intelligence staff is often a Cinderella organization. The problem is that the path to military glory invariably lies in the field of *operations*. Shooting down aeroplanes, sinking ships, capturing enemy brigades or being an *operational commander* is the sure path to recognition and high command in all military organizations. The result is that, with its fellow battle-winning partner, logistics, intelligence is often treated like a backwater or a mysterious haunt of clever but difficult individuals. Yet ironically, both intelligence and logistics are acknowledged by every staff college in the world as two of the fundamental keys that can guarantee a commander's success on the field of battle.

The realization that intelligence can be disregarded or challenged as being unpalatable or inaccurate has forced modern intelligence services to make their intelligence ever more robust. The aim is to force their "customers", be they military or political, to acknowledge the truth staring them in the face. To achieve this, military intelligence nowadays has been turned into a system designed to reduce error and anomaly to a minimum. The process is known as the Intelligence Cycle. It is a simple system designed to transform *information* into *intelligence*.

It is important for us to understand these basic processes of the intelligence world. Only then can we understand what went wrong in the past, and why.

The Intelligence Cycle

Intelligence is nothing more or less than information that has been systematically and professionally processed and ana-

lyzed. There are many definitions of intelligence, but every professional intelligence officer understands precisely what he or she is required to deliver. For the professional, intelligence is simply defined as "*processed, accurate information, presented in sufficient time to enable a decision-maker to take whatever action is required*".

The intelligence cycle is usually presented graphically as a circular process, as in fig. 1. *Inaccurate* information speaks for itself; no one gets credit for wrong facts. Even junior reporters are fired for failing to check their sources. Equally, to shout "Look out!" after the piano crashes to the ground is hardly *timely* intelligence. But the intelligence officer confronts another, more subtle, problem: that of capabilities versus intentions.

CAPABILITIES VERSUS INTENTIONS

Understanding the difference between a potential enemy's *capabilities* and his *intentions* is crucial to understanding the difficulties facing the purveyor of intelligence. For example, if I have a gun gathering dust in a drawer, then I have the *capability* for violent action. But there is no evidence of *intention*. I pose only a *potential* threat, based solely on my possession of an object designed for killing.

If, on the other hand, I have a sharpened pencil, *but I am waving it in front of your face absolutely determined to stab you in the eye*, then I am an extremely dangerous individual. Despite an apparently limited aggressive *capability* (every household or office has a pencil or two), my *intention* makes me a major threat. Capabilities and intentions are very different things.

This problem of separating intentions and capabilities will recur throughout our examination of intelligence failures. The intelligence cycle makes an effort to separate the two, though how successfully is open to question. But the distinction is clear.

THE INTELLIGENCE CYCLE

DIRECTION

The commander or political leader states his *intelligence requirement*, usually in the form of a question.

DISSEMINATION

Dissemination can take any form: a written brief, an urgent signal, a routine intelligence summary, or, more usually in urgent cases, a verbal brief to the political leader or commander.

INTERPRETATION

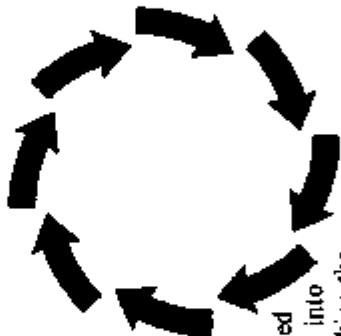
Interpretation is where the collated information is analyzed and turned into intelligence. This is usually done by asking the key questions: Who is it? What is it doing? What does it mean?

COLLECTION

The intelligence staff convert the commander's intelligence requirement into a series of essential elements of information (EIs) and task the intelligence agencies using a *collection plan*.

COLLATION

The intelligence staff collates all the information from the various sources into a readily accessible database. It is essential that all the information collected can be *retrieved*.



The reason is simple. Capabilities are relatively easy to measure - anyone can count tanks or aeroplanes - but determining an adversary's true intentions is fiendishly difficult to quantify. A man's intentions can change like the weather. Even the most sophisticated intelligence breaks down when confronted by the vagaries of the human mind. Just what were Saddam Hussein's real intentions before he invaded Kuwait in 1990?

In fact, the classic Cold War intelligence briefing invariably centred around the issue of Soviet capabilities (lots of tanks and missiles) versus Soviet intentions for their use. During the Cold War, the "bean counters" (that is, the *capabilities* men) ruled the intelligence roost with a vengeance. For the first time in history, technology enabled intelligence organizations to collect information on a massive scale. Intelligence was reduced to the acquisition of huge quantities of information, often in very expensive and career-enhancing ways, and then drawing dubious conclusions from the evidence.

This was summed up elegantly in a NATO intelligence briefing in 1979, packed with pictures of Soviet tanks and guns and ships and aeroplanes and missiles. It concluded with the Supreme Allied Commander saying "So we're outnumbered, then" to the young intelligence briefing officer.

"Yes, sir!" he replied enthusiastically.

"Will they use them?" came the quiet question.

Crestfallen, the briefing officer replied, "We don't have that information, sir." Then he brightened up. "But they *coulddo*, sir!"

Sometimes it is hard not to feel some sympathy for a commander confronted with this level of advice. Capabilities are not always intentions.

INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS

In order better to understand the intelligence process, we must return to our military commander and his wishes. The first

stage of the intelligence cycle is the definition by the commander of his intelligence requirements. What precisely does he want to know?

Surprisingly, many commanders have been unclear about this vital aspect of their task. It is often as if their potential adversary and the whole business of intelligence can be disregarded as a mere impediment to their own impressive plans. At Waterloo, even Napoleon and Wellington, two of the greatest captains in history, both ignored their opponent's intentions and wider dispositions, concentrating only on fighting their own battle, despite Machiavelli's advice three hundred years earlier: "Nothing is more worthy of the attention of a good general than to endeavour to penetrate the designs of the enemy."

However, with prompting, most sensible generals will usually come to address this vital question. For example, "Will the Argentines invade the Falkland Islands? If so, when, where and in what strength?" is a classic and clear example of a commander's intelligence requirement, enabling the intelligence cycle to begin. If the British Joint Intelligence Committee had debated these particular questions in such clear terms in late 1981, the Falklands War might never have erupted in the way it did.

THE COLLECTION PLAN

These various requirements are then tasked to the various collection sources and agencies as part of a *collection plan*. To construct a collection plan, it is essential that the intelligence users understand the strengths and weaknesses of all the various agencies involved.

For example, "humint" (human intelligence, the business of running agents, traditionally the province of the CIA, MI6 and the James Bonds of fiction) is good at reporting on an enemy's *intentions*, whereas satellite photography (the province of the USA's National Reconnaissance Office, or NRO)

can count an enemy's *capabilities*, measured in tanks or rockets. Both agencies would find it difficult, if not impossible, to do it the other way round, given their sources of information. Plainly, it makes little sense to task an intelligence source or agency with a job for which it is ill suited. No one would expect a maritime search radar to provide up-to-date intelligence on a land-based nuclear research programme.

An intelligence collection plan works as follows:

An Intelligence Collection Plan

A Commander's Intelligence Requirement:

Does the enemy intend to invade or not? If so, when, where and in what strength!

What are the essential elements of information?

- Enemy force dispositions?
- Readiness states?
- Exercises and training?
- Pattern of air and maritime activity?
- Civil mobilization?
- Logistic preparations?
- Stated intentions?

The detailed intelligence collection plan is prepared by the Intelligence Staff and tasked to as many different sources and agencies as possible. Not all the information collected will be secret: what is vital, however, is that the very secret information is kept separate ("compartmentalized") and that a time-limit is placed on the agencies for reporting back. The collection programme is monitored and managed on a regular basis. "Hot" items are usually reported immediately.

An intelligence collection plan's requirement can be broken down into even more specific "essential elements of information", as shown in fig. 2.

Collation - Putting It All Together

Once information has been collected, it has to be *collated*. This can be laborious and unglamorous, but the greater part of the intelligence operative's work is taken up with collating a mass of information rather than collecting it. This is the province of the clever and industrious clerk and is far removed from the exciting world of guns and missiles. Nowadays, collation systems and records data are computerized; in Napoleon's day they relied on quill pens and good memories. Interestingly, Hitler's prime expert on the Soviet Army, Colonel Gehlen of Fremde Heere Ost, or Foreign Armies East, who had painstakingly collated the best card index and records on the Eastern Front, was promptly recruited by the US Army at the end of 1945. Gehlen went on to found West Germany's new Secret Service, the END. A unique intelligence database can overcome almost any scruples.

Collation is important for another reason. In today's technical age it is, perhaps for the first time, possible to overload an intelligence system with *too much* data. For example, in the Vietnam War the Americans famously held drawers full of unlocked aerial photographs. This "foot-drawer of photographic intelligence" became a derisive symbol of the failure of US military intelligence to cope with the mass of information available, let alone present it to their masters. There simply was not the time or the manpower to look at every single image. And - who knows? - perhaps the vital piece of intelligence that could have alerted the USA to an important event and saved lives in Vietnam was never looked at.

An Intelligence Collection Plan's Essential Elements of Information

SOURCES & AGENCIES	HUMINT	SIGINT	IMAGERY	DIPLOMATIC	MILITARY	ALLIES	OPEN SOURCES
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION (EEIs)	e.g., SIS/MI6 CIA, KGB	e.g., NSA (US) GCHQ (UK)	e.g., NRO (US) JARIC (UK)	e.g., Foreign & Commonwealth Office, including attachés	e.g., DIS (UK) DIA (US) GRU (Russia)	e.g., UK/US Treaty, or NATO	e.g., CNN BBC, media, newspapers
Where are the enemy's attack aircraft?			✓	✓	✓		
Is there any evidence of ammunition being out-loaded?	✓		✓				✓
Are the attack pilots away for the weekend?	✓			✓		✓	✓
Are the migrants embarking on ships?		✓	✓		✓		
What is their government's official line?		✓		✓		✓	✓
Is there any evidence of civilian mobilization?	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓

On Intelligence

Technology can overwhelm resources. Modern police surveillance cameras suffer from the same problem. So a collation system must have a "rapid retrieval response capability", to be immediately accessible to users when they need to get at data, for it to be of any real value. For the collator, the cardinal sin is to have vital evidence and not know it or be able to find it in order to interpret it.

Interpretation - What Does It All Mean?

Once collated, information then has to be interpreted or processed. This means that it is compared with all other existing information to answer four basic questions:

- is it true?
- who is it?
- what is it doing?
- what does it mean?

On the objective answers to these deceptively simple questions the whole expensive intelligence effort can stand or fall. Maddeningly for the technocrats, the human factor, with its flair, expertise, experience and intuition, cannot be bettered. Interpretation remains firmly the province of the intelligence expert.

Dissemination - Telling The Boss

This final part of the intelligence cycle is perhaps the most fraught. Although the days of killing the bearer of ill tidings are long past, no bureaucracy relishes the prospect of passing on unwelcome information to its political or military masters.

Intelligence officers are as human as the rest of us, and the temptation for the nervous, ambitious or sycophantic officer to tailor the story to suit a superior's wishes or avoid his displeasure can be very strong. Who would relish saying to Winston Churchill or General "Stormin'" Norman Schwarzkopf in the Gulf, "I'm afraid you are wrong . . ."

Interpretations can be and often are twisted to suit political preconceptions with no basis in fact, as happened to the Israelis in 1973 with their mantra "no attack is possible without full Egyptian mobilization". Even worse, intelligence reports can be blatantly excluded altogether. In 1916 and 1917 Haig's intelligence chief, Charteris, smoothly ordered his junior staff not to report bad news or intelligence that contradicted the British C.-in-C.'s assessment of the German Army: "We shouldn't upset the Chief with this sort of stuff . . . it merely increases his burdens and makes him depressed." Against this sort of bureaucratic manipulation there is little defence. In a university, such behaviour could be airily dismissed as "intellectually dishonest". In the First World War it led to the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of men. Military decisions carry a grimmer responsibility than a discredited academic thesis.

Dissemination, then, should be accurate, timely and clearly distinguish intelligence *fact* from interpretative *comment* or assessment. It should also be secure and free from prying eyes (if the enemy knows what you are up to, he will probably change his plans). Above all, it should be brutally honest and objective. These are easy sentiments; but who in reality really likes to confront an all-powerful politician or general with the knowledge that their best-laid plans are either nonsense or soon will be because the enemy refuses to co-operate?

Hitler, the supreme warlord who dictated both the strategic and the tactical dispositions of the German Army in the Second World War, could fall into towering rages when

contradicted by his staff. On one occasion before the final Russian attack at Stalingrad, a brave intelligence officer briefed him on the growing Soviet capability in the Don Bend. The Fuhrer exploded with rage, shouting "I won't have that sort of talk in my headquarters . . . ridiculous pessimism!", then physically attacked the unfortunate individual before his astonished generals and had him sacked from his staff. As every intelligence officer has known throughout history, telling the truth can sometimes be a *very* bad career move.

The pinnacle of the whole intelligence process is often a device called the I&W Display. Indicators and Warning is the most important way of keeping track of an enemy's capabilities and intentions. It effectively fuses all known intelligence into an easily read matrix, usually coded like a traffic light's green, amber and red for danger. Black usually means unknown. It is really nothing more than a comprehensive all-source collection chart. Technically developed governments like the USA and high-tech agencies such as North American Air Defense Command [NORAD] rely nowadays on highly sophisticated computer-driven I&W displays. Traditional, politically-conscious organizations (such as the mandarins of Britain's Foreign & Commonwealth Office or the Joint Intelligence Committee) have tended to look down on such an obvious technical tool as lacking the intellectual subtlety of the more elegant "diplomatic assessment".

However, the deceptively simple I&W display can be relied on by military and political planners far more than the vagaries of individual minds, however brilliant or experienced, because it applies ruthless academic discipline that cannot be denied. For example, if in the Cyprus crisis of late 1974 the British Foreign Office had asked the key questions "Are the Turkish Air Force's aircraft at flight dispersal or not? Are they bombed up? Are the Turkish pilots at readiness or away for the weekend?" they might have been better served. If the

Foreign Office had listened to the Ministry of Defence's political-military I&W assessment of the Turkish government's intentions over Cyprus in late 1974, which was based on answers to these simple questions, it need never have embarrassed the Foreign Secretary and forced an apology at Cabinet level, a fact which is still concealed with some embarrassment.

I&W, done properly by objective third parties, and using rigorous techniques of critical source analysis, can successfully fuse intelligence from all sources to give realistic estimates of a potential enemy's capabilities and intentions. Even where it cannot, a good I&W display will highlight even for the most obtuse minister or commander precisely which critical elements of information are needed to make up the full picture.

Armed with a better understanding of the mechanics of the intelligence process, and able now to discern the true role of "intelligence", we can look more closely at the truth behind some of the intelligence blunders that have shaped armies, wars and the destinies of nations. Our case-studies and examples can be grouped under the headings of the intelligence process itself: failures of collection, of collation, and of interpretation with a particular hell being reserved for failures to disseminate intelligence to those who really needed it. (It is impossible not to feel some sympathy for those unfortunate commanders who just didn't know, *because someone with the information failed to pass it on.*)

For our first foray into the murky world of poor intelligence, it is reasonable to start with a genuine error: those unfortunate intelligence officers in the run-up to D-Day who were deceived by the evidence they had so conscientiously collected and collated, and who failed to interpret it correctly - the *misinterpreters*. They undoubtedly did their job; they just didn't do it very well.

The Misinterpreters

D-Day, 1944

If the D-Day landings had failed, then the rest of the twentieth century would have been very different. If there was one event in the Second World War that could possibly have changed the course of history more than any other, an Allied repulse on the Normandy beaches would have had cataclysmic consequences. The German generals would have been unlikely to risk their bomb assassination plot against a victorious Adolf Hitler. Hitler could have redeployed East and bought time, new secret weapons would have become available and Stalin's Soviet Army would have faced the full might of a rearmed and victorious Wehrmacht, equipped with the greatest outpourings of German industry so far (German arms production peaked in September 1944).

Today we take it for granted that D-Day, codenamed Operation Overlord, was a success. At the time, however, there was a real fear that the landings might fail and that the Germans would be waiting to hurl the invaders back into the sea, as they had done at Dieppe in 1942. Churchill himself feared another first day of the Somme with its 60,000 casualties. We even know that on the morning of 6 June 1944, Eisenhower secretly began to draft a signal beginning "The landings in Normandy have failed", just in case the invasion was the disaster it could so easily have been.

And if German intelligence had interpreted the evidence

they had collected correctly, Eisenhower might well have gone down as a defeated and disgraced commander. However, blinded by the greatest deception operation in history, the German intelligence staff was confused, misled and tricked into a calamitous misinterpretation of Allied intentions. To the key *intelligence requirement* questions of "Will the Allies invade? If so, when, where and in what strength?" the baffled German intelligence officers and their masters got three out of four answers wrong.

It was not as if the Germans failed to realize the Allies were coming; on the contrary, they expected an invasion. Early in January 1944, the Chief of Fremde Heere West (Foreign Armies West, or FHW), Colonel Baron Alexis von Roenne, received a crucial signal from one of German military intelligence service's secret agents in England, telling him that General Eisenhower was expected back in Britain. After the catastrophic German defeat in North Africa in 1943, such an appointment could only have one significance: 1944 was expected to be the year of the Second Front and Ike was to command the invasion forces in the West. Von Roenne would have been less pleased had he realized that the signal from his agent had in fact been dictated by Agent Tate, an MIS double agent.

The German C.-in-C. West, von Rundstedt, and his Atlantic Wall deputy, Rommel, Commander of Army Group B, also understood the dangers of invasion only too well. The key question was where the Allies would strike. On the other side of the Channel, von Rundstedt and Rommel's dilemma was unsurprisingly also the key topic of conversation among the Overlord planners. Even if the Allies could not hide that an invasion was imminent, they were determined to sow as much confusion in the German intelligence service as possible. The organization charged with the crucial task of deceiving the German High Command was a unique group, the Allied Deception Staff, better known by its cover name of the

The Misinterpreters

London Controlling Section or LCS. The LCS's primary task was simple: to deceive and confuse the German High Command, and Hitler himself, as to the Allies' intentions over the D-Day landings.

LCS was a remarkable organization. As befitted its extraordinary task - to "puzzle and defeat" the German intelligence staff - it was staffed by some remarkable men. In Colonel John Bevan, its leader, supported by men like Denis Wheatley, the novelist, Sir Reginald Hoare, the banker, and Sevan's brilliant multilingual deputy, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Ronald Wingate, the LCS boasted one of the most high-powered collections of talent on any wartime staff. More importantly, LCS's members had an extraordinary network of personal contacts and links with nearly every centre of power and influence in the Allied camp. As a result, and perhaps most important of all, LCS enjoyed the complete confidence of the Allied Chiefs of Staff, even Churchill himself and the War Cabinet. This trust was crucial, because at times LCS was effectively co-ordinating and directing the efforts of nearly all the argumentative and competing Allied intelligence and security agencies in their own intelligence attacks on the Germans' indicator and warning system.

Hitler was keenly aware that the Allies' first priority was to deceive him. In March 1944, he told his commanders in the West, "Whatever concentrations of shipping exist, they cannot, and must not, be taken as evidence or any indication that the choice has fallen on any one sector of the 'Long Western Front' from Norway to the Bay of Biscay." Like many a commander before and since, the Fuhrer believed that he was his own intelligence officer and was determined to dictate terms to his intelligence professionals.

Hitler and his military experts were, however, convinced of one thing: in order for a successful invasion to work, the Allies would need to seize a port on landing. This preconception,

based on sound German naval advice and the experience of the Allied raid on Dieppe in 1942, was to seriously damage any objective intelligence assessment. Across the other side of the Channel, an ingenious plan had been drawn up with the sole purpose of feeding these German preconceptions: Plan Bodyguard.

Bodyguard was the Allied cover name for a comprehensive range of strategic deceptions aimed at using the German intelligence system to pass false messages. It had two clear aims: first, to weaken Hitler's forces by making him spread his key divisions and armies throughout Europe, from Norway to the Balkans; and second, to delay any German reaction to the invasion for as long as possible by keeping the German planners unsure whether the first landing was just a feint.

In order to do this, Bevan's LCS proposed an extraordinarily wide-ranging series of deception operations to feed the German intelligence staff with exactly the information they were seeking. Moreover, by using real intelligence as far as possible, Bodyguard would even offer Colonel von Roenne of FHW a reasonably accurate picture of Allied troop strengths. The real subtleties lay in clever distortions designed to mislead the German staff about the exact time and place of the landings and the size and dispositions of Allied units. These reports were embedded in a huge mass of conflicting information that was to be pumped directly into the German intelligence system. Some of it, astonishingly, was true. The only problem for the German planners was, which parts? To use the modern language of intelligence, LCS's aim was to overwhelm the German intelligence services' I&W display with "noise".

The sheer scope of the Bodyguard plan was vast, and in Anthony Cave Brown's words, "resembled nothing less than a large scale corporation fraud". Bodyguard was split into sixteen main stratagems or intelligence areas, each designed to feed the Germans' known intelligence collection plan, from

humint to electronic warfare, from bombing target analysis to French resistance activity. In this the British were helped immeasurably by Ultra, the highly secret code-breaking operation at Bletchley Park that enabled the British to read Hitler's most secret Enigma-enciphered messages sometimes even before the intended Nazi recipient had seen them. Using Ultra, the Allies were able to discover precisely what information the Germans were looking for and then, obligingly, to provide it for them; suitably doctored to mislead and misinform, of course.

Enigma was a remarkable coup for the British and a triumph of secrecy. Even so, the story of the breaking of the Enigma machines has probably had more nonsense written about it than almost any other event of the Second World War. For a start, the Enigma story was *not* a triumph of British skill and intellect: the Poles broke Enigma, and the French gave it to the British.

The true story of the Enigma machine, or "Secret Numbers Machine" to give it its proper title, goes back to the end of the Great War. In 1919 the mechanical cipher machine, looking like a heavy typewriter in a wooden box, was developed from a Dutch invention by a German, Arthur Scherbius, and sold openly as a commercial venture at the International Postal Union Congress in 1923. Scherbius didn't sell many and became disenchanted, but in 1926 the German Navy bought a number of Enigma machines and modified them for military use.

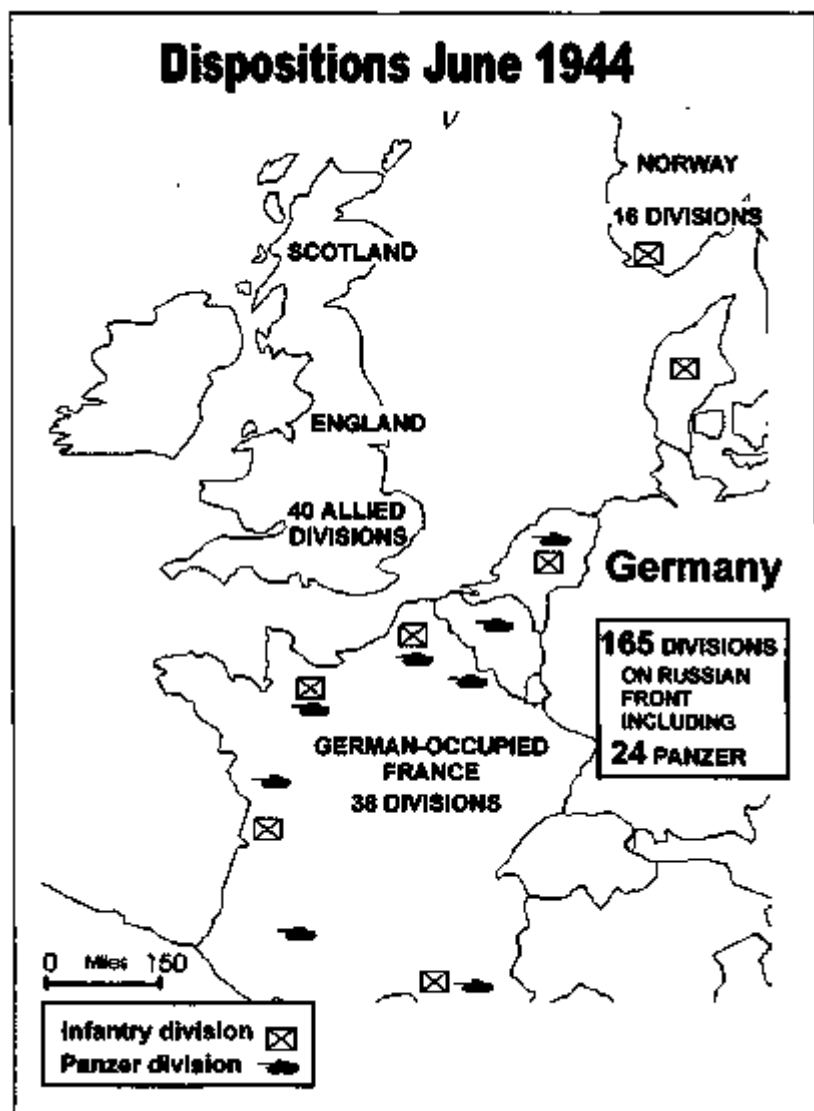
In 1929 an alert Polish customs officer in Warsaw intercepted a crate allegedly containing radio equipment addressed to a German company. On making the usual checks, an excited official appeared from the German Embassy claiming that there had been a terrible mistake, and that the crate should be returned to Germany immediately. Intrigued, the customs officers decided something odd was going on, but as it was a Friday they agreed to deal with the matter first thing on

Monday morning. Over the weekend the Polish General Staff, having been tipped off by the now thoroughly suspicious customs men, covertly opened the crate and copied its contents with drawings and photographs.

The crate contained a secret Enigma cipher machine for the German Embassy. Realizing the potential of their find - if they could make it work - the Poles began the laborious job of "reverse engineering" to re-create an Enigma and, more importantly, work out how to read its traffic. The Poles had a powerful motivation; between 1928 and 1932 all Germany's armed forces and its Foreign Service adopted the Enigma machine as their principal encoding device on the grounds that it was completely unbreakable.

In 1932 Captain Bertrand, Chief of the French Cryptographic Department, recruited a German agent called Hans Schmidt. Schmidt's claim to fame was that he worked in the German Military Cipher Department. As agent "Asche" he became a regular supplier of codes and cipher manuals to French Intelligence, handing over 303 German secret documents, including at least one long enciphered Enigma message and several sets of cipher keys. The French directed Bertrand to offer this intelligence to the British and Poles, friendly nations equally worried by Hitler's rise to power. On the instructions of the Foreign Office, the British turned agent Asche's intelligence material down.

However, the Poles gratefully accepted Asche's windfall and gave it to a brilliant young team of mathematicians from Poznan University, where the first courses in code-breaking were now on the syllabus. In co-operation with the French, and armed with brand-new, legally acquired commercial Enigma machines and Asche's sets of keys, Marian Rjewski and two assistants in a secret team codenamed BS-4 broke the secrets of Enigma. By the mid-1930s they had begun reading "up to 80 per cent" of some secret German military traffic. By



1937 the Polish mathematical team had even managed to build a rudimentary mechanical computer - which they called a *bombe* - to replace their earlier methods of using punched cards and long paper "keys".

Once Sudetan Czechoslovakia had fallen to Hitler after Munich in 1938, the Poles knew that a war with Germany could not be avoided. In January 1939 they held a secret intelligence conference in Paris to discuss code-breaking with the British. According to Meyer, the head of Polish Intelligence, the disappointed Poles offered little to the British because it was "obvious they knew little about Enigma" and quite clearly had "nothing to offer in the code-breaking of Enigma in return". (This was not strictly true; the British had begun to read some low-level Enigma traffic from Germany's Kondor Legion in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War and were intrigued by the potential for code-breaking.)

By July 1939 the situation had changed completely. The Poles were no longer able to read Enigma traffic because the Germans had increased the number of rotors on their service machines. With war now inevitable, the Poles had not the time to start another mathematical logic hunt for the new cipher keys. So, on 16 August 1939, nineteen days before war broke out, Captain Bertrand of French Signals Intelligence personally handed over a Polish-built copy of an Enigma machine together with documents, keys, ciphers and even technical drawings of the first-ever secret Poznan computer to an astonished - and grateful - British Secret Services Liaison Officer at Bletchley Park. The British had been given their war-winning weapon on a plate *by the Poles*. Armed with this invaluable tool, suitably developed and refined to meet the changes that the war brought about, the British deception service could not only feed the Germans false information, but their intelligence services could also monitor whether their enemy had taken the bait.

The Misinterpreters

London Controlling Section was also keenly aware of another vital fact: few intelligence organizations believe easily-won information. Just as a wealthy collector may resolutely refuse to believe that an expensive painting could be a fake, so intelligence officers tend to believe that the most hard-won secrets are more likely to be true than easily-gathered information. This is of course nonsense, but Bevan and his staff prepared a series of inspired leaks that would come to Colonel von Roenne and his staff only by the most roundabout - and sometimes expensive - means: through obscure agent runners in Madrid, the Swedish stock exchange and hastily suppressed "leaks" in the neutral press to name but three.

In all this, Bevan was aided by a remarkable humint coup. Since 1940, the British Security Service, MIS, had effectively been running and controlling every known German agent in the UK. Instead of executing the majority of the lacklustre spies sent by the Abwehr, the German military intelligence bureau, in 1940 and 1941, a special British MIS team had arranged for them to be picked up shortly after landing and "turned" them to work for the British by sending false messages to their former masters. Faced with the choice between a firing squad in the Tower of London or a spell of warm, safe house arrest with a radio to send fake messages to expectant German controllers, most agents became extremely co-operative.

Using MIS's network of long-established double agents, the Double Cross Committee, headed by Sir John Masterman, could send the Germans whatever lies the Bodyguard plan required. Agent Tate's message about Eisenhower's arrival in England was merely the first of an elaborately conceived series of lies that would continue until well after the D-Day landings. At least six other trusted Double Cross agents pumped messages direct to their Abwehr controllers in Hamburg or Madrid, giving such details as unit badges, tank and infantry landing-craft concentrations and sightings of troops.

In Operation Fortitude North, one of Bodyguard's major sub-plans, a phantom 'British "4th Army"' was reported around Edinburgh in Scotland, painstakingly recorded by two Double Cross agents, "Mutt" and "Jeff. These were in fact loyal Norwegian patriots who had defected to the British immediately on landing. From their mythical network of contacts and sub-agents, the two Norwegians informed Hamburg about 4th Army's new "commander", Lieutenant-General Sir Andrew Thorne, deliberately chosen because he was well known to Hitler personally as the British Military Attache in Berlin before the war. For good measure they also threw in local Scottish newspaper reports of civilian welcome committees and military traffic accidents. Meanwhile the Germans themselves could log 4th Army's ceaseless administrative local radio chatter. In fact "4th Army" never amounted to more than about forty staff officers and a few heavy-handed wireless operators diligently churning out a tightly controlled script.

These wireless operators were the next stage in Colonel Sevan's complex deception. Knowing that the German Staff would, like any professional intelligence operation, look for "collateral" (reports from other sources, confirming the humint agents' information), the ever-helpful Bevan thoughtfully provided von Roenne and his people with just the material they were seeking. The fake "4th Army" headquarters and its busy sub-units transmitted and received a stream of credible messages for the excellent Abwehr Signals Intelligence or Y Service to intercept and plot. Here an officer - easily checked against the Army List - would be sent on compassionate leave; there an irate quartermaster would be indenting for quantities of missing ski equipment.

Whatever the variations, the messages, when carefully collated by the diligent Abwehr intelligence staff, all indicated that there was a major British Army assembling in Scotland, preparing for a campaign in mountainous or arctic terrain. Allied to

The Misinterpreters

the dangerous RAF photo-reconnaissance flights over the fiords and the increased Royal Navy destroyer activity off the Norwegian coast, it could only mean one thing. Hitler was eventually to tie down no less than twelve divisions in Norway against an invasion that never came, from an army that never existed.

These humint and sigint (signals intelligence) reports had to be complemented by other sources that LCS knew the Germans would use. While photographic reconnaissance was unlikely to be able to check the Fortitude North dispositions around Edinburgh - few German planes had the range, service ceiling or speed to survive after a long flight across the North Sea - in the south of England it was another matter. Specially equipped high-flying Luftwaffe PR planes could easily overfly Kent. Bodyguard decided, as part of Operation Fortitude South, to offer them suitable "targets" to feed into the Abwehr collection plan. Ever mindful of German nervousness about an invasion across the short sea crossing against the Pas de Calais, Bevan's team decided to strengthen the image of an Army Group massing in the south-east. This would have the effect of diverting attention away from Normandy and reinforcing the Germans' anxieties about the Calais area.

A massive dummy oil depot was built on the coast near Dover, complete with pipes, valves, storage tanks and even well-publicized inspections by King George VI. From 34,000 feet the German aerial photographs could not reveal that what they were recording was a wooden fake whose building had been directed by the illusionist Jasper Maskelyne and Sir Basil Spence. The photographic interpreters could not spot that the hundreds of tanks parked in the Kentish orchards were really nothing more than inflatable rubber Shermans. One farmer even saw his bull charge a "tank" and watched in astonishment as the pierced dummy slowly deflated. And the lines of landing craft moored in the Medway, with their sailors' washing hanging on the lines looked real enough.

When the evidence of aerial photography was added to agent reports, analysis of signals traffic (which showed that all over Kent, Essex and Sussex well-known US Army radio operators were transmitting) and the well-publicized presence of General George Patton in the area, German intelligence analysts received a clear message. Patton's 1st US Army Group (FUSAG) did exist, and it was poised in the south-east of England just across from the Pas de Calais. Masterman's double agents Brutus and Garbo enthusiastically reported every fictitious detail, while the ever-loyal Tate faithfully confirmed their reports in his own radio messages from Wye in Kent. "Something big is building in the Dover area", he told his controller. It was; Bevan and his LCS were building an illusion that would pin down the bulk of German Panzer divisions in France 150 miles to the east of the real invasion site.

By now the fastidious and aristocratic von Roenne had the key components of his collection plan collated: humint, reporting a massive build-up; sigint, confirming new formations arriving in the UK; and imagery intelligence, whose aerial photographs clearly indicated an enormous concentration of troops and *materiel* in the south-eastern corner of England. All now depended on von Roenne and his experts' evaluation and interpretation of the mass of intelligence reports they were studying. Were they true? Which units were they? What were the Allies doing? And what did it all mean?

Von Roenne's personal assessment was vital because he, unlike many of Hitler's inner circle of senior army officers, was implicitly trusted by the Nazi dictator. But von Roenne was fighting *two* enemies as he sat in his Zossen office trying to interpret the intelligence in front of him: the Allied deception staffs, clever, well-resourced and playing him like a fish on the hook; and, amazingly, his own side - specifically the Sicherheits Dienst, or SD, the Nazi Party's own security service, now firmly in control of all Germany's intelligence services.

In early 1944, the head of the military intelligence bureau, the Abwehr, Admiral Canaris, had been quietly retired by Hitler and pensioned off. Wilhelm Canaris was a complex character and one of the real enigmas of the war. The Director of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, popularly known as MI6) later described him as "a damned brave man and a true patriot", an unusual accolade from an enemy. Was Canaris a leader of the anti-Nazi resistance and a British spy? It seems an astonishing question, and highly unlikely, and yet there is enough circumstantial evidence that he was in contact with Sir Stuart Menzies, the Director of SIS, to raise serious doubts about his role in the mysterious intelligence exchanges that seem to have taken place between the British and those Germans who abhorred the Nazi Party. The role of these murky links between the Abwehr and the SIS may well have influenced the outcome of D-Day.

Canaris had been a resourceful and gallant naval officer in the Great War, escaping from the doomed SMS *Dresden* off Chile in 1915 and making his way overland to Buenos Aires and back home to Germany in a series of adventures that read like a Hornblower novel. Once back he was awarded the Iron Cross and seconded to secret intelligence duties in Spain. (Interestingly, one of the British agent handlers in Spain at this time was a young British MI6 officer, Stuart Menzies.) Escaping a British plot to kill him, Canaris fled Spain and ended the war as a successful U-boat commander in the Mediterranean where he sank eighteen enemy ships.

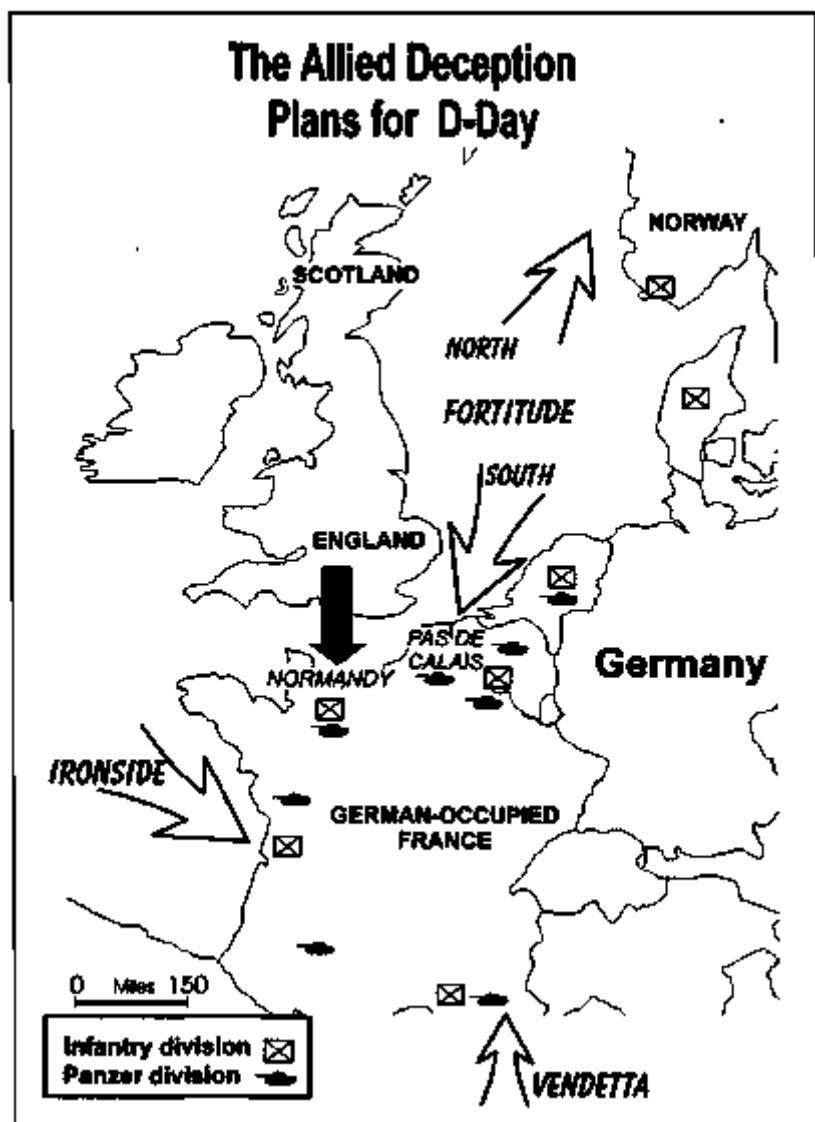
After the war Canaris dropped into the shadowy world of the post-Versailles Reichswehr and its unofficial secret service. In 1934 the new Chancellor Adolf Hitler, offered him the job of head of the Abwehr with the words, "what I want from you is an intelligence service like the British Secret Service." Canaris was no Nazi, however, and when war broke out a series of mysterious intelligence coups helped the British. For

example, packages of priceless technical information turned up anonymously on the doorstep of the British Embassy in Oslo, among other places. (The information was so good that the British didn't believe it at first.) As the war developed, the leaks and links between the Abwehr and its opposition became too obvious.

A suspicious Hitler finally pensioned off Canaris and gave his responsibility for intelligence to his arch rival and Party stalwart General Walter Schellenberg, the head of the SD. Canaris's discredited Abwehr was merged with Schellenberg's SD to form a single unified Nazi intelligence organization, the Reich Security and Intelligence Service, firmly under party control. Even in the middle of war, the inevitable bureaucratic turf battle now broke out between the SD's Nazi ideologues and the remnants of the Abwehr as each side tried to keep control of their own area of expertise. In the event the military intelligence professionals were consistently overruled or taken over completely.

However, the Amt Mil or military section of the new service was still - just - under General Staff control. Its British Area intelligence officer was a cheerful extrovert called Oberst Leutnant Roger Michel, who like all his brother officers heartily detested his new Party bosses. Worse, Michel was labouring under a particular handicap. Whenever he submitted an order-of-battle estimate to headquarters, it was invariably sanitized and diluted by the SD officials above him. They halved every estimate he made of Allied strength in Great Britain. For any professional intelligence officer to have his reports altered on ostensibly political grounds is like a red rag to a bull. It impugns his professional capabilities, integrity and objectivity. The hot-blooded Michel was no exception.

Colonel von Roenne, however, had devised a way for his frustrated subordinate to thwart their Nazi masters tampering with, as they saw it, perfectly good intelligence assessments. If



the new SD was going to halve their estimates, what could be easier than *doubling* them in the first place? So, in the spring of 1944, von Roenne and Michel began to multiply their assessments of Allied strength by a factor of two, secure in the knowledge that the SD would then halve their figures, thus ensuring that the report which went to Hitler's desk was an accurate reflection of the General Staffs original estimate. To add verisimilitude to this breathtaking scheme, the two plotters uncritically accepted the flood of Fortitude reports about the British 4th Army in Scotland, Patton's FUSAG and the military build-up in the south-east of England. Ironically, von Roenne and Michel needed the LCS's flood of false evidence almost as much as the Allied deception staff needed to send it. Only the false Fortitude reports could be relied on to satisfy the Germans' desperate need for every scrap of collateral about troop dispositions in Britain to support their inflated figures.

In May, von Roenne's crucial pre-invasion "FHW Assessment of the Enemy's Order of Battle" (ORBAT) was published. To his horror, this time the SD did not halve his estimate of Allied strength. The reason was simple: the SD officer who had been cutting the estimates had been posted. Von Roenne's assessment was sent out as the official secret combined intelligence ORBAT to all Wehrmacht formations and headquarters in the West. Von Roenne dare not admit the deception - to do so would invite summary execution in the fevered atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue surrounding Hitler's court in spring 1944 - and so he had to accept that the influential report issued under his name had effectively doubled the true known strength of the Allied forces in Britain from forty division to over eighty. It was a deception that would ultimately cost von Roenne his life.

Colonel Bevan's ever-resourceful LCS intelligence hoaxers had one final trick up their sleeve. How much better, they

reasoned, if a trusted *German* general could himself corroborate the mass of false reports they had fed into the German intelligence machine. And, as chance would have it, the British just happened to have a spare German general. General von Cramer had been captured in May 1943 as the Axis forces collapsed in Tunisia. As a prisoner of war in England his health had deteriorated, and in May 1944 the Red Cross arranged to repatriate him back to Germany in a neutral Swedish ship. Sevan's staff ensured that the General did not go empty-handed. His drive to the docks took him through some of the heaviest troop concentrations in southern England, ending up at Patton's "HQ" for his last night before embarkation. Von Cramer hadn't the faintest idea where he had been but was dined out as a military courtesy to a sick man by Patton himself. He also met some of Patton's "divisional commanders" who were cool and correct to an enemy general officer, however ill, but gossiped away among themselves about "Calais".

The ruse worked. By 24 May, only thirteen days before D-Day, von Cramer was back in Berlin faithfully reporting to General Zeitzler, Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht, everything that he had seen and heard in England. Unsurprisingly, his information tallied with everything the Germans had collected and provided further collateral for von Roenne's intelligence estimate. So, in the final days before the landings, the great LCS deception plan had, remarkably, become the basis for the German intelligence appreciation. Even Hitler himself, despite an almost feminine intuition that suddenly swung him towards Normandy at the last moment, forbore to change his dispositions. Of the German Army's 300 divisions, only sixty were active in the West: less than 20 per cent. And of those, only eight divisions were in place to oppose the Allies directly as they came ashore. The remainder were spread between the Balkans, Italy, Russia, the south of France, Denmark, Holland, Norway and,

most important of all, the Pas de Calais. From their reading of the decrypted Ultra intercepts on 1 and 2 June, Sevan's delighted staff could read that Baron Oshima, the Japanese envoy in Berlin, was reporting to Tokyo that no less a person than Adolf Hitler himself had assessed that the likely attack would fall in the Pas de Calais, with feints elsewhere.

For Bevan and his LCS, it had been an intelligence triumph. A small, highly talented and influential staff had successfully orchestrated the most complex deception in history against an alert and highly competent adversary. One slip, one mistake in the script, one piece of the story that did not quite fit, could have unravelled the whole fraudulent network that was Bodyguard, Fortitude and their interlocking layers of hoaxes. By complete understanding of the Germans' professional intelligence methods, and aided by the ability to read the Enigma traffic, LCS had effectively hijacked the German intelligence staff assessment for D-Day and forced von Roenne and the whole German intelligence machine to do precisely what the Allies wanted. The final German intelligence summaries for the end of May 1944 read like a catalogue of errors: the Germans were convinced that the Allies would attack in good weather, in the dark near a large port and at high tide. They also assessed that there would be *several* feint landings designed to draw German reserves away from the true landing - in the Pas de Calais.

Astonishingly, the deception operations continued well after the Allied troops came ashore on 6 June 1944. During 9 and 10 June a fresh wave of resistance attacks, heavy air raids and an unheard-of tempo of offshore preparations hit the Calais area. Masterman's ever-faithful Double Cross agents sent extensive humint "collateral" explaining that the Normandy landings were merely a diversion and the real blow - the landing of Patton's FUSAG - was just about to fall on the Pas de Calais.

Von Roenne, who had by now probably begun to believe his own inflated assessments, accordingly sent out an intelligence summary to all Wehrmacht Western Front headquarters and formations: "In all probability major enemy landing expected Belgian coastline from 10 June." To compound his misinterpretation and after consultation with Marshals Keitel and Jodl of Fuhrer Hauptquartier, Roenne then added a fatal *operational*, not intelligence, assessment: "Withdrawal of [German] forces from the Pas de Calais/15th Army Sector unwise." Intelligence assessments should *never* include operational recommendations.

To further compound this catalogue of errors, Roenne personally contacted Hitler's intelligence liaison officer, one Colonel Krummacher, and reinforced FHW's written intelligence estimate by insisting that any diversion of forces from the Pas de Calais to Normandy would be a mistake, as "von Roenne personally had definite intelligence that a new invasion was about to fall on the 15th Army Sector, beginning with a wave of resistance attacks starting on the night 9/10 June." Armed with this highly unusual special pleading from a senior staff intelligence officer, Krummacher agreed to represent FHW's view at Hitler's crucial midday situation and planning conference.

At that conference, Marshal Jodl reported FHW's assessment to Hitler and added to it the weight of General Kuhlentahl's latest secret radio message from his ever-diligent agent Garbo, giving fresh collateral for an imminent main force attack on Calais by Patton's non-existent FUSAG based in Kent. Kuhlentahl was the senior agent controller in Portugal and Spain. Hitler took the bait. At the midnight staff conference on 9/10 June, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces abruptly ordered a halt to any movement from the Pas de Calais to Normandy. Not only that, but the Fuhrer ordered extra divisions to the 15th Army Sector and not to the hard-pressed Wehrmacht battlefield in Normandy.

Hitler might have been less happy with his decision and with the FHW/Kuhlentahl intelligence assessment had he realized that Garbo's radio message had taken *two hours* to send. The critical question why the extremely efficient British Signals Security Service had failed to pinpoint a two-hour transmission and catch the illegal sender never seems to have occurred to the gullible Kuhlentahl and von Roenne. Intelligence officers need a highly developed critical factor, and never more than when their prejudices are being pandered to so obligingly.

Back in London, the delighted Bevan and his LCS saw the map lines heading towards Normandy suddenly stop, and over the following days coalesce into the Pas de Calais. Fortitude and Bodyguard had worked. Even then, the great intelligence deception was not over and continued well into July. In addition to the mock invasion off Calais on 10 June, as late as the last week in June there were more Allied spoof airborne and naval operations off Boulogne and Dieppe. These feints were successful enough for Hitler to personally authorize an order (a full month after D-Day) for all divisions still held back in the Pas de Calais to go on full anti-invasion alert for 8 July. For Bevan and his LCS, it had been a triumph of deception; for von Roenne's FHW and the German High Command, it had been an intelligence disaster.

Was von Roenne an incompetent intelligence officer? Far from it. His track record before 1944 had been outstanding. His mistake was probably to allow his belief in his own system to overcome his doubts and to forget the need for critical analysis. The old intelligence assessment of source material - Is it true? Is it credible? Is it confirmed by other sources? - seems to have either broken down or just been saturated by an enemy deception operation that knew, thanks to Enigma, just how FHW's intelligence system worked and how to fool it. Faced by the key questions of "Will the Allies invade? If so,

when, where and in what strength?" the German intelligence staff got it completely wrong. It was a mistake that was to end in the ruins of Berlin and the collapse of the Third Reich. Rarely can a mistaken intelligence estimate have had such catastrophic consequences.

The D-Day intelligence deception story has a postscript that elegantly sums up Sevan's cunning, Masterman's professionalism and the German tragedy. At 3 a.m. on the morning of D-Day, Masterman's trusted double agent, Garbo, frantically signalled his German controllers to inform them that one of his "network of agents" had reported that the Allied troops had left camp, complete with sea-sickness bags. Only by dawn did the message get through to Berlin, by which time the Allies had begun to land, thus boosting Garbo's credibility as an agent without damaging Allied operations. Bitterly, Garbo castigated his German controllers: "I sent you this priceless information and it makes me seriously question your professionalism and responsibility." Two months later, Garbo received a message awarding him the Iron Cross by Hitler's command.

Von Roenne was not so lucky. He was arrested in the aftermath of the bomb plot against Hitler of 20 July 1944. He was joined later by his old boss, Admiral Canaris, who may well have been a party to some of the deceptions and was almost certainly in touch with the British. For the Nazis, the final straw over the intelligence duplicities of the Abwehr appears to have been a mysterious journey that Canaris undertook to France in June 1944. His replacement Schellenberg knew that Canaris had been talking to a number of the generals who were later implicated in the plot. Three days later Canaris was arrested by Schellenberg and his men. "Hello," said the little admiral to his arresting officer, "I've been expecting you."

On 11 October 1944, Colonel Baron Alexis von Roenne,

lately Chief of Foreign Armies West of the German General Staff, was executed by the Nazi authorities for treason in the bloody aftermath of the bomb plot on Hitler's life. Rarely can an intelligence officer have paid such a high price for getting it so badly wrong. Canaris, whose role in the whole D-Day deception has never been clear, was to follow. An SD search of the old Abwehr offices revealed records and diaries that implicated the Admiral and his staff as having been in the know about many things he should have reported. The last head of the Abwehr was finally condemned for contact with the enemy. In vain Canaris protested that contact with the enemy was the job of a secret intelligence service, and that he was a loyal German and no traitor to the Reich. It was to no avail; he was imprisoned, and as the Reich crashed around the deranged dictator, Hitler finally ordered him killed.

Canaris's end was not easy. After being beaten by SD thugs, and with blood dripping from a smashed nose and jaw, he was slowly strangled by hanging from a meat hook on 9 April 1945 at Flossenburg, a lonely sacrifice to Nazi vengeance. In their own way, the two German intelligence officers, von Roenne and Canaris, were both among the final victims of the successful Allied deception on D-Day.

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

The standard response by Stalin's staff in 1941 to any expression of concern about an impending German attack.

Barbarossa, 1941

At 01.45 on the morning of 22 June 1941, a Soviet train steamed up to the frontier post on the Russian-German border at Brest Litovsk, loaded with 1,500 tons of grain. The trucks were part of the 200,000 tons of grain and 100,000 tons of petroleum products delivered to the west *every month* for the German war economy by Stalin, keeping his word to Adolf Hitler under the the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact's "co-operative economic ventures". The scene at the border was of routine, calm and order. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Nazi Party's Greater German Reich were allies, by solemn treaty.

An hour and a half later, the all-conquering Wehrmacht burst east across that same bridge in another ferocious blitzkrieg, to begin the invasion of communist Russia. "We just need to kick in the door," the Fuhrer boasted to his inner circle, "and the whole rotten edifice of the Bolshevik regime will come crashing down." The Nazi leadership, in a phrase that has eerie echoes, believed that it would all be over by the autumn, let by alone by Christmas.

By 1941, the Soviet Union had the largest, most efficient and best informed intelligence service in the world. Under the

leadership of the revolutionary founder of the Soviet Secret Service, Felix Dzerzhinsky, by the 1920s the Soviet intelligence service had grown both in size and scope until it reached into every aspect of Russian life as well as overseas communist parties and foreign Chanceries. Using a vast network of agents and sympathizers, little went on in the rest of the world that did not find its way back to the seat of the communist revolution in Moscow. Comrade Stalin, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was determined that in the historic clash of ideologies between capitalism and communism, the heirs of Marx and Lenin would not be found wanting.

Yet just before dawn on 22 June 1941, over three million men and 3,350 tanks of the armies of the Greater German Reich invaded the Soviet Union and took its unprepared western border defences almost completely by surprise. How on earth could such a failure of intelligence, which led to the most destructive war in human history, have happened apparently without warning?

The answer is simple. The dictator of the Soviet Union refused to acknowledge a truth presented to him over and over again: Nazi Germany was going to invade the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Stalin is the root cause of the intelligence disaster that befell Soviet Russia in 1941. His obsession with avoiding a war with the Third Reich, coupled with his persistent refusal to acknowledge clear intelligence that the Germans were about to invade, were to ensure that his country suffered a catastrophic defeat as Operation Barbarossa pushed the Russians back to the gates of Moscow itself.

Stalin's motives were complex but seem to stem from an overriding desire to buy time. He knew better than anyone just how unprepared the Red Army was for war, and he seems to have been prepared to ignore the most accurate reports of trouble in a vain attempt to convince himself that it couldn't

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

happen. Stalin expected war. Indeed, in the analysis beloved of Marxist-Leninists, a final clash between communism and capitalism was an historic inevitability. Stalin's problem was he was not yet ready for this particular stage in the unfolding of the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic. For just three years before, he had wrecked - deliberately wrecked - his army.

In the spring of 1937, as part of what became known as the "Great Terror", Stalin had moved to purge the Red Army of "internal enemies". During the next three years he executed most of his senior military commanders on trumped-up charges. The cull was horrific: 75 of the 80 members of the "Military Soviet" were killed; every commander of every military district: two-thirds of the divisional commanders, half the brigade commanders and over 400 of 456 staff colonels. Stalin effectively sliced the head off the Red Army.

Hardly surprisingly, the Red Army's invasion of neighbouring Finland in the winter of 1939 turned into a military debacle. Little Finland's 200,000 defenders cut the million-strong Red Army to pieces, inflicting nearly a quarter of a million casualties on the Russians before finally being ground down by superior numbers. David had not only thrashed Goliath but shown him to be a sluggish incompetent, a fact of which Stalin was only too well aware.

It is to the inner recesses of Stalin's secretive, fearful and cunning psyche that we must turn for the truth behind the surprise attack known as Barbarossa. Stalin may have wielded supreme authority in the USSR, but at heart the Russian dictator was terrified - paranoid, even - of losing power. While he could master events in the Soviet Union by killing off his enemies, real or imagined, outside it one man and his all-conquering army posed a potentially mortal threat to the communist regime and leader.

In this light, many of Stalin's actions become not only under-

standable but also strangely rational. By the bizarre standards of paranoid ideological dictators, Stalin's behaviour makes a kind of curious sense. He felt he had at all costs to prevent a war which could destroy him until he was ready for the final historic combat between the great ideologies. If we understand this *Weltanschauung*, or world view, then Stalin's attempts to ignore and suppress unequivocal intelligence warnings of a German attack seem almost logical. At worst they offer the ultimate nightmare for the intelligence officer: a commander who chooses to ignore and suppress the very best intelligence handed to him because he has his own agenda, and is prepared to go to any lengths to suppress the truth becoming known, much less acted upon. Stalin was not the first or the last commander to utter the immortal words, "I am my own intelligence officer!" He just wasn't a very good one, as events proved.

The facts speak for themselves: between late July 1940 and 22 June 1941, no less than ninety separate, unequivocal warnings of an impending attack on the Soviet Union were passed to Stalin. In every case they were professionally collated, evaluated, interpreted and briefed to Stalin as supreme commander. So far as we know, none of them was disseminated further. As a direct consequence of this intelligence failure the USSR lost 4 million soldiers - including over 2 million prisoners of war - 14,000 aircraft, 20,000 guns and 17,000 tanks in the battles from the frontiers to the outskirts of Moscow between June and December 1941 at the hands of the German invaders.

To understand how this came about, we have to go back three years to Munich. The Munich Agreement of 1938 had come as a great shock to the Soviet Union. Convinced by Marxist dogma of the historic inevitability of another Franco-German capitalist war (from which there could only be one beneficiary - the Soviet Union), and still trusting in the international system of "collective security" to contain Hitler's resurgent Germany, for the Soviets Munich spelled a

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

new and dangerous Europe. The Soviet Ambassador in London, Maisky, warned Moscow that "International relations are now entering an era of brute force, savagery and the policy of the mailed fist." Further Soviet analysis of the USSR's position in the post-Munich world spelled out British and French policy in brutally stark terms: "[British] Foreign Office policy now has only two aims: peace at any cost, and secondly, collusion with aggressors at the expense of third countries to grant the aggressor concessions."

Such a policy of colluding with Hitler was seen by Stalin and his advisers as both fundamentally anti-communist and anti-Russian, and therefore a serious threat to the USSR. For, looming ever larger in Soviet official thinking, was the belief that Britain and France would be only too happy to use a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union to divert Hitler's rapacious attention away from themselves.

Alan Clarke's telling phrase about Hitler's advisers, "vanity and self delusion are among the lesser vices of despotic courts", applies equally to the Byzantine post-revolutionary circle of Stalin and his Bolshevik cronies, where paranoia and conspiracy were the norm. Any objective analysis of events was further distorted by communist prejudices and dogma, plus a fear of capitalist plots to snuff out the fledgling Soviet Union, both of which led to a ruthless search for internal traitors and counter-revolutionaries.

The problem of deciding what was reality in Moscow was further hindered by Stalin's decision to kill his intelligence analysts. Like the Red Army, the NIO (the Foreign Intelligence Service) and the NKVD/NKGB (the State Security Intelligence Apparatus) had both been ruthlessly purged between 1937 and 1939. Litvinov, the architect of the failed collective security foreign policy, was removed and replaced by a Stalin-led committee early in 1939 after Munich. Although, surprisingly, Litvinov survived, his staff did not. Many diplomats and

foreign service officers tainted by association with "counter-revolutionary elements" disappeared overnight, "liquidated" in the purges that reached into every aspect of Soviet life in the years immediately before the Second World War.

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Stalin lacked sound and informed foreign policy advice in the months after Munich. Most of those who understood what the British and French might do were dead or in the slave camps of the Gulag, enjoying the delights of "honest proletarian labour". Those who survived were keeping their heads well down in a personal survival policy based on the well-known Soviet adage "sniff out, suck up, survive". Only a brave man or a fool was going to gainsay Comrade Stalin's interpretation of events in 1939⁴⁰.

The irony was that the post-Munich period really marked the *end* of appeasement by the French and British. Hitler's cynical invasion of the rump of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 had in fact strengthened Allied resolve and convinced hitherto timid politicians that an Anglo-French and German clash was inevitable. The Soviets read it differently. From Stalin's perspective, the USSR now had a hungry fascist wolf loose on her unprotected western border, aided and abetted by perfidious capitalist democracies. An accommodation with Germany had therefore to be sought: Stalin believed he had to buy Hitler off at all costs. If the road from Munich steeled the Western democracies for a war with Nazi Germany, then, paradoxically, the road from Munich led Stalin directly down his own path of appeasement to the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty of August 1939.

With Soviet policy bent on avoidance of war with Germany, Britain and France became secondary players. The Soviet leadership believed the USSR was now isolated and alone in a dangerous world. Almost in desperation, Stalin ordered Molotov to seek an alliance that would bind their potential

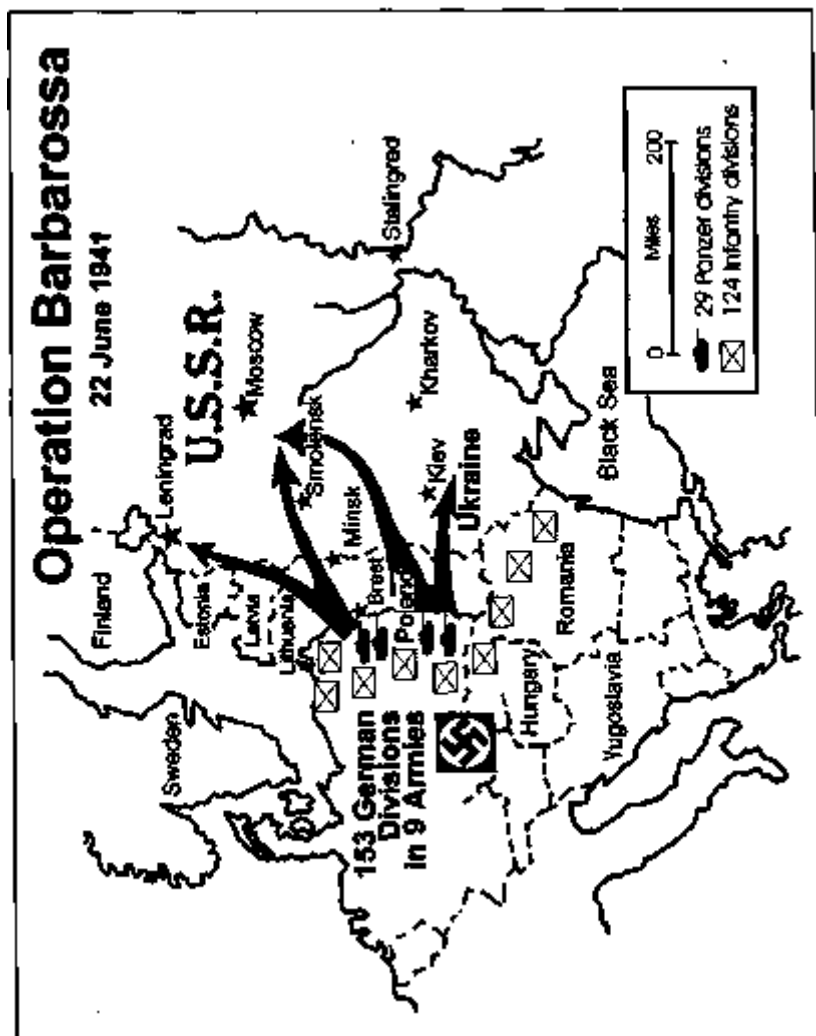
"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

i

enemy, Germany, into a non-aggression pact. Hitler's peremptory rupture of the Peace of Munich in March 1939 merely accelerated the process. However, before approaching Germany direct, Stalin tried the Western Allies one last time, although he believed that neither Britain nor France was in any position to protect their new eastern clients, Poland and Romania. In April 1939 Stalin proposed a new triple treaty based on a collective defensive alliance against Hitler, consisting of Britain, France and the USSR, to protect eastern Europe and by definition the USSR.

Whether this was to put pressure on Hitler, buy time or, most likely, merely to keep Stalin's options open, the French and British response to the proposal was both lukewarm and ambiguous. They counter-proposed a military pact where Russia would come to *Britain and France's* aid if Poland was attacked. As every intelligent observer in Europe knew that Poland was next on Hitler's list of territorial aims, and that neither France nor Britain was capable of protecting that isolated and encircled nation in the event of a Nazi attack, the Anglo-French proposals looked not unnaturally to Stalin like a cynical ploy to suck the USSR into Hitler's coming war with Poland: the very thing he was determined to avoid. None the less, desperate for an accommodation, he despatched emissaries from his new, purged Foreign Ministry to woo the Poles and their new allies. If and when war came, Stalin had no intention of fighting the Germans alone.

The negotiations for the triple alliance dragged on through the summer of 1939. Unfortunately, the French and British saw the talks as a political exercise designed to frighten Hitler and apply pressure to Berlin. The British in particular dragged their feet and played for time. The French, correctly, feared that if the talks were unsuccessful, Stalin might feel that he had no choice but do a deal with Hitler. Stalin himself viewed the discussions differently. Low-level Franco-British delegations



"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

without authority to sign agreements gave the Russian dictator no comfort and merely confirmed his suspicions of capitalist duplicity. He needed a result, and he needed one quickly.

Exasperated by the lack of progress in the triple-alliance talks, and receptive to German counter-approaches designed to give Hitler the free hand he needed to deal with Poland, in August 1939 Stalin decided to make a pact with his potential arch-enemy. In an astonishing volte-face, he authorized face-to-face negotiations between Molotov and Ribbentrop. This time, to ensure success, the negotiations were conducted by the NKVD (the fiefdom of Beria, Stalin's security chief) and not by the purged and cautious diplomats.

On 23 August, to the surprise of diplomatic observers, Ribbentrop flew to Moscow. The Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed the very next day, on 24 August, just eight days before Hitler's invasion of Poland. This unholy alliance of tyrants was a diplomatic coup that, in the words of one seasoned reporter, "stupefied the world". At a stroke, Hitler was given a free hand to attack Poland; and for his part, Stalin had his cherished guarantee of peace. As the German delegates left, a relieved Stalin announced, "The Soviet Government takes [this] new pact very seriously . . . The Soviet Union will never betray its partner." He meant it. The price was that over the next eighteen months, he steadfastly chose to ignore the mass of indications that his partner was about to betray *him*. Whether this was calculation, wishful thinking or just fear we will never know. The seeds of the Barbarossa disaster were sown.

Having signed his treaty, Stalin determined to keep his word. The most striking feature of the Soviet leader's appeasement of Germany was now a series of political and economic gestures designed to conciliate Hitler. Some of these were pure theatre, as when Stalin bear-hugged the embarrassed German Ambassador at Moscow's railway station and swore eternal friendship. History doesn't recall what the fastidious von

Schulenburg said in reply to this very public display of Georgian emotion.

Others were more devious, as the Tass official denial on 8 May 1941 of any German troop concentrations on the Russian border showed. There was a mass of evidence to the contrary, of which Stalin was well aware. Even overt German photo-reconnaissance flights were studiously "overlooked", despite at least one crash at Rovno on 15 April 1941 of a Luftwaffe plane laden with incriminating exposed intelligence films in the wreckage. Soviet anti-aircraft defences were specifically ordered not to open fire on German aircraft, even if they strayed into Soviet airspace. Apparently no humiliation was too much for Stalin in his desire to avoid provoking the Germans and to prevent an outbreak of war between autumn 1939 and spring 1941.

It is not difficult to understand the workings of Stalin's mind in this period. According to Churchill, the Soviet leader later claimed ruefully, "I thought I could gain another six months or so", and there is plenty to suggest that Stalin's aim was to delay war until the Soviet Union was prepared for one, perhaps in 1942. Unfortunately, Stalin believed that he alone could effect this. Any adviser bringing him a contrary view was dangerous: not just to Stalin's perceived - and obsessive - beliefs, but also to "peace". The unenviable task of being one of Stalin's intelligence officers in the spring of 1941 was thus fraught with danger. The last thing Stalin wanted was objective and honest reporting that would compel him to take action.

It is against this twisted logic that the failure of Stalin to heed the intelligence warnings of an impending German attack should be viewed. And there was no shortage of intelligence warnings. As early as the end of June 1940, information about Hitler's future intentions had already been passed to Moscow. Where this came from is obscure, but it was subsequently reinforced by no less than ninety factual reports - accurate,

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

credible and in many cases confirmed by other sources - between July 1940 and 22 June 1941. How Stalin could dismiss some of the intelligence that was passed to him personally almost beggars belief. For example, on 25 December 1940, the Soviet Attache in Berlin passed on a resume of Hitler's Fuhrer Directive 21 of 18 December 1940, the operation order for Barbarossa; and on 1 March 1941 in Washington Sumner Welles, the US Under-Secretary of State, formally summoned and briefed the Soviet Ambassador with the full details of a forthcoming German attack. His source was the junior US Commercial Attache in Berlin, Sam E. Woods. Woods had been briefed by a disgruntled anti-Nazi official in the Berlin Trade Ministry on detailed German plans for an invasion of the USSR planned for spring 1941.

The stunned Soviet Ambassador heard that the American attache had learned of the details in *August 1940*. The American authorities were so concerned to ensure that the reports were accurate before passing them on that they had turned them over to the FBI in January 1941 for critical evaluation. After exhaustive cross-checking, analysts confirmed that the intelligence appeared to be accurate and confirmed by other sources. Welles gravely informed the Soviet Ambassador that the evidence was "so overwhelming it should be passed to Foreign Minister Molotov immediately". Urmansky, the Ambassador, "turned very white", according to Welles. Stalin's reaction on being told was different. He ignored the US reports and in the Russian phrase "safed it in the wall". And "safed" the intelligence stayed.

The reason Stalin could do this was simple: like many dictators and supreme commanders, he allowed an intelligence organization to grow up around him that reflected his own prejudices. Only the "right" intelligence could be passed to the great man, if intelligence officers wanted to survive. Being human, General Golikov, his chief intelligence officer,

an efficient if doctrinaire operations officer, with no reputation as an intelligence analyst but a commendable political loyalty to the party line, made sure that any intelligence reports reaching his master were carefully sorted into "reliable" and "not confirmed". As the Kremlin definition of "reliable" in early 1941 seems to have embraced any information that agreed with Comrade Stalin's analysis of the politico-military situation, Stalin's propensity for self-delusion was powerfully reinforced.

Golikov's promotion as head of the GRU (Soviet Military Intelligence) in 1940 must have wrung sad farewells and tears over the vodka from his colleagues rather than the congratulations that accompany the usual office party. The seven previous incumbents of the post had all been shot on Stalin's orders

Yet Golikov survived, even though his two immediate successors were also shot by Stalin, doubtless anxious to re-establish his track record for consistency in these matters. Quite why Golikov survived is a curiosity. After the German attack he was even transferred to England in late 1941 in order to run the GRU's agent network from a safe overseas base - a fact that the British have been reluctant to advertise. We now know from GCHQ's Venona decrypts that there were at least *thirty-three* British-based traitors working for Moscow, including some very senior figures, in addition to the "famous five" usual suspects - Philby, Burgess, MacLean, Blunt and Carncross. The Soviets must have been very confident of their British spy network to have allowed the head of their Military Intelligence Service to run it from London.

Golikov was certainly in Stalin's confidence; in December 1940, on Stalin's direct orders, he had secretly briefed the twenty-five most senior officers of the GRU, "that the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which was a product solely of the political genius of Comrade Stalin, was no more than a temporary expedient", and that "Hitler would never dare to attack Russia as he was

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

not unbalanced, and to a realist such a course would be suicide." This was, of course, little more than wishful thinking at best, and at worst, pure self-delusion on Golikov's part. However, to survive and prosper as Chief Intelligence Officer amid the murderous intrigues of Stalin's court, sycophancy was the norm, and the "Great Leader's" Party Line the only true guide to accurate intelligence assessment.

Golikov died in his bed in 1980. Only then did the truth come out. Far from being a simple son of peasant stock, as his revolutionary biographers claimed, like many others he had lied about his origins and even his age to survive the Revolution. He had attended the Tsarist Cavalry Academy before the Great War in 1911 (which would have been difficult for an alleged 11-year-old) and had won his party credentials by being a ruthless killer in the repression of the peasants and kulaks after 1918. Stalin had chosen him to bear the poisoned chalice of the GRU in July 1940 precisely because he trusted Golikov's slavish devotion to the party line and to his leader personally. He could rely on comrade Golikov to follow his orders without question.

The result was that, with the military commanders Timoshenko and Zhukov, Golikov conspired with Stalin to ensure the total inaction of the Soviet intelligence apparatus until the Germans struck on 22 June 1941. On 20 April 1941 he had brandished the latest intelligence warnings of the impending German invasion in front of a group of GRU officers and parroted the very words Stalin had just screamed at him: "This cannot be true. It is an English provocation! Investigate!"

Golikov was not alone in this. His counterparts, Merkulov, the Georgian head of the NKGB, and Fitin, the head of the International Department, the INU, adopted a similar survival strategy. Both of them also backed down from any confrontation over the intelligence flooding in about Barbarossa.

Even when Fitin took his courage in his hands and suggested they sign a joint warning to Stalin, a frightened Merkulov flatly refused, saying, "No - up there at the top. [Comrade Stalin] knows far more about intelligence than we do. Comrade Stalin knows best." For the chief of a national intelligence service this is a remarkable statement.

Faced with intelligence advisers like these, Stalin was easily able to delude himself about German intentions. When Churchill (armed with hard Enigma decrypts that elite Nazi divisions were in Cracow, Poland, and not in the Balkans) decided to alert Stalin with a personal message from a "trusted agent" in April 1941, Stalin is alleged to have scrawled "Another English provocation!" in the margin before filing it, and took no action. Churchill's accurate and timely warning was by no means the only one. With the advantage of the 20/20 vision conferred by history, we can today see clearly both sides of the intelligence build-up to Barbarossa, and, equally clearly, Stalin's blind refusal to countenance it. It makes astonishing reading.

As early as 22 July 1940 (*before* the Battle of Britain had reached its peak) the German Army's Chief of Staff, General Franz Haider, noted that Hitler wanted now to "begin planning for an attack on Russia". A week later, Jodl and Hitler are both on record as saying that Russia must be smashed. On 9 August 1940, the German High Command issued the directive for "Otto", the preliminary planning for an attack in the east set for spring 1941. And on 8 September 1940, the Wehrmacht's new Quartermaster-General at Zossen took over a draft operation order for the invasion of Russia in his safe. There is ample evidence that Stalin was made aware of these German intentions.

On 1 July 1940, Churchill wrote personally to the Soviet dictator warning him of Hitler's intentions. Although the British Prime Minister's letter appears not to have been based on any specific hard intelligence, he was the wrong man to

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

alert Stalin and, considering Britain's post-Dunkirk plight, it was the wrong time. Stalin read it merely as a feeble attempt to involve the USSR in Britain's lost war and, coming as it did from the arch anti-Bolshevik Churchill, just another clumsy provocation. Amazingly, he passed the message directly to the German Ambassador, von Schulenburg, as yet another example of perfidious Albion. No one was going to accuse Comrade Stalin of breaking faith over the Nazi-Soviet Pact with his valued ally, Herr Hitler.

To add to this catalogue of ignored warnings, Stalin's intelligence service was feeding him with high-grade human intelligence from a number of trusted agents deep within the combatants' war machines. For example, John Cairncross (later revealed to have been the KGB's "Fifth Man" in Britain) was Private Secretary to Lord Hankey, the minister responsible for the British intelligence services in Churchill's government. We do not know exactly what Cairncross passed to his masters in Moscow, but Oleg Gordievsky has claimed that there were literally "tons of documents" in the KGB archives sourced from Cairncross after his recruitment in September 1940.

The intelligence from Britain was confirmed by other reports: the Schulze-Boysen spy network based in the German Air Ministry, the Trepper "Red Orchestra" and the German traitor von Scheliha in the German Embassy in Warsaw all contributed to the flow of alarming reports landing on Golikov's desk in Moscow. They confirmed one clear and constant trend: Hitler and his generals were planning an attack on the USSR in spring 1941.

In all fairness, Barbarossa, like any thorough military operation planned by the German General Staff, had a substantial deception plan. Indeed, its deception measures were the biggest the Wehrmacht ever used; only the Allied plans for D-Day were more all-embracing. The major thrust of the deception effort was the pretence first that Hitler was covering

the Balkans (where Mussolini was in deep trouble fighting the Greeks and Albanians), and second that the movement of troops to the East in winter 1940/1 was a ruse to fool the British into thinking that Operation Sea Lion, the German invasion of England, had been cancelled. The massive Barbarossa troop redeployments were represented as *a deception plan for an invasion of Britain*.

Even though the German General Staff operation order on deception for Barbarossa closes with the plaintive words, "The stronger our troop concentration in the East, the harder [it will be] to create uncertainty about our plans. . . . Suggestions and proposals by subordinate units are desired", the overall deception plan worked, despite the numerous accurate warnings that presaged it. Stalin's ears were sealed and his eyes were blind; a therapist today would say that he was "in denial". However much evidence he was given Stalin just ignored it, believing only reports that coincided with his own perception of intelligence. Anything that did not fit was dismissed as provocation or disinformation. Even though some of the reports flowing to him were amazingly precise, in the end Stalin believed only what he wanted to believe. Early in June 1941 the German Ambassador, the ever-sympathetic von Schulenburg, briefed the new head of the Soviet International Affairs Department that "I am going to tell you something that has never been done in diplomacy before . . . Germany's state secret number one is that Hitler has taken the decision to begin war against you on 22 June." Stalin's indignant response to the Politburo was that "Disinformation has now reached ambassadorial level!"

Looking now at the sheer mass of intelligence presented to the Russians, it seems incomprehensible that Operation Barbarossa would have taken them by surprise. And yet it did. Stalin even ignored the detailed intelligence on Barbarossa from Richard Sorge, the NKGB's prized agent in Japan, to such an extent that the Communists' most trustworthy and

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

accurate spy was reduced to weeping "Moscow doesn't believe me" in his mistress's arms. Stalin had rejected Sorge's warning of 19 May 1941 that nine German armies with 150 divisions were massing against the USSR. Stalin angrily denounced Sorge as "a little shit who has just set himself up with some good businesses in Japan".

Stalin also chose to overlook news of Luftwaffe and panzer units relocating to Poland, a personal statement by Hitler to his ally Prince Paul of Yugoslavia that he would invade the USSR in mid-June, a copy of the outline Barbarossa operation order from an agent, massive German railway traffic to the East, German General Staff requests for thousands of copies of maps of the Baltic States and the western USSR, Wehrmacht defectors giving precise details of their targets and objectives, and last but not least, on 9 June 1941, precise details of the instructions to Ambassador von Schulenburg to "burn all documents" and prepare to leave Moscow. The number and detail of the Soviet reports read like an intelligence officer's indications and warning textbook and cover every available intelligence source and agency.

Some of the warnings were positively bizarre. The case of the drunken professor is one of the more remarkable and reads more like a film script than reality. At a diplomatic reception on 15 May, Professor Karl Bomer, the head of Dr Gobbels' Foreign Press Department, "waving a glass", announced to the astonished throng of diplomats and journalists that "he would soon be leaving his post as he was being promoted to become Gauleiter of the Crimea after the invasion of Russia on 22 June." As Bomer was known to enjoy a good party and was notoriously indiscreet with journalists, this drunken boast by a senior Nazi official should have been taken seriously, especially as Bomer was promptly relieved of his post and arrested by three large Gestapo men in leather coats.

Another more serious report was of an exchange at the

farewell party for the American Embassy's First Secretary at the end of April in Berlin. Secretary Patterson introduced his Soviet diplomatic counterpart to a Luftwaffe major in uniform, who revealed (rather more soberly than Dr Bonier) that his squadron had just been secretly redeployed from Rommel's command in North Africa to Lodz in Poland. "I know I shouldn't be telling you this," the German added, "but I'd hate anything to happen between our two countries." The startled Russian transmitted this to Moscow where it was doubtless filed away as "another provocation".

Stalin ignored all these reports. Worse, he suppressed them to such an extent that in the final days before war he even ordered German deserters coming across the border bringing precise details of their units' Barbarossa objectives to be shot as *provocateurs*. Not a word reached his generals. Neither Timoshenko at the Defence Commissariat nor Zhukov at the General Staff saw any data or hard intelligence of the impending German attack. Golikov, with Stalin's approval, "safed" his intelligence away. To compound their difficulties, by spring 1941 the Russian generals' own subordinates in the frontier military districts were warning them from below. German troop and aircraft movements on the scale of Barbarossa could not be entirely concealed. Pleas for contingency plans to relocate forward Soviet units to better defensive positions began to flood into Moscow in late May and June 1941. In desperation, the Soviet marshals turned to their intelligence staffs on the High Command for accurate assessments.

The fact that they did not get them can be attributed to two other factors, in addition to Stalin's suppression of the truth. First, there was the German deception operation designed to mask their build-up in the East. Many of the individual incidents of German activity reported to the Soviet commanders on the western border were undoubtedly capable of ambiguous interpretation. However, although the deception

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

arrangements made by the Germans to disguise Barbarossa were both professional and comprehensive, it is doubtful whether they would have worked as well as they did without the dead hand of Stalin's self-deception. There were simply too many reports, and the Soviet intelligence system was simply too thorough to be deceived. But Stalin made it otherwise.

A second reason, which we may find hard to credit today, was that Stalin believed there could be no war without an *ultimatum*, a view shared by the whole diplomatic community of the time. There was a misplaced but obstinate belief that any crisis must start with a German ultimatum. This pre-Pearl Harbor outlook coloured all intelligence assessments, and not just in the Kremlin. As a result, the whole thrust of Stalin's policy of appeasement towards the Nazi regime in 1941 seems to have been designed to prevent any situation that could have led to a German ultimatum. If we accept the fact that *no pretext for war was to be offered under any circumstances*, then Stalin's deliberate suppression of unwelcome intelligence makes sense. The more unwelcome and forceful the intelligence, the more danger it posed to Soviet policy. Like a dog fearing a beating, Stalin was rolling on his back, determined not to provoke Hitler at all costs.

In its final days, the prelude to Barbarossa saw perhaps one of the most bizarre events of the Second World War and one that muddied the waters hopelessly against any Russian perception of British good faith over the final warnings of German intentions. On 10/11 May 1941, Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, unexpectedly flew to Scotland in an Me-110 long-range fighter. Even today, the mysterious circumstances of his flight remain unexplained. Hess appears to have acted for his own reasons, in a desperate last-minute attempt to negotiate peace with Britain to avoid Germany's long-standing nightmare of war on two fronts.

Whatever Hess's motives, Soviet suspicion of both the flight

itself and the British government's reaction fatally skewed his perceptions of the subsequent British warnings over Barbarossa, however accurate and urgent. Stalin's greatest fear - an Anglo-German negotiated peace, thus freeing Hitler to turn all his victorious legions east - suddenly looked frighteningly possible. Every British action over the next month was weighed in the Kremlin against the belief that the British aim was to do everything in their power to provoke a Soviet-German clash. Even Anthony Eden's personal warnings (2-13 June 1941) of the impending Nazi onslaught were dismissed by the Soviet Ambassador in London as merely part of Hitler's "war of nerves to wring concessions from the USSR without a fight". The stage was set for Barbarossa.

So it was that on the night of 21/2 June 1941 trains full of wheat and oil were still being dispatched west by the Soviets. The grain shipment at the bridge over the River Bug at Brest Litovsk was the last of many. Nazi customs officials solemnly cleared the train and its cargo, which then steamed slowly across the bridge and into the Fatherland, to add to the thousands of tons of *Soviet* food and petrol with which Hitler, with calculated effrontery, would supply his invasion of the USSR.

As it crossed west onto Polish soil, the train snaked between batteries of German artillery massed in the darkness, where sweating gunners stockpiled ready-use shells in the short humid night. An hour and a half later they were in battle, part of the huge barrage that flamed into action at 03.15 along the 1,250 miles of the whole Eastern Front from the Baltic to the Black Sea. It launched the biggest invasion in history and the bloodiest campaign of the Second World War. Barbarossa had begun. Its first casualty was a German communist, Private Alfred Liskow, who deserted on 21 June to alert the Russians. He was shot immediately on Stalin's orders.

The shock of the attack in Moscow was total. Marshal Zhukov's memoirs, although written cautiously as befitted a

"Comrade Stalin Knows Best"

canny survivor of the Communist Party's purges, give clear indications that in the Kremlin Comrade Stalin had the equivalent of a nervous collapse. The Great Leader disappeared to his villa at Kuntsevo, leaving a shaken Molotov to go on the radio and break the news to the Soviet people. Stalin was stunned and panicky, telling his family to "flee to the Urals with all their children".

Stalin was not to regain his composure for several days. Everything for which he had deceived, killed and suppressed apparently lay in ruins. We can even speculate that he may have felt his own position was at risk as a result of his denial and misreading of intelligence vital to the state. He had, after all, ordered others shot in the gloomy dungeons of the Lubyanka for much less. Fortunately for the Russian dictator, the Kremlin had more pressing concerns than Politburo leadership squabbles in those confused days of the last week of June 1941.

Across the years we can ask ourselves how such an obvious military build-up could have been ignored. How could seasoned intelligence professionals allow such an intelligence disaster to happen? In all fairness, many of the warnings were *not* ignored. They were misinterpreted: as political pressure, as relocations of units for other purposes, as part of Hitler's wider ambitions in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean. Stalin was not alone in his misinterpretation of the available intelligence. Even the British Joint Intelligence Committee was ambivalent in its conclusions until the end of May 1941 and only confirmed the Germans' final intention to invade early in June.

In the final analysis, the failure to anticipate Operation Barbarossa must stand as one of the greatest intelligence disasters in history, and there can be no doubt that the blame must be laid squarely at Stalin's door. Harrison Salisbury, who was in Moscow at the time, sums up the Soviet dictator's intelligence failure thus in his book *900 Days*:

Neither quantity nor quality of intelligence reporting determines whether national leaderships act in a timely and resolute fashion. It is the ability of that leadership to comprehend what is reported, to assimilate the findings of spies and the warnings of diplomats. Unless there is a clear channel from lower to top levels, unless the leadership insists on honest and objective reporting, and is prepared to act on such reports, regardless of preconceptions, prejudices . . . then the best intelligence in the world goes to waste - or even worse, is turned into any agency of self-deceit. This was clearly the case with Stalin. Nothing in the Bolshevik experience so plainly exposed the defects of the Soviet power monopoly as when the man who held that power was ruled by his own internal obsessions.

Stalin's fatal misinterpretation and denial of the clear intelligence he was given was to cost the Soviet Union 20 million dead, 6 million houses, 6,000 hospitals, 70,000 cities, towns and villages laid waste, and changed the map of the world for ever.

With potentially the best intelligence service in the world at his beck and call, Stalin blew it. There can be no other judgment. Although he may have bought a little time for the USSR, he did not even prepare the Red Army for invasion, with the result that Soviet losses in 1941 were far worse than they needed to be. In 1941 alone Mother Russia - to which Stalin now desperately pleaded in Churchillian rhetoric for his own and his regime's survival - suffered nearly two million casualties, many of them avoidable as the Red Army's trapped forward divisions were encircled and annihilated by the scything Nazi panzer thrusts.

Stalin was indeed his own intelligence officer - and a thoroughly bad one at that. We are still paying the price for his mistakes today in our post-Cold War world.

*" The Finest Intelligence in Our
History"
Pearl Harbor, 1941*

If D-Day was a triumph of deception over an efficient intelligence service, and Barbarossa the neutralization of an outstanding intelligence service by a dictator's stupidity, then Pearl Harbor represents the consequences of a nation not having a proper intelligence service at all.

For the intelligence analyst Pearl Harbor deserves particular attention because it was the classic case of a nation actually having nearly all the key intelligence indicators of an impending attack, but failing to recognize them or act upon the warning. As a result of poor intelligence the course of world history was altered irreversibly and the new dominance of the USA confirmed four years later in the world's first atomic bomb. That mushroom cloud over Hiroshima has cast a shadow over world affairs to this day, and yet without Pearl Harbor the USA would have been reluctant to become involved in Japan's war in the Pacific.

The disaster at Pearl Harbor on Sunday 7 December 1941, when 18 major fighting ships were sunk (including four out of eight battleships), 188 aircraft destroyed and 2,403 Americans killed by the Japanese Imperial Navy in a surprise dawn air attack, came as a huge shock to the American people. Every American of that generation could remember where they were

the day war broke out. President Roosevelt called it "a day that will be remembered in infamy".

The irony was that most informed commentators were expecting war at some point with Japan. Even by the standards of the time, there was ample evidence that a Pacific war was not only inevitable but imminent. How then did the US government fail to prepare for what was recognized at the highest levels as "a clear and present danger"? To understand how such a disaster could befall a great nation, we have to go back to the beginning of the Second World War.

The USA of 1939 was a world power; economically, politically and in terms of sheer size. Paradoxically, with the exception of her navy, she exhibited few of the trappings of a major global force. Her army was tiny, she was not even a member of the League of Nations (the forerunner of the United Nations) and both government policy and public mood were fiercely isolationist. Not only did America lack an integrated intelligence organization, but she steadfastly refused to create one. Secure behind her ocean barriers, continental America wanted nothing more than peace and a return to prosperity. In 1940 Washington was absorbed by the presidential election and domestic politics.

This attitude was understandable. The Great Depression of 1931-8 had hit the USA harder than any other democracy. With millions unemployed, food queues and the near collapse of what was effectively unregulated capitalism, the American economy in the thirties had come much closer to a meltdown of society than is realized today. Only unprecedented political and economic measures by the new president, Franklin Roosevelt, some of them of dubious constitutional legality, had enabled the Union to survive. Economically and socially, the America of 1938 was a traumatized country.

The advent of yet another European war was in many ways an unmitigated blessing for the United States. Provided the

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

country could stay out of the conflict, rich economic pickings could be made out of the misfortunes of others. For example, US unemployment plunged by nearly three-quarters of a million in the autumn of 1939 as the value of the great defence stocks - chemical, aircraft, steel, shipbuilding and auto-manufacturing companies - soared following Hitler's invasion of Poland. Industry and the economy boomed; in the words of the old Depression song, "Happy days are here again!"

In this atmosphere there was little incentive for the US political authorities to do anything that might endanger the USA's domestic economic recovery. While President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's enemies claimed that he was trying to drag the USA into an unwanted war, the facts seem to indicate that FDR, although not unaware of the long-term threats posed by fascism and communism, wanted nothing more than to keep the US economic recovery going.

Despite some claims by conspiracy theorists, the path to Pearl Harbor is not littered with deep plots to involve the USA in a major war or some cunning Churchillian scheme to lure the USA into rescuing Britain in her darkest hour. Rather, the more one examines the build-up to America's greatest intelligence disaster, the more it becomes clear that like most accidents there was a chain of errors, some big, some small, all contributing to a fatal climax. Hindsight is a fairly exact science. Today with the benefit of the evidence, we can examine in some detail those links in the chain that brought America so disastrously to war. In the cumulative sequence of US miscalculation, however, the one clear and constant failure was of intelligence; of that there can be no doubt.

For the professional intelligence analyst the factors that led to the failure at Pearl Harbor are fairly clear:

1. There was no national intelligence organization.
2. Total underestimation of the Japanese as potential enemies.

3. No single analysis of all the available evidence.
4. Under-resourcing of the various providers of intelligence.
5. Failure to understand the significance of intelligence provided.
6. Competition between intelligence agencies.
7. Ignorance of senior officers.
8. Lack of any warning system.
9. Interservice rivalry for political-military power and influence.
10. Lack of trained intelligence analysts.
11. No sense of urgency.

Alarming as this list of intelligence mistakes is, it could be longer. But it makes the point: in December 1941, the USA was not taking the possibility of a war with Japan seriously and was certainly not organizing her intelligence services, such as they were, to provide a priority warning of war. In retrospect the intelligence picture seems blindingly obvious, but then most disasters are only really obvious after they have happened.

One unusual feature of the Pearl Harbor story is that we can identify almost precisely the catalyst that triggered the Japanese attack on the sleeping US fleet. The story of the slippery slide to war really begins with an *American* action. By July 1941, Imperial Japan's policies of militarism and expansion, and the invasion of her neighbours, had finally caused the exasperated Allied powers to act. After the brutal invasions of China and Manchuria, the Japanese seizure of southern Indo-China in 1941 was the final straw. In retaliation, the United States, followed by Britain and the Dutch colonial government in the East Indies, imposed a strategic embargo on any exports of oil or steel to Japan in a move designed to force the Japanese to the negotiating table. Japan's ability to make war and indeed to survive economically depended on the oil and

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

other crucial raw materials such as rubber from the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya. Surely, reasoned the far-off politicians in their committee rooms, the embargo would bring the aggressor to its senses. In fact, for Premier Tojo's Japan, there was another policy option. As any knowledgeable adviser on Japanese culture and thought at the time could have explained, the American diplomatic pressure left only one real choice open to the proud, fiercely independent and irredeemably martial heirs to the Samurai: to fight, and to seize what Japan needed, despite efforts to deny access by the Americans and their friends. From July 1941, certainly in Japanese minds, force was the only real option.

It was even possible to work out the timing of any likely attack. In the summer, American planners had calculated, correctly, that Japan had stockpiles of aviation spirit for only another six months. Surely then, reasoned the policy-makers in Washington, by December 1941 the Japanese would be forced to come cap in hand to the Allies. Would not the Japanese have no choice but to agree to demands for a withdrawal from their illegal conquests in South-East Asia, if they wanted to get their hands on the precious stocks of oil and strategic materials they so desperately needed?

Unfortunately, the Japanese planners saw the ticking clock started by their American counterparts in July of 1941 rather differently. From the Japanese perspective at the time they really had no choice but to seize by force what the US and Allied embargo was denying them. And, calculated the Japanese planners, their seizure had to be made before the end of December 1941 when their existing stocks of strategic war supplies would begin to run out. Not for the first time in intelligence matters, two opposing sets of planners looked at identical information and came up with diametrically opposed conclusions. Therein lie the real roots of the blunder and the fascination of the disaster at Pearl Harbor.

Despite having naively miscalculated probable Japanese intentions, the US administration was not completely unaware of Japanese policy and military thinking. By a triumph of code-breaking that paralleled Britain's Ultra operation to break the German Enigma traffic, by 1941 the USA could read Japan's most secret codes and ciphers. Every high-level Japanese diplomatic message could, theoretically, be "unbuttoned" and made available to defence planners from the President downward. The code name of this priceless intelligence advantage was appropriately enough, Magic, and through the labyrinth of this shadowy code-breaking world many of the secrets of Pearl Harbor were to be revealed in advance.

The US record in signals intelligence was unusual. In 1929 America's original team of diplomatic code-breakers, MIS, led by the legendary Herbert Yardley, was summarily disbanded by Secretary of State Henry Stimson because, as he said later, "Gentlemen don't read each other's mail". This astonishing act of political self-denial may not have been quite as high minded as history likes to make out. For at the very time that Yardley's MIS closed, its work was being discreetly transferred to yet another branch of the US bureaucracy, the Army's Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) under William F. Friedman. Friedman, a dedicated and scientific figure, now took on the task of deciphering the Japanese diplomatic codes.

To further complicate the picture, yet *another* American signals intelligence (sigint) organization was successfully reading Japanese radio traffic. In Washington, the US Navy had established its own highly secret code-breaking organization known as OP-20-G, under a quiet and untidy Naval Lieutenant, Lawrence Safford. There is no evidence that any of these signal intelligence organizations' activities were co-ordinated. By an even more ironic stroke, SIS and OP-20-G were only one block apart in Washington, DC. Safford's Navy team were diligently going about their mysterious trade in the Navy

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

building on Constitution Avenue; up the road in the Munitions Building, Friedmann's Army SIS group was equally enthusiastically attacking Japanese diplomatic cables.

By 1941 both groups were heavily overworked. For the Navy, OP-20-G had obtained almost complete access to day-to-day Japanese naval traffic, which was code-named Orange. Breaking the Magic Japanese diplomatic traffic, known as Purple, was the responsibility of SIS. Neither Army nor Navy agency fully trusted the other or shared its information. Naval secrets were for the Navy and Army secrets were for the Army. Therein lay yet another seed of disaster. You need to see *all* the pieces in the box to complete the jigsaw.

If this bureaucratic mismanagement were not enough, the deal struck between OP-20-G and SIS late in 1940 almost beggars belief. Safford, the head of OP-20-G, recorded: "We agreed [with SIS] to divide all Japanese Diplomatic processing on a daily basis, the Navy taking the odd days' traffic and the Army the even days' traffic . . . later Naval Intelligence and Army G2 arranged for dissemination of the Japanese Diplomatic [take] to the White House and State Department on a monthly basis, Navy taking the odd months and Army the even months."

So, to further confuse the intelligence picture, not only were the US Army and Navy failing to co-operate on collection targets, traffic analysis or technical breakthroughs, but they were also refusing to share interpretation successes. And to compound it all, they were both competing to disseminate any intelligence gleaned separately to their political masters. In today's world, where knowledge is a valuable commodity, the ability to gain a monopoly of access to a politician's ear is rightly hailed as a bureaucratic triumph. Astonishingly, for many months in 1940 and 1941, the US Army and Navy intelligence chiefs refused to tell even the President of the United States vital intelligence that was being made available to their own service chiefs.

Their motives appear complex and seem primarily to be based on a deep and not unreasonable suspicion that Washington's party politicians could not be trusted to keep their mouths shut with real secrets. There were probably other, less clear motives. Both General Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, and Admiral Stark, the Chief of Naval Operation, shared a mistrust of the political advisers surrounding the President. Not everyone trusted Roosevelt's New Deal administration to behave in the national interest. As a result, both Army and Navy restricted the "read" lists for Magic to the bare minimum, using the fiercest need-to-know criteria. Only Roosevelt, his Secretary of State for War, Stimson (who appears to have overcome his previous aversion to reading other people's mail by 1941), the Secretary for the Navy, Knox, and Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, appear to have had access to the secrets of Magic, and even then on a severely restricted basis.

By December 1941, the US intelligence services had between them managed to read both the Japanese naval operations code, JN 25, and most of the Japanese Government's high-level diplomatic traffic. They therefore possessed the capability to decipher and read the Japanese intentions before Pearl Harbor. Unfortunately what the Americans had also done was to allow their sigint units to grow in a fragmented and uncoordinated fashion and so weaken their code-breaking efforts. They had also failed to establish an intelligence coordinating staff. Last but by no means least, in order to keep a great deal of their strategic intelligence out of the hands of their service rivals and the despised Washington politicians, they were only showing some of the intelligence to some of the decision-makers *some* of the time. Suddenly, the disaster at Pearl Harbor becomes a little more understandable.

There is much more to Pearl Harbor than a confused and incompetent misuse of sigint, however. The intelligence ana-

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

lysts, indicators and warning board for December 1941 flashed red and amber for a large number of other significant indicators as the build-up to Pearl Harbor continued. Sigint alone cannot be held responsible. The American authorities had access to plenty of other evidence from a variety of other sources.

In Chapter 2, we saw how Sir John Masterman's Double Cross Committee had used MI5's turned Abwehr agents and then played them back against their former masters. If bureaucratic Washington is to bear the principal burden of the Pearl Harbor debacle, it is only just to include the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover. He appears to have disregarded, on grounds of prejudice, a vital warning about Pearl Harbor given by one of MI5's prize double agents.

As part of the complex game of playing the Abwehr's agents, "Tricycle", Dusko Popov, a Yugoslav, was dispatched by the British to the neutral USA via Lisbon in late summer 1941. Popov's value was twofold: first, he could help to educate American counter-intelligence chiefs in what Britain was achieving by "doubling" agents and playing them back; second and perhaps more important, Tricycle had received one of the Germans' new microdots with clear instructions from his official Abwehr masters on their collection priorities. Tricycle had, in fact, the Abwehr's collection tasking for the USA, in the form of a long questionnaire. This revealed a great deal about the Axis alliance's intentions, obsessions and preoccupations.

The Nazi preoccupations in the questionnaire contained, among a mass of other questions, some revealing queries. One whole section was devoted to Pearl Harbor, its layout, dispositions and defences. Armed with this, double-agent Popov met the FBI Bureau Chief in late August 1941 in a hot and humid Washington.

The meeting was a disaster. Hoover's dislike of the *louche*

Balkan playboy was manifest. MIS's codename for the Yugoslav is alleged to have originated as a dry joke based on Popov's liking for two girls at a time in his bed, but any idea of using such a "corrupt degenerate" as agent Tricycle was dismissed out of hand by the sexually fastidious and xenophobic Hoover. Even the significance of such items in the long German questionnaire as "What is the progress of the dredger at the entrance to [Pearl Harbor's] East and South East Loch?" was ignored or overlooked by him. Tricycle was banished and the whole security liaison effort between the successful British and the arrogant Hoover never materialized. Hoover did not bother to inform the Navy or the State department of the questionnaire, preferring instead to gloat in his memoirs later that he had personally interviewed a "dirty Nazi spy . . . and sent him packing". Yet, sadly, Hoover had held a vital piece of the Pearl Harbor jigsaw in his hand that hot August day: since 30 January 1941, the Japanese had agreed to co-ordinate their collection efforts in the USA with their Italian and German allies. Popov's Abwehr questionnaire was in reality partly a *Japanese*, not a German, collection plan. But J. Edgar Hoover never knew; more importantly, he never cared.

Whatever one thinks of Hoover or Popov, one inescapable fact emerges: if the FBI had compared Tricycle's Abwehr questionnaire with the Navy's existing intercepts of the Japanese J-19 and PA-K2 messages, then the significance would probably have struck them like a thunderbolt. The Japanese intercepts and Popov's questionnaire were nearly identical. Someone really did want to know about every tactical detail of Pearl Harbor; the only questions were who and why?

In 1941 no one in Washington co-ordinated intelligence, no one assessed all source material at the highest level, and there was no way that J. Edgar Hoover was going to share his information with the armed forces, even though he must have known that his own head of station in Honolulu would have

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

been *very* interested in Popov's questionnaire and anything else that gave an indication of Japanese intentions on the islands. For the FBI was responsible for security and counter-intelligence on Hawaii, and the Japanese Consul-General was using a similar questionnaire to Popov's. Another piece of the Pearl Harbor jigsaw was not just overlooked, but thrown away in Hoover's inimitable mixture of conceit, prejudice and arrogance.

Even the crown jewels of intelligence, the Magic intercepts of the Japanese Purple code, were nearly compromised. On 5 May 1941, a worried Tokyo signalled their embassy in Washington, "According to reliable information, it appears that Washington is reading some of your coded messages." The precise source of the leak has never been established, but Ambassador Nomoru was probably being tipped off indirectly by another Axis source, possibly the Abwehr in Berlin. However, the Japanese investigation came up with no hard evidence of compromise, and so, on 20 May, Nomoru signalled Tokyo admitting that perhaps some low-level material was being read, but not the high-level diplomatic traffic. The Japanese were aided in this judgment by a mistaken belief that Japanese was too difficult for foreigners (a not uncommon Oriental conceit), and the somewhat sad conviction that the Purple code, like the Enigma machine, was unbreakable. The Washington siginters could breathe again.

As the countdown to war continued, the indicators of approaching hostilities intensified. During 1941, signals were intercepted from Bangkok, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Batavia (in the Dutch East Indies), London, Moscow, Rome, Shanghai and Singapore. All confirmed the same simple message: Japan was preparing for war. Ironically, even Stalin's Russia helped to build the picture of Japanese preparedness. As part of the Soviet dictator's desperate attempts to avert a war on two fronts, Stalin signed a Japanese-Soviet neutrality pact on 13

April 1941. This freed the Soviets to concentrate on their western border and the looming Nazi threat; but the pact equally released Japanese forces for deployment elsewhere than Siberia. The US I&W board - if such a thing existed - was beginning to fill up with indicators, and nearly all were red.

The relatively moderate Ambassador Nomoru in Washington was reluctantly dragged into the picture yet again, with a peremptory order from his Foreign Minister, Matsuoka, to "set up a [clandestine] intelligence organization in North America for the purpose of being prepared for the worst". American service intelligence staffs faithfully reported the message, but in the absence of a joint national assessment staff the significance of the warning was lost in the welter of background noise and contradictory signals.

With hindsight we can see that it was not war in itself that came as such a traumatic shock to the United States. The real surprise was the way war erupted, and where. But even here the US authorities should have been more alert. Not only did they have the intercepted Japanese Navy questions about Pearl Harbor and the discarded collateral of Tricycle's Abwehr questionnaire, but they were also being fed a daily diet of bellicose Japanese intercepts from all over the Far East. Many of these pointed to American possessions as a potential target.

As the year progressed, further confirmation of Japan's warlike intentions came with the so-called "Canton" signal intercepted in mid-summer 1941 which spelled out the target list for what was to become notorious later as Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. While not denying its provenance, the US Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) dismissed its contents as a mere Japanese wish list, an "expression of Tokyo's wishful thinking" and not a possible warning of targets for attack - which in fact it was. The weight of intelligence flooding in from other sources was equally significant. For example, British intelligence in Manila (MI6) is

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

on record as passing a warning of the Japanese build-up to "Chiefs of American Military and Naval Intelligence, Honolulu" on 3 December stating clearly the British assessment that the US was "a likely target for early hostilities".

Reviewing the evidence, we must ask ourselves two questions. First, did the available intelligence up to 6 December 1941 identify *Pearl Harbor* as a definite target? Second, was Pearl Harbor prepared for trouble, and if not, why not? (The second question is not strictly a matter of intelligence interest, but is crucial to American reaction to the Japanese threat and to the final stages of the disaster.)

It is important to remember that, especially to the Japanese strategic planners, Pearl Harbor was merely a sideshow. It was intended as nothing more than a surprise aerial blitzkrieg, designed to neutralize the American fleet on the flank of the *real* Japanese attack. The prime strike was designed to seize Japan's key economic objectives in South-East Asia. Hard though it is to accept, Pearl Harbor was not the main Japanese target on 7 December 1941. The merest glance at the balance of Japanese forces deployed in the Pacific during the first week of December 1941 shows that only a fraction of Japanese power was dedicated to neutralizing the US fleet. *Politically* the Pearl Harbor strike was every bit as important as the attack on Malaya and the Philippines; however, in strictly military terms, it was a sideshow.

This fact comes as a slightly shocking revelation to many observers. After all, was it not Pearl Harbor that dragged the USA into the Second World War and turned an essentially European quarrel into a global conflict? The judgment is easily supported by the evidence, however, not just of the balance of Japanese forces deployed but also in the Japanese staff planning for the 7 December attacks. *The greater part of the Japanese planning effort was focused on targets for strategic occupation.* This was inevitably reflected in the number of

messages intercepted by the Americans and British. The greater part of the traffic was taken up with events in the South-West Pacific and Asia, and staff interest in the US fleet anchorage appeared to be minimal or non-existent.

This balance of strategic priorities was strongly felt in Japan's councils of war. For example, the Japanese Naval Staff in particular was initially highly sceptical of Admiral Yamamoto's plan for Pearl Harbor. Admiral Nagano, the Chief of Japanese Naval Staff, only authorized the attack on condition that it could be cancelled at any time and *would not interfere with or jeopardize other, more important strategic operations*. So, while there was a wealth of evidence that Japan was going to assault the Far East, the signals for any activity at Pearl Harbor were essentially secondary to the main assaults being planned. This balance of operational priorities was mirrored in the balance of intelligence received by the Allies and reflected in their assessments.

The salient fact about the intelligence disaster at Pearl Harbor is that most of the evidence was hidden by a blizzard of other information at the time. This masking of vital indicators in an overall level of other signals is called "noise" by professional intelligence officers. Quite simply, the clamour of other voices drowned out the Pearl Harbor material. After any surprise attack it is relatively easy to go back over the evidence and pick out the crucial indicators; and thus it proves with Pearl Harbor. But at the time they were competing for attention with other, more likely, events.

There is another factor. By the end of November 1941, almost every informed commentator had realized that the diplomatic policy of bringing Japan to her knees was failing and that the Japanese were preparing to go to war. This is easily confirmed from a selection of the Hawaiian newspapers of the time. During the last two weeks before Pearl Harbor they included the following headlines:

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

US-JAPAN TALKS BROKEN OFF
US REJECTS COMPROMISE
HAWAII - TROOPS ALERTED
JAPAN GIVES TWO MORE WEEKS FOR
NEGOTIATIONS - PREPARES FOR ACTION
IN EVENT OF FAILURE
PACIFIC ZERO HOUR NEAR:
JAPAN ANSWERS THE US

The problem was that although everyone recognized the gravity of the crisis, equally every informed commentator focused on Thailand, Malaya, Burma and the Dutch East Indies as the most likely targets for any Japanese onslaught. Even so, there can be no doubt that the USA took the situation very seriously. Secretary of War Stimson, acting for Roosevelt while the President was on holiday in the last week of November 1941, actually signed a war alert to all US commands on 27 November, during the period of the headlines above. The US Navy's OPNAV version of this signal of 27 November, sent by the Chief of Naval Operations to his fleet commanders in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres, could not be more specific:

This dispatch is to be considered a war warning . . . an aggressive move by Japan is expected within the next few days.

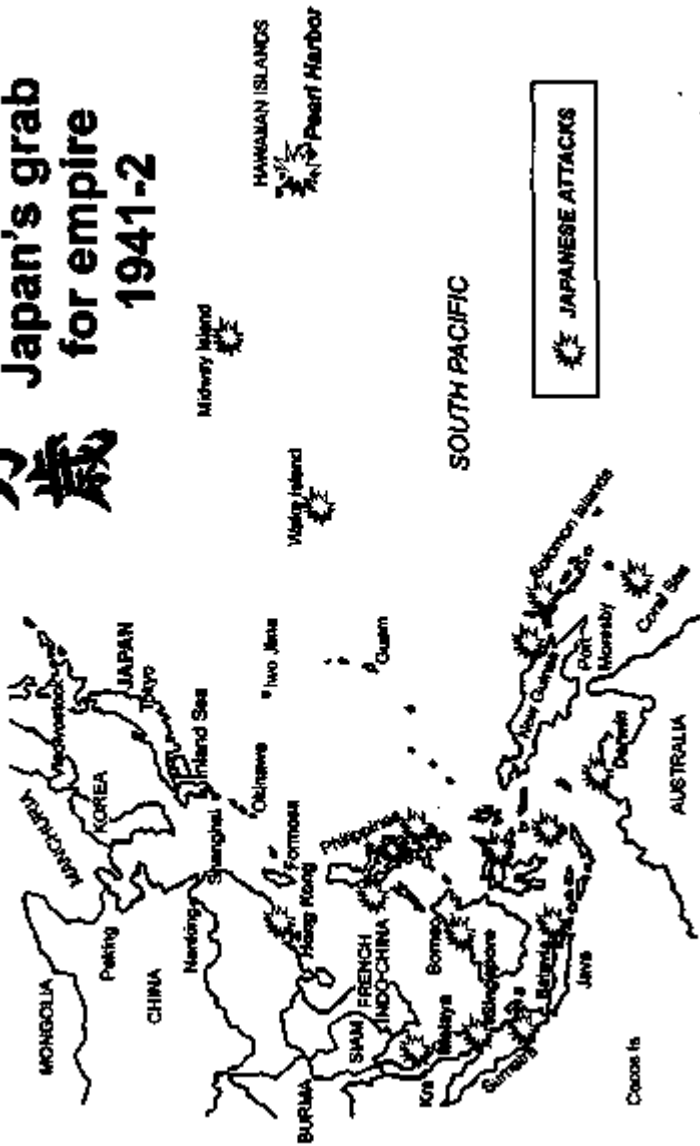
Crucially, the signal goes on:

"The . . . organization of naval task forces indicates an amphibious expedition against either the Philippines or Kra Peninsula [Thailand] or possibly Borneo.

There was no mention of Pearl Harbor.

Pearl Harbor Japan's grab for empire 1941-2

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"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

Both Stimson's and the OPNAV message were received by their respective services in Hawaii. Astonishingly, both were effectively ignored in that neither commander in Hawaii, Army or Navy, put their forces on full alert. Peacetime routines, albeit enhanced ones, continued. Apparently the Japanese threat did not involve Pearl Harbor. Another weak link in the chain had been forged.

So, of the two key questions, the first is clearly answered: by December 1941 the balance of evidence is that everyone who counted knew that war with Japan was imminent, but there was little unambiguous intelligence available to commanders that *Pearl Harbor* was a definite objective, even though US territories might well be a target. The focus of our investigation now homes in on the second question: were the US commands on Hawaii prepared, and if not, why? More ink has been spilled on this issue than almost any other. Nowadays Pearl Harbor stands as a model of the surprise attack, with innocent sailors preparing to go to church on a Sunday morning being slaughtered by a perfidious hail of bombs and high explosive raining from a clear blue sky. No less than six separate inquiries have examined the disaster at Pearl Harbor, although only one appears to have been privy to all the available intelligence.

In this climate of recrimination and accusation it is hardly surprising that conspiracy theories have flourished. The usual suspects in the Pearl Harbor conspiracy stakes are, predictably, Roosevelt and Churchill. Roosevelt, it is claimed, knew only too well that the attack on Hawaii was imminent but deliberately refrained from alerting his hapless commanders in order to drag the USA into a war against the wishes of his countrymen. Churchill, more sinister still, is alleged not only to have known the attack was coming but also to have suppressed any warnings to Washington in order to suck the USA into a war for survival that Britain was losing. Even Stalin gets a mention: some conspiracy commentators allege

that the USSR knew all about Pearl Harbor but kept the information to itself in order to ensure that the Japanese would embroil themselves in Pacific adventures. The threat to the Soviet Union's exposed eastern possessions in Siberia would thus be lifted.

None of these conspiracy claims stands up to close scrutiny. Roosevelt and his advisers knew that something was going to happen, but they didn't know what until it was almost too late to save Pearl Harbor. Churchill and the British Signals Intelligence Service (GCCS), particularly their Far East Combined Bureau, shared the bulk of their relevant operational intelligence with their American counterparts. They passed across much more than any nation at war would normally pass to a neutral country. No one disputes Churchill's relief at the involvement of the USA in the war or his delight at Hitler's ill-judged declaration of war on the USA. There is no evidence, however, that Churchill deliberately misled his American colleagues or knew more about the Pearl Harbor attack than Roosevelt, although both parties knew a great deal of what was going on in Japanese official thinking.

Part of the problem facing commentators both today and the intelligence analysts of 1941 is that the sheer volume of high-level signals intelligence often exacerbates the problem. Given complete transparency of the twists and turns of an enemy's internal policy debates, the analyst often becomes a party to the discussion, if only as an invisible observer. But detailed knowledge of the policy background is not the same as access to a clear copy of the final chosen course of action, the resulting operational plan and, crucially, its executive instructions with locations, timings and code words. This was really the position that the American commanders at Pearl Harbor faced in the first week of December 1941. They knew a Japanese strike was imminent, *but they never appreciated that it might also fall on them.*

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

The reasons for the detailed operational and tactical failures at Pearl Harbor on the ground on the morning of 7 December 1941 are therefore neither military nor strategic. The intelligence failures *before* Pearl Harbor were undoubtedly failures at national, governmental level. The issue of the commanders' "preparedness" in Hawaii *on the day* cannot be ascribed to Roosevelt, Churchill or any other Machiavellian conspirator; the failure at Pearl Harbor lies squarely at the feet of the respective local commanders and their immediate supervisors.

To understand this we have to be clear about the status of the US Hawaii Commands in 1941 and see the world as it was then, far from modern military practice of unified command structures, joint service organization and the like. The first and most striking fact is the plural, "commands". Hawaii was a divided US defence responsibility: the US Navy, under its C.-in-C. Pacific Fleet, Admiral Kimmel, was responsible for the fleet, its operations in the Pacific and its fleet anchorage at Pearl Harbor. The US Army, on the other hand, under Lieutenant-General Short was responsible for ground security of all the Hawaiian islands, defence against invasion and counter-sabotage (there was no US Air Force until 1946). The sad fact is that the US Army and the US Navy did not work together in 1941. They were two entirely separate and competing organizations. Relations between the two commanders and their staffs were distant. The US Navy regarded itself as the premier service and saw Short and his forces as little more than a high-ranking garrison commander ashore for their naval base. There were no joint staffs and no effective liaison between the Navy's intelligence assets on the islands and the Army's.

Another factor intrudes, hard for us to judge across the years but one that is instantly understandable. Rather like Cyprus for the British and Tahiti for the French, Hawaii was the classic "cushy billet" or soft posting. The islands' reputation for sun, sand and the other recreational delights of a

semitropical paradise were as strong in 1941 as they are today. For the Navy, "Pearl" was where you docked after tough sea duty, went ashore and relaxed while the ship was refitted. For the Army, "The Army's Hawaiian Command was a perpetual happy hour", in the words of Colonel Henry Clausen, the lawyer appointed to conduct the definitive secret US Department of Defense investigation into the debacle.

The state of affairs in Hawaii before Pearl Harbor is reinforced by a damning and little known report by a Colonel H.S. Burwell into the Hawaiian Command, dated July 1941 and prepared for Lieutenant-General Short, the Army's new commanding general for the Islands. It identified a number of important deficiencies in his Command, in particular:

- A dangerous lack of awareness of the possibility of a surprise enemy attack in the event of "an abrupt conflict with Japan".
- Complacency at all levels based on "the ingrained habits of peacetime".
- Lack of "aggressive attitude" and "unconcern for the future".
- "Inattention accorded in peacetime to intelligence functions."
- Failure to implement joint planning sufficiently with other services.

Short was not alone in his problems. The US Navy in Hawaii, under Admiral Kimmel, almost intentionally cut off the Army from the deliberations of the Fleet and its staff. For example, there was, according to the subsequent inquiries:

- No joint planning staff on the islands.
- No joint air or radar surveillance of the waters around Hawaii.

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

- No official liaison staff between Navy and Army.
- A deliberate C.-in-C. Pacific Fleet policy to withhold signals intelligence from the Army, especially the decision by Admiral Kimmel or his staff not to pass on the final Japanese alert for war, the so-called "Winds Code" messages.
- Squabbles between Navy and Army over who should be in command of outlying islands such as Guam and Wake.

Admiral Kimmel failed to even contact his Army counterpart to discuss their problems as the clock ticked on. In his damning testimony to the subsequent Naval Court of Inquiry, the Admiral's peacetime failure to comprehend the need for joint command rings clearly:

I tried to inform the Commanding General of everything I thought might be useful to him. I did not inform the Commanding General of my proposed plans ... I saw no reason for taking the additional chance of having such information [further] divulged ... by any agency who would have no part in the plan.

Faced with a divided command, no real liaison, a reluctance to share vital intelligence and a peacetime lack of urgency at all levels in the islands, it is hardly surprising that the US forces on Hawaii were unprepared.

As the final days of the tragedy unfolded US and Allied intelligence staffs went into overdrive. Early in December 1941 traffic analysis correctly spotted the build-up of the Japanese attack fleets for Batavia, Thailand and Malaya. The timing of any attack then became the key requirement. The "essential element of information" or prime intelligence requirement came down in the end to one simple question: when?

The Japanese had gone to considerable lengths to prepare

their embassies abroad for just such a contingency. Having elected for a surprise attack, they had also decided to give their ambassadors just enough time to hand-deliver a message to their host governments. Timing, like the attacks themselves, would be crucial not only for the victims but also for the attacker. This traffic was a specific weakness in Japanese security, but they could not simply abandon their embassies and diplomats. Naturally, for the intelligence analyst, these sorts of signals are crucial indicators on the indicators and warning board.

On 19 November, Tokyo issued a specific warning to its Washington Embassy to listen out for a special radio broadcast "in case of an emergency (cutting off diplomatic relations) and the cutting off of international communications". This would be done by inserting a coded personal message into the daily Japanese international short-wave news broadcast. The messages were to be disguised as meteorological reports (hence the name "Winds Code") with "East Wind Rain" standing for a breach with America and "West Wind Clear" for a break with the British Empire. The instruction went on to order all low-level secret diplomatic codes and ciphers to be destroyed and for the diplomatic staffs to prepare for war.

The message was duly intercepted and read by all the Allied intelligence staffs. Needless to say, from that moment on, the number one priority of all US and Allied intelligence staffs was to listen for the "Winds Code" message. It was to become the intelligence obsession of the Pearl Harbor story, and the mystery as to whether the message was ever sent endures to this day.

Alert to the deteriorating situation, and fully aware of the significance of events, the Office of Naval Intelligence and the War Department in Washington stepped up their vigilance. They were rewarded by two damning intercepts that, more clearly than anything else, indicated war was now imminent.

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

On 3 December the Washington Navy Bureau alerted Admiral Kimmel in Hawaii with two crucial signals:

Highly reliable information has been received that categorical priority instructions were sent yesterday to Japanese diplomatic posts at Hong Kong, Singapore, Batavia, Manila, Washington and London to destroy most of their codes and ciphers at once and to burn all other confidential and secret documents.

The second message from Washington to C.-in-C. Pacific Fleet at Hawaii should have rung even more alarm bells.

Tokyo One December ordered London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Batavia and Manila to destroy "machine". Batavia "machine" already sent back to Tokyo. December second Washington also directed to destroy all but one copy of other systems and all secret documents.

When an embassy is ordered to destroy all its codes and ciphers and, more important, its code *machines*, there can be only one explanation: the embassy is about to be withdrawn and diplomatic relations broken off. Once the code machines have gone, there can be no turning back. Destruction of code and cipher machines is one of the intelligence analyst's ultimate warnings of war.

We know from the record that the Hawaiian naval intelligence staff received this intercept. Sadly, there is no evidence that Admiral Kimmel passed on this vital information to his Army counterpart, the man responsible for the defence of Hawaii, General Short. Joint command and mutual co-operation were conspicuous by their absence amongst the US forces on Oahu in the first week of December 1941.

Across the years separating us from Pearl Harbor there

seems to be an almost tragic acceleration towards disaster in the last days. The US Navy, aware but not alert, struggled with the problem of what to do. It was not just an academic problem. A naval alert in Hawaii in 1941 had certain practical limitations. The manning for the ships in port was regarded as an individual captain's responsibility. Already naval families were complaining bitterly about the burden of their husbands doing extra ship duty in harbour unnecessarily. The Executive Officer of the USS *Indiana* "thought that he might have trouble from the wives ashore unless he eased the watch bill for the crew in port".

In their barracks ashore, a peacetime Army garrison decided that there were not enough specialists to man the new surveillance radars for more than three hours a day. They also planned to lobby Washington for more specialist manpower to be posted to the Hawaii establishment in order to start up a low-level liaison staff with the Navy. As an interim counter sabotage measure all the aeroplanes at Hickham Field airbase were drawn up wing-tip to wing-tip so that they could be better guarded. The effect was to create what a later generation of military planners would call a "target-enriched environment" for the Japanese planes when they swooped down on Hickham Field a few days later.

There was one final chance that Hawaii could be saved from the Japanese combined fleet, which had sailed in secret from northern Japan on 26 November and was now closing the Hawaiian islands from the fog-shrouded waters of the north-west Pacific. Arrival was timed for Hawaiian dawn, 7 December 1941. If the USA could only see clear intentions of the Japanese attack in time, Hawaii could still be warned.

Fortunately for the intelligence specialists, one clear political indicator of the likely course of events was becoming ever more significant. The Japanese had been given a final set of diplomatic proposals for a peaceful solution by the USA, and

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

their reply, when it came, would be crucial. It would only be a yes or no: peace or war. All efforts were diverted to listening for and unbuttoning any Japanese reply. Once again the aptly named Magic code-breakers did not fail.

The US authorities were alerted by their siginters that the Japanese Embassy in Washington was to receive a long fourteen-part top-secret message from the Japanese Foreign Ministry on or about 6 December 1941. The message was to be handed formally to the US authorities as Japan's reply to their proposals. The timing for precise delivery of the reply was to be sent in a separate message. The US code-breakers, using their Magic access to the top-secret Japanese diplomatic codes, could now intercept and read Japan's reaction as it came in. American foreknowledge of its contents might buy a few vital hours.

What happened next was the final link in the chain of mismanagement, bad organization, bureaucratic wrangling and chronic understaffing that characterized the whole story of Pearl Harbor. By 6 December it became apparent to Washington that the Japanese reply to the American proposals was being transmitted. It was duly intercepted by both Army and Navy (despite the agreement to break codes on odd and even days), and the Navy took the lead in unbuttoning and translating the signal. Unaware of the secret parallel excitement in downtown Washington, so did its official recipients, the Japanese Embassy.

About 22.00 Washington time, a Navy courier took the first thirteen parts of the Japanese reply to President Roosevelt, who read it with his aide, Harry Hopkins. Both men read the English text carefully, and Roosevelt commented, "This means war." The naval courier, Lieutenant-Commander Kramer, then hand-carried the highly sensitive signal around late-night Washington to a number of other senior naval officers. Eventually, seeing no sign of the fourteenth part of the signal

on his return to the Navy sigint office, he went home to his bed at about 01.00 on Sunday 7 December, after a twelve-hour working day.

Across at G2 (Army) Intelligence the same message was getting the Army treatment. This time the signal was unbuttoned and the two Army Intelligence watch officers, Colonel Rufus Bratton, Chief of the Far Eastern Section, and his deputy, Lieutenant-Colonel Clyde Dusenbury, waited impatiently for the full text to arrive. By 21.30, as with the Navy, the crucial fourteenth piece had still not arrived. Unlike his naval counterpart, however, Bratton was not prepared to drive around the Washington dinner circuit late on a Saturday night. Bored and tired, for he had been working long hours as the Japanese crisis developed, Bratton went home to bed enjoining his deputy to "make sure he showed the whole signal to General Marshall [the Army's Chief of Staff]".

Sometime around midnight on 6/7 December 1941, Dusenbury received the final, fourteenth part of Tokyo's secret instructions to their Washington Embassy. It ordered the Japanese Ambassador to break off relations with Washington at precisely 13.00 Eastern Standard Time, which meant at 07.00 in Hawaii.

Having at last received the final part of the long-awaited message, Dusenbury tried to contact Marshall. He could not be located and so a weary Dusenbury himself decided to go to bed at about 01.30, intending to deliver the full message to the interested parties later on Sunday morning. Across town in the Navy office, the fourteenth part of the Japanese message was also sitting in Lieutenant-Commander Kramer's in-tray. It, too, could be delivered in the morning. While Washington slept, nine precious hours of warning time were lost.

Early on Sunday morning the truth dawned on the key players. In the Navy building Admiral Stark, C.-in-C. of the Navy, was reading the final part of the message. Colonel

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

Bratton was frantically trying to deliver the whole fourteen parts of the Japanese reply to his Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall. President Roosevelt read the fourteenth section, given to him by the Navy, and said, "So it looks as if the Japanese are going to break off negotiations." But that was all.

But the fourteenth section was both damning and final. I read: "The Imperial Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the American Government that in view of the attitude of the American Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through normal negotiations." Fortunately, the President's service chiefs were not so casual about a message which effectively gave the USA a blunt reply involving sex and travel, albeit in the language of diplomacy. The significance of the 13.00 Washington deadline was immediately obvious to both Admiral Stark and General Marshall. After urgent discussions with his colleague, the Army Chief of Staff drafted a warning to be sent priority to Hawaii as well as to all other Pacific commands. The agreed text read: "The Japanese are presenting at 1 p.m. (13.00) Eastern Standard Time, today, what amounts to an ultimatum. Also they are under orders to destroy their code machine immediately. Just what significance the hour set may have we do not know, but be on alert accordingly."

Now a message like this from a national command authority is not just an umbrella against any future Board of Inquiry. A regional C.-in-C. can use a signal like this to take whatever steps he deems appropriate, particularly at a time when even the open press is headlining a war as imminent. The message from Washington effectively devolved complete freedom on a fighting commander to act: "be on alert accordingly". The Fleet could have been prepared for sea; the Army could have gone on red alert and issued ammunition. Indeed, in the judgment of professional officers ever since, that is precisely

what they would have done on receipt of such a message from the C.-in-C. to a commander in the field, given the international tension at the time and their existing knowledge of events.

Unfortunately, the message was never sent in time. Marshall released the signal to the Comms Room at about 11.30 Washington time (H hour minus one and a half hours for the Japanese attack), but the War Department message centre could not raise Hawaii on their secure radio. As a result, Colonel French, the senior signals officer, ordered Marshall's crucial warning to be sent, suitably encoded, as a Western Union cable to San Francisco and thence by RCA commercial radio to Honolulu. The message was logged at 12.01 Washington time (06.01 in Hawaii). By the time Marshall's warning actually reached Hawaii, the air raids had already started and it was finally delivered by a motor-cycle messenger to General Short's HQ at 11.45 Hawaii time, 17.45 in Washington. Apparently the RCA courier apologized for taking longer to deliver a cable than was normal but said that he had been obliged to "take shelter from an air raid".

The chain of intelligence warnings had failed completely, and despite futile last-minute attempts to alert Hawaii the Japanese fell on to an unprepared US Fleet and land bases. Asked later by the Congressional inquiry why he hadn't simply telephoned Hawaii, given the time constraints and the urgency on the morning of 7 December, Colonel French replied that the telephone was never used by the Message Center for overseas calls; it was considered insecure. "If senior officers wanted to use the phone," said French, "then that was up to them."

As the shock waves of the Japanese attack reverberated around the Pacific, some other fairly obvious indicators suddenly assumed a new significance. Why they were ignored at the time remains a mystery to this day. What happened to

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

some of those warnings remains an even bigger mystery. On 2 and 3 December, a liner, the Matson shipping company's SS *Lurline*, had been routinely monitoring the radio frequencies in the empty northern Pacific as she ploughed a lonely passage to the west towards Honolulu, outbound from San Francisco. Suddenly, on 2 December, her radio operator had been blasted by powerful signals in Japanese naval code on the lower maritime frequency. The signals were so lengthy and powerful that the ship's radio operator was able to identify the Japanese Navy's HQ callsign ("JCS") and to take bearings on them over the next two days. The radio operator plotted the signals along a bearing that placed a powerful Japanese naval force transmitting somewhere north-west of Hawaii and moving slowly *eastwards*.

When the liner docked at Hawaii two days later, the two merchant marine radio operators, like the conscientious professionals they were, went immediately to the US Naval Intelligence Office at Admiral Kimmel's Pacific Fleet HQ, turned over their logs to the Duty Officer and briefed him on what they had heard. The logs have never been seen since and there is no record of the warning ever having been received by the US Navy.

Another curiosity is the story of the long-awaited "Winds Code" message, which everyone was looking out for. Usually, as the bombs finally rain down and the fighting erupts, *all* the lights on a modern electronic indicators and warnings board are flashing red, like the control panel of a stricken aeroplane. Ironically, as the Japanese Navy's aircraft hurled themselves on Pearl Harbor, the most sought-for indicator of all remained stubbornly *green*. The famous "Winds Code" message, the sure-fire sign of an impending Japanese attack, appears never to have been sent according to the documentary evidence. As with so much of the Pearl Harbor story, however, even this has been muddied by time and conflicting testimony.

Sometime before dawn on 4 December a US Navy radio-man, Ralph Briggs, a qualified Japanese-speaking radio intercept operator working at the Navy's signals intercept station, picked up the Japanese telegraphic code for "East Wind, Rain" (*Higashi no kaze ame*) in a routine official naval weather broadcast. He dutifully logged it and transmitted it down the secure TWX circuit to Commander Safford's Fleet Intelligence Office at Pearl Harbor. Briggs was subsequently given four days' leave by the US Navy, his reward for being the "first man to intercept the Winds Message." This is confirmed by the fact that Briggs was at home in Cleveland, Ohio, when the Japanese attacked. Briggs is also on record as saying on 7 December that "the Japanese must have received a terrific surprise, as Pearl Harbor knew that they were coming".

Across the passage of time it is impossible to follow the paper trail of Briggs's discovery. Both Safford and Briggs were adamant that they had received and reported the vital "Winds Code" message, but in that dreadful week after the Japanese attack some unknown agency (probably on the orders of the Director of Naval Intelligence) destroyed a significant number of vital materials in a panicky attempt at a cover-up. An unknown number of highly classified documents were mysteriously removed in silent hours from safes on the "second deck" of the Navy Building.

It is possible, indeed likely, that Safford's copy to Washington of the message from Hawaii found itself there, among those sensitive documents, but got no further. It could have been one of the embarrassing messages sitting in the safe of an ONI officer. We shall never know. The official Washington inquiries denied any evidence of any "Winds Code" message, and concluded, despite Safford's vehement assertions to the contrary, that the Commander's memory was faulty and that he was confused by the passage of time. However, Briggs

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

undoubtedly got his four days' home leave; if not for the "Winds Code" message, then for what? But no one ever questioned Ralph Briggs.

One other curious mystery about Pearl Harbor has never been satisfactorily resolved. As the prospect of war loomed ever closer, the Allied intelligence services around the Pacific began to forge ever closer informal links with each other, for obvious reasons. The British intelligence services, particularly the Far East Combined Board (FECB), an out-station of the Government Communications and Cipher School (GCCS), increased their US liaison efforts, as did their co-belligerents, the Dutch. With the Netherlands overrun by the Germans in May 1940, the Dutch East Indies kept an effective independent colonial administration up and running. More important, it had diplomatic accreditation as representing the Dutch government in exile, now based in London.

One of its officers was a Captain of the Royal Netherlands Navy, Johann Ranneft. Captain Ranneft's duties as the Dutch Naval Attache in Washington were to ensure that the Netherlands benefited from his presence in the USA. His main preoccupation was selling 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns to the US Navy. This, while infuriating Bofors AG (the Swedish patent-holders), would at least bring revenue to their co-manufacturers, the Dutch company Signaal. The US Navy was delighted with their new AA gun and afforded Ranneft all the easy, informal access that valued attaches strive so hard to achieve but so rarely obtain. For Ranneft was not only a valued friend, he was also, in the eyes of the US naval officers based in Washington, a colleague, a senior officer, a friend to US interests and overall a "regular guy". As a result, the Netherlands Naval Attache often saw much more than would be normal for a foreigner. Ranneft also kept an official diary. His record is interesting.

On 6 December 1941 Captain Ranneft called at the Office of

Naval Intelligence, on the "second deck" of US Navy Headquarters. A spirited discussion was going on over the location of the Japanese combined carrier fleet. Ranneft, who knew that the Dutch East Indies were a likely Japanese target, and who regularly shared intelligence acquired from Batavia and the Dutch East Indies with his American counterparts, rapidly became absorbed in the professional discussion of Japanese intentions.

Several days before, during an earlier routine visit to the "second deck", Ranneft had been shown the track of a Japanese carrier force in the northern Pacific by two relatively junior ONI officers. To his surprise, the plot showed them east of Japan and heading towards Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Ranneft was startled and noted in his official office diary, "ONI. They show me on the map the position of two Japanese carriers. They left Japan on an easterly course."

Now, a few days later, Ranneft rounded on Admiral Wilkinson, the head of US Naval Intelligence, "What about those two carriers? Where are those fellows?" Someone (Ranneft didn't remember who) pointed to a position on the chart about 400 miles *north* of the Hawaiian Islands. Ranneft was stunned, but assumed that, in the words of his official diary entry for 6 December 1941, "I myself do not consider it, because I believe that everyone in Honolulu is 100 per cent on the alert just as everyone is at ONI."

Ranneft reported on the same day (6 December) by official cable what he had learned to the Dutch government in exile in London. At no point was Ranneft's testimony ever read into any of the subsequent official US inquiries into the disaster at Pearl Harbor. ONI Washington resolutely denied that it ever knew where the Japanese carriers were. Certainly there is no record that they ever informed Admiral Kimmel that a powerful Japanese carrier force had been plotted 400 miles to the north of the Pacific Fleet's main base.

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

What makes this story all the more tragic is that Kimmel, a highly professional two-star admiral, who had only recently been promoted to acting four-star admiral (a remarkable jump), actually discussed the location of the Japanese carriers with his staff on 2 December. On being informed that the Hawaiian-based Fleet Naval Intelligence Staff had no idea of the carriers' location, Kimmel dryly observed, "so they could be rounding Diamond Head [the entrance to Pearl Harbor] at any moment?" A member of his somewhat embarrassed staff is on record as replying that "they hoped that they would locate them before that, Admiral." In the circumstances this exchange takes on a particular poignancy.

Years later, in 1960, the now retired Admiral Ranneft attempted to raise the subject with Admiral Stark (the senior US Naval officer in Washington during Ranneft's 1941 tour of duty) while on a valedictory visit to Washington from NATO. When Stark realized why Ranneft wanted to see him, he abruptly cancelled the meeting and refused to see the Dutch officer. No explanation was ever given.

To round off this series of mysteries about Pearl Harbor, finally we have the curious testimony of a newspaper boy. Early on Sunday 7 December 1941, 16-year-old Tom Nichols dropped off a copy of the Sunday edition of the *Washington Times-Herald* to one of his regular customers, the Japanese Naval Attache, on the top floor of 3601 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, DC. To his surprise, two burly uniformed US Marines were standing guard on the attache's door and took the newspaper from him. No one has ever explained who ordered a special US Marine guard on the Japanese Naval Attache at dawn, Washington time, Sunday 7 December 1941; or, perhaps more significantly, *why* a guard was ordered. Even the President hadn't been shown the fourteenth part of the crucial diplomatic signal at the time the youngster delivered his papers. Only the US Navy and Lieutenant-Commander

Kramer of ONI in particular had that intelligence. However, US Marines are routinely tasked by the US Department of the Navy. No explanation has ever been offered for this curious side-tale to the events of 7 December 1941.

For the intelligence analyst, Pearl Harbor is unique. It presents a story of opportunities missed, intelligence ignored and bureaucratic bungling across a broad and tragic canvas. The whole mystery is also spiced by a slim, but persistent, possibility of conspiracy or cover-up. No less than six major national inquiries crawled over nearly every detail of the tragedy for the US authorities, all with a broadly similar aim: who knew what, and when? The inquiries were:

1. The Roberts Commission (1941) (Roberts was a Supreme Court Justice)
2. The Hart Inquiry (1944) (Hart was a senior Admiral)
3. The Army Pearl Harbor Board (1944)
4. The Navy Court of Inquiry (1944)
5. The Congressional Inquiry (1945-6)
6. The Clausen Inquiry (1945)

Of these, only the top-secret Magic inquiry by Colonel Clausen, a lawyer in civilian life, had access to all the facts and, most important of all, to the surviving sigint traffic. It is hardly surprising therefore that Clausen's conclusions differ radically in a few areas from the thrust of the earlier service and political inquiries, which seem to have been primarily designed to assign blame or find scapegoats. Unfortunately, as with so much of signals intelligence during the Second World War, the real facts remained highly classified until Clausen broke his fifty-year silence in 1992.

Colonel Clausen's inquiry broadly supported official Washington's view, that the hapless service commanders in Ha-

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

waii, Admiral Kimmel and Lieutenant-General Short, were the real villains of Pearl Harbor and were primarily to blame for the final tragedy. Clausen based his criticism on a very clear understanding of who had really known what and when. By meticulously piecing together the story in 1945, mainly by flying all over the world with a live document destruction charge strapped to his body, and by shoving the top secret sigint intercepts under the noses of startled 1941 staff members, Clausen discovered that people had known much more than they admitted to the various official inquiries, *most of which had not been cleared for sigint.*

One of the biggest dangers of the secret world is excessive secrecy. Not for nothing are intelligence staffs, especially those cleared for exclusive information and locked away behind closed doors, visited only by high-ranking commanders, often known as "the secret squirrel club" by those without access to the information. The principle of need to know, designed to keep access to delicate information very tightly controlled, is a vital part of security but can also be highly dangerous, for two main reasons.

First of all, decision-makers can be denied access to information on the grounds that they have no need to know. So it was with Lieutenant-General Short on Hawaii in 1941; he was not cleared for all available sigint and certainly did not know that the Navy was reading Japanese intentions. This ignorance *must* have affected his decisions before 7 Dec 1941. Short didn't know what he didn't know. Equally, Admiral Kimmel's refusal to show Navy intelligence to his co-commander on the island becomes understandable. Short was not cleared for the Navy's most sensitive secrets. Worse, Kimmel himself wasn't seeing everything the Navy was intercepting. His personal Magic code-reading machine had been removed earlier in 1941 as part of a highly secret sigint exchange deal with the British. It is clear that both senior commanders on Hawaii were blindsided to a significant degree.

The problem was compounded by the uncoordinated organization of US national intelligence at the time. There was no national intelligence assessment staff reporting to the President. No single agency saw everything or reported the significance of the intelligence. Everyone had their own piece of the jigsaw, but no one was making them put all their pieces on the table to complete the whole puzzle. In the circumstances it seems harsh to put all the blame on the two commanders in Hawaii. Although Clausen compares them to "sentries who fell asleep on watch", it is hard not to feel some sympathy with Kimmel and Short, who were both subsequently disgraced and took the bulk of the blame for the debacle.

Second, and much more serious, the "secret squirrel mentality" can sometimes be used to conceal errors. There seems to be little doubt that in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor secrecy prevented an honest and thorough evaluation of the facts. Much of the real truth never came out in the earlier inquiries. The question is whether "national security" was used as a cloak to hide war-winning secrets from an enemy (that America could read the Japanese codes) or as an excuse to conceal embarrassing and politically explosive mistakes. The answer, unhelpfully, is probably both.

There is another, perhaps psychological reason for the disaster. In 1941 every expert *knew* that Pearl Harbor could not be attacked. The US Pacific Fleet's base was simply too far from Japan or any other likely enemy, the anchorage too secure and well guarded, and the surrounding hills and shallow anchorage made any torpedo attack a technical impossibility. The received wisdom of the day was that Pearl Harbor was invulnerable.

Unfortunately, what had been true in 1939 was no longer valid in 1941. On 11 November 1940 the Royal Navy, in one of the most successful and least acknowledged actions of the Second World War, caught the Italian battle fleet at anchor at Taranto in southern Italy. Eleven special torpedoes from

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

obsolescent Swordfish biplanes sank or disabled three Italian battleships and two heavy cruisers and effectively neutralized Mussolini's Navy in a daring night attack launched from British carriers off the coast.

An abiding American trait, often remarked upon by friends and enemies alike, is the "not invented here" syndrome. With the confidence of youth and the limitless power of the most developed, innovative and successful economy in history, Americans tend only to trust American ideas and developments and tend to ignore or resent others' achievements, be they weapons, consumer goods or even TV shows.

The US Navy virtually ignored the lessons of Taranto. The Imperial Japanese Navy, on the other hand, recognized it as the remarkable strategic victory it undoubtedly was, and set out to re-create the British success in their own doctrine. In the words of the Japanese Naval Staff, "Taranto made Pearl Harbor feasible."

In particular, the Japanese naval aviators were curious as to just how the Royal Navy had been able to air-launch torpedoes to run in such a shallow anchorage. By trial and error the Japanese discovered that aerial torpedoes can be modified to surface immediately and not "dig deep" after dropping provided they are rigged with special hydrofoils or fins. The superlative Japanese torpedoes, already the best in the world, were rigged with special fins like the British ones for air-dropping in late 1941 and tested for shallow launch. They worked, and suddenly the attack on the anchored fleet in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor became a practical possibility. This was one piece of techint (technical intelligence) that the USA didn't discover until it was too late, although, ironically, it was freely available from the Royal Navy had they only been asked. But then, in the complacency and insularity before Pearl Harbor in 1941, the US Navy felt that it had little to learn. Not so the Japanese.

Whatever the psychology of technical surprise in 1941, it is possible to dissect the attack on Pearl Harbor by straightforward reference to the intelligence cycle which we laid out in Chapter 1 as a tool for approaching intelligence in a calm and logical way. Analysis of this basic planning system shows clearly the deficiencies of the US intelligence and warning system in 1941, and is worth a careful study.

WAS THERE AN OVERALL US NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENT?

No. Although all the players knew that war with Japan was either a possibility or imminent, and each organization appears to have been busy collecting intelligence on its own, there is no evidence of any co-ordinated *national* collection requirement.

WAS THERE A COLLECTION PLAN?

Again, no. Within the single service preoccupations (naval intelligence was interested in the Japanese fleet, the FBI was looking out for Japanese spies, etc.) there was obviously planned and tasked collection. But it was never integrated and assets were duplicated or wasted.

WERE COLLECTION ASSETS CO-ORDINATED AND TASKED?

No. Each service or agency did its own thing without reference to others. For example, in 1941 the FBI's Chief of Station on Honolulu was one Robert L. Shivers. His primary interest was security: spies, sabotage and subversion. With a large Japanese population on the Hawaiian Islands this was a task the FBI took very seriously, despite Hoover's disregard for agent Tricycle's Abwehr questionnaire. To ensure smooth working arrangements, Shivers established weekly liaison with his service

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

counterparts on the islands, Commander Joe Rochefort of the US Navy and Lieutenant-Colonel George Bicknell of Army G2. Shivers was particularly interested in the Japanese Consul-General on Hawaii and so he was excited to learn that US Navy Intelligence had been secretly tapping the consul's office telephone for over a year. As wire taps were officially within the remit of the FBI, Shivers decided to add his own line into the Japanese Consul-General as well. Unfortunately, the telephone company immediately informed the original "bugger", Captain Mayfield of the US Navy, that another federal agency wanted to get in on the act. Worried about the breach of security and concerned for the political repercussions if the Japanese discovered they were under surveillance, on 2 December 1941 Mayfield decided to bail out and ordered an immediate halt to any US Navy taps on the Japanese Consul-General. No one told Shivers of this, however, and none the wiser he then decided not to proceed with the FBI tap. As a result, in the critical last week before the attack, no US agency was bugging the Japanese diplomats on Hawaii, *and no one realized it had stopped.*

WAS INTELLIGENCE COLLATED IN AN ACCESSIBLE AND READY FORMAT?

Again, no. Single services and agencies squirrelled away their own precious nuggets with no regard for the wider picture and reported independently, if at all, to their masters. In the modern jargon of intelligence there was no "integrated all-source database" on the Japanese.

WAS THE AVAILABLE INTELLIGENCE INTERPRETED CORRECTLY?

The answer to this is both yes *and* no. For example, the Magic sigint take was correctly assessed and interpreted as leading to war with Japan. Although the location of the Japanese combined carrier fleet was either ignored or misunderstood by

ONI, the majority of intelligence received was understood correctly. The problem appears to have been that although its meaning was understood its *implications* were ignored or overlooked. The whole institutional psychology at the time must also have been influenced by the pervasive contempt for the Asiatic Japanese as any kind of credible enemy. The American interpreters of intelligence - at all levels, from the President downwards - completely underestimated the Japanese both technologically and as warriors.

**WAS THE INTERPRETED INTELLIGENCE DISSEMINATED TO
DECISION-MAKERS IN A TIMELY FASHION?**

The answer to this must be an emphatic no, from top to bottom. Thus the President and decision-taking Washington were not alerted to the fourteen-part message from the Japanese Foreign Ministry in time to act upon it; Admiral Kimmel and Hawaii were left unwarned at the last minute; vital naval operational indicators disappeared between Hawaii and the Navy Department; and the unfortunate Army commander in Hawaii seems to have been kept in the dark throughout. The dissemination of intelligence before Pearl Harbor was not just a sorry tale: it was *appalling*. There was no all-source integration of material, no all-source assessment and no briefing to those with a need to know.

If there is any single factor that links all these failures of US intelligence in 1941, it lies in the phrase "all-source integration". Nowadays it is axiomatic that a single assessment and tasking staff must co-ordinate and integrate a nation's intelligence effort at the highest level like any other scarce resource. This principle is easy to state, but desperately difficult to achieve. Every agency has its own special monopoly of secrets, and equally, every agency is reluctant to tell its colleagues, for two reasons, one good and one bad. The laudable reason is invariably security. A

"The Finest Intelligence in Our History"

secret shared with another agency, without the strictest need-to-know criteria, is usually viewed as a potential loss of control of a vital source and thus of secrecy. The second reason is less edifying but understandable. Any bureaucratic agency holding a monopoly of a secret source can usually guarantee for itself access to politicians, power and resources. In the constant bureaucratic battle for political advantage, agencies are reluctant to share their victories with others and only too keen to seize more offices and better budgets in the corridors of power.

This puts an enormous responsibility on the ultimate decision-makers, usually the politicians, for they are the only people with the authority and control of national resources to command the agencies to work together. Even if this means a specialist assessment staff (like the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee or JIC) *above* competing agencies, someone has to integrate the effort. In the final analysis politicians have to knock civil servants' and military heads together.

In December 1941, the one clear omission in Washington was of a national intelligence assessment and briefing staff, with access to all available intelligence from every source. With the lunacy of the Navy briefing on odd days and the Army on even days, Roosevelt was effectively cast as his own co-ordinator and tasker of political-military intelligence. It is a job he did very badly, which, given his other responsibilities and lack of understanding of the Japanese, is hardly surprising. He was not equipped as an analyst of the Japanese military mind and he never knew just what was *not* being shown to him. His service chiefs failed him. And in their turn, the service chiefs' specialist intelligence staffs failed their masters too. The truth is that they, and the nation as a whole, consistently underestimated both the capabilities and intentions of the Japanese as a potential adversary.

Whatever the excuses, and whatever the failings of subordinates at all levels, the brutal fact remains that the USA had

ample and timely intelligence of a Japanese surprise attack somewhere in the Pacific and probably on Pearl Harbor from a wide variety of indicators and sources. Because the nation's chief executive failed to establish an integrated national intelligence organization in time and to control the Washington bureaucracy, over 2,000 US servicemen died and America was plunged into a war which might have been avoided.

The final judgment on Pearl Harbor must be that the President and US government of the day were to blame, aided and abetted by their senior advisers. There was no conspiracy to drag the USA into a world war, although Churchill was undeniably delighted to welcome the USA as an ally in Britain's struggle. (As, ironically, was Adolf Hitler: in a strange echo of Churchill, Hitler expressed himself delighted at Japan's entry into the war. Indeed, his jubilation may explain his misreading of the real significance of America's involvement and his rash declaration of war on the USA. On hearing the news of Pearl Harbor, the Fuhrer rushed in to see a Nazi Party crony, Walther Hewell, and exclaimed, "Now we have an ally who has never been vanquished in three thousand years!")

At the end of the day, Pearl Harbor stands as an awful warning of the ultimate intelligence blunder perpetrated by a badly organized and uncoordinated group of parochial intelligence-providers who had the tools but didn't know how to do the job properly. In the words of the 1946 Congressional Inquiry, "With some of the finest intelligence in our history, with the almost certain knowledge that war was at hand, with plans that contemplated the precise sort of attack that was executed on the morning of 7 December 1941 - why was it possible for Pearl Harbor to succeed?"

***"The Greatest Disaster Ever to
Befall British Arms"
Singapore, 1942***

The British loss of Malaya and the fall of Singapore in 1941/2 were consequences of perhaps the most dangerous intelligence vice of all: underestimating the enemy.

Winston Churchill described it as the "greatest disaster ever to befall British arms". On 15 February 1942, the British imperial garrison of the supposedly impregnable bastion of Singapore, on the southernmost tip of Malaya, surrendered to a numerically far smaller Japanese assault force. Some 130,000 well-equipped British, Australian and Indian officers and soldiers, with ample battle stocks, capitulated to just 35,000 hungry, exhausted Japanese front-line combat troops, almost out of ammunition and at their last gasp. The Japanese were astonished at the ease of their victory. In the brief but martial history of the British Empire, no greater military humiliation can be found.

Only 9,000 of the total of 60,000 Japanese soldiers became casualties in the whole Malayan campaign. The British-led force lost 146,000, of which over 130,000 surrendered. Many of those Allied prisoners of war died in appalling conditions in Japanese captivity. We have to go back to the Athenian defeat at Syracuse in 415 BC to find comparison for the debacle at Singapore: both effectively marked the beginning of the end of a great maritime empire.

The root cause of the British defeat was, like so many defeats, to be found in poor intelligence. Combined with the Western underestimation of the Japanese as a potential adversary was the breathtaking smugness and complacency of successive British governments and the colonial regime in Malaya, which appears to have sleepwalked into a major war in the Far East sure in the knowledge that "it can't possibly happen to us". Only on Sunday 15 February 1942, as the victorious Japanese rounded up the tens of thousands of demoralized British and Indian troops, *ad hoc* Royal Navy shore parties, fleeing RAF ground staff, thousands of drunken and mutinous Australian deserters (many of whom had basically "withdrawn their labour" in a kind of military strike in the last days) and the rest of Lieutenant-General Percival's humiliated command on Singapore - only then did it really dawn on the British in Malaya that their world was gone for ever.

If they were in any doubt, a few casual bayonetings and rapes by the Japanese of the terrified civilian population put them absolutely in the picture. The day of unquestioned rule by the white *tuans* in Asia was ended, and their long nightmare of three and a half years of captivity at the hands of the Japanese was about to begin. The wretched inhabitants of Malaya had merely swapped an Asian colonial occupying force for the British, but the myth of white superiority in Asia had been exposed once and for all as a fiction. Things would never be the same again.

For years before the outbreak of the Second World War the British had watched the rise of Imperial Japan's maritime power in the East with mounting unease. During the First World War the Japanese had actually been allies of the British in their long hunt to sweep the Pacific free from German surface raiders. Yet the Versailles peace treaty of 1919 had come as a bitter disappointment to at least one of the supposedly victorious powers. Although Japan was given a mandate

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

over some German colonial territories, the Japanese felt that their contribution to the war had not been sufficiently recognized. This resentment at being deprived of the spoils of victory sharpened after the Washington Naval Conference of 1922 when Japan was theoretically locked into an inferior maritime position in the Pacific by a new treaty favouring the United States.

Japan had only been opened up to Western influences in the late 1850s. The medieval political mechanisms within the Shogunate state were, by Western democratic standards, primitive and more akin to today's developing world, where the power of the military often permits a disproportionate influence on politics. As the global economic stresses of the late 1920s and 1930s swirled round Japan, the military seized political power and began a policy of armed expansion to guarantee Japan access to the economic riches and raw materials of the East, readily available to those prepared to seize them for itself by armed force. In 1931 the Army Party engineered an invasion of Manchuria, thus lighting the fuse for the long sequence of military and political expansion that would finally explode at Pearl Harbor and Malaya a decade later, on 7 Dec 1941.

The British colonies in Malaya were a particularly tempting target for Japanese economic aggrandizement. During the 1930s Japan had managed to secure a plentiful supply of coal by conquest from China, but she still lacked other vital raw materials, especially iron, tin, oil and rubber. Further attempts to go north had been decisively crushed by the Soviet Army at the battle of Khalkin Gol in 1939. Japan turned south. By 1940, in response to Japanese expansion into French Indo-China, the USA had slowly begun to apply political pressure to freeze out Japanese imports and other economic activity from the US and its territories. The result was that by mid-1941 the Japanese Economic Planning Board could forecast,

fairly accurately, the moment when Japan would no longer be able to function owing to lack of raw materials. The Japanese planners also predicted (with a chilling clarity unusual among government planners) that "it will be impossible to obtain oil ... by peaceful means."

In Japanese eyes, the only answer to pressing shortages of strategic supplies now lay far to the south: the prosperous, ill-defended and peaceful colonies of British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. Malaya with its tin and rubber was regarded as little more than a cash cow by the British, earning a fortune in dollars every year for the City of London and helping to subsidize the war against Hitler in Europe and the Middle East. The defeated government of the Netherlands, now in exile in London, was effectively sustained by the rich outpourings of the Royal Dutch Shell oil wells in the East Indies. Possession of these two colonies would enable Japan to become industrially independent; and neither Britain nor the Dutch seemed to be capable of defending their assets to any marked extent.

To protect their economic empire in the East after the Great War, successive British governments had established a fleet anchorage and naval bastion based on the harbour and island of "Fortress Singapore". The intention was clear: to provide a fixed defended point that could hold out, whatever happened, like some embattled medieval castle until the Royal Navy could send a fleet from Britain to relieve the beleaguered fortress and sweep away the importunate invaders. The British were deceiving the Empire, despite bold words in Parliament. As the Romans had proved over many centuries, nearly two thousand years earlier, the only way to defend a far-flung empire was to have a strong mobile force able to deploy rapidly using internal lines to any threatened point on the perimeter. When war did come later and Britain was pinned down fighting in Europe, this was the one thing that Churchill could never guarantee.

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

In cold print, this imperial policy looks remarkably suspect as a strategic concept, posing as many questions as it answers. For how long would the naval base have to hold out? What size of relieving force would be required? How many days would it take to assemble a fleet and sail it to the Far East? Why was Britain spending a fortune on *Singapore* when the real colonial asset that needed protecting was the extraordinary wealth of the *Malayan peninsula*, producing over 60 per cent of the world's rubber and tin? How was it to be paid for: with Malayan colonial money or by the straitened taxpayers of the "Great White King across the sea", who were already feeling the pains of the Great Depression?

Armed with these doubts and a cunning Treasury that used the government's policy of "no war within the next ten years" as a device for avoiding expenditure, Britain brought the allegedly impregnable fortress of Singapore into being slowly and inefficiently during the 1920s and 1930s at enormous cost and without a single integrated defence plan. In fact the final product was anything but impregnable. The main approach through the Malayan forests to the north was virtually ignored by the planners, despite warnings, and the airfields built all over Malaya by the fledgling RAF were constructed without consultation with the Army's tactical needs for ground defence. Even so, the illusion of security was there.

Although the great base and its peacetime garrison provided little or no real defence at all, the expatriates living their comfortable peacetime lives in Malaya and the cinema-going audiences in the West genuinely believed the propaganda they were shown on the screen: that Singapore was one of the greatest fortifications the world had ever seen. This might explain the curious lack of concern when the Japanese did finally invade northern Malaya. Singapore was impregnable. It might also explain the subsequent panic and loss of nerve when it looked as if the unbelievable was actually happening

and the "Gibraltar of the East" was about to fall in February 1942.

The one consistent voice in the planning for the defence of Singapore between the wars is a surprising one: Winston Churchill. He had been the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1928 who had starved the project of building funds, and he had been one of the arch-advocates of the defence policy that based all expenditure on "no war within the next ten years"; a risky approach to international security. As a former First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill had also argued passionately *against* the Royal Navy's coldly realistic estimate of the true cost of a genuinely defensible naval base in Singapore; and finally, as Prime Minister he was ultimately responsible for the disastrous defence of Malaya between 1940 and 1942.

Despite the myth of Churchill the great war leader, Singapore was most definitely not Winston Churchill's finest hour. This may well be the reason that no parliamentary inquiry was ever held on the debacle, although Churchill had ordered an inquiry into the disaster in Crete in May 1941 with commendable alacrity. It may also be why so many of the official government files on the Malayan campaign remain closed to this day. If there is a single individual responsible for the debacle of Singapore then the most likely candidate is Winston Spencer Churchill.

The Australian government was especially wary of Churchill by 1941. The relationship between the two countries was politically ambiguous and both sides had based their defence needs before the war on a series of highly suspect guarantees and false premises. To Churchill, Australia was little more than a potential base in the East and a ready supply of fresh Commonwealth divisions to eke out Britain's small army. Any promise or reassurance that could lock Australia into this relationship and prise more manpower out of the dominion was freely given. For example, when he was First Lord of the

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

Admiralty Churchill went to great lengths to reassure the Australian minister, Richard Casey, in late 1939 that Britain was even prepared to abandon the Mediterranean should it become necessary to save Australia. This was a promise he could not honour.

Not all the deceit was on the British side, however. In peacetime it had suited Australian governments to ignore defence and pretend that the old country would pay for Australian security. Military spending was thus kept at less than 1 per cent of the government's budget during the 1930s. Australians were fed on the fiction that the British were primarily responsible for their defence and would automatically come to their rescue if the worst happened. This arrangement was encouraged by Australian politicians ever mindful of the American saw "there ain't no votes in bullets", even though a moment's sober reflection might have led them to wonder why the British should be able to send a fleet in war when they had never been able to dispatch one in peacetime. But no one asked awkward questions like that. It was all too politically convenient to get someone else to pay for your defence, however false the premises.

When Churchill finally took over the premiership from Neville Chamberlain in May 1940, he eyed events in the Far East and the Japanese threat with growing concern. Fine speeches and rhetoric were no substitute for a credible and well-resourced imperial defence policy. The year of 1941 was to expose his strategic reassurances as dangerous gambles with the security of Australia and the East at the expense of the war in North Africa and aid to a beleaguered Soviet Union.

As the year 1941 opened, and after their decisive rebuff by the Soviets at Khalkin Gol had blocked expansion north into Siberia, the Japanese turned their attention to the south. In early summer Thailand, directly to the north of Malaya, had a brief war with the Vichy French regime in Indo-China over a

border dispute. By June 1941 the Japanese, under the guise of mediating between the combatants, had established a formidable military presence in Indo-China (one estimate is 200,000 troops) and were pushing hard for a military presence in, and transit rights through, Thailand. For the first time, northern Malaya was directly threatened. The subsequent Japanese move into the airfields of southern Indo-China suddenly brought their bombers well within range of the Malayan peninsula.

British intelligence had followed these developments with increasing interest and growing alarm. The British were hampered in their intelligence efforts, however, by four fundamental problems: a complete underestimation of the Japanese armed services as effective fighting forces; fragmentation and lack of any real intelligence co-ordination in the Far East; a serious shortage of local resources for collecting intelligence; and finally a dangerous lack of any influence in the war councils of the civil and military staffs in Malaya.

Of these, without doubt the worst failing was the first: the underestimation of the Japanese as a viable adversary. In many ways this is surprising, given that Japan was a warrior nation with an impressive track record. They had trounced the Russians in the Far East in 1904/5, possessed a large and modern fleet, and had been successfully fighting a major ground war in China and Manchuria since 1931. To understand quite why this dramatic underestimation of an enemy came about it is necessary to enter the mindset of the White colonial world before the shocks of 1941.

Britain was not alone in her contempt for "Asiatics" as little more than clever natives. Even in America, which had a large Japanese immigrant population, on the eve of Pearl Harbor the Japanese were generally seen in a similar light. The myths of racial superiority were not confined to Hitler's Nazi Germany in the 1930s. The British view is best summed up by the

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

then C.-in-C. Far East, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, on a visit to Hong Kong in December 1940:

I had a good look at them [the Japanese guards on the frontier] close up across the barbed wire, of various sub-human species dressed in dirty grey uniform . . . If they represent the average of the Japanese army, although the problems of their food and accommodation should be simple enough, I cannot believe that they would form an effective fighting force.

At the time it was genuinely believed that the Japanese were physically small, buck-toothed, had poor eyesight and were incapable of fighting in the dark or operating sophisticated machinery. White men were inherently superior. The feeling was widespread. One naval expert even wrote, "Every observer concurs . . . that the Japanese are daring but incompetent aviators . . . they have as a race defects in the tubes of the inner ear, just as they are generally myopic. This gives them a defective sense of balance." The Japanese "could not fire rifles because they could not close only one eye at a time". An otherwise serious writer on aviation matters observed that "nothing is much more stupid than one Japanese, and nothing much brighter than two." There was a view that "terrified Japanese would flee at the first sight of a white soldier." The commanding officers of two British infantry battalions in Malaya are on record as saying to their generals that they hoped "we aren't getting too strong in Malaya . . . as it might deter the Japs from a fight." Perhaps most arrogant of all is the remark by *another* CO, "Don't you think my soldiers are worthier of a better enemy than the Japs?"

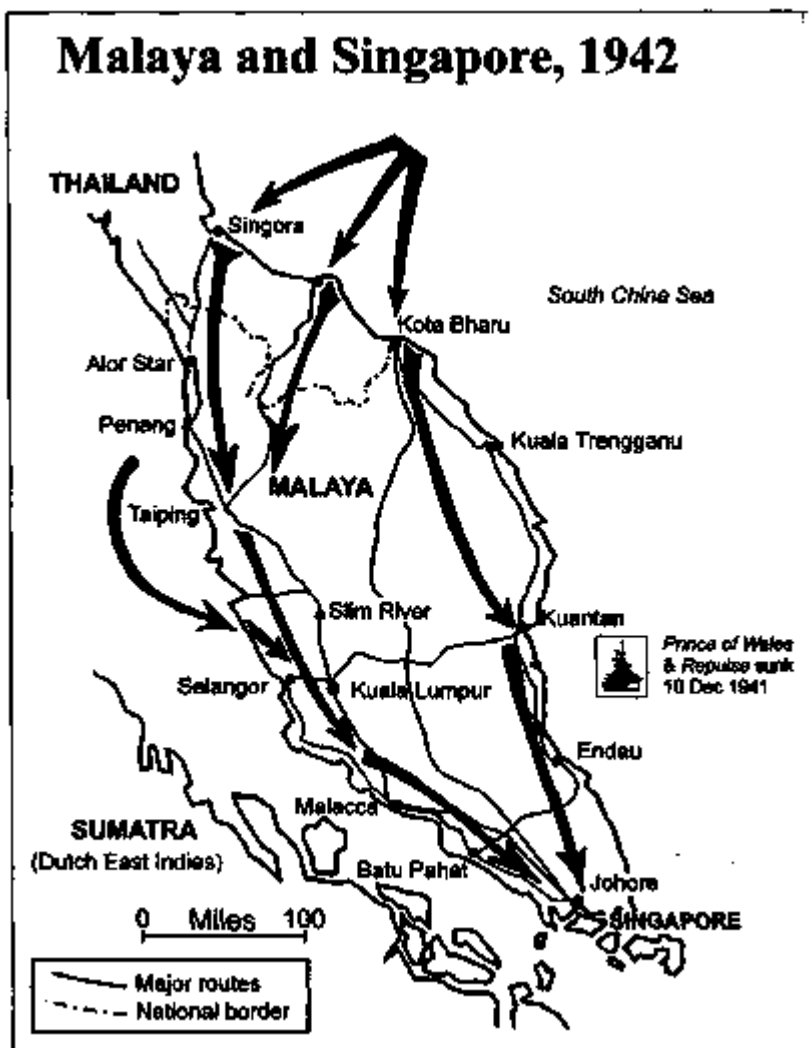
This was dangerous nonsense. The reality of operations against Japanese imperial forces came as a profound shock to all the Allied combatants, on the ground, in the air and at sea.

The Australian Russell Braddon looked aghast at the first Japanese bodies he came across in Malaya, "not a specimen under six foot tall, with not a pair of glasses or a buck-tooth between them". And as for Japan's alleged technical deficiencies, while the British did not have a single tank on the Malayan peninsula, the Japanese, despite their supposed inability to operate machinery effectively, had managed to land armour in the north and used their light tanks to great effect against the static British defensive positions on the main roads.

The dismay at GHQ Malaya was profound: everyone knew - it was a matter of British operational doctrine - that tanks could *never* be used in the jungle. Anyway, Intelligence had assured successive British planners that there was absolutely no armoured threat from the Japanese. Now here was a Japanese tank assault slicing straight through the British jungle defences and heading south for Johore and Singapore.

The Japanese had also developed new tactics (the majority of the battles in 1941-2 in Malaya were fought not in thick jungle but in primary forest or rubber plantations with good spaces between the trees and visibility, akin to a beech wood) that involved thrusting hard and swiftly down the lines of the modern Malayan roads. Once they were halted, the Japanese infantry deployed swiftly into the trees on either side, firing as they went and outflanking the dug-in defensive positions blocking the track. By using these so-called "fishbone" tactics they consistently outflanked the bewildered and static imperial heavy infantry, forcing a perpetual morale-sapping retreat on the increasingly exhausted and despondent Australians, British and Indians.

The baffled defenders trudged wearily back through the January monsoon rain to the next road-block to the south, leaving a trail of abandoned equipment, guns, stores and wounded comrades in their wake for the Japanese to do with



as they chose. To make things worse, the retreating foot soldiers often saw the Japanese using *bicycles* to cycle past them through the trees, making their lightly equipped troops significantly more mobile than the encumbered Imperial infantry. British intelligence knew nothing of these "secret weapons" until the after-action reports were collated in India after the disaster.

In the air, the same tale of underestimating the potential enemy unfolded. It was thought that Japanese pilots - even if their aviation industry had been able to provide them with sophisticated modern aircraft that were mechanically efficient - would be quite incapable of operating them to Western standards as "Japanese aircrew could not withstand the rigours of high G forces". As the first bombing raids thundered down on the RAF's airfields, the derisive British airmen poured scorn on the so-called "diarrhoea" bombing tactics where tight formations of bombers dropped their loads simultaneously onto an area target. This was not the individual precision bombing operation the RAF trained for.

The raids were remarkably successful, however. Using tactics developed in four years of area raids on targets in China the Japanese aircrew knew their business. On the order to release from a master bomber, Japanese bombs fell in a broad pattern that turned out to be a highly effective tactic for airfield denial, ensuring that some damage was *always* done to the target. And, in a curious development that puzzled the air staff in Malaya, the Japanese bombers always seemed to know just when and what to strike.

Another unpleasant surprise in the air, unforeseen by air intelligence, was the high-performance capability of Japanese aircraft, especially the Navy "0" fighter, the Zero. Dismissed as little more than an "unarmoured, underarmed light sports plane with a 1,000 horse-power engine on the front", in the words of one American analyst, the Zero's dragonfly man-

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

oeuvreability came as a traumatic shock to Allied pilots unaware of its phenomenal dogfighting capabilities. The crews of the outnumbered and obsolete Brewster Buffalo fighters of RAF Malaya swiftly learned that they were outclassed.

Although a little later than the Singapore story, perhaps the best example of this underestimation of the Japanese in the air is the contact between the "Darwin Wing" ferrying new American P-40 fighters out to the Far East and the Zeros escorting a Japanese bombing raid on Australia's Northern Territories in early 1942. The action was a memorable one, and not for reasons that the seasoned Battle of Britain fighter squadrons newly arrived in Australia wanted to remember. As the experienced British pilots broke into the diving Zeros (as was their successful operating procedure with the Luftwaffe's Messerschmitt 109s) the Japanese pilots promptly turned expertly inside them and effortlessly shot down eleven out of twelve P-40s inside five minutes with only one loss to themselves. This humiliation was not lost on the British and for the rest of the Pacific war *all* Allied pilots, both British and American, learned to rely on the superior diving speed and firepower of their fighters and never to try to out-turn a Zero in a turning dogfight.

In fact RAF intelligence in Malaya had known all about the Zero and its fighting capabilities long before the war. In May 1941 the Chinese had downed one of the new Japanese fighters near Chungking and produced a comprehensive air intelligence report warning of its fighting potential. This intelligence eventually got to London where the Air Ministry passed it to the co-ordinating staff for all intelligence in Malaya, the FECB or Far East Combined Bureau. In Malaya, despite its clear significance - of all the services, aviation depends on technical superiority more than any other - the information was not just ignored: the Secret Air Staff Technical Intelligence report disappeared!

This is not to say that the FECB failed to alert the services in Malaya to the overall Japanese threat. An accurate and clear General Staff Malaya intelligence memorandum exists from mid-1941 that spells out the Japanese order of battle and weapons capabilities in some detail. The problem was that the information, even when it was supplied, appears to have been largely ignored by the operational staffs, the units and particularly the politicians. So much so that the day before war broke out, one of the military staff officers on the GHQ staff said publicly that "he couldn't understand why the Governor had got the wind up and mobilized the local volunteer forces." Even the day before the Japanese invaded the politicians vacillated. The unfortunate C.-in-C. Brooke-Popham, on asking if he should execute Operation *Matador* (an advance into Thailand to block off the narrowest part of the Kra Peninsula), was met with the reply from London on 6 December "that he could act at his discretion". His Chief of Staff, contemplating his troubled chief, said dryly, "They've made you personally responsible for declaring war on Japan, sir."

If the British and their intelligence service underestimated the threat from Japan, then the Japanese did not make the same mistake about the British. Japanese intelligence efforts for their campaign in Malaya before the war were comprehensive, thorough and well resourced. The aggressor always has the initiative, even in intelligence, and for more than ten years the Japanese intelligence service had been able to build up a sophisticated intelligence organization largely based on the numbers of legitimate Japanese companies and business activities trading in Malaya, with their 7,000 Japanese residents and visitors. In addition, there was a steady commercial sea traffic in small boats along the eastern coast; many of the Japanese craft included naval officers on reconnaissance missions. It was later claimed that even the official photographer

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

to the Singapore naval base was a serving Japanese intelligence officer, Colonel Nakajima.

This Japanese intelligence activity was well known in Malaya. The head of the Straits Settlement Police, writing after the war, claimed that the extent of Japanese espionage had compelled him to recommend to the Governor that at least half of any Japanese company's workforce must in future be non-Japanese labour. Nothing was done. The policy from London was to do nothing that might antagonize the Japanese, in case it provoked them to attack.

Sometimes Japanese spying was so blatant that it became farcical. In late 1940 the Japanese Press Attache in Singapore, Mamoru, was arrested *in flagrante* and eventually jailed by the British authorities for three and a half years for openly running espionage agents in Malaysia (including a British Army corporal) and in particular for offering *guided tours of British barracks and military installations* to Japanese army officers visiting Malaya. The most blatant examples of all were the unauthorized mooring of two Japanese submarines in the Malayan harbour of Endau, which was owned by a Japanese mining company, and the remarkable testimony of Captain Collinge of the Straits Volunteers. In September or October 1940 he saw a Japanese officer, in full Japanese Army uniform, observing a squadron of British armoured cars on exercise before coolly embarking on a motor boat and heading out to sea in the gathering dusk, "presumably to rendezvous with a Japanese ship offshore". When he reported this, Collinge was told by two British civilians on the Governor's staff not to make an issue of it, "as the policy of H.M. Government . . . was to appease the Japs and to avoid provoking an incident at all costs."

Across the years we can only imagine the fury of the helpless FECB officers in Malaya collating this intelligence and vainly trying to warn the military authorities at GHQ.

The greater the truth, the greater the potential provocation, made worse by the peaceful languor of colonial life in a humid semitropical paradise where the Governor, the Colonial Civil Service and the old Malaya hands ruled supreme. No one, and certainly not the white *tuans* out to make their commercial fortune in Malaya, wanted to prepare for the worst. Malaya was a long way from the war, and life, for the British, was good.

If the British were unprepared for a war in Malaya, then the Japanese most certainly were not. We are fortunate that the chief operational planner of General Yamashita's victorious 25th Army, Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, Imperial General Staff, has left a full account of the planning for the seizure of Malaya. Planning for the invasion began on 15 September 1941 and was accompanied by an intensive programme of aerial reconnaissance. As the date of the invasion drew nearer the busy Japanese pilots conducted ever more blatant overflights of RAF airfields and installations, many of which were detected by the British. On one flight on 22 October 1941, Tsuji actually went along himself in a Japanese Type 100 "Diana" reconnaissance aircraft as it flew directly over the sites of the landing beaches at Khota Baru and the RAF base at Alor Star at only 6,000 feet. Many of these flights were noticed by the RAF but no action was taken.

A second, even more thought-provoking example is the story of Air Technician Peter Shepherd, then 18 years old, who was serving as an RAF aircraftsman at the forward airfield of Sungei Patani in northern Malaya in December 1941. Shepherd, a highly trained RAF Halton apprentice, was one of the numerous intelligent, well-educated young men who were attracted before the war by Lord Trenchard's vision of a new technical elite for Britain's youngest armed service.

On 4 December 1941 Shepherd was ordered to fly as stand-

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

in crew on a Dutch East Indies civilian Lockheed Hudson as the Dutch technician had been taken ill. In his own words:

To my surprise we landed in Cambodia on a private landing airfield in the south at a place near Kampot. As French Indo-China was virtually in Japanese hands at the time, this made Cambodia a pretty dangerous place for a Dutch plane to land. The French authorities were of course liberally sprinkled with pro-Vichy elements and so no friends of the British in 1941.

My own position as an RAF serviceman in civilian clothing was therefore highly dangerous. To make things worse, on the way north, the Dutch pilot divulged that the real purpose of the trip was to collect a single British passenger under cover of what sounded to me like a clandestine commercial flight smuggling contraband. To me this looked like a combination of agent-running and smuggling. I had been told none of this before we took off. I thought we were going to Thailand, which was neutral, not to Cambodia, so I was extremely unhappy as you can imagine. I decided to stay out of the way on the ground.

Later in the day the pilot took me to a restaurant to eat. There were only the two of us. The pilot went off into the back of the kitchen to do some business, probably about the cargo. I was only eighteen and stranded in a strange country in civilian clothes. I thought I could be shot as a spy, so I was fairly frightened as you can imagine, and kept my head well down.

At the restaurant, an Oriental came up to me and offered me some of his Tiger Balm for my mosquito bites, which were pretty bad. He started to talk, but I could hardly understand a word. I gathered from his mixture of broken English and sign language that he was a Jap civilian and some sort of aircraft engineer himself. After

all, "engineer" sounds the same the whole world over. He thought I was a *French* aircraft engineer. He seemed very pleased about something and kept trying to talk to me. He was pretty drunk, mainly on cognac. We communicated in a weird mixture of sign language and place names and eventually he pulled out his diary and a map and tried to tell me where he had been and what he was doing there.

He indicated that he had sailed on an aircraft carrier from Japan to Hitokappu Bay north of Japan and had seen a huge armada assembled there. On the 24 November he had been flown south to Phu Quoc Island to supervise some urgent operational modifications on the bomb racks of the Japanese planes based in southern Cambodia.

He seemed very proud of what he was doing and what he had seen and indicated that we were the only people who knew about the fleet, and that it had been planning to sail on 26 November to obliterate the US fleet in Pearl Harbor and to launch a simultaneous invasion of Malaya and Singapore. He explained this with lots of signs and "boom, booms". When I indicated surprise, he dragged out a kind of diary book and even showed me a few rough sketches of some of the naval ships that he said he had seen moored the week before to convince me.

I realized it was important, so when he staggered out to the lavatory, I stole the drawings from his book. He got even more drunk after he came back, and when the pilot told me it was time to go I left my new friend vomiting over the verandah rail.

On returning to Malaya the next day, 5 December, I immediately reported all I had been told to the RAF Station Intelligence Officer. Later that morning I was flown down to Kuala Lumpur where I was interrogated

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

by two civilians whom I took to be intelligence officers. I handed over the sketches that the Japanese engineer had drawn and went through all the details yet again. During the course of my interview I said that I believed the Japanese to have been telling the truth as he saw it, and we agreed that *if all* the details of his story were true, then the time of the supposed attack would probably be in three days on 8 December [7 December Hawaii time, because of the International Date Line]. I flew back north to Sungei Patani that afternoon with strict instructions to keep my mouth shut once I got back to the station.

Nothing happened after I got back. Despite the state of emergency the airfield never even went on full war alert, much to my surprise, and the next thing I knew was when a bomb blew me through the concrete doorway of the aircraftmen's showers at 7 a.m. on the morning of 8 December during a surprise Japanese air raid.

As a result of my serious injuries I was evacuated from Malaya to Batavia and then Karachi and didn't pay much attention for the next two years while my wounds healed. Then I was invalided out of the RAF back in the UK in early 1944.

I often wonder what happened to the information I gave to those intelligence officers at Kuala Lumpur. To this day I can't understand why Malaya Command didn't go on a war alert that morning, let alone attack the Jap shipping which we all knew had been detected offshore.

Peter Shepherd's story has never been told before but it is merely one dramatic example of the mass of intelligence warnings that were flooding in to the British authorities in Malaya in the month before the invasion. The Japanese

appear to have provided plenty of last-minute signals and indicators of attack for the British intelligence staff; the only mystery is why they were not acted upon.

To understand this we have to look at the second fundamental problem that hampered British intelligence in Malaya: poor organization. The British approach to the management and co-ordination of intelligence in the Far East seems to have been remarkably fragmented. It is easy to understand that at the height of a war for survival against a ferocious and dangerous enemy like Nazi Germany the British would give priority to the immediate danger on their doorstep and worry less about the Far East. That is logical. What is less easy to understand is the apparent disorganization of the intelligence effort in Malaya itself. The reason appears to be both lack of organization and shortage of resources.

The structure of intelligence in Malaya was thin, to say the least. The key body was the Far East Combined Bureau (FECB) which was theoretically charged with co-ordinating intelligence from the three services, sigint sources and sometimes SIS reports, providing the authorities with up-to-date, accurate summaries of the threat to British interests. In fact its prime role was as an outstation of Bletchley Park's Ultra code-breaking operation. Very little has been written about the activities of FECB in comparison with its Whitehall-based controllers, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and the Government Code and Cipher School (GCCS). It most certainly did not occupy anything like the same authoritative place politically in the Far East as its Whitehall cousins. It was more a collection agency than a co-ordinating body or filter. What is clear is that FECB was relocated from Hong Kong to Singapore in 1939.

In the absence of a full official history of intelligence in Malaya at the time we can only guess at FECB's real role and influence. We do know that FECB was not a respected voice in

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

the war councils of Malaya. If anything, it was excluded from them and because of the requirements of tight security (FECB was evacuated before the fall of Singapore to prevent its secrets falling into Japanese hands) was unlikely to be heard in the more rarefied civil and military committees responsible for the defence of the peninsula. The truth seems to be that no organization was co-ordinating intelligence in Malaya in 1941.

Part of the fragmentation problem was a lack of understanding about what intelligence could and should do. Military intelligence was only a small and subordinate staff within the bureaucracies that ran the Malayan colonies and was largely ignored by "real intelligence". This seemed to stem from ignorance on the part of the colonial regime and an outdated belief that intelligence and the secret services were one and the same thing in some curious John Buchan or Bulldog Drummond view of the Great Game. The whole of the Far East Command seems to have been permeated with the belief that the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI6) and its secret collection assets was what intelligence was *really* all about; the rather more mundane intelligence cycle of collection, collation, interpretation and dissemination seems to have been ignored or unknown. Vital assets like the services' signals intelligence units, which were breaking Japanese codes and reading Japanese messages, seem not to have had any great influence on events before spring 1942; or if they had, intelligence secrets were not put to work for operations.

To compound this unworldly unprofessionalism was another agency's jealously guarded monopoly of *counter-intelligence* through the so-called Defence Security Officer (DSO). The British Security Service (MI5) has always seen itself as the service with prime responsibility for espionage, sabotage and subversion within British Crown Territories and for their security, an arrangement which continues to this day. But

MIS, as ever, lacked operators. Even so, fragmentation was further increased by the variety of secret political police officers (the so-called Special Branches) of the several police forces in the colony. The result was that intelligence co-ordination in the Far East was effectively non-existent, and endless squabbling between agencies was the norm.

To add to the confusion, many of the individuals in charge of the various intelligence departments got on so badly on a personal level that co-operation between their offices became impossible. In just one case, MIS's DSO in Singapore, Colonel Hayley Bell, was not on speaking terms with the head of the Japanese Section of the Singapore Police Special Branch. Relationships were so poisonous that Morgan, the SB chief, flatly refused to tell the DSO (who was Chairman of the Governor's Security and Intelligence Committee) precisely what he knew about Japanese espionage *on the grounds of security*.

Eventually the row between the two came to the attention of the military. There is a fascinating note in the files of the man who surrendered Singapore, Lieutenant-General Percival, from the days when he was the chief staff officer in 1937 about the secret policeman Morgan: "It is not possible to feel any confidence in Major Morgan. His statements and views . . . convey a strong impression of an eccentric mentality, ill-balanced judgment, muddled thought and uncalled for reticence." A sardonic view might be that this is merely the inevitable *deformation professionnelle* and descent into paranoia of any secret policeman anywhere who has spent too long inside the secret world, but Percival - who many feel was a much more incisive staff officer in 1937 than he was a commanding general in 1941/2 - goes on, "Morgan is clearly lacking in ability and not fitted for the appointment he holds . . . and this view is supported . . . by his past history and antecedents." However, like all good civil servants, Major

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

Morgan was well able to escape the consequences of his actions, particularly from a mere soldier. Percival goes on sadly, "On the other hand, he appears to be on a seven to ten year [Civil Service] contract, so there may be some difficulty in removing him."

With men of Morgan's calibre looking for spies it is no surprise that British counter-intelligence had a poor record of protecting the colony from the disaster which was to befall it. Morgan and his colleagues would have had a fit had they realized that there was a major Japanese military espionage operation active in Malaya in 1940/1. *It was run by a serving British Army officer.*

Captain Patrick Heenan was probably recruited as a spy by the Japanese Military Intelligence Service during a visit to Japan in the winter of 1938. He was unpopular with fellow officers in his battalion, the 3/16 Punjab Regiment in Malaya, so much so that he was posted out as an Air Intelligence Liaison Officer. This was never going to be a good career move for an infantry officer, but it did provide Heenan with the agent-runner's dream: access to military secrets. As an AILO, Heenan now had access to all Malaya Command's orders of battle and the types, dispersal locations and weapon states of every RAF aircraft on the peninsula, together with contingency battle plans.

One of the great mysteries of the Malayan campaign was the uncanny ability of the Japanese to hit RAF airfields so accurately and at a time that guaranteed maximum loss to the British. "It was almost as if they knew our plans," in the words of one RAF NCO of the time speaking long after the campaign. They did. Heenan supplied the Japanese with everything he knew, and in particular probably provided accurate detailed plans of RAF Alor Star, the key airfield in the north. Alor Star was neutralized in a devastating series of air raids early on, thus virtually guaranteeing the Japanese

air superiority for the rest of the campaign. Worse, he almost certainly passed on top secret British codes and ciphers, enabling the Japanese sigint service to read all the Army and RAF traffic throughout the battle.

Heenan was careless. He had attracted attention and suspicion before the war within the military, but nothing was done. However, on 10 December 1941 he was arrested after what looked like a botched attempt to murder his section head, Major France, and his quarters were searched. He was found to be in possession of unauthorized classified maps, operation orders and codes, and two disguised transmitters and a code book to encipher transmissions. In the exigencies of wartime a full counter-espionage security inquiry into Heenan's contacts was impossible; but it soon became quite clear that he was heavily implicated not only in his own direct espionage activities but also in running a network of agents in Malaya before the war.

Heenan was moved south under escort with the retreating British armies and taken to Singapore in January 1942 to be court-martialled for espionage, in that "he wilfully communicated information of value to an enemy while on active service in Malaya in December 1941". He was found guilty and sentenced to death. Heenan was not alone in the intelligence he supplied. The British discovered to their horror after the war that the Japanese had also seen all the most secret traffic between Churchill and the War Cabinet in London and the Commander-in-Chief in Singapore in 1941.

To ensure that the most secret and the highest level documents of all were not hazarded or compromised by transmission or by aircraft overflights, Whitehall dispatched direct correspondence by a fast merchant ship, the 7,500 ton MV *Automedon*, to Singapore in late September 1940. On board was a weighted sack containing "most secret" operational plans for the Far East together with an extremely pessimistic

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

British Chiefs of Staff appreciation of Britain's real ability to defend Malaya. The *Automedon's* Master, Captain McEwen, and the diplomatic courier Captain Evans both had strict instructions to drop the sack over the side should anything go wrong.

It did. In November 1940 the *Automedon* was intercepted on the last leg of her journey off the Nicobar Islands as she swung north through the Indian Ocean by the disguised German surface raider *Atlantis*, which had been reading British merchant codes. At 300 yards' range - *Atlantis'?*, resourceful Captain Rogge had disguised some of his crew as women and run up a Dutch ensign - a hail of twenty-eight 5.9-in shells smashed the *Automedon'?*, radio room, disabling the Master, Evans the diplomatic courier and the radio.

The leader of the German boarding party, an English-speaker called Mohr, could not believe his luck. The delighted Germans found that they were now in possession of a weighted British diplomatic courier mailbag containing the top secret personal correspondence and intelligence crown jewels for the Far East, together with all the new British maritime code-books, *and the British did not know*. The Admiralty assumed that *Automedon* had been torpedoed and sunk by a submarine, as the victims of surface-raider attacks were usually able to get off a signal; but not this time.

The Germans were not much concerned with the details of British plans in the Far East - although the new British maritime (BAMS) codes were another matter - and so they passed all the relevant material Far Eastern documents to their ally, Japan. The British did not know that early in 1941 the Japanese had copies of the highest level policy between London and Singapore and in addition could read almost all the British secret maritime radio traffic. By the time London found out, it was too late.

The *Automedon* affair was the biggest British intelligence

loss in the Far East. One of the recurring mysteries, given its importance to Britain's enemies, is why no real mention of the *Automedon* or the loss of its priceless cargo is made in the official history, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*. It is clear, however, from the change in Japanese thinking and planning *after* they had been given their copy of the British Chiefs of Staff report by the Germans, that the *Automedon's* haul was one of the primary catalysts that steered Japan towards ever-bolder planning to strike at Pearl Harbor and Malaya. If there can be any doubt about the significance of the *Automedon*, after Singapore surrendered in 1942 Kriegsmarine Kapitän Rogge of the *Atlantis* was presented with a samurai sword from the Emperor of Japan's own hands; a Japanese honour almost impossible for any Westerner to comprehend, and the real mark of Japanese appreciation for an intelligence coup of extraordinary magnitude.

As if superior Japanese military intelligence and British incompetence, underestimation of the enemy and poor organization were not enough, the British in Malaya were hampered in all their efforts by a self-inflicted wound: a divided and weak command. The final ingredient in the loss of Malaya and Singapore was provided by the fragmentation of the colonial government itself. Just who was really running the Crown Colonies in Malaya as they prepared for war in 1941 is open to question. It was most certainly not the armed services, neither before, nor, more seriously, after the Japanese invaded.

The problem lay firmly with the colonial government itself. Under the leadership of Sir Shenton Thomas, the Governor since 1934, the Straits Settlements of Singapore and Malaya had slipped into a colonial torpor more concerned with the *status quo* and the social life of the colony than with harsh external realities. Described by a contemporary American observer as "a [pompous] slave to British civil service values [. . .] living in some kind of dreamworld where reality

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

seldom enters and where the main effort is to restrict the entrance of anything disturbing", Governor Thomas seems to embody the worst characteristics of early twentieth-century British values.

Much of the blame for the debacle in Malaya has been laid at his door, especially by the British armed forces. The Governor may have been at least partly a victim of poor leadership himself, however. Churchill's War Cabinet had given him strict instructions on Malaya's prime role in Britain's second great war with Germany, which was not to prepare for a war with Japan but to make as much money as he could for the Empire by selling rubber to the Americans.

In this atmosphere the main priority was undoubtedly economic. It therefore followed that anything that impeded the production and sale of tin and rubber - such as calling up local defence volunteers for guard duty or military training - was a costly distraction from Malaya's principal task. Despite this, Thomas *did* direct that considerable civil effort was put into assisting the armed services by helping to construct camps, build airfields and redirect labour, although in the case of the last of these without any great success. Like the careful civil servant he was, Thomas devoted much of his *apologia* after the war to his bureaucratic struggles over the costing details of native labour in the colony in 1941 and how it was impossible to pay realistic wages for war workers without more government money. This begs the real question in 1941: whether Malaya was on a war footing or running a civil economy, being run by the military or the old colonial administration? The answer seems to be both, and neither was doing it particularly well.

Perhaps the true reason for Malaya's problems, including its incompetent intelligence organization, can be found in this schizophrenic rule. Faced with a mortal threat to the colony, the patterns of peacetime social and civil service life never-

theless seem to have continued unchanged. Imperturbability in the face of deadly danger is a quality much admired by the English: in Singapore in 1942 it found its limits.

Not all Britons were as complacent and confident as the Governor and his herbivorous civil service. At least two men made sound intelligence predictions of the real threat to Singapore: Lieutenant-General Percival, when he was a staff officer in 1937, and the one man who sounded a really accurate alarm before the war, C.A. Vlieland. Unfortunately Vlieland was a civilian and a member of Governor Thomas's staff. Appointed Secretary for Defence Malaya in 1938, he was eventually to resign after some curious backstairs political intrigue in 1941 before war broke out. Before then, however, Vlieland had predicted in great detail and with uncomfortable accuracy the probable route and outcome of any likely Japanese invasion from the north through Siam and Malaya. Equally accurately, he outlined the need for strong defences in the forests to the north of Singapore and virtually dismissed the notion of any assault from the sea. He even claimed that "Fortress Singapore" was a complete white elephant and pointless to Malaya's real defence priorities. This was not a view likely to endear him to the collective mandarins of official British policy or the combined services.

Vlieland's real tragedy was to get caught up in the bureaucratic power play between the Governor, the Army, the RAF and the new Commander-in-Chief, General Bond, when he arrived in August 1939. Bond, a powerful and opinionated figure, promptly set about regaining control of the defence strategy of his command from "a bunch of damned civilians". Bond's particular obsession was with Singapore Island, and he would have no truck with a mere colonial civil servant meddling in matters of defence policy, especially one offering his own intelligence appreciations. The clash was inevitable, as was the outcome. Outmanoeuvred by the services and aban-

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

done in committee by his boss - and theoretically the Commander-in-Chief, the Governor - an embittered Vlieland eventually resigned as Secretary for Defence in early 1941. Once back in England he was to suffer the worst torture of all: seeing all the bitter predictions of his 1940 military appreciation for the defence of Malaya and Singapore being successfully put into action by the Japanese.

Perhaps this civil-military clash ensured the fall of Malaya more than any other factor, more so than poor intelligence and underestimation of the enemy. The infighting and lack of a clear command structure meant that no organization, from intelligence operations to civil defence, could survive the endless wrangles over who was in charge. Given the other weaknesses of British intelligence and Japan's ability to get inside the British operational information flow, it is hard to see how the British could have succeeded, even if Malaya and Singapore had been run as a battle zone and not as a colony right up to the very last days of the siege as the Japanese closed in and finally invaded Singapore Island.

Even as the final convoys of reinforcements poured into Singapore Harbour in late January and early February 1942, it was already too late to save the campaign. To the Australian government's dismay they found that their final reinforcements for the 8th Australian Division, disembarking in Singapore as late as 24 January 1942, were little more than more fuel for the fire. The battle for Malaya was as good as lost.

The discovery that Churchill had been contemplating diverting the *British* 18th Division on the high seas and sending it to the Middle East instead of embattled Singapore turned out to be the last straw for the Australian Prime Minister. John Curtin had already seen Churchill sacrifice Australian troops twice in 1941 in Greece and Crete, and he was alert for any backsliding or evidence of duplicity from the British. In January 1942 he cabled Churchill, warning him that any

attempt to divert the 18th Division from reinforcing the garrison in Singapore would be in Australian eyes an "inexcusable betrayal". Churchill backed down and sent the last drafts of the 9th, 11th and 18th Divisions virtually straight into captivity, to join their Australian comrades in the last days of the doomed colony.

These troops could have been needed elsewhere, as retreat and panic spread throughout the Far East. Subsequent Japanese air raids on Darwin in 1942 spread even more dismay and panic as far away as the isolated population of northern Australia. After the worst raid, when all the ships in the harbour were either hit or sunk, hundreds deserted and joined the headlong flight south in what became known as the "Great Darwin Handicap" as vital Air Force technicians and their families headed for the safety of the interior. Fortunately for Australia, the Japanese were at the limit of their resources and never did invade. But the events of early 1942 stand as an inglorious chapter in Australian history. The atmosphere of the time was one of flight, despair and the end of an era.

Two stories sum up the atmosphere of those last days in Singapore more than any other. As a tired British infantry battalion began to dig its fire trenches for the final defence of Singapore on a golf course, "a colonial planter of the worst type" came up quivering with rage and demanded to know what was going on. On being told by the young officer in charge, he stormed off "apoplectic with rage, shouting that the Golf Club was private property and threatening to tell the Governor to get this nonsense stopped, and full compensation".

The second story is the popular canard that it was really lack of water that finally persuaded Lieutenant-General Percival to capitulate. When the local civil works engineer said that nothing could be done about Singapore's water supply, the Army's Commander Royal Engineers countered that, with a few trucks and a work party of a hundred men, he could

"The Greatest Disaster Ever to Befall British Arms"

repair and maintain the reservoirs and pipelines, and guarantee water for as long as it was needed. He never got them: not from the hundreds of thousands of desperate civilians nor from the thousands of drunken, defeated deserters roaming the streets amid the flames and chaos of the doomed island on that terrible Sunday of 15 February 1942.

Amid the uproar of the last days one grim final act was played out. On "Black Friday", 13 February 1942, the convicted traitor Captain Patrick Heenan of the Punjab Regiment was, officially at least, executed by firing squad. Rumour has it that what really happened amid the smoke and explosions was that he was dragged onto the dockside between two sergeants during a Japanese air raid. An enraged Military Police Sergeant, who had won the right (by cutting cards) to kill the traitor before the Japanese arrived, then blew Heenan's brains out with a revolver at point-blank range before kicking the body into the dock and melting back into the crowds of deserters, drunks and terrified civilians trying to fight their way on to the last boats out.

It took the victorious Japanese Army to restore order and calm to the imperial garrison. They did so quickly and efficiently in their own brutal way, proving once again that it had been a very serious mistake to underestimate them, even up to the very end. Perhaps Churchill was wise after all not to have convened a parliamentary inquiry into the blunders and mismanagement that led to the fall of Singapore, the "impregnable fortress". Some disasters are so shameful that they are best quietly ignored: but their lessons should not be forgotten.

Uncombined Operations

Dieppe, 1942

On 19 August 1942, men of the 2nd Canadian Division based in Sussex, England, raided Dieppe, a small port on the northern coast of France. The landings were just after dawn in broad daylight and supported by thirty of the new, heavily armoured Churchill infantry support tanks. Five hours later the defeated invaders withdrew, having sustained the heaviest casualties of any Allied attack in the whole Second World War.

Of the 5,000 men who were in the force, 2,700 were killed, wounded or captured. As only 4,000 of the attackers got ashore, this meant a casualty rate of 60 per cent: worse even than that benchmark of loss, the first day of the Somme in 1916. The German defenders were astonished at the stupidity and temerity of their assailants. One German commentator wrote, "This [reckless] affair mocked all rules of military strategy and logic." Many myths and mysteries surround the Dieppe affair.

To some Canadian nationalists, Dieppe has become a defining myth of nationhood with brave Canadian soldiers being sold out by callous and incompetent British generals. To the British public, it was seen as a sacrificial political gesture to show Stalin that the British Empire really was trying to take the pressure off the USSR by opening up a second front; and to conspiracy theorists, Dieppe has even been represented as a cunning British plot to demonstrate to the American planners

Uncombined Operations

in Washington, new to the European war in 1942 and hot for some decisive action against the Nazis, that any premature cross-Channel invasion could only end in bloody failure.

All of these allegations have an element of truth: but no single one of them is the whole story. For, in one vital aspect, Dieppe is unique: it seems to have been the only major assault mounted by imperial forces without official authorization from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It is the only *unrecorded* major Allied operational decision of the Second World War. Therein lies the mystery behind the myths about Dieppe.

Close analysis of the evidence reveals that Dieppe was nothing less than an *unofficial* attack that circumvented the chain of command. The attack on Dieppe went in without proper resources, lacked intelligence on many key aspects of the German defences and, last but by no means least, was not given the full support on the day by the British Home Commands, which had often been kept in the dark or just ignored. Worse, its planners deliberately chose not to alert the official intelligence organizations to the attack or its intelligence requirements. It was, as a result, a disastrous intelligence blunder.

If it seems bizarre that a commander could mount what was essentially a private attack against the Wehrmacht's Fortress Europe, then no less bizarre was the personality, ambition and track record of the man responsible for the Dieppe operation: Mountbatten. At the end of 1941, Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten was promoted from a ship's captain in the Royal Navy and appointed Chief of Combined Operations, with a seat alongside Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke on the Chiefs of Staff. By March 1942 Mountbatten had been elevated *three grades* to become the youngest Vice-Admiral in British naval history.

Mountbatten's principal claims to fame were three. He had shown himself to be a dashing captain of destroyers - his last

three ships were sunk under him in circumstances that his detractors, of whom there were many, claimed only demonstrated his recklessness and inexperience. Second, he was a master of personal public relations, projecting the image of a young, dashing and heroic commander able to carry the war to the Germans and lighten the gloom in a Britain weary of defeats. Last, Mountbatten was formidably well connected. A cousin of the King, confidant of the Prime Minister, personal friend of Noel Coward and able effortlessly to summon powerful friends from Hollywood and the British Establishment alike, Mountbatten was a public relations dream in the war-darkened Britain of early 1942. There was even talk among some Conservative politicians (almost certainly started by Mountbatten himself) that he should be elevated *over* the Chiefs of Staff in some capacity.

Mountbatten's carefully cultivated legend hid a ruthlessness and ambition that frequently accompanies great men and their success. He was not averse to cheating during naval exercises to gain advantage over his brother officers, and he deliberately suppressed or falsified military records after the war when he felt that his carefully cultivated historical image was in danger. In the somewhat guarded words of even his *official* biographer, Mountbatten chose to "rewrite history with a cavalier indifference to fact".

Mountbatten's vanity knew few limits. In the midst of his wartime responsibilities he could be found posturing on the film set of *In Which We Serve*, a propaganda hagiography based on his own experiences in which the dashing destroyer captain was played by his close friend Noel Coward. Mountbatten actually wrote to Coward after the Dieppe raid saying, "Your letter caught me on my busiest day . . . but since the matter . . . is so pressing, I am dealing with it before my service duties." A normal commander would have been visiting the wounded and dying and debriefing the survivors.

Uncombined Operations

Beaverbrook himself warned during the war, "don't trust Mountbatten in any public capacity", knowing that Mountbatten's dark and untrustworthy side would brook no attack on his carefully managed reputation or self-image. Despite Beaverbrook's warning, the young, unscrupulous, vain and ambitious aristocrat had now been given a seat on the highest military council in the land, together with the resources and authority to attack the German-occupied coasts of Europe. Mountbatten's personality combined with his newly acquired power and ambition were to have tragic consequences.

The roots of the 1942 attack on Dieppe are to be found twenty-four years earlier, in the attack on Zeebrugge on St George's Day 1918. Under the leadership of Admiral Sir Roger Keyes of the Dover Patrol, a raiding force of warships, marines and soldiers stormed the German submarine pens on the Belgian coast in a daring attempt to block the Kaiser's U-boats from access to the sea. The raid was partly successful and despite heavy casualties, provided a much needed boost to British morale, at the time reeling under the impact of the Germans' last ground offensive of the Great War. The Zeebrugge raid created an image of a brilliant military coup, causing serious damage at little cost - precisely the sort of indirect attack so beloved of British strategists over the years.

By 1940 Keyes was back, this time as Chief of Combined Operations with a remit to attack the victorious Germans around the coasts of Europe and repeat his success of 1918. Quite why the British felt that they had to raid the defended coasts of Europe is a question that seems rarely to have been asked - the Germans never felt a reciprocal urge to mount similar military adventures against the British coastline. In 1940, however, Britain's new Prime Minister Churchill was determined that even though British forces had been evicted from the Continent, the offensive must be maintained, not just to inflict casualties on the Germans but also as an act of faith

with the suffering populations of occupied Europe, who in 1941 had no other hope of release. Apart from Bomber Command, it was the only offensive option at the time.

Combined Operations was a curious command. It was essentially an experimental tri-service co-ordinating and planning staff, put together as a result of wartime experience and designed to bring together the military assets of the three armed services to launch, as its name implied, combined operations against the enemy. By the time Mountbatten took over in late 1941 on the direct instruction of Winston Churchill, his orders were in Mountbatten's own words "to continue the raids, so splendidly begun by Keyes, to keep the offensive spirit boiling . . . Secondly, to prepare for the invasion of Europe, without which we can never win this war." Mountbatten also claimed that Churchill said, "I want you to turn the south coast of England from a bastion of defence into a springboard for attack."

This was heady stuff for a recently promoted 41-year-old naval captain whose next command was to have been one of the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers. But Churchill had another, political, agenda implicit in his choice of the dashing Mountbatten for such a high-profile appointment: the Prime Minister had to sell British aggressive spirit to the Americans, newly arrived in the war and sceptical of their ally's fighting capabilities. After the humiliations of Norway, France, Dunkirk, Greece, Crete, Malaya and Singapore, and Rommel's victories in North Africa culminating in the surrender at Tobruk in June 1942, the Americans had every justification for their scepticism about the British Army's ability to fight. Even Churchill could not understand why the Army kept surrendering, saying plaintively on more than one occasion, "Why won't our soldiers *fight*?"

Churchill had chosen well. Conscious of the effect of Mountbatten's charm, good looks and *beau sabreur* image

Uncombined Operations

on the Roosevelts, particularly Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, the wily Premier knew that if anyone could impress Britain's fighting spirit upon the highest councils of American decision-making, it would be Mountbatten. During visits to Washington the new commander of "Combined Ops" won over all the Americans he met, including that doyen of republican military values and America's most powerful soldier, General George C. Marshall, who became a personal friend. The young hero had done his diplomatic PR work well, doing what he did so brilliantly, and at a time when it mattered for the rest of his countrymen, not just for himself. Churchill was justifiably proud of his protege. Mountbatten himself appears to have been well aware of Churchill's wider intentions, boasting to a friend, "Winston told me what he wanted and now it was up to me to carry it out." Given this level of backing, it would have been difficult for the most humble personality not to have been tempted into delusions of grandeur, and Mountbatten's many friends had never accused him of excessive humility. In the words of the Canadian authority on Dieppe, Professor Brian Loring Villa, "for thus turning Mountbatten's head, Churchill was in no small measure responsible." There is even a case for seeing Mountbatten as a *victim* of an unscrupulous Churchill, manipulating the young Admiral's weaknesses for his own ends.

Once Keyes had gone, Mountbatten lost no time in putting his own stamp on Combined Operations and was, like many others in his position, able initially to reap the rewards of his predecessor's efforts. Combined Ops basked in the glory of successful raids on Vaagso off Norway and the Parachute Regiment's first battle honour, the daring theft of German radar secrets from Bruneval in northern France. Even the St Nazaire raid of 27 March 1942, despite its cost (and five VCs), was counted a success because the destruction of the huge dry dock - the only one capable of servicing German battleships

on the Atlantic - removed a major strategic pressure on the British. All these attacks were originally the fruits of Keyes's staff regime and planning.

For Combined Ops's new plans for 1942, Mountbatten's staff unveiled a wide-ranging schedule of attacks, ranging from the temporary seizure of Alderney in the Channel Islands to a hare-brained scheme for a raid on the Gestapo headquarters in Paris. The set piece was to be an attack on Dieppe in June, under the code name "Rutter". The aims at Dieppe, despite later claims that it was the invasion of Europe gone wrong, or some kind of bluff to confuse the Germans and the French Resistance, were really quite straightforward: to see whether it was possible to seize and hold a major port for a limited period; to obtain intelligence from captured prisoners, documents and equipment; and to gauge the German reaction to a sizeable demonstration blow against the French coast.

In addition to these purely military goals, there were three other, less clear-cut agendas in play. The first was the wish of the Air Staff to draw the Luftwaffe in the West into a major air battle and inflict serious casualties on the German aircraft deployed in France; the second was the purely political goal of showing the USSR that Britain really was trying to get at the Germans' throats; and the third and most hazy agenda of all was the wish of the Canadian government to get more into the war.

The first of these was to play firmly into Mountbatten's hands later. Although the Royal Navy and the Army were wary of committing too many forces to Rutter the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Portal, was only too keen to demonstrate the power of his vastly expanded fighter force in 1942 and bring the Luftwaffe to action in the hope of inflicting a crushing defeat on the Germans. A major fighter sweep over a port well within range of the southern English airfields would "draw the Luftwaffe up". As a result, the RAF became willing

Uncombined Operations

supporters of the plan whereas the other two fighting services were relatively lukewarm.

Churchill's political difficulties in the spring and summer 1942 had much to do with his backing for Operation Rutter in particular and Combined Ops activities in general. Any British victory in the West would be an important bargaining chip in the complicated manoeuvring that was taking place between the Allies. The need for decisive action had become more acute following a speech by Stalin in February 1942 in which he made what seemed to be an oblique offer to negotiate a separate truce with Hitler. A thoroughly alarmed British Foreign Office assessed the speech as an attempt either to negotiate a truce or to bring pressure to bear on the British to ease the pressure on the Russians. In any case, the USSR had to be reassured of Britain's determination to fight. A major attack in the West would do this, irrespective of its outcome.

As the summer wore on with its wearisome defeats in the desert and rumblings of political discontent with his leadership at home, Churchill became evermore depressed and desperate for a success - any success. With the fall of Tobruk on 21 June 1942 the political volcano in Westminster and Whitehall erupted as the murmurings against his wartime leadership surfaced. A torrent of political and press criticism burst over Churchill and his administration. A vote of no confidence was tabled in the House of Commons and, although the outcome looked suspiciously like a put-up job (the vote was 475 to 25 in his favour), Churchill was badly shaken. He admitted later that "the only thing he ever feared was the House of Commons in full cry."

Churchill needed a success to survive; and he knew it. Now he had a sceptical Parliament and Whitehall to battle with as well as the Germans and his strategic allies, Roosevelt and Stalin. The cautious and pragmatic Chiefs of Staff frustrated most of his military adventures as premature, content to build

up Britain's military strength for the long haul. Churchill the politician, ever conscious of the need to keep the crowd entertained in a democracy, needed some short-term gains. Only Bomber Command under the pugnacious Harris and Combined Ops under the dashing Lord Louis Mountbatten seemed to share his values and be prepared to carry the fight to the enemy in the summer of 1942.

The third agenda for operation Rutter was to have the greatest human consequences, but was the least practical of the attack's aims. It was the desire of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, after two and a half years of inactivity to get into action. Since the outbreak of war the Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, had followed a politically sensible but basically unsustainable policy. He had given the public appearance of vigorous Canadian support for the war but without committing his troops to actual fighting. Inevitably, with the raw aggression and justifiably famous fighting spirit of the Canadians, this policy could not last for ever. Although thousands of Canadians flocked to the colours, Mackenzie King knew that conscription, especially in French-speaking Canada, for service overseas was a recipe for political trouble and so he ensured that Canada's exposure to front-line combat was reduced to the minimum.

The political contradictions inherent in Canada's war policy gradually forced themselves upon the politicians back home in Ottawa. Having created a large, well-trained and well-equipped army and sent it to Sussex in England to prepare for battle, Canada's politicians discovered that their military machine had built up a momentum of its own. The Canadian Expeditionary Force's senior commanders in England, MacNaughton, Crerar and Roberts, with two years of training under their belts, were pushing hard for a more active part in the fighting if only to give their bored soldiers something to do. As usual, this showed itself by a rising tide of indiscipline

Uncombined Operations

in which the Canadians stole, got drunk, fought and got up to the usual sexual shenanigans common to any large group of fit young men a long way from home with too little to do and too many available, lonely women on their own.

In vain the Canadian PR machine briefed that the Canadian Army's crime rate was no worse than any other. The grim and increasingly irritated citizens of Sussex counted the 3,238 Canadian courts martial up to August 1942 and hoped, like their high-spirited guests, that action would soon focus their minds on other things. In Lord Haw-Haw's mocking words from Berlin. "If you really want to take Berlin, why don't you give each Canadian soldier a motor cycle and a bottle of whisky? Then declare that Berlin is out of bounds. The Canadians will be there in 48 hours! . . . that would end the war." By 1942 the Canadians in Britain were the most exercised but least tried army in the war. The Canadians, and their commanders, wanted to fight. When Lieutenant-General Harry Crerar, commanding the 1st Canadian Corps, was summoned to Montgomery's headquarters, South East Command, on 27 April 1942 and asked whether his Canadian soldiers would like to take part in a major attack on the French coast his answer was brisk - "You bet!"

On 13 May 1942 the Chiefs of Staff approved Operation Rutter. As it stood, the plan relied on a frontal attack across Dieppe town beach, supported by flanking attacks by commandos to knock out coastal batteries covering the approaches. In the air a thousand RAF sorties would be flown to seize control of the sky and provide an umbrella of air superiority; and offshore, the Navy would bombard the town. Rutter was not a good plan. In the final planning stages the attack was considerably weakened: the Navy refused to provide a battleship or any other capital ship for fire support, and the RAF scaled down their plans for heavy bombing of the seafront at Dieppe to a series of fighter-bomber sweeps

and strafing attacks, to avoid French civilian casualties. The Canadian 2nd Division would spearhead the assault and go on to seize a radar station and an airfield at Arques, three miles inland, for a limited period.

On 5 and 6 July the Canadian troops embarked on their assault ships, but when the weather began to deteriorate they were ordered to batten down the hatches and ride out the weather at anchor. While the troops lay heaving with sea sickness in their small landing craft, two German bombers appeared over one of the Isle of Wight staging ports and bombed the flotilla, without significant result. As the Channel gale continued to blow, on 7 July the operation was cancelled and the troops disembarked to flood the pubs and billets of southern England with stories of the raid on Dieppe that never took place and the horrors of small landing craft in a storm. All concerned believed that "Dieppe" was hopelessly compromised and now off for ever.

It was just as well. Neither the Army commander, Montgomery, nor the Naval Commander at Portsmouth, Admiral Sir William James, really believed in the plan. The more Rutter had developed, the greater their concerns. As the Army Commander, Montgomery was very uneasy about the whole idea of a frontal infantry attack, particularly without a proper bombardment by the RAF to soften up the opposition, which C.-in-C. Bomber Command was not prepared to provide. Bernard Law Montgomery had fought in the First World War and knew all about poorly prepared frontal attacks without proper fire support.

For their part, both the Royal Navy's Commander in Portsmouth and the Admiral commanding the amphibious forces were mindful of the fate of HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* only six months previously off Malaya. They had no intention of risking battleships within five miles of an enemy coast and within striking distance of the Luftwaffe's

bombers. The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, agreed wholeheartedly. The professional military view was that the Rutter attack on Dieppe had been badly conceived, lacked sufficient fire support and was uncoordinated. Now it was off they could all breathe a sigh of relief.

What followed the cancellation of Rutter is the beginning of the mystery of Dieppe. Seething from the cancellation of a long-cherished project that would place his command firmly in the public eye, and on the receiving end of a number of highly critical reviews of both the overblown organization of Combined Operations and its "second-rate" planning procedures for Rutter, Mountbatten decided to act on his own. On 8 and 11 July he called two meetings of the main staffs involved in the original operation and asked for their support to remount the raid. He did not get it.

As the second conference broke up on 11 July, a number of Mountbatten acolytes were quietly asked to remain behind after the main critics of the scheme (such as Rear-Admiral Baillie-Grohmann, the designated commander of Rutter's naval forces) had left the room. No one is completely clear what transpired at the closed meeting that followed, but from then on Mountbatten and his principal staff officer, Captain John Hughes-Hallett RN, were wholeheartedly dedicated to a substitute operation for Rutter. This was to be called "Jubilee", and the target was to be Dieppe - again.

Any major operation to attack the continent of Europe needed the authority of the Chiefs of Staff. What followed that July is one of the more remarkable stories of the Second World War: the Commander of Combined Operations, protege of the Prime Minister and darling of the media, Lord Louis Mountbatten, set out deliberately to deceive the combined British Chiefs of Staff, the British intelligence co-ordination apparatus, the other armed services and most of his own staff officers. Mountbatten had decided to relaunch the aborted attack on

Dieppe under another name and without formal authority. He admitted as much towards the end of his life, in a little-publicized interview with BBC Television in 1972: "I made the unusual and I suggest rather bold decision that we would remount the operation against Dieppe."

Even Captain Hughes-Hallett, who was closest to Mountbatten and a total accomplice in the scheme to remount the attack on Dieppe, was concerned at this lack of authorization from the top. He pointed out that as Combined Ops Principal Staff Officer he needed to quote some official authority on all the operation's paperwork and requisitions. Accordingly, on 17 July, Chief of Combined Operations formally minuted the Chiefs of Staff, asking the COS Committee for a specific decision to be included in the minutes of their next meeting that "the Commander Combined Ops is directed to mount an emergency operation to replace Rutter . . . using the same forces." The Chiefs of Staff demurred, and the item was not recorded in the minutes.

Mountbatten was now getting desperate. He had another go at the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 25 and 26 July, this time asking for a blanket authority to conduct large-scale raids but without specifying the target every time. Already jealous of Mountbatten's rapid rise and privileged access, and highly suspicious of his ambitions and motives, the Chiefs of Staff were having none of it. On 27 July they recorded a decision that merely widened his planning powers slightly, but specifically endorsed the existing need for Combined Ops to seek formal authority before embarking on any new operations.

That was enough for Mountbatten, however. Excited at getting his chance and chafing to do something, he gave direct orders for Captain Hughes-Hallett and a few trusted staff officers to proceed. No one knows precisely what he said to Hughes-Hallett, but there seems little doubt that he deceived him, probably by claiming that he had authority from the

Uncombined Operations

Chiefs to proceed with the new plan, Jubilee, under the blanket authority of the decision of 27 July widening his planning powers. Hughes-Hallett was a more than willing ally and believed what his charismatic master, a man who spoke directly to prime ministers, film stars and chiefs of staff, told him - which principal staff officer would not?

On 28 July orders were issued to selected Combined Ops staff officers that Rutter was back on, under the authority of the Chiefs of Staff and with the code name Jubilee. New operational orders were issued to the raiding force headquarters on 31 July, and the whole planning frenzy for the aborted operation started again. On 12 August the Chiefs of Staff noted that Mountbatten could, in principle, *plan* to mount a substitute raid for the abandoned Rutter. Dieppe as a target was not mentioned, nor discussed.

To the end of his days Mountbatten used these broad planning directives to give the impression that he had received official backing for his second Dieppe raid. Interestingly, none of his colleagues on the Chiefs of Staff nor the Cabinet papers have ever supported this claim, either during or after the war. Even Churchill had great difficulty retracing the decisions for the Dieppe raid when he wrote his own history of the war, *The Hinge of Fate*, in 1950. Eventually, frustrated, he accepted Mountbatten's account and took responsibility himself: but we know from his correspondence that Churchill did so only because neither he nor anyone else could locate any substantive Cabinet documents to the contrary.

The fact was that there was no specific authorization to relaunch an attack on Dieppe and Mountbatten knew it. He got round the problem of the troops by telling the Canadian commanders to keep details of the new operation to themselves, "in the interests of security". A limited number of staff officers began to plan Jubilee in great secrecy. But not everyone was informed. Under the guise of "security" (that invaluable

able military mantra for those hoping to conceal the unpalatable), several key agencies were deliberately kept in the dark. Admiral Baillie-Grohmann, the uncooperative naval commander, was excluded and Captain Hughes-Hallett offered the job by Mountbatten. Montgomery's army staff at GHQ were ignored as Mountbatten dealt directly and secretly with the Canadian Army's chain of command. Most dangerous of all, neither Mountbatten's own Chief of Staff nor the high-level intelligence liaison officer and his official deputy, Major General Haydon, were informed that Dieppe was back on. The nearest commercial analogy might be if the Chairman of Ford UK decided to invest in a new car in Britain but did not inform Ford HQ back in the USA and also did not tell the Sales and Marketing Director or Company Secretary. As a planner one is left wondering how Mountbatten thought he could ever get away with it. Presumably he was gambling on a major success, in the knowledge that "victory has no critics".

The real danger to the revised operation lay in the intelligence world. While the logistics and administration will always give the game away that a military operation of some sort is afoot, they need not give the *objective*. The demands for intelligence will inevitably expose the target, however: Mountbatten's subterfuge needed maps, plans, pictures and information about Dieppe. Mountbatten, in fact, now had two threats to his security; not only did he need to keep his revised operation secret from the Germans, but he also had to keep it secret so far as possible from the Chiefs of Staff. The scale of the deception is breathtaking. But Mountbatten still needed intelligence - a lot of intelligence - to mount a successful assault on a defended port in occupied Europe.

Over the years the British have shown considerable skill in the higher management and co-ordination of intelligence. Learning by mistakes and experience, they had refined a cardinal principle by the end of 1941; *all* operations were to

Uncombined Operations

be notified to the Inter Service Security Board. The purpose behind this piece of bureaucracy was simple but profoundly important: the ISSB was the clearing-house for deception planning. It alone co-ordinated the activities of the London Controlling Section, the highly secret British deception staff described in Chapter 2. The ISSB was also responsible for the security of operations. Only the ISSB knew what lies and what real secrets were being leaked to the Germans by various counter-intelligence and deception operations. Only ISSB was capable of evaluating the total security risk to any one operation.

Mountbatten deliberately chose not to inform the Inter Services Security Board of Operation Jubilee. The official history, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, is absolutely clear on the omission. Not only that, Mountbatten did not request any support from the major intelligence agencies like the Secret Intelligence Service, preferring to rely on the existing Rutter target dossiers. He updated this basic intelligence with an *ad hoc* series of low-level intelligence tasks put out to tactical photo-reconnaissance flights and small special signals units which could be tasked directly by Combined Ops without awkward questions being asked.

The dangers of this disregard of intelligence were serious. In the first place, Mountbatten risked not getting the very best intelligence for his troops as they went up the beach. In the second, he could not be sure how much the Germans knew of his plans. Dieppe was without doubt by now a deeply compromised target. Six thousand soldiers had been talking about the cancelled Rutter raid of 7 July all over southern England since they had disembarked. Why should they not? It was history now so far as they were concerned. Any real security about the Dieppe raid was long gone. To make matters worse, the London Controlling Section (about which Mountbatten knew little) was now busy passing carefully planed nuggets of

information about the *old* Dieppe raid to their opposite numbers on the German intelligence staff. Now that Rutter was cancelled there were few restrictions on feeding really good titbits to the enemy in order to boost the credibility of MI5's turned Abwehr double agents.

The British Double Cross operation, using MIS's turned agents to send false messages back under control to their German masters, had a field day in the summer of 1942. As a result, the German intelligence service had at least four specific warnings about Dieppe from false agents whom they trusted in the UK. The Germans, in fact, were extremely well informed, so much so that some commentators have speculated that the second Dieppe operation was a deliberate deception operation offering a sacrifice to build up the reputation of MIS's false agents with the Abwehr. This seems far fetched. The most likely explanation is that ISSB gave clearance to leak redundant secrets to the Abwehr after Rutter was aborted. The only problem was that they were *not* redundant secrets: Dieppe really was going to be attacked, but Mountbatten had chosen not to tell ISSB that the operation was back on again. The risks to Mountbatten's forces were horrific.

In one of those extraordinary twists of fate that happen in war, the German intelligence service in Paris never passed their warnings down to the local troops defending Dieppe. Although there was a practice alert on the French coast on 17 and 18 August 1942, and both Hitler and the German C.-in-C. West, von Rundstedt, warned that raids could be made against the French coast, there is no evidence that this was linked to any specific warning about an attack on the Dieppe area. There is no evidence that the Germans were reinforced and lying in wait for the Canadians. Neither Mountbatten's nor the Canadians' intelligence staffs could have known that, however. Mountbatten was lucky.

The intelligence requirements for Operation Jubilee were

Uncombined Operations

relatively straightforward. To attack a defended coastline, operations staffs require four specific kinds of information: the topography of the battlefield - beach gradients, currents, etc.; the enemy's strengths, dispositions and layout; enemy weapons, their locations and capabilities; and last, knowledge of the enemy's reaction plans - to fight, to reinforce or to withdraw.

None of these is particularly difficult in theory, but they all require access to the complete pantheon of intelligence sources and agencies. For example, beach composition and gradients may be laid out in pre-war books, but time and tide mean that a frogman has to double-check what the topography is really like as close to the time of the raid as possible. The enemy's strengths, dispositions and morale can be gleaned from a number of sources: photo-reconnaissance, agent reports, sigint disclosures and even open-source material. Finding his weapons and their ammunition stocks is harder; once photo-reconnaissance has shown where they are sited, only local information from agents, captured information or sigint will reveal the real details that flesh out the camera's pictures. Finally, knowledge of an enemy's plans and intentions will come only from humint, captured documents or sigint.

The point is that the whole of Britain's exceptional intelligence-collection armoury was needed to mount a successful operation of Dieppe's scale. It was available and perfectly capable of answering all the questions. But if Mountbatten asked for the full Joint Intelligence Committee support-package for Dieppe, he knew that the JIC would alert the Cabinet Office and Chiefs of Staff to his scheme to remount the raid, and they might stop him. So, by bypassing the Chiefs of Staff, Mountbatten was forced to bypass the intelligence agencies.

By ignoring the intelligence community, Mountbatten was accepting the risk of deliberately keeping his troops in the dark about vital information. This failure to use the full intelligence

resources available was to cause needless casualties. To give only two simple but deadly examples: the beach at Dieppe was too steep and too stony for loose-tracked tanks; second, there were artillery pieces hidden in the caves at either flank of the beach. On the day the failure to identify these points would kill many Canadians. Both could have easily been answered by the Joint Intelligence Committee and its intelligence collection assets, had they known, but Mountbatten dare not risk asking for help from an outside and senior agency. He wanted to keep his private bid for glory secret.

Some of the other intelligence blunders at Dieppe were almost farcical. Combined Operations intelligence staff - in common with Military Intelligence - identified the Wehrmacht unit holding the area at Dieppe as the 110th Division. This would doubtless have pleased the sweating soldiers of 110 Div greatly, had it been true: at the time they were trudging across Russia, two thousand miles away, heading east in pursuit of the fleeing Soviets across the endless steppe.

The actual unit at Dieppe sampling the delights of the wine and French girls was in reality the 571st Infantry Regiment of the 302 Division, a category two division consisting largely of Poles and middle-aged ethnic Germans equipped with a motley mixture of horses, bicycles, captured Czech and French guns and anything else that the harassed Quartermaster staff at Wehrmacht GHQ West in Paris could scrounge from Berlin. Lacking weapons, ammunition and trained, fit manpower, the commander of 302 Division wisely chose to concentrate his forces to cover the most likely and most dangerous enemy approach: the shingle beach at Dieppe. Equally wisely, he ordered a policy of not keeping his guns in the prepared emplacements in case they were spotted and attacked from the air. Combined Ops' tactical air reconnaissance flights were quite incapable of seeing *inside* the caves in the cliffs at Dieppe as they swept low along the beach. The wisdom of General-

Uncombined Operations

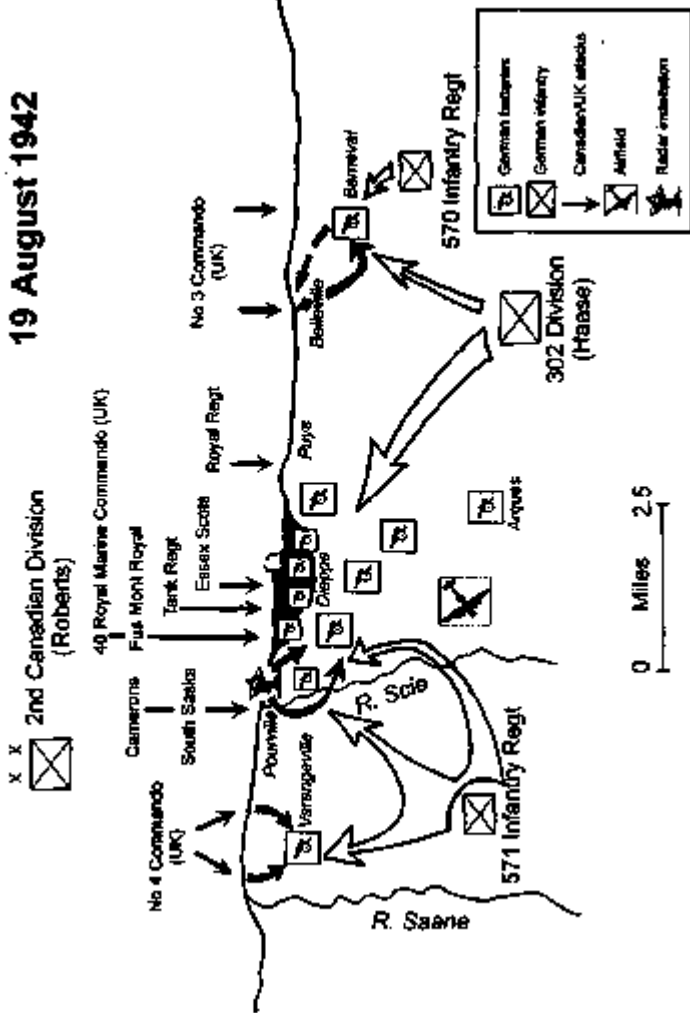
Major Conrad Haase's simple but effective divisional defence plan - from the defenders' point of view - came on the day, when the flanking fire from his concealed assortment of weapons and his single captured French tank, firmly cemented into the sea wall, slaughtered men and machines alike as the Canadians struggled up the steeply sloping stones of the beach.

If Mountbatten ignored the services of SIS and the SOE agent networks in France, his staff did at least try to involve the signals intelligence services at the tactical level if not at the strategic JIC level. This was as a result of the experiences of the raid on St Nazaire in the spring. If the command staff could listen to the enemy's reactions and countermoves as they actually occurred during a battle it would allow the Combined Ops force commanders to react accordingly. This was a sound tactical policy and actually worked on the day at St Nazaire far better than anyone at Cheadle (the intercept HQ) believed possible. Ironically, at Dieppe the Combined Ops HQ signals staff was completely flooded with tactical sigint and was unable to pass on any really timely intelligence to the air commander during the battle. However, the intention was sound.

As the day for the attack drew closer, concerns about the prospects for Jubilee's success and the security of the operation began to emerge. Security became the prime concern; after the cancellation of the first attack this seemed a bit pointless, but various scares over compromise and lost documents highlighted the need to keep the force secure from the British and the Joint Intelligence Committee, if from nobody else. Even the gung-ho Canadians had their doubts. Major-General Roberts, the divisional commander, was uneasy about the plan but was gulled into an uneasy silence by the slick reassurances of Mountbatten and his staff at Combined Ops; after all, he reasoned, these were the experienced officers, not he. But many Canadians shared his unease.

DISASTER AT DIEPPE

19 August 1942



Uncombined Operations

Captain Austin Stanton, adjutant of the assaulting tank unit, the Calgary Tanks, was worried: "In my opinion there was no hope of security." In fact, he was so pessimistic that he wore brand-new battledress clothing on the day, in case he became a prisoner of war, and much to his commanding officer's annoyance. Nevertheless, with the rest of the force of Operation Jubilee, the Calgary Tanks embarked on one of the new 195-ft Landing Craft Tanks (LCT) at Newhaven on the night of 18 August watched by a silent crowd of civilians. "As we queued to get into the docks," Stanton observed, "it was quiet and ominous." With the other 237 ships and 4,963 invaders the uneasy adjutant of the Canadian tank force went off to battle in his LCT.

The attack began to go wrong from the outset. The German Navy had a regular inshore milk run which tried to slip small merchant shipping along the French coast at night. This was well known to the Dover and Portsmouth maritime search radars, as was the Germans' general routine and timings for these little convoy. Precise intelligence on the convoy programme was held at the highest levels, however, as it would have come from sensitive strategic sources like the Enigma code-breaking operation. No one on Mountbatten's intelligence staff had asked for details of German Channel movements on the night of 18/19 August. To do so would have compromised the operation to the Joint Intelligence Committee and thus the Chiefs of Staff.

The result was inevitable. In the early hours of 19 August, as the convoy carrying the men of 3 Commando closed on the cliffs of Belleville and Berneval to the east of Dieppe, their escort blundered into a German coastal convoy in the dark. Despite two clear signals from the RN radars in England at 01.27 and 02.44 to the Force Commander aboard HMS *Calpe*, giving the German convoy's precise position, the warning was not passed on to the eastern flank naval escorts. Combined Ops planning had gone wrong from the outset.

The first the Jubilee attackers knew of the German convoy was when a starshell burst overhead and in the cold, wobbly light the German escorts opened fire, knocking out the vulnerable Steam Gun Boat Number 5 providing close protection for the eastern landing craft. A furious firefight developed with tracer streaming in all directions "like a firework display" as other Royal Navy escorts joined in before the outgunned Germans were driven off with heavy losses. Jubilee was compromised. As dawn broke, the shocked occupants of the eastern landing craft closed on the coast in an eerie silence. As one of the sergeants in 3 Commando said, "Through the binoculars you could see the bloody Germans watching *us* through binoculars as we ran in to the beach!"

At first light the various assaults got under way. Out to the east on the left flank, 3 Commando under the redoubtable Peter Young (who had watched in mounting horror from the very middle of the convoy firefight) climbed straight up the German barbed wire, "which the Huns had so helpfully strung down the face of the cliff to help us ascend", and led the commandos in a successful assault that silenced the Goebbels artillery battery inland. By noon Young was back in Newhaven, his battledress and his hands ripped to shreds. On the extreme western flank at Varengeville, Lord Lovat's disciplined 4 Commando destroyed the guns of the Hess battery in a textbook pincer movement assault.

These diversionary commando attacks to knock out the German guns covering the flanks were the only real successes of the day. Closer in, on the eastern edge of Dieppe at Puys, the Royal Regiment of Canada was mowed down as the soldiers struggled to get ashore, suffering 225 killed and 264 prisoners. Only 33 wounded men survived. To the west of the town at Pourville the South Saskatchewan and Cameron Highlanders of Canada got ashore without too much difficulty but were unable to cross the River Scie to get into

Dieppe. Of the thousand men in the two battalions, only 341 managed to get off; 144 were killed and the remainder went straight to German prisoner-of-war camps.

With both headlands covering the beach still firmly in German hands, the Canadian divisional commander, General Roberts, would have been wise to abandon the attack. But he was inexperienced, never having commanded a battalion attack before, let alone a divisional amphibious assault. He could not see the beach or the flanking headlands because of the thick smokescreen the attack force had laid down, and he could not talk to his commanders ashore because of communications failures. A tough-minded, decent soldier, who believed all the assurances Mountbatten and his staff had given him over the excellence of the Combined Ops plan, Roberts allowed the main frontal assault to go in on the beach as planned.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and the Canadian Essex Scottish got ashore in the centre without heavy casualties. Flights of cannon-firing RAF Hurricanes blasted the German defenders into momentary silence as the attackers closed the sea wall. Once the regrouped Canadians launched themselves across the wall and barbed wire into the buildings opposite, however, the full fury of the German defences shot them down in droves, with machine-guns and mortars firing on fixed lines. Any officer or signaller was promptly sniped from the cover of the various buildings on the seafront, and the casino turned out to be a defensive strong point with arcs of fire covering right down the beach. The attack stalled, with the Canadians taking cover and the Germans firing at anything that moved.

Into this firefight lumbered the Churchill tanks of the Calgary Regiment. Under a hail of fire, which included the Germans dropping mortar bombs accurately into the landing decks of the ships, the LCTs closed the beach and disgorged

their loads. Despite the damage and the difficulties 27 of the 29 tanks got ashore but only 15 managed to struggle up the smooth, grapefruit-sized pebbles of the beach, slipping and sliding, to get on to the esplanade. And there they stayed; for the Germans had built tank traps for just such an occasion to keep any invading tanks from getting into the town. In the words of one Canadian trooper, "We just went round in bloody circles, using up our gas and firing off all our ammo."

One tank managed to push its way down to the western end of the beach and helped to shoot the infuriated Hamiltons into an assault on the casino, but that was the only success for the armour. If the intelligence for Dieppe had been properly co-ordinated, the planners at Combined Ops would have known that they had to deal with anti-tank walls more than six feet high and four feet thick protecting the exits from the esplanade. They were, after all, hardly secret, and every citizen of Dieppe knew just what they were and where they were. The agent-runners in SIS and SOE, the Special Operations Executive, handling the "take" from French humint sources in the area were equally aware of them; but no one asked or attempted to co-ordinate all the intelligence for Jubilee, and the tank traps had not shown up well on Combined Ops' last-minute photo-reconnaissance flights. The Canadians had been let down by a basic lack of intelligence. Even on the Somme in 1916 the assault troops had known the enemy positions in more detail.

The disaster was compounded at about 07.00 hours. Desperately straining to make sense of the scanty and fragmented messages from ashore, General Roberts managed to pick up two clear pieces of information: the Essex Scottish were across the seafront and into the houses of Dieppe, and the casino had fallen. Roberts then took the only decision an attacking commander has left to him once his battle plan is in operation: to commit his reserve at a time and place of his own choosing.

Uncombined Operations

It was a defining moment for the stolid, steady thinking Manitoban, who had won a Military Cross and been wounded as an artillery officer in the Great War. His soldiers' lives and his own career hung on his decision. He ordered his mobile reserves, the French-Canadian Fusiliers Mont-Royal and 40 Commando Royal Marines, to land on the beaches in the centre to reinforce what he took to be the success so far.

French-Canadian soldiers are a breed apart. Fired by some kind of North American version of the *furia francese* and a frighteningly fierce national pride, Quebecois make formidable fighting soldiers. As the Fusiliers ran in, a storm of fire burst over their little vessels. One of the naval party counted over fifty bullet holes in his craft's White Ensign alone. Undeterred, the French-Canadians stormed ashore into six feet of water and "a positive blizzard of firing". Tragically, in the words of the official report, "the Regiment Mont-Royal was unable to accomplish anything at all, except to add to the losses being suffered." Within a minute of landing the Fusiliers were shot down and reduced to "shocked and dazed little groups, seeking only to survive". Of the 600 men who landed, only 125 got back to England that night.

At 08.17 Roberts made his penultimate decision of the day and ordered 40 Commando to land on the very western edge of the town in a vain attempt to outflank the Germans. Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph "Tiger" Phillips, Royal Marines, had already tried once to sail his group into the harbour at Dieppe but had been driven back by the intensity of the German opposition. Phillips, a man who had bivouacked with his soldiers in the open all through the winter of 1941/2, "to make sure we're all sharp and toughen us up", was not a man to quit lightly. He led the boats of 40 Commando Royal Marines in to the west edge of Dieppe.

As they broke from the cover of the smokescreen about 600 yards offshore into the bright sunlight, the terrible truth

dawned on Colonel Phillips in the front boat; he was leading his men onto a shambles of a beach, swept by tracer bullets and dotted with dead men and the human remains of scores of Canadians blown to bits by the intensity of the fire. Despite his orders, Phillips was leading his commandos into what looked like another Charge of the Light Brigade. Even as he took stock, watched by the officers in the command group, a storm of small-arms fire cracked overhead and tracer began to rake the assault craft.

In an act of astonishing moral and physical bravery, and realizing the futility of further action, Phillips stood up on the stern of the command motor launch. In full view of the enemy he put on a pair of white gloves and signalled the following boats not to attack, but to turn back into the cover of the smoke. Seconds later he was shot down, mortally wounded. In the words of one of his officers, "His final order undoubtedly saved the lives of over two hundred men."

It was all over. At 10.50 Roberts gave the order to withdraw. The Navy managed to rescue only three hundred men from the beaches. As the battered survivors of Jubilee limped home across the Channel, the firing gradually died down and stretcher-bearers and cautious Germans slowly put their heads up and began to help the moaning wounded. The remaining survivors surrendered. Jubilee was over.

The final cost was appalling: 1,027 dead and 2,340 captured, and only Canadian pride on the credit side together with a number of hard-learned lessons about invading Europe. To add insult to injury, overhead the RAF had suffered a major defeat, too. The new Focke Wulf 190 had come as a nasty shock to the RAF's fighter pilots. Over 105 British aircraft were shot down, no less than 88 of them fighters, and another hundred were damaged; the Luftwaffe lost only 46 aircraft. The Navy lost a destroyer and 13 major landing ships. For Combined Operations - and the Canadians - it was the worst day of the War.

Uncombined Operations

Once the propaganda boasting was over, the world took stock. Churchill briefed the House of Commons, taking full responsibility, and saying that "Dieppe had been a reconnaissance in force - to which I gave my sanction." But he had not, and he knew it. This was made quite clear in a private note dated December 1942 to General Ismay, the War Cabinet's representative on the Chiefs of Staff Committee. By this time the Chiefs of Staff had identified the duplicities behind the Dieppe operation and were taking steps to "prevent a recurrence of these unfortunate breakdowns in procedures". The finger pointed clearly at Combined Ops and a not particularly chastened Mountbatten. Churchill's note is worth quoting in full because it identifies the real mystery of Dieppe:

Although for many reasons everyone was concerned to make this business look as good as possible, the time has now come when I must be informed more precisely about the military plans.

In a torrent of questions that reveals just what Churchill did *not* know in 1942, he goes on,

"Who made them? Who approved them? What was General Montgomery's part in it? And General MacNaughton's [the senior commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Force] part? What is the opinion about the Canadian generals selected by General MacNaughton? Did the General Staff check the plan? At what point was the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff [VCIGS] informed in the Chief of the Imperial General Staffs absence?"

The last question was a shrewd and dangerous thrust to the heart of the matter. As Churchill almost certainly knew when

he asked the question, the truth was that the VCIGS, General Nye, had known nothing about Operation Jubilee, even though he was the most senior military officer in the UK on the day of the attack.

On 2 August 1942, two and a half weeks before Jubilee, Churchill, accompanied by Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had flown to Cairo for wholesale sackings of his desert generals and then to Moscow for delicate political negotiations with the Soviets. In Brooke's absence the VCIGS, General Nye, an officer of formidable intellect and reputation, assumed responsibility for the chairmanship of the Chiefs of Staff. Now we know from no less a person than General Ismay that the first Nye knew of the Dieppe raid was on the morning of 19 August when he inquired what all the reports from C.-in-C. Portsmouth and Combined Ops were about. The embarrassed Ismay, who claimed to be equally ignorant, had to bear the full brunt of General Nye's rage at being kept in the dark.

If Churchill did not order the attack on Dieppe and the Chiefs of Staff, including the acting Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the day, were not consulted or advised, then just who did give the order to attack Dieppe? All roads seem to lead to Mountbatten. His sleight of hand in misrepresenting a Chiefs of Staff directive to widen his powers to make plans, and their later agreement that he could explore a substitute for Rutter, the aborted Dieppe raid of early July is the key to the mystery. Mountbatten misrepresented these decisions to give his staff the impression that he *did* have official clearance for a second attack on Dieppe. After all, who was to gainsay the Commander Combined Ops? Senior commanders do not lie to their own staff.

This analysis is reinforced by Mountbatten's subsequent furtiveness in planning the second assault. It is clear that the only high level staff informed of the new "go" decision for

Uncombined Operations

Jubilee were Hughes-Hallett, the senior Canadian officers, the individual force commanders (one of whom was Hughes-Hallett, in place of Admiral Baillie-Grohmann who had not been kept informed after the secret 11 July meeting) and certain selected staff officers acting in good faith on the direct orders of their powerful new chief.

Any queries about the extraordinarily tight security for the operation were explained away by Mountbatten as special measures for a secret surprise operation, ordered personally by the PM himself. Only Mountbatten could have provided the necessary authority inside Combined Ops HQ for the way the operation was planned and handled. Only Mountbatten had the power and could have sanctioned the actions taken in his name and on his behalf, as he finally admitted in 1972.

Why did he do it? Ambition and vanity appear to have been the main driving force behind Mountbatten throughout the war. One friend wrote of him - presumably as a result of personal confidences - at this time, "This operation [Dieppe] is considered very critical from the point of Commander Combined Operations' *personal career* . . . If he brings this off . . . he is on top of the world *and will be given complete control.*" The last statement is probably an allusion to Mountbatten's ill-concealed desire (expressed to Leo Amery, Conservative MP) for a post as *supreme commander* of all British forces reporting directly to Churchill. Mountbatten certainly did not lack ambition or self-belief. The view of Mountbatten at this time is given weight by other sources. At least one informed commentator has described him at Combined Ops as "a master of intrigue, jealousy and ineptitude, [who] . . . like a spoilt child . . . toyed with men's lives."

The implications of Mountbatten's "vanity and conceit, and anxiety to steal the glory", in the words of the CO of 4 Commando, Lord Lovat, about his commander were profound. Operation Jubilee may well have been ill conceived,

poorly supported, lacking in basic intelligence and badly planned. There can be little doubt, however, that if only Mountbatten and his dupes on his staff had been honest and asked for help from the official intelligence agencies, then his soldiers would almost certainly have known about the beach, the tank walls, the guns hidden in the caves and the need for overwhelming fire support from bombers and battle-ships to suppress the Wehrmacht's defences at Dieppe.

Certainly the Germans thought so. General Haase of 302 Division, the victorious commander on the day, described the plan as "mediocre, the timetable too rigid and the fire support entirely insufficient to suppress the defenders during the landings". He paid tribute to the gallantry and determination of the Canadians, as did 15 Army Commander when he forwarded Haase's after-action report to von Rundstedt and Berlin. Field Marshal von Rundstedt added his own prescient postscript about the Dieppe landing: "The enemy will not do it like this a second time."

In the series of lies, blunders and myths that have grown up around Dieppe, it is plain that intelligence failures take second place to, and were a direct consequence of the basic lie by Mountbatten about the whole operation. It is equally clear that if he had used all the intelligence resources available to his command properly, many Canadian lives could have been saved. With proper intelligence, the operation might have been more successful and brought Lord Louis the adulation and further promotion he appeared so single-mindedly to crave. Certainly in many quarters he was never trusted again. However, Mountbatten was one of those almost pathologically self-assured personalities who genuinely believed that he had never made a mistake in his life. "It is a curious thing," he is on record as saying, "but I have been right in everything I have said and done in my life", a statement of breathtaking arrogance.

The story has a footnote. On 3 September 1944 an irritated

Uncombined Operations

Montgomery demanded of Lieutenant-General Crerar, the Canadian Army's commander in Normandy, why Crerar had seen fit to be absent from one of Montgomery's battle conferences. Having just taken the salute after the Canadian Army had captured Dieppe, Harry Crerar replied that there were *hundreds* of reasons why he had not been able to be at Monty's conference: the hundreds of Canadian graves he had just visited for the first time in the cemetery at Dieppe. Montgomery, wisely, let his Canadian commander have the last word.

*"I Thought We Were Supposed to be
Winning?"*

The Tet Offensive, 1968

If Pearl Harbor represents a salutary example of a great nation's failure to value intelligence properly, and suffering grievously as a result, then it must be said that America learned rapidly from its mistakes. With the astonishing energy and sense of purpose that characterizes the very best qualities of its people, the USA set about making sure that Washington would never again be taken by surprise by constructing a national intelligence service second to none.

The results were spectacular. By 1945 America had a fully developed worldwide signals intelligence capability, an international secret intelligence service, an effective clandestine operations capability and the best-equipped aerial reconnaissance capability in the world. These assets were reflected in the increased priority given to intelligence within the individual armed services and were backed by a formidable array of expensive technical aids and highly trained specialists to make the whole thing work. It was a staggering achievement.

In order to ensure that the mistakes before Pearl Harbor could never be repeated, a formal national intelligence assessment staff was activated with the prime task of ensuring that the President and his advisers would always have access to the best and most timely information, whatever the cost. Theoretically,

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

by the early 1960s, only twenty years after Pearl Harbor, the US authorities were masters of the most sophisticated and certainly the best resourced intelligence service in the world.

When Professor C. Northcote Parkinson formulated his famous law that work expands to fill the time available for its completion, he applied it equally to corporate bodies and bureaucracies. Parkinson's experience of the post-war British socialist bureaucracy was both telling and depressing, and the Professor never subsequently underestimated the ability of public servants to fight for power and influence among themselves in turf squabbles every bit as painful as the most savage corporate boardroom battle. It is, as Parkinson sadly observed, only human nature, and corporate organizations are but human nature writ large.

Bureaucratic Washington was no exception. Although the capability to provide intelligence had increased a hundredfold since Pearl Harbor, one unforeseen side-effect was to increase the value of the prizes for the Washington bureaucrats to squabble over. New and powerful intelligence agencies attracted new and powerful budgets. The consequence was that by the 1960s the competition for power between the US intelligence agencies had become the new US intelligence problem.

The problems of having too little intelligence scattered around became the problem of having too much intelligence from competing organizations and the struggle for its control. Each agency clung jealously to its own particular monopoly and kept it tightly compartmentalized, with the CIA trying, unsuccessfully, to become the overall master of US intelligence. A kind of competitive market economy had begun to dominate American's secret world. Ideally, in intelligence matters, a strong executive would direct such matters without argument. However, the US Constitution is specifically designed to make central control of just about anything very

difficult to achieve. Add to this the irresistible lure of defence contractors' dollars, the lobbying of elected politicians, regional demands for a share of the pork barrel of taxpayers' money, together with the competing demands of the armed services, and the internal battles over US intelligence become just another sad reflection of how Washington does business.

America's new intelligence capabilities were sorely needed. After the Second World War and the humiliating liquidation of financial support for Greece in 1947/8, British imperial power collapsed. In its place, in Sanche de Gramont's phrase, America embraced the "struggle for the world" with commitment and enthusiasm, assuming the role of leader of the Free World. The challenges of communist expansionism embodied in the Soviet Union and its revolutionary allies needed to be met, and America took over its new global responsibilities wholeheartedly. The isolation of pre-Pearl Harbor days was long forgotten. Nowhere was this new attitude better summed up than in Theodore Sorensen's speech for John F. Kennedy's inaugural address of 1961, which contained the words "we shall pay any price, bear any burden". Many saw it as a kind of global blank cheque. For America's fledgling intelligence agencies this was the springtime of hope. A Homeric clash of ideologies, fuelled by apparently limitless tax dollars, with an adamant and resourceful enemy gave a fervour and conviction to the fight that only the noble and well-funded cause can bestow. Nowhere was this better exemplified than in the war in Vietnam.

Although Vietnam was essentially a French post-colonial problem, the British originally had a finger in the pie. Despite the rhetoric of de Gaulle and his Free French, France was incapable of immediately reasserting its authority over its pre-war colonial territories in the Far East when the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. A successful nationalist - but communist - resistance leader called Ho Chi Minh promptly

"/ *Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?*"

proclaimed an Independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the name of the Vietminh (League for the Independence of Vietnam) on behalf of the Vietnamese people. In August and September 1945 the nearest allied troops were British and not at all sympathetic to communist nationalist uprisings against the colonial power, for obvious reasons. So when General Gracey's 20th Indian Division reoccupied Saigon under the terms of the surrender document signed in Tokyo Bay they promptly set about re-establishing the status quo *ante bellum*.

Pragmatic as ever, and alive to the dangers of unrest on the streets, the British commanding general took the unusual step of rearming the Japanese soldiers, effectively swore in their officers as *Allied* deputies and sent the now-conquered conquerors back onto the streets of Hanoi to keep the law and order they had maintained so effectively for the previous three years, provisional new Vietnamese government or not. They were, once Vietnamese shock had abated at seeing the return of the Japanese, apparently very successful peace-keepers. Somewhat breathlessly a hastily dispatched French colonial government team turned up late in September 1945 and stormed the headquarters of the Vietminh to reassert control of their colony. The British withdrew leaving the French in charge of their reluctant Indo-Chinese citizens. It was too late, however. A savage war for Vietnamese independence quickly destabilized the new French regime, a war mainly led by the heroes of the anti-Japanese resistance (who had been well armed in 1944/5 by the British and Americans), the Vietminh, under their cunning and ruthless nationalist leader, Ho Chi Minh.

By 1954 it was all over. Despite their best efforts the French were outgeneraled, outnumbered and outfought. The climax came in the north at Dien Bien Phu, 160 miles west of Hanoi, where the Vietminh under General Giap surrounded and trapped a large French garrison. Over a period of two months

in the spring of 1954, 16,000 French troops were besieged and worn down by over 50,000 Vietnamese supported by massed batteries of artillery. The fall of the garrison on 8 May 1954 spelled final defeat for French power. They had seriously underestimated the determination, the skill and the combat power of the Vietminh Army, and the fall of Dien Bien Phu ensured the end of French colonial rule in Indo-China.

Of the 8,000 Frenchmen who went into captivity, only 3,000 later returned to recount their ordeal to a nation that only wanted to forget the humiliation. The shadow of Dien Bien Phu and the memory of a well-trained and equipped Western army's humiliation by an Asian "peasant army" was to haunt other generals in Vietnam in the years to come.

The Geneva Peace Settlement of 1954 gave Vietnam back to the Vietnamese but crucially split the land into two, with pro-communist North Vietnam north of the 17th Parallel and anti-communist South Vietnam to the south. By 1956 Vietnam had polarized into two antagonistic nations: one a totalitarian communist state and the other a corrupt despotism. Within the southern half there were also seeds of future trouble. Not only did the communist north stoutly maintain Ho Chi Minh's claim to rule all Vietnam, but within the 900,000 refugees now in the South, many of them Catholics who had fled the communist purges in the Vietminh's workers' paradise, was contained a hard core of professional revolutionaries with instructions to destabilize the corrupt regime of President Diem. Thus was born the Vietcong, the military arm of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF).

By 1961 this communist insurgency group had control of no less than 85 per cent of South Vietnam, mainly the countryside. Disaffection with Diem's imperious rule ran high and a combination of communist, nationalist and religious opposition looked set to destabilize the whole country. There were

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

600 Vietcong attacks a month by the turn of the year. In the circumstances Kennedy, the new American president, felt obliged to make a stand and show his support for such an avowedly anti-communist regime in a highly unstable region. Faced with the choice of supporting Laos - which was embroiled in its own anti-communist war - and the Republic of South Vietnam, Kennedy chose the second. It was the South-East Asian domino that would be shored up at all costs by the USA as an example of America's willingness to "support any friend, oppose any foe".

To this day there is a continuing debate about the real factors that influenced Kennedy's final choice of domino. In addition to the ideological divide between north and south Indo-China, there was a deep Vietnamese *religious* divide between Buddhism and Catholicism as well. After the communist victory over the French, many Catholics chose to relocate in the South. Diem, for all his dictatorial tendencies, was a practising Catholic and begged for Western support on that basis, among others. President Kennedy was a staunch Catholic whose family had milked the Catholic political constituency regularly over the years in pursuit of votes for the Kennedy clan. The influence of the Catholic Cardinal of Boston, Kennedy's home base, has never been clarified by students of the murky world of 1950s and 1960s New England politics, but no one disputes that there was *some* clerical influence. There remains strong scepticism among many American political observers that Kennedy's decision to support Diem was not entirely a disinterested one by America's first Catholic president.

Whatever the reason, it was to be a fateful decision. In December 1961 the first US combat units, with 33 heavy-lift helicopters, arrived in Vietnam, and in February 1962 the new United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) began operations. What was to be called "America's long nightmare" had begun.

America's involvement in Vietnam soon began to escalate. In 1965 the US 9th Marine Brigade splashed ashore at Da Nang, and in the spring of that year the US began a programme of overt offensive air operations against communist safe havens and installations in North Vietnam. To back up this military support, the USA pumped nearly a quarter of a billion dollars a year into the South over the next twelve months. The ground force commitment had swelled from 1,000 US troops in 1960 to 300,000 by 1966. America's military machine was fully committed to South-East Asia.

Casualties mounted, too. In 1965 the USA had 1,484 men killed. Within one year, that number had increased to nearly 5,000. Suddenly, a far-away war was beginning to make an impact on homes and families across every state of the Union. More important, the war was taking on a new dimension. No longer was it just a battle for the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese people: the war in Vietnam was now becoming a battle for the hearts and minds of the *American* people as well, who were being asked to support the South Vietnamese not only with their tax dollars but also with the bodies of their treasured sons.

Every aspect of the war in Vietnam became the subject of intense American press and television scrutiny, with the result that by 1966 the USA was effectively fighting on two fronts. It was conducting a savage daily battle with a ruthless and elusive enemy in South-East Asia; at the same time it was trying to convince a sceptical public that propping up a corrupt and undemocratic foreign regime "because of a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing" was in the interest of American families, voters and taxpayers. It was a challenging task, anti-communist crusade or not. For first Kennedy and then Johnson and their advisers it was a permanent source of worry: domestic issues always seemed to impinge on the conduct of an unpopular war.

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

By 1967 the Americans had effectively won. Their massive infusion of men, *materiel* and aid, allied to new tactics, better intelligence and reforms of the South Vietnamese administration and army had brought the Vietcong and their northern sponsors to the first stages of defeat. Moreover, despite an increasingly vocal anti-war movement in the USA, middle America still remained broadly supportive of President Johnson's prosecution of the war. General Westmoreland could write accurately, "After only little more than a year of fighting sizeable numbers of American troops, communist losses were mounting dramatically, with nothing tangible to show for it."

It was clear that the pacification efforts in the South were beginning to succeed, too. Security and increased economic well-being had brought a re-establishment of stable government. For example, by 1967 only 20 out of the 242 provincial districts in the South remained unpacified. The Vietcong logistics infrastructure, so carefully built up by the cadres and party faithful over ten long years, had been smashed. Moreover, it was not something that could be quickly replaced.

Nor could the morale and commitment of the North Vietnamese Army and their Vietcong allies, hammered out of their strongholds by a series of major US-Vietnamese sweep-and-destroy operations, be restored easily. One of the biggest, Operation Junction City in spring 1967, deployed over 26,000 US and Vietnamese troops, with massive air and fire support, and killed over 2,700 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong troops. The secret communist HQ in South Vietnam (the COSVN) was forced to flee for safety over the border into Cambodia. Both sides recognized Junction City and a number of accompanying smaller offensives quite properly as major US successes and serious defeats for the communists.

Captured documents support this view. Contemporary NVA texts record defections to the "puppet" (i.e., the Army

of the Republic of Vietnam, ARVN) regime to be rising and an increasing disillusion with the war by the hitherto committed communist fighters in the south. For example, the diary of an NVA soldier captured in 1967 talks of regular admonitions from his Party cadres (officers) "not to defect to the puppet army" and records criticisms of his unit's "weak ideology, poor sense of organization and poor execution of orders". These and many similar documents of the time are not the record of a revolutionary force buoyed up by anticipation of final victory. On the contrary, they reek of disillusionment, appalling casualties, little food or ammunition, constant fear of US bombing, plummeting morale, failure and despair. The communists' operations were in ruins.

It was in this atmosphere of impending defeat that the Communist Party cadres in North Vietnam met in July 1967. The North Vietnamese leadership had been stunned by both the scale and success of the US intervention; more importantly, many of their Marxist analyses of the developing political-military situation had been shown to be so much rubbish. The ensuing debate over party strategy was lengthy, acrimonious and accusatory. The communists realized that their strategy to reunify the country was failing and that the combat power and commitment of their troops in the South was waning. However, they also realized that, despite the US and ARVN successes, there were serious potential weaknesses in the US position that could be exploited by a readjustment of the communists' priorities and resources.

The communist analysis identified a number of factors in the South that could be made use of. Two key areas were identified: the fault line between the American public's uncertain support for the war and the US government was seen as a potential weakness; and second, there were very real political difficulties inherent in the neo-colonialist US and South Vietnamese coalition. Both of these essentially political

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

targets had, up to then, been relatively ignored by the North. On the military side it was recognized that uncoordinated military confrontation of US main force units was markedly unsuccessful and likely to remain so. However, reasoned the Northern strategists, limited "spectaculars" against fixed logistics installations such as fuel and ammunition dumps and airbases were relatively easy to organize and did not risk heavy casualties. They would also make good television.

These were shrewd judgments. The seeds of the Tet offensive were sown.

The debate in Hanoi was also heavily influenced by other factors, not immediately obvious to Western observers at the time. (Unlike the more porous strategy debates of the democracies, Hanoi "did not sell tickets to its inner party councils".) Although no formal record exists of the secret policy and strategy conference held in Hanoi in July 1967, over the years it has been possible to piece together the main themes of the debate. For example, the US bombing campaign against the North was undoubtedly beginning to bite. Some 600,000 civilians had been mobilized to keep the country's infrastructure repaired and working, and another 145,000 troops were active in the air defence of North Vietnam. The bombing had caused serious economic disruption and hardship to the population. These were heavy drains on a small, poor and embattled country's resources.

In the circumstances, it would hardly be surprising if there had been no internal opposition to the war in the South. By holding up to the mirror a curious article in the official magazine *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, published on 22 July 1967, it is possible to see a reflection of the inner workings of the North Vietnamese communist leadership. The article (which is addressed to a North Vietnamese readership) explicitly criticizes "officials . . . who fail to recognize the deadly and irreconcilable differences between the USA and North Viet-

nam", and appear "to believe that Hanoi could make concessions for a negotiated settlement".

The very existence, albeit by oblique identification, of a group of North Vietnamese Communist Party functionaries apparently *opposed* to the continuance of the war is a significant pointer to the heat and polarization of the secret Hanoi debate. When we recall that another genuine fear was that the USA might actually invade North Vietnam (General Giap, the victor of Dien Bien Phu, had made a speech earlier in 1967 alerting the party faithful to the need to defend the homeland against a US amphibious invasion), it is perfectly reasonable to believe that the North Vietnamese leadership was divided and fearful by mid-1967. There can be little doubt that the fateful Hanoi conference in July of that year was divided between doves and hawks, between those who wanted to seek an accommodation, albeit temporary, with the USA and those who wished to strike a spectacular blow in an attempt to re-energize the armed struggle to reunify Vietnam.

In the end, the hawks won. A magazine article by General Giap of September 1967 entitled "The Big Victory, the Great Task" sets out in ringing tones what is almost a blueprint for the Tet Offensive of the following year. He identifies two themes in particular: "the US unwillingness to face a protracted war" and "US ruling circles would face . . . the increasing opposition of the US people." These were to be the key strategies. Giap also let slip some other interesting clues. He laid great stress on the courage and will to resist of the North Vietnamese people and their "unshaken determination to endure as they advance towards the reunification of our beloved homeland". This implies that North Vietnamese morale was shaky and did, in fact, needed bolstering. More ominously, he states that the necessary steps had already been taken to "guard against the evil plotting of reactionaries and spies". To connoisseurs of Communist jargon this usually

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

means only one thing: party members who have opposed the party line - and failed. More than two hundred officials, including the head of the North Vietnamese intelligence service, were quietly arrested and disposed of by one means or another in the autumn of 1967. Opposition can be dangerous in a socialist people's paradise.

In Giap's view, the time had now come to reassert the basic aims of the whole long-term Vietminh strategy. What he proposed in September 1967 was nothing less than a spectacular *all-out offensive throughout South Vietnam* by every available NVA and Vietcong asset. This, he hoped, would accelerate the long hoped-for uprising of the South's oppressed masses. Giap genuinely believed that by mobilizing *every* communist resource - political, diplomatic and military - for a series of showpiece attacks in every town and city in the South, the Vietminh and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam would provide the final revolutionary catalyst to bring the people out of their homes and throw off their yoke of capitalist oppression.

In military terms, given the conditions of the time in South Vietnam, Giap's politico-military analysis was little short of barmy. Sometimes, however, even a mistaken tactic can have unforeseen strategic and psychological results. Thus it was to prove with what became known as the Tet Offensive. In other respects Giap's analysis was remarkably perceptive. For example, he recognized a psychological flaw in the "subjective and haughty" senior US officers. According to the North Vietnamese, senior US commanders were nothing more than military technicians, mere "managers of violence" doing the bidding of their masters. They were conditioned only to think in very simple military terms. They were either winning or devising a new system to bring about battlefield advantage. Above all they were obsessed with numbers and "the management of force". They did not think like their enemies or even try to put

themselves in an adversary's mind. In particular their unwillingness to consider the idea of a sudden surprise attack from a retreating enemy was a very real flaw in their comprehension, reasoned Giap. For example, the American generals had failed to see the real political purpose behind the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes in 1944. Not only had the US commanders of the time been so swept up with their successes that they were oblivious to the possibility of a surprise attack, but they were also so politically blind to the real purpose of the war that they did not realize that an attack for essentially *political* motives was a distinct possibility.

Giap also correctly identified the precise reasons why the USA would find it impossible to increase troop levels in Vietnam in response to any sudden onslaught. The demands of worldwide US garrisons limited the number of divisions available; the whole of US strategic Cold War global policy was based on the doctrine of "limited response". Last, domestic and international political pressure would constrain any real attempt by the US military to go for the North Vietnamese jugular by, for example, the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Even so, the North Vietnamese never forgot that, with political will, the power of the full US military machine could have reduced North Vietnam to the Stone Age.

Giap also noted the growing US domestic unrest over the war, quoting in particular what he called the "widespread struggle of the American Negroes", which with other US domestic constraints would restrict the range of American responses to his planned attack. Secure in his analysis of the problem, and with the total backing of his political masters, in September 1967 the hero of Dien Bien Phu began his final plan to win, at last, their historic war of national liberation.

The first requirement was to be secrecy. Here Giap ran head on into the problem that was to bedevil all NVA planning for Tet. There were two key objectives of the North Vietnamese

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

plan: the mobilization, simultaneously, of every available communist soldier and sympathizer in the South for a maximum effort; second, the need for absolute surprise to catch the South Vietnamese and their American allies completely off guard. To a degree these objectives were mutually exclusive.. One required maximum publicity to get the message to all the party faithful. The other called for maximum secrecy so as to catch the enemy unawares. Publicity versus secrecy: it was an operational planner's conundrum.

Considerable thought went into a solution. Clearly, any deception plan would have to take into account the need for very public calls to arms to rouse the allegedly revolutionary masses in the South and the disheartened Vietcong hiding in the jungle. The final deception plan, like all the best deceptions, was a skilful blend of fact and fiction. It took account of what the USA and their allies expected and indeed wanted to see and combined it into a mix of contradictory signals that reinforced American prejudices.

The North Vietnamese also launched several initiatives to aid their deception schemes. For example, in October 1967 they let it be known that the VC and NLF would be observing a whole week's ceasefire from the beginning of the Tet Festival on 31 January 1968. The length of the truce surprised many observers, but as the NLF had for twenty years observed some kind of truce over the period of the Vietnamese New Year, this was both expected and welcomed.

US analysts assumed that the length of the truce was designed to allow the debilitated VC units in the South to be resupplied from North Vietnam without being harassed by US aerial bombing, which is precisely what had happened in previous years. In fact, a long truce over Tet *reinforced* the Americans' view that the NVA/VC were a well-beaten force. More than any other single measure the week-long truce was designed to lull the USA into lowering its guard. It was also

precisely the time period that would encourage the southern commanders of the ARVN to send their soldiers back to their families to get some decent home leave.

No other passive deception measure had anything like the same effect as this false truce; and after the Tet Offensive no other NVA ruse aroused such anger among the South Vietnamese population. It was as if the North had deliberately attacked at Christmas, New Year, Easter and the annual family visit to see Granny's grave all combined, after promising faithfully that it wanted a ceasefire. Tet is a sacred time and occupies a unique place in Vietnamese culture.

The USA was hoping, indeed, *expecting* to see some kind of peace-feelers as a reaction to the success of their bombing of the North and the National Liberation Front's military reverses in the South. The NVA command set out to ensure that every diplomatic channel would be used to indicate that they were hurting badly and wanted to talk terms. In September 1967 they decided on a deception operation intended both to offer the American authorities a tempting distress signal and at the same time to drive a wedge between the USA and their South Vietnamese allies along the neo-colonialist fault line they had identified as a potential weak link.

A VC agent called Ha, armed with suitably credible documents, contrived to be captured by the ARVN and obligingly told them that he had been sent to open a channel of negotiations with the Americans to discuss prisoners of war and political matters. When the US authorities were eventually informed, they opened discussions with Ha and tried to force some of his demands (such as the early release of convicted VC terrorists) on to the South Vietnamese regime, much to its anger. Distrust and dissension between the allies began to mount at a critical time, with the South Vietnamese deeply suspicious that the USA was plotting some kind of unilateral deal with the North behind their backs.

This deception was strongly reinforced by a later call on

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

Radio Hanoi from the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister' offering substantive talks if only the USA would stop bombing the North. This was taken as genuine confirmation that: North Vietnam was beginning to respond to US pressure and its will to continue the war was weakening. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

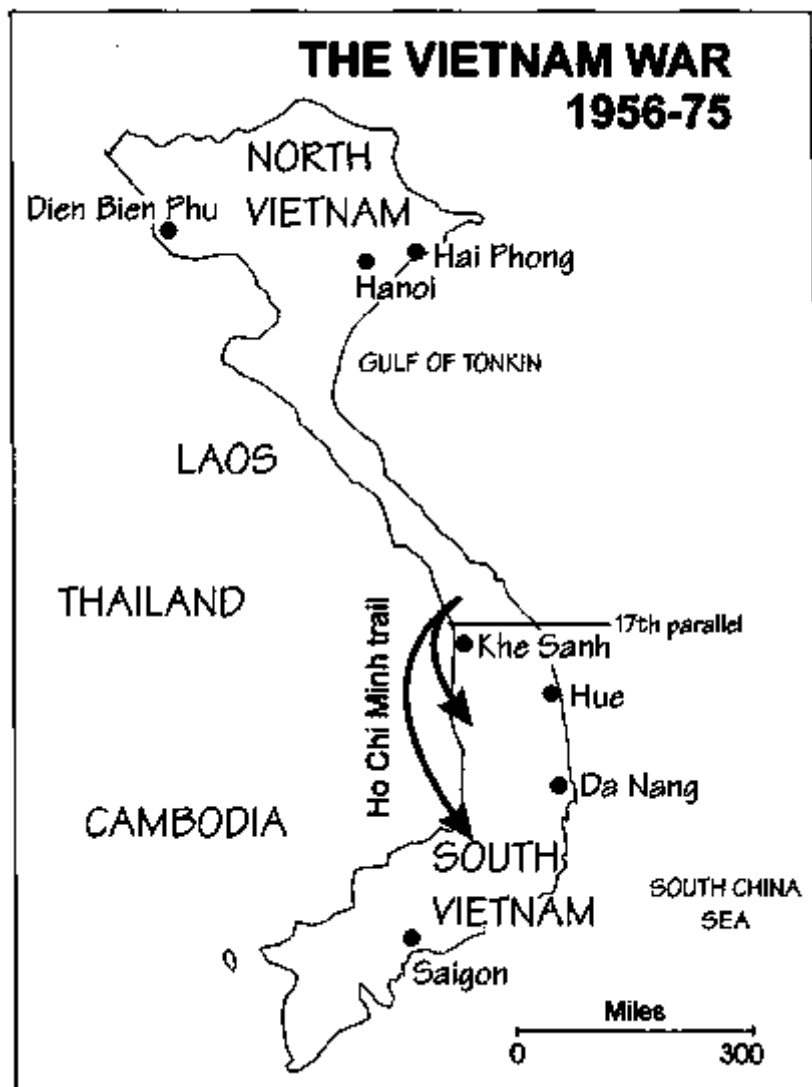
These diplomatic and overt political gestures were part of what the North Vietnamese termed "passive" deception, designed to conceal their real intentions. The other arm of the: communist deception plan was what they called "active" measures. This policy was designed deliberately to draw MACV's attention to a number of set-piece military attacks; on key bases. The thinking was that if the NLF was going to be forced to trumpet a coming attack that would win the war,, then it would be prudent to offer the USA just the sort of attack that the US military intelligence analysts would be: looking for. This would not be a country-wide general uprising in the South but a major siege of an isolated and vulnerable: US garrison: in fact, another Dien Bien Phu.

To ensure that the USA could not fail to spot the significance of the impending military attacks, Giap offered their principal enemy not one but *two* potential Dien Bien Phus.. Both were near the North-South border and both were a long; way from the true targets of the Tet Offensive, the main USi logistics bases and populated areas. These diversionary attacks were specifically designed to draw American military attention away from the plans for Tet and to divert US! reserves and firepower. They were also sufficiently "noisy" to draw the attention of the whole of MACV and much of the: world's press, even in the unlikely event that the US MACV J2 intelligence staff in Saigon had failed to collect good intelligence on the impending attacks in advance. If the USA was; looking for military attacks on its troops, then Ho Chi Minh and General Giap were going to provide them.

The first onslaught was on a defended camp at Dak To, halfway up the country and out to the west near the Cambodian border. It started on 4 November 1967 and lasted until the end of the month. The attack cost the NVA over 6,000 casualties and was intended among other things, callous though it seems, partly as a live battle-training exercise for the NVA officers who were later to lead the Tet Offensive. From the US point of view it was an expensive communist defeat, but it achieved its primary aim: fixing Westmoreland and his staffs eyes firmly on communist set-piece attacks on isolated US garrisons at a crucial point during the real build-up to Tet. Was Dak To going to be the "Great and Final Victory" that the communists kept talking about?

Dak To was merely the curtain-raiser. During December final instructions went out to the province commanders of the communist forces in the South, including the following significant passage: "In July 1967 a resolution for a general offensive and uprising was adopted . . . after a lengthy assessment of the current political and military situation . . . the general offensive will occur only once every 1,000 years . . . and will decide the fate of the war." US intelligence was well aware of the coming storm from this and many other captured documents, all pointing to the same thing. Indeed, in early January 1968 MACV's Public Affairs Officer in Saigon actually issued a press release which amounted to the operation order for the Tet Offensive, based on a document captured by the US 101st Airborne Division in November 1967. The document included VC phrases like:

Use very strong military attacks in conjunction with the local people to take over towns and cities. Troops should flood the lowlands . . . and move towards liberating Saigon, seize power and rally enemy "puppet" [i.e., South Vietnamese] units to our side.



It seems incomprehensible that, given this quality of intelligence, the USA could have been taken by surprise by Tet. Yet, with certain exceptions, Giap and Hanoi achieved complete *strategic* surprise. To understand how this came about we have to examine the organization and what a sociologist would call the "belief structure" or culture of US intelligence on matters Vietnamese in late 1967.

The US intelligence machine did have one unusual advantage over many other intelligence organizations faced with similar problems. The US military had an almost limitless supply of knowledgeable, articulate, well-informed and highly co-operative "country experts" on Vietnam: the South Vietnamese. Every document could be translated promptly; every prisoner interrogated without delay; and the linguistic nuances, the communist jargon and the regional prejudices of the country were completely transparent to US analysts - provided they consulted their allies. This was a remarkable trump card for any army fighting on foreign soil against an enemy with a difficult language and an alien culture.

Unfortunately, US military intelligence also had a number of inbuilt disadvantages working against them in Vietnam. These disadvantages would fatally distort both the US interpretation of the intelligence available on Tet and reaction to it. The principal disadvantage skewing American understanding was a particularly fixed perspective of history. As US policy-makers and intelligence analysts (who should never enjoy too close a relationship - the political wishes of the policy-makers invariably corrupt the objectivity of the intelligence officers, who being human, are usually only too anxious to please their masters) looked at the intelligence available on Tet, they sought historical parallels. In Vietnam, they did not have to look far. The spectre of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu hovered over every Western analysis of North Vietnamese aims. Beyond Dien Bien Phu, communist strategy in Korea

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

and even the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 were offered as analogies of the impending attack. In fact, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff gave a speech in Detroit in December 1967 stating that there might well soon be a last communist thrust comparable to the German attack in the Battle of the Bulge.

General Westmoreland, the MACV C.-in-C., and his deputy, General Creighton Abrams, had actually served in the Ardennes in 1944. Dispassionately viewed, one might think that this analogy with von Rundstedt's last battle could have helped the senior US commanders in assessing the threat from a North Vietnam they believed to be increasingly cornered and desperate. However, we are all prisoners of our own experience. Both Westmoreland and his senior advisers saw the analogy with the Battle of the Bulge as representing only the last *military* gasp of a fatally wounded adversary, and not! as a general uprising for a specifically political goal.

From this image of a final military onslaught it is but a short step to conclude that the communists would resort to their tried and tested formula by trying to cut off a major chunk of the US forces, like Bastogne during the Ardennes Offensive, and eliminating them in a set-piece battle: just like Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The US analysts and their commanders genuinely believed that a desperate NVA would "go for broke" in a *military* set piece designed to humiliate the USA and to increase domestic pressure back home to end the war. Although Dien Bien Phu was a tactical defeat for the French, history tends to forget that the rest of the French expeditionary force in Indo-China remained largely undefeated, combat-ready and perfectly able to fulfil its mission, but Dien Bien Phu caused its recall by a war-weary metropolitan population. The Americans, in particular the CIA, had homed in on Dien Bien Phu from the moment they became involved in Vietnam. If, went the reasoning, an NVA attack to win the

war was imminent *and* the communists were losing the war, they would go for a new Dien Bien Phu to eliminate the American people's support for Vietnam - it had to make sense.

An obsession with historical parallels was not the only weakness in the US position, however. The complex US-South Vietnamese command structure also increased their difficulties, in particular their ability to respond quickly. The grim fact from the C.-in-C. Westmoreland's point of view was that he was not solely in charge of the US effort in Vietnam. The Navy's Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet commanded all US strategic and maritime air power. The US Air Force was a separate service. The CIA ran its own operational programmes in-country, some of which (like the Phoenix covert operations and assassination programme) were definitely *not* for the conventional military. Ambassador Bunker in Saigon was in charge of all relations with South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese had their own military, administrative and regional organizations. Behind all this, the Johnson Democratic administration in Washington, sensitive - and rightly so - to every shift in Vietnam that could influence public opinion, was running an increasingly hands-on policy of micro-managing the war from 5,000 miles away.

The official at the centre of this centralizing policy was Robert McNamara, the ambitious and arrogant civilian who was Secretary of State for Defense and who believed passionately that the micro-management methods of the Harvard Business School were the only way to run a war. This soon reached an absurd level, with the President of the United States poring over tactical target maps of Vietnam and demanding detailed bomb damage assessments from his Air Force staff officers. Some of these were even transmitted to him in-flight aboard the Presidential aircraft, Air Force One. In fact, LBJ is reputed to have said following one BDA review,

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

"Is that the best the Air Force can do? Blow up a few lousy/shacks!"

By 1968 no real decisions were being delegated down the US military chain of command. Robert McNamara's way of dealing with the military was simple: those who disagreed with him he sacked if he could; and if he couldn't, he sidelined them and choked off their access to the President like some latter-day Renaissance cardinal. Under the Secretary of Defense's baleful influence, LBJ's lack of access to any military subordinate with a point of view that differed from Bob McNamara's would be a major factor in the debacle that was to follow.

Below this overcentralized National Command Authority was a mass of competing intelligence organizations that made any real central control of intelligence a C3 (Command, Control and Communications) nightmare. A list of some of the agencies involved gives a bewildering flavour of the Byzantine bureaucracy of intelligence collectors and analysts, working the Vietnam problem: Office of National Estimates, O/NE; Central Intelligence Agency, CIA; Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA; National Security Agency, NSA; National Reconnaissance Office, NRO; Office of Naval Intelligence, ONI; Joint Intelligence (J2) Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, MACV; Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam, CICV; Combined Military Interrogation Center, CMIC;; Combined Document Exploitation Center, CDEC; Combined Material Exploitation Center, CMEC. All these US agencies were paralleled to a degree by the Republic of Vietnam's *own*¹ intelligence agencies and sources.

To further bedevil matters, most South Vietnamese officers working in the supposedly combined intelligence centres in Vietnam were not cleared for the most highly classified US material, such as NSA's "NoForn" Sigint. The need to know was applied so ruthlessly as to fragment the true intelligence

picture. In their turn the South Vietnamese intelligence officers (rather like the police officers of the Special Branch of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who are traditionally unwilling to pass on details of a prime IRA source to some "foreign" British Army officer) were naturally reluctant to turn over their most sensitive humint to US intelligence officers, here today and gone tomorrow. The US one-year tour system for military personnel denied any real continuity or experience. To cap it all, the South Korean contingent, one of the toughest and most successful of the allied contingents, refused to turn over *any* intelligence from their patch unless specifically told to do so.

A dizzying amount of intelligence flooded through this labyrinth of Vietnam intelligence organizations. The Combined Document Exploitation Centre - which, given the language problem, was an ARVN fiefdom - was dealing with *half a million* pages of captured NLF and NVA material *every month*. About 10 per cent was of prime intelligence value, but every blood- or faeces-smearred page had to be handled and read. The workload was huge. The US problem was not that they lacked intelligence in Vietnam; they quite simply had too much.

To control and co-ordinate this vast effort would have taxed General Eisenhower's large and experienced joint intelligence staff in 1944. By late 1967, the US had appointed just *six* liaison officers to the South Vietnamese intelligence staff (RVN-J2). They promptly and unsurprisingly drowned in a flood of liaison requests and paperwork between the USA, MACV, all the US intelligence agencies in Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam's own agencies supporting ARVN. The US had a very serious *intelligence* command, control and communications problem in Vietnam by December 1967. To put it bluntly, there was no real joint command and no one had the authority to ensure that everything was co-ordinated properly. This made a mockery of Robert McNamara's painstaking attempts to micro-manage

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

"his" war from Pennsylvania Avenue. The NVA and Vietcong; were well aware of these command weaknesses, too. In fact, as part of their planning for Tet they specifically targeted some: Electronic Warfare (EW) jamming to blot out a number of key US radio links, but not AVRN's links. Command, control and communications of all types were to be a prime target for Tet.

To compound the problems of an obsession with the past and particularly with Dien Bien Phu, a muddled and divided command in Vietnam and too many uncoordinated intelligence agencies, the US authorities had a fatally flawed appreciation of NVA/VC strategy. By July 1967, the month of the secret Hanoi policy conference, US analysts had, they thought, identified the overall communist aims. Defeated in the South and on the defensive, hurting badly in North Vietnam under the US Rolling Thunder bombing campaign, surely the NVA could only strike effectively from border country, well away from the US build-up on the coast and populated areas. Only by threatening the whole of South Vietnam's 1,100 miles of mountainous and jungle-clad border, the theory went, could the communists hope to surprise and trap a sizeable US force, destroy it and with it destroy the American people's will to continue the war. Armed with this analysis, the US intelligence staffs began hunting for America's own possible Dien Bien Phu.

They did not have far to look. Even though the various US intelligence agencies in Vietnam were engaged in a bitter bureaucratic war of their own by the autumn of 1967, by late November and early December it was obvious to every informed observer that something unusual was going on. The intelligence indicators were changing. Truck movements along the Ho Chi Minh supply trail in Laos and Cambodia had increased from 500 in August to 6,300 in December 1967. Following the signing of a new arms deal with the Soviet Union, new weapons were appearing in the South. Signals

traffic was increasing. Defectors were no longer coming in so readily. Captured documents talked of a great new offensive to win the war. Unusual troop movements and reinforcements were reported. The South Vietnamese confirmed that significant numbers of VCs in plain clothes were seeking false civilian documents and reconnoitring Saigon and US installations. Unusually, depleted Vietcong units were being brought up to strength by drafts of North Vietnamese Army volunteers for the first time. Puzzled US intelligence officers up-country in the Central Highlands were encountering newly uniformed, better equipped enemy soldiers by the late autumn of 1967 as the build-up to Tet got under way.

If the key to intelligence interpretation is looking for the presence of the abnormal or the absence of the normal, and asking what it all means, then the US intelligence community had its indicators by the late autumn of 1967. But it could not agree on what it all meant; worse, it *would* not agree. Part of the problem was that the US intelligence agencies were deeply committed to various *policy* aspects of the Vietnam War. They were by no stretch of the imagination disinterested, objective observers. The US agencies all had a policy stake somewhere. The military (MACV) had an interest in proving that they were winning and that General Westmoreland's military policies were successful. Despite a long-standing and as it turned out well-founded pessimism about the whole Vietnam adventure, the CIA was hopelessly split in its assessments between its Field Office in Saigon and CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia. In their turn, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington were paranoid about any increased estimates from MACV-J2 of NVA/VC strength as these could embarrass the Johnson administration and public opinion, and might lead to calls for increased troop levels in Vietnam. Political policies were distorting military objectivity.

The solution to such a problem is an independent national

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

assessment staff, drawing on all available sources. Since the Second World War the Americans had formed precisely such a staff: the Office of National Intelligence Estimates (O/NE), tasked with producing National Intelligence Estimates (NIE). The NIE process was specifically designed to avoid any more Pearl Harbors and to provide the highest quality objective assessments for the President and his advisers.

President Truman's original plan for US national intelligence in 1950 had been bold and powerful. A Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), General Walter Bedell Smith, had been put to work. Bedell Smith had been Eisenhower's Chief of Staff in Europe and knew just how intelligence should work from his experience with the wartime Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The new DCI established the O/NE as an independent assessment group of the brightest and the best which would submit draft intelligence assessments to a committee of the heads of the national intelligence agencies under the chairmanship of the DCI.

Unfortunately Bedell Smith was unable to prevent the intelligence agencies from disagreeing or setting up rival staffs. Under his own powerful chairmanship the system worked, but by 1968 the CIA had established its own separate Directorate of Intelligence (DDI) reporting daily to the White House, and the State Department had the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, equally prepared to challenge any NIE that did not fit the agenda of either CIA or State. In this climate, US National Intelligence Estimate 14—3/67 of autumn 1967 assessing the order of battle and enemy strength in Vietnam proved not to be a document which brought Washington consensus based on the fusion of all available sources, but merely an agenda for yet another vicious dispute between America's many competing intelligence agencies. Professor Parkinson would have understood only too clearly.

The battle lines were quickly drawn up. In the blue corner

was the Vietnam military establishment led by MACV-J2; in the red corner was the CIA. Behind the protagonists, their backers hovered like nervous seconds, ever ready at a host of committee meetings with advice, support and the occasional political low blow. The issue was simple: just how many troops could the NVA/VC field against the USA and her allies? On the outcome of this bureaucratic battle would hang the honest assessment of the enemy forces available for any new communist offensive, and thus the proper US military response with all its domestic political consequences.

MACV and its backer the Defense Intelligence Agency argued strenuously that Vietcong civilian supporters should *not* be included in any estimate of enemy strength. No one knew how many there were and, anyway, you only had to go into any Vietnamese village and see that most of them were probably just harmless old men and children. The CIA on the other hand argued that to exclude anything between 120,000 and 150,000 assorted Vietcong auxiliaries capable of carrying a rifle or helping in the liberation struggle in the South was a lunatic attempt to gloss over the real size of the problem. This was not just some arcane matter of numbers. The answer would have very real practical military consequences. A simple analogy is whether the Germans should have included Britain's Home Guard in their total of potential enemy forces in 1940. Either way, it would have made a big difference to the Wehrmacht's assessment of the German troops required for an invasion.

The stakes in Vietnam were high, and the dispute bitter. At risk was the intensely sensitive political calculation of US troop-strength requirements in Vietnam, the barometer of MACV's success. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and MACV knew that *politically* they had just about reached their manpower limits by early 1968. If MACV's strategy really was winning the war in South Vietnam, as was claimed, what on earth

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

would the American public make of a sudden leap in Vietcong strength? The issue went to the core of Johnson's presidency and domestic political agenda. In the words of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a private letter to Westmoreland:

I note that there is some feeling . . . about the relationship between "statistical book keeping" . . . and future troop strengths . . . any attempts to "weigh the dice" will only result in trouble for us all.

Thus was the issue spelled out clearly from the highest political-military level in Washington. Don't inflate the enemy numbers in any politically embarrassing attempt to get more US troops for Vietnam, went the message, otherwise Robert McNamara will fire you.

General Westmoreland and his MACV intelligence staff took the hint. When the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff warns someone not to cause "trouble for us all", no politically astute commander in the field is going to ignore such advice. The real message was clear and unequivocal: don't tell the truth - this *Apolitical*. Thus national policy, as spelled out by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was going to dictate the military input to a key National Intelligence Estimate, not hard military facts. In the end, the Office of National Estimates did include 120,000 Vietnamese self-defence or auxiliary forces in their draft National Intelligence Estimate, and a furious row erupted. The military felt that the estimate contradicted their successful battle of attrition against the NVA/VC and threw doubt upon the extent of MACV's success in killing Vietcong.

The core of the issue was the infamous "body count". Not unlike General Haig on the Western Front in 1916-17, in Vietnam General Westmoreland had opted on the instructions

of Robert McNamara for a brutal reckoning by numbers to wear down the enemy. Just as Haig plotted surviving German divisions and their battleworthiness, so Westmoreland plotted surviving and battleworthy NVA and VC. That genius of American management technique, quantification of the problem and cost efficiency, first applied in the Union's Springfield Armory in order to manufacture guns, was now a century later being applied to running a war. It was a strange and unobvious way to achieve a military victory against an essentially political enemy, but new and unobvious methods were ruling the thinking of Washington's military planners in the mid-1960s.

The problem with this method of measuring success lay with Robert McNamara, his methods and his placemen. One of those placemen was General Westmoreland, the Commander-in-Chief, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. The appointment of "Westy" was a direct product of McNamara's political influence on the conduct of the war. Westmoreland was a tall, handsome, well-connected South Carolinian, another product of the Southern elite that has traditionally chosen the United States Army as a career fit for a gentleman. It did not hurt that the powerful Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, L. Mendel Rivers, was also a South Carolinian.

At the time many of Westy's contemporaries believed he had reached his ceiling as a Major-General commanding the 101st Airborne Division in the early 1960s and that he was intellectually and temperamentally unsuited to command at the highest level. He appeared to be better suited to the tactical level of battle where he could personally influence the activities of his troops - no one ever questioned Westy's undoubted courage and panache - than to the operational and strategic level of war. Quite simply, his peers felt that he lacked the necessary strategic vision to be an effective Commander-in-

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

Chief. As such he was unlikely to challenge Robert McNamara's personal handling of "his" war.

That suited the former Chief Executive of the Ford Motor Corporation just fine. No individual stands indicted for the failure of the American effort in Vietnam more than the US Secretary of Defense, Bob McNamara. He believed that he did not need generals other than to do his will and regarded traditional military experience as a positive handicap to the clear management thinking needed to exercise power efficiently in the modern world. Fresh from his victory over the military in toughing it out with Khrushchev as part of Kennedy's inner circle during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and from his business success in running an international car company, the politically astute McNamara now had only two clear goals: giving his political master, President Johnson, what he wanted, and forcing the military establishment to do things his way.

To achieve the first, McNamara unashamedly manipulated the Washington political system to ensure that he had total control of all military advice to the President. He played on LBJ's insecurities, which stemmed from a deep-seated feeling of insecurity as President because Johnson believed that his tenure in the White House was in some way illegitimate (LBJ had succeeded by default when John Kennedy was shot and killed). Johnson had a deeply rooted preference for avoiding confrontation and liked to do business without any controversy or open disagreements. Anyone who got in the way was "fixed", bribed, muzzled, got his "snout dunked in the pork barrel" or was "gotten rid of. It was the LBJ way of making things work around Washington.

Knowing this well, McNamara made sure that he laundered any dissent from the US military leadership over the conduct of the Vietnam War. He went to unusual lengths to ensure that the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not air their concerns about the way that the war was being fought either in private or in

public. In particular, McNamara took special care to suppress any conflicting military advice that would have adverse political results, such as the US Marine Corps Commandant's advice behind closed doors that "if the President wants to really *win* the war in Vietnam, then you'd better tell him it'll take half a million US troops and five years." Fighting for the advancement of their single service budgets and personal power, the individual Chiefs of Staff were picked off one by one by McNamara using a combination of threats and political bribes, despite their constitutional responsibilities to report to Congress and not just to the C.-in-C. and his Secretary of Defense. Schooled in the rigorous school of democratic civilian control of the military, and mindful of the fate of General MacArthur in Korea, the Chiefs kept their mouths shut for far too long, until they themselves stood accused as accomplices in McNamara's and LBJ's half-baked Vietnam policies: but by then it was too late.

To achieve his second goal, that of bending the US military to do his bidding, McNamara applied the business methods that had served him well in civilian life and taken him to the top of the ladder in corporate America. On first coming to office as Secretary of Defense he launched a blitz of civilian cost-effectiveness inspections at all levels of the US military machine that dismayed the more traditionally minded senior soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. Dissenters were swiftly replaced and the cowed remainder went along with their new master's methods. Military waste and incompetence - of which there was much, as in any other operation run by a government - were identified with brutal efficiency by teams of bright young civilian MBAs, freshly hired from the major US business schools. Despite having never heard a shot fired in anger, they toured every major command treating experienced officers with a breathtaking arrogance and contempt for hard-won military experience.

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

Despite the wails of the military traditionalists, McNamara was in some respects absolutely right. It undoubtedly *was* rotten economics to have the aircraft carrier USS *Constellation* steaming off "Yankee Station" at a cost of \$30 million with the sole purpose of destroying North Vietnamese targets from the air, and then for her expensive aircraft and pilots to sprinkle free-falling iron bombs in the general area of the target. Better by far to make the national "product investment strategy" worthwhile by using much more expensive precision-guided weapons that were *guaranteed* to strike their targets: suddenly the whole costly investment in the aircraft carrier could be justified. It was sound economics. No taxpayer could argue with the logic of that.

McNamara and his circle do not appear to have thought the problem through one step further however: whether bombing a scientifically chosen set of military targets is really the best strategy for winning a war against a resourceful and elusive guerrilla enemy whose goals are essentially political. Numbers and statistics are only a small part of battle; much of warfare is inherently unquantifiable. Regrettably, McNamara proved to be ill prepared for the subtle world of international policy and irregular warfare, and so he fell back on the things he really understood, like collecting the daily statistics of precisely how many VC had been killed in Vietnam. For Bob McNamara, if a lifetime in business had taught him anything, the numbers were everything.

For McNamara's "manager" in Vietnam, General Westmoreland, the key numbers were the "crossover point", that magic moment when NVA/VC losses in South Vietnam measured by the body count would be greater than the NVA's ability to replace these losses. At this point MACV planners calculated that NVA/VC strength in-country would be in terminal decline. By mid-1967, according to MACV, with enemy casualties at 6,000 a month and replacements at only

3,500 a month, the crossover point had been reached, and so the pressure was off in terms of policy and troop levels. Yet here was the CIA with an extra 120,000 Vietcong troops challenging all MACV's carefully collected statistics in a National Intelligence Estimate that would only too quickly become public knowledge if "leaky" Washington ran true to form.

An attempt at a compromise NIE and frantic visits to Saigon by DIA and CIA teams in September 1967 tried to sort out the discrepancy. According to the CIA's calculations, MACV's estimates of NVA/VC strength did not make sense. The bureaucratic fight was savage, with a MACV-J2 officer shouting across the table to the chief CIA analyst at one point, "Adams, you're full of shit!" Even the CIA's Station Chief in Saigon was accused by his own superiors from Langley as "having gone over to the military".

The meeting broke up with an uneasy compromise which, like most bad compromises, neither party accepted. The result was that, as the indicators and warnings for the Tet Offensive piled up, ticking away at the heart of US national intelligence policy was a bitter political disagreement about just how many enemy could be deployed against General Westmoreland's command. The Office of National Intelligence Estimates, General Bedell Smith's careful creation to harmonize American intelligence at the national level, had been disabled twenty years on by feuding government agencies anxious to prove that they alone were right.

Against this political chicanery and bureaucratic infighting the NVA's careful plan to deceive the Americans in South Vietnam had only a limited impact. Although the NVA undoubtedly did succeed in poisoning the wells of accurate intelligence assessment, it can be argued that the NVA's complex deception schemes were to some degree incidental to the whole affair. In many ways the American intelligence

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

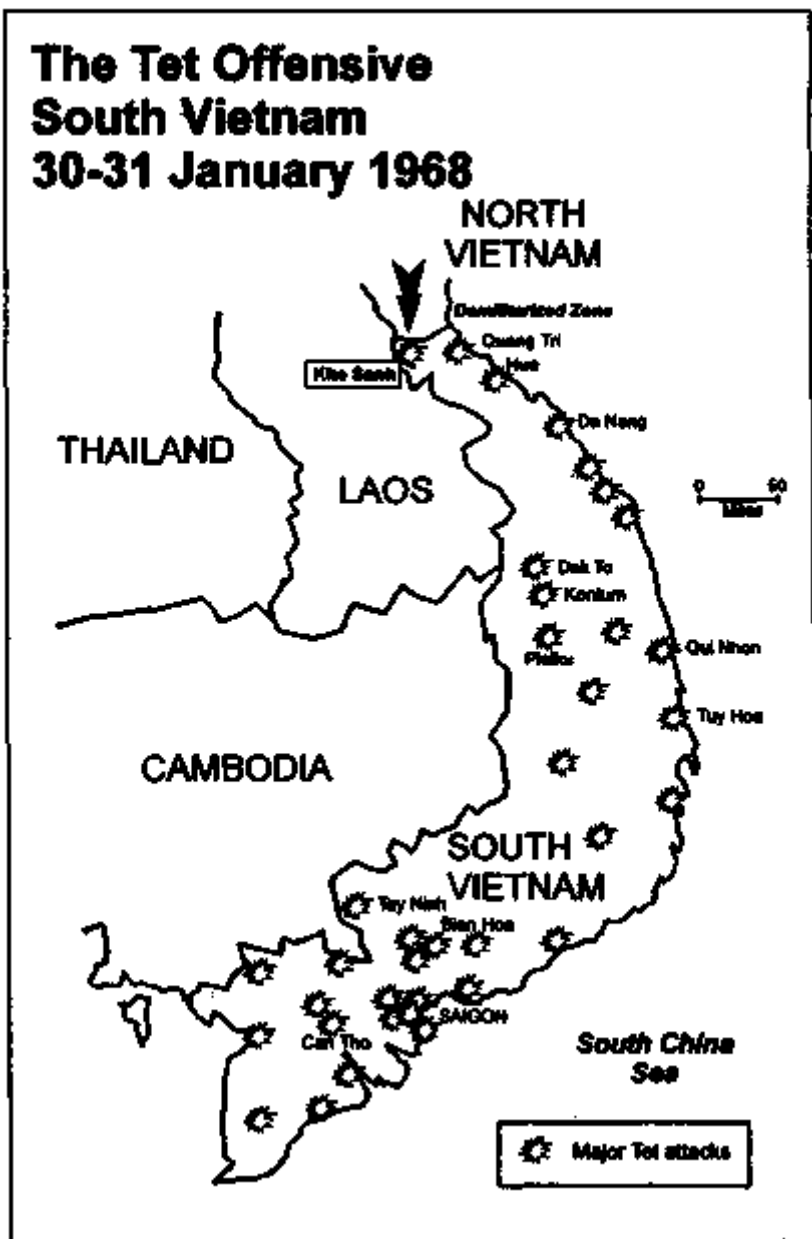
community did not need deceiving: it was perfectly capable of deceiving itself, even without a careful enemy deception plan. In the words of some embittered US intelligence officers, "the NVA would have done better *not* to have tried to attack the US Military Headquarters in Saigon on the night of Tet; success would only have *ended* the existing confusion within the ranks of the US Command in Vietnam."

Whatever the power struggles in Washington, by early January 1968 in Vietnam it was blindingly obvious that something was up. North Vietnam's passive deception strategy was reopened at the highest political level by a New Year's proposal for bilateral talks (thus excluding South Vietnam, provided the USA stopped bombing the North). This set a new political agenda, and diverted attention from NVA/VC preparations elsewhere. In the South there was a flurry of small attacks on US installations and a clear movement of at least two NVA divisions towards Khe Sanh on the border between North and South Vietnam. US suspicions were further aroused when six NVA officers made an unsuccessful attempt to walk through the front gate of the Khe Sanh firebase dressed as US Marines. Alert US sentries shot the lot.

Khe Sanh was about as isolated a US garrison as there was in the whole of South Vietnam. Only 12 miles south of North Vietnam, 6 miles from Laos and 800 miles from Saigon, Khe Sanh sat firmly across one of the NVA's Ho Chi Minh supply trails draining into the northern corner of South Vietnam. It was garrisoned by two elite regiments of US Marines. The base was difficult to resupply and, being high in the mountains of the interior, frequently shrouded by fog. With its isolation, vulnerable airstrip and outposts, Khe Sanh had all the makings of another Dien Bien Phu. Most alarming of all, it was well within artillery range of guns firing from over the border in North Vietnam.

General Westmoreland let the Ambassador in Saigon and

The Tet Offensive South Vietnam 30-31 January 1968



"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

Washington worry about political talks with North Vietnam and began a gradual build-up of operations designed to ensure that, should Khe Sanh indeed be the NVA's much heralded "general onslaught to win the war", then the US Marines and their supporting forces would be ready. In Operation Niagara thousands of the new Unattended Ground Sensors (UGS) were airdropped around the base to monitor North Vietnamese activity, and intelligence analysts at highly secret signal bases in far-off Thailand were soon receiving conversations between puzzled NVA soldiers along the lines of "What on earth is this metal spike, comrade?" and doubtless the equally soldierly response, "Search me, comrade, but we're late getting to Khe Sanh."

Operation Niagara around Khe Sanh was a huge intelligence success, and by mid-January 1968 it had identified 15,000 men of the NVA 325th and 304th Divisions definitely closing in on the US base. Patrols from the Marines began to clash with NVA regulars digging in on the surrounding hills as the communist noose tightened. General Westmoreland and his staff became even more convinced that Khe Sanh was the target of the long-promised decisive attack by the communists. That ever reliable indicator of an enemy's intentions, signals intelligence, seemed to confirm this by reporting a growing volume of NVA military radio traffic building up around Khe Sanh. More puzzling, they reported a country-wide pattern of unusual VC activity and actually warned of impending attacks in the South. But it was too late; all eyes were fixed on the NVA's two divisions around Khe Sanh, not on the Vietcong trying to regroup and resupply themselves in the South.

Any last doubts were swept away on 20 January 1968 when a junior officer of the NVA defected to the Khe Sanh sentries and openly informed the Marines that two of the defenders' hill positions would be attacked that very evening, "as a prelude to tomorrow's all-out attack on the US base". The

commander of the US Marines force, Colonel Lownds, acted swiftly. He needed to. The two hills were duly attacked and by dawn on 21 January 1968, two regiments of US Marines were trapped at Khe Sanh, and their South Vietnamese covering force had been forced to withdraw into the firebase perimeter. Khe Sanh was now cut off from the rest of Vietnam, besieged and under heavy attack. General Westmoreland, his staff officers and the US intelligence analysts had at last found their Dien Bien Phu.

It is difficult for us to overestimate the effect of the Khe Sanh attack on the US military psyche in January 1968. The whole cultural bias at the time was to expect a desperate military offensive by a trapped and beaten enemy, just like the Ardennes in 1944. The attack was *expected* to be on an isolated US garrison and designed to win a military victory targeted on public support for the war. America's micro-managed military machine immediately swung into action. Here was a crisis they could manage "efficiently". In the White House, President Johnson had a daily briefing on the conduct of the Khe Sanh siege on a specially constructed terrain model in the basement. Senior briefing officers were personally appointed by McNamara just to monitor the progress of the siege on a trench-by-trench basis. Nothing was to be left to chance; no statistic from the besieged garrison's command bunker was too insignificant to be overlooked in Washington's fixation with Khe Sanh's defence. Reinforcements and supplies were flown in to the garrison at great cost and with considerable bravery. No political or military effort was spared to ensure that the beleaguered American garrison would hold out. The alternative would be a military and public relations disaster not worthy of contemplation.

General Giap's principal active deception measure to mask his true offensive had worked brilliantly. Blinded by their own prejudices, the Americans had been inexorably drawn to the

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

feint attack and not to the real onslaught, as surely as a charging bull is drawn to the matador's cape. It was a triumph for the North Vietnamese planners and a serious intelligence failure. General Westmoreland even issued a warning that "attempts would be made elsewhere in South Vietnam to divert and disperse US strength away from the real attack ... at Khe Sanh." He was, unwittingly, referring to the main Tet Offensive, but all eyes were now focused on the diversionary attack on Khe Sanh.

Not everyone was fooled. The American and South Vietnamese intelligence collection effort was simply too big and too active to miss indicators of impending trouble elsewhere. Ironically, these indicators were now viewed by US commanders as *diversionary* measures intended to draw attention away from the "real attack" on Khe Sanh and not the other way round. The NSA's signals intelligence effort in particular was concerned about the rising tide of messages in the South. In a special intelligence report issued exactly a week before Tet, they warned of a wave of co-ordinated attacks country-wide in Vietnam. In their turn, the AVRN's comprehensive humint coverage in the South picked up hundreds of indicators of planned VC attacks on military installations, and demonstrations. As a result, AVRN began a series of intelligence collection operations designed to find out exactly what was going on. In the coastal city of Qui Nhon on 28 January they struck gold.

On 28/9 January 1968 a police sweep captured a group of eleven Vietcong leaders and all their plans and preparations for the "great liberation offensive" just three days away. In the bundles of captured documents and maps were included some audiotapes, intended to be broadcast once VC fighters had captured a number of radio stations. The startled South Vietnamese security police played the tapes. They were ringing exhortations to the populace "to rise up and overthrow the

puppet Ky Government in South Vietnam now that the day of liberation is finally at hand", and to support the "forces struggling for peace and national sovereignty who have seized the cities of Saigon, Hue and Da Nang".

So impressed were the AVRN authorities that they played the tapes over the telephone to American analysts in Saigon. Obviously the communists had yet not seized Hue and Saigon. Perhaps they were intending to? The MACV-J2 intelligence officers were interested and called for translations, but these would take time and would have to come by courier. The dinosaur-like nervous system of command and control between the US and the Vietnamese, and between the police and the military, had imposed another critical delay.

Twenty-four hours later, by the time the MACV-J2 analysts had received the transcripts and begun to assess the significance of the Qui Nonh audiotapes, a bigger threat was looming - or so they thought. With perfect timing on the morning of 29 January 1968 (H-hour for Tet minus forty-eight hours) the US sensor station monitoring the Khe Sanh perimeter alerted MACV to a number of major NVA units closing in on the firebase. In fact, their report actually used the phrase, "This looks like the 'Big Push'." Even if it had not been before, the attention of the US commanders was now obsessively fixed on the Demilitarized Zone in the north and the threat to the beleaguered garrison. Any other intelligence indications of activity elsewhere were seen merely as attempts to divert US attention from the NVA's main battle effort. In all fairness, General Westmoreland and his staff were not blind to the forthcoming Tet Offensive; they just misunderstood its significance. To them it was simply a diversion.

On 29 January 1968 the Tet ceasefire took effect. Fortunately for the allies, neither the South nor the North Vietnamese gave it the weight that General Giap had intended. The North Vietnamese and their VC allies promptly broke the

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

ceasefire by attacking prematurely in a number of towns throughout the south. This singular piece of military incompetence was caused mainly by poor NVA-VC communications. Thoroughly alerted, the ARVN authorities curtailed the 50 per cent leave plans for their soldiers and issued warnings of probably widespread ceasefire violations by the NVA and VC. If not strategically, poor NVA/VC organization had seriously compromised Tet at the tactical level.

It did not matter. Even though a wave of communist attacks erupted prematurely in four provincial capitals at dawn on 30 January, the friction inherent in the complicated US-South Vietnamese command structure could not pass on the signals, analyze their significance and then warn thousands of allied units, civilian regional administrators and US billets throughout Vietnam in time. The senior intelligence officer in MACV and the principal architect and collator of the body count statistics, General Davidson, belatedly recognized the significance of events. Early on 30 January he warned his C.-in-C. that "major follow-up attacks could take place throughout Vietnam in the next 24-18 hours", and that the South Vietnamese Army was busy cancelling their own Tet ceasefire. General Westmoreland promptly alerted all major US commands to resume normal operations, and place "troops on maximum alert . . . for the defense of HQs, logistic installations, airfields, population centres and billets". With just twenty-four hours to go, the US military in Vietnam was beginning to gear up ponderously for trouble nationwide.

It was too late. In the words of Colonel James Wirtz's masterly study of the whole Tet intelligence problem, "The [US] command structure was incapable of passing on the warning to all its units at such short notice." Wirtz also points out that the communications network "simply could not provide enough information to all the commanders in the field . . . in time". General Giap had beaten General West-

moreland to the draw, despite the sophisticated US intelligence apparatus. If proof needs giving, Wirtz dryly recollects that

Two hundred Colonels, all assigned to the joint intelligence staff in the US military command in Vietnam, spent the evening of 30 January attending a [Tet] party in the Batchelors Officers Quarters (BOQ) in Saigon.

No greater indictment of the failure of the intelligence community could be found. One of their number, the intelligence analyst Colonel James Meacham, next morning found himself manning a .50 calibre machine gun on the roof to defend the US Senior Officers Quarters, still blissfully unaware of the existence of any Tet Offensive. And he was a senior intelligence officer!

The Tet Offensive burst upon the US and MACV like a thunderbolt. Thirty-six out of 44 provincial capitals were assaulted overnight on 31 May 1968 by a mixture of NVA and Vietcong units, as were 5 out of 6 "autonomous cities", and 58 of South Vietnam's 245 major towns. ARVN units and "pacification hamlets" were particularly targeted. Major attacks took place in Saigon, where the US Embassy was attacked unsuccessfully under the eyes of US television cameras, Quang Tri, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, My Tho, Can Tho, Ben Tre and Hue. For a very short time the Vietcong actually managed to seize temporary control of ten provincial capitals.

The centre of Hue, the ancient capital in the North, was invaded despite a clear warning of attack issued by the ARVN Joint Intelligence Staff ten days previously and held by a mixture of VC and North Vietnamese regulars. The US and South Vietnamese closed in on the invaders and a fierce battle

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

developed. As one US marine said, firing his M-16 at the advancing NVA, "Those poor sad bastards have got us surrounded. Boy, are they gonna get themselves *****!" Trapped by an ARVN division and several battalions of US Marines, the communists sold their lives dearly. US television cameras faithfully recorded the stress of combat among the young Marines and flashed the message into every living-room in the USA as their soldiers struggled with the life-and-death realities of a major battle, leaving an indelible impression that the US forces were *losing*. In fact, the reverse was true.

Unfortunately, the TV crews failed to flash the horrors of the besieged and doomed VC and their terrified South Vietnamese hostages trapped in Hue citadel with equal honesty. Such one-sided and inaccurate reporting by the US media was to alter the course of the war. The coverage was also to leave an ineradicable grievance in the US military mind against the lies, incompetence and self-seeking ambition of journalists in particular and the media in general. It remains to this day. In the words of one Vietnam veteran,

We lost the [Vietnam] war at Tet, when those lying sons of bitches showed American boys fighting and dying in Saigon and Hue . . . Hell, what did they expect real combat looked like? A cat fight in the ladies room? But they never showed what was happening to the VC in the Citadel and what they were doing to those South Vietnamese civilians. They never explained just how we was whuppin' those NVA bastards' ass . . . I'll never, ever, trust the press again . . . They lied.

Encapsulated in that quotation was the American tragedy. For the Vietcong and the NVA, Tet was a total military disaster and a serious defeat. For the Americans and their

allies, Tet was actually the successful repulse of a widespread surprise attack, with heavy enemy losses. But it was a public relations catastrophe.

In the first two weeks of the communist offensive, which petered out thereafter, the NVA/VC lost 33,000 killed, an estimated 60,000 wounded, 6,000 prisoners of war and failed to hold a single objective. The South Vietnamese Army in particular fought back both tenaciously and savagely. General Giap's *Khnoi Nghai* or "general uprising of the oppressed masses in the South" failed to materialize. Not only that, the same ungrateful masses in the South proceeded to inform on the VC insurgents at every turn and, given the opportunity, took up arms to kill their "liberators" or hand them over to ARVN who exacted rough military justice on their enemies. (The famous picture of Saigon Police Chief General Loan blowing out the brains of a VC prisoner captured in civilian clothes dates from Tet.)

From the perspective of Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese Politburo, militarily Tet was a complete failure. Sometimes, however, perceptions of truth are more real than truth itself. Truth, for most people, is what can be seen on a television screen. "The camera," in the old cliché, "cannot lie." Of course it can. All images are selective. Documentaries are faked, actors paid to pretend to be real people, riots and demonstrations bought by TV teams with props and kerosene-soaked flags, and carefully selected shots represented as showing the whole scene. So it was with Tet. Damaged Vietnamese buildings were treated as if they were the ruins of Hiroshima; in the words of Charles MacDonald, "Television cameras focusing on one badly damaged block in Vietnam could give the impression of an entire city in ruins." The damage overall after Tet was light, but pictures of a burnt-out city block with a few bloodstained corpses, weeping refugees and nervous trigger-happy soldiers make hot copy.

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

The US and to a lesser extent the international press corps in Vietnam fell on the story with alacrity. A series of highly misleading television and press pictures were passed to the media audience with equally biased reports. Thus Saigon was alleged to be "in ruins" - it was not. The communists had "inflicted a bitter defeat on the US and South Vietnamese" - on the contrary, the US and ARVN forces had successfully repulsed the communists at the cost of only 2,800 ARVN and 1,100 US soldiers killed (less than 10 per cent of NVA/VC casualties). The press almost totally ignored the thousands of South Vietnamese refugees and victims of the communist offensive, and, to the undying shame of Western journalists in Vietnam, failed even to report the 5,000 South Vietnamese tortured and murdered by the VC during their brief occupation of Hue. To the press they did not matter. For the press in South Vietnam, only their copy and the career-enhancing story mattered. And the US press corps knew they had a story to tell.

It was a story of deceit, deceit on a massive scale by their government and by their armed forces. Had the Johnson administration and General Westmoreland's command staff not been telling them for months that the war in Vietnam was as good as won? Was this not proof of the chicanery, deceit and lies of the smooth-talking, Martini-drinking public affairs briefing officers at Westmoreland's Saigon headquarters, known as the "five o'clock follies", endlessly mouthing platitudes about pacification, progress and body counts? The press and thus by extension the American people had been systematically lied to. This was no victory. The communists had surprised the US Army and inflicted a shattering defeat upon America in South Vietnam. Anyone could see the truth. Even the great Walter Cronkite, TV anchorman and the voice of the suburbs, wailed plaintively, "But I thought we were supposed to be winning."

There was no conspiracy as such among the reporters. There was just their story as they saw it. Sceptical of official US claims, they individually and collectively came to the correct conclusion that the USA had been the victim of a successful surprise attack. Inexperienced in the confusion of war, they then incorrectly assumed that the American forces in Vietnam had suffered a serious reverse. Back home the editors uncritically accepted their correspondents' verdicts. Years later, one of the Saigon press corps, Peter Braestrup of the *Washington Post*, ruefully admitted how badly the press had misled the American public. In a TV documentary he confessed, "Rarely had contemporary crisis journalism turned out, in retrospect, to have veered so widely from reality." But by then it was ten years too late. Only in one aspect was the press verdict accurate. At Tet in January 1968 the US commanders *had* been taken by surprise. That much was true, and the blame for it lay in faulty intelligence, in particular poor intelligence assessments. Logically, it can be argued that it was the rotten intelligence assessments before Tet that lost the USA the Vietnam War.

The truth is that until Tet the USA had been winning. By the time the reality of Tet had sunk in, the USA was only interested in getting out of Vietnam. The Tet Offensive was the decisive battle of the Vietnam War, but not, ironically, for the reasons General Giap and his planning staff had sought. Tet marked, in Wirtz's phrase, "the turning point between US escalation and US withdrawal from Vietnam". The shock to American public opinion and to the US President, both conditioned by McNamara's bland assertions that the war he was "managing" was well under control, was simply too great. Whatever Giap's dreadful losses at Tet, he had won the battle where it most counted - not in South Vietnam but in the hearts and minds of the American people. No one was more surprised by all this than the North Vietnamese, who found

"/ Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

the hysterical US reaction to Tet almost incomprehensible. Years later, one of the NVA's generals, Tran Do, admitted, "In all honesty, we failed to achieve our objective, which was to start a general uprising in the South. As for making a propaganda impact in the USA, it had not been our principal intention - but it worked out as a very fortunate result for us."

For the intelligence analyst the Tet Offensive is a brooding, sad tale of opportunities lost and bad assessments. With so much information available, just how could the US intelligence machine possibly have got it so wrong? This was no Pearl Harbor; the US military intelligence collection units did an amazing job, and MACV-J2 was awash with indicators of an impending attack, some of them accurate to the point of precision. The difficulty lay in the interpretation of the information.

Here the US system let them down. Intelligence is not just about collecting information in vast quantities. Drawer after drawer full of glossy 10x8 prints of communist units on the move, or technically brilliant intercepts and decoding of obscure radio transmitters lurking in some inaccessible jungle hide-out, is not true intelligence. For information to become intelligence there is no substitute for sound and well-informed analysis. In the end, intelligence is just that: interpretation and analysis. The US military's intelligence system failed for a number of reasons: institutional, cultural and organizational. In their errors, however, US intelligence staffs were greatly helped by General Giap's deception plan to lure US commanders' attention to his diversionary attack and not to the main effort. There can be no equivocation about his final success. For the key US decision-makers, General Westmoreland and President Johnson, the diversion at Khe Sanh drew them like moths to a light.

Yet not all US analysis was wrong; therein lies part of the tragedy of Tet. For example, the CIA's Station Chief in

Saigon, Joseph Hovey, produced a strikingly accurate all-source objective analysis of the Tet Offensive on 23 November 1967, two months before the attack. Unfettered by the institutional constraints of US government policy in Vietnam or the military's need to prove that MACV's strategy really was working, Hovey spelled out a clear interpretation of North Vietnam's combined military and political goals and just how they would plan to achieve them. He was spot on.

Nobody would listen. There were so many competing analyses of communist intentions doing the rounds in Washington that it was impossible to know which one was right, and there was no national organization to build a credible consensus. Hovey's accurate and highly relevant analysis was quickly disowned by his superiors at Langley. It did not accord with CIA Headquarters' view of events or the political wishes of the administration at that particular moment. For the bureaucrats in Washington, intelligence had become the view of the senior officer present; and well-informed analysis by those actually in the field was not welcome in the endless internecine war of the interagency committees.

If analysis and interpretation let the US authorities down at Tet, then the final phase of the intelligence cycle - dissemination - assured their failure to react quickly. By the time they realized that a country-wide attack was imminent, it simply was too difficult to warn everyone in time. In some cases it did not matter, because alert local commanders and intelligence staffs realized that something was afoot and took action in their own patch on their own initiative. In other areas the attack came as a complete surprise. The result was that reactions to the Tet Offensive varied from place to place.

For example, the 173rd Airborne Brigade was refitting at Tuy Hoa, a provincial city on the coast south of Nha Trang, after several difficult months in combat up-country at Dak To. Thanks to a combination of good local intelligence and

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

NVA miscalculation, this particular US light infantry brigade was alert and ready for Tet. In the words of one of the brigade's intelligence officers, Captain John Moon of the US Military Intelligence Corps:

The 173rd was ready for the Tet Offensive, although we didn't call it that until it was over. Our commanding general was a tough little Kansan called Leo H. Schweiter. He had been the intelligence officer of an American Airborne Division which dropped on D-Day. He had also been a Special Forces commander, so he knew just what intelligence could - and could not - do. He had an insatiable appetite for all the stuff we could provide. He ran his intel staff hard, and was always pushing us to know everything. He understood our business sometimes better than we did. Even though we were in a supposedly safe area he kept his guard up all the time. No sonofabitch was going to surprise his troops!

During the run up to Tet it was pretty clear to the brigade S2 staff that something unusual was in the wind. Through the local ARVN we were aware that there were plenty of low-level indicators of some kind of activity; although, to be fair, we reckoned it was just in our tactical area. As a result, General Schweiter ordered the battalions to cut special landing zones [LZs] in the jungle so that the troops could be picked up and deployed quickly anywhere in our tactical area if there was any need. The local Vietnamese were on alert too, so we were all waiting for something to happen.

On the night of Tet the NVA took too much time to get into Tua Hoa as they got diverted by a small airfield and a radar site on their march route and the firefight started early. When the alert sounded, the brigade troopers were

quickly airlifted in the dark into the battle area using the new LZs to block off all the approaches to Tuy Hoa and back into the forest. So the NVA found themselves with dawn breaking, short of their objective and cut off from the flanks and the rear as more and more US troops were airlifted in to surround them. To make things worse for the NVA, the Tuy Hoa Airbase was only about five miles to the south.

It was a turkey shoot; the F-100 Super Sabres were barely tucking in their wheels before dropping their ordnance and getting straight back into the airfield circuit to land and rearm. God knows how many sorties the Air Force flew that day. There was so much shit going down into the North Vietnamese box that the local villagers just waded up to their necks into the warm water of the South China Sea to get out of the way. In the end only twenty-five NVA got into Tuy Hoa and the ARVN just mopped them up. The city itself was hardly damaged.

If Tet was meant to take over South Vietnam, then in Tuy Hoa it was a complete military failure and the attackers were massacred as well. The 173rd was good and ready and we reckoned we whupped 'em good that day.

The battle-hardened 173rd Infantry Brigade, which had been in Vietnam since 1965, was lucky to have such an experienced staff. Most other units of the allied forces in South Vietnam either found themselves responding to a sudden attack or, forewarned by some particular local event, "stood to" in one alert state or another. The units round Qui Nhon, for example, went on red alert unilaterally on 29 January, following the capture of the two VC propaganda audiotapes.

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

The Tet ceasefire, its subsequent cancellation and the difficulty of reaching commanders going off for holiday leave compounded the problem of disseminating intelligence warnings. In the words of one US communications officer, "Really we needed 36 to 48 hours to get a message down to everybody in MACV." The US had just eighteen hours to alert the whole of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. As a result, the majority of units were surprised by the attack when it came on the night of 31 January 1968.

To take one example, the US First Cavalry Division was sited around Quang Tri in the far north. To the surprise of Captain John Robbins, the youthful commander of the six guns of Alpha Battery, 2nd Airborne, his unit was relocated at short notice to LZ Ann, an isolated hill top about ten kilometres west of Quang Tri city on 28 January. The artillerymen dug in their 105 mm guns and chafed at being so far from the rest of civilization just before the Vietnamese New Year stand-down. It may have been that Captain Robbins's superiors in First Cavalry knew something, because on the night of the 31st, the bored gunners at LZ Ann were treated to what they thought was a spectacular fireworks display as the great Tet holiday festival got under way. In fact they were seeing NVA/VC 122 mm Soviet-supplied rockets streaking across the night sky to bombard Quang Tri city.

The next thing Robbins knew was a desperate call from his battalion headquarters in the middle of the town demanding; that he get his guns into action as quickly as possible. To his; request for a proper target and detailed fire order came the; snarled response from the battalion fire team, who had never; been on the receiving end of enemy fire before, "Goddammit; Captain, we're all sheltering under a table in the command!; post . . . just open fire on the sons of bitches."

Obligingly, the guns on LZ Ann opened fire, aiming in the; dark at the flashes of the rockets as they fired in the forest four

miles away by a combination of eye and map, like Napoleonic gunners two hundred years before. By dawn Robbins ordered his men to cease fire, being down to ten rounds a gun, and a dense fog settling over the hilltop. It was nearly a week before Alpha Battery was relieved on LZ Ann: only then did it come home to the gunners just how big the attack had been, and that an NVA supply convoy of *elephants* carrying the rockets had been lumbering through the jungle immediately below LZ Ann on the night before Tet, both sides oblivious to the other's presence.

If the surprise of Tet to US commanders and troops in Vietnam was profound, in Washington it came as a total shock. President Johnson had not even had the advantage of General Davidson's last-minute intelligence briefing to his C.-in-C. on the morning of 30 January that trouble was brewing. In fact Westmoreland did not react over-much to his intelligence chiefs warning, going home to bed as normal that night. Next morning, like so many of his officers and men in Saigon, he found himself embarrassingly trapped in his quarters by the communist attacks and so unable to get in to his command post until he was rescued by Military Police.

To the politicians and chattering classes of Washington, the Tet Offensive was "an incredible shock, an unmitigated disaster". The politicians felt deceived by their military advisers; the media felt cheated by the military and politicians alike. Had not McNamara and Westmoreland claimed victory and talked of US troop withdrawals in 1969? And yet here was the supposedly beaten VC inflicting a highly visible surprise attack and defeat on the USA and her allies throughout the whole of Vietnam. Tet was undoubtedly a local setback, but it was never the disaster the media subsequently portrayed, with breathless reporters (led by the doyen of journalistic responsibility, Walter Cronkite) and shocked and embarrassed military officers on television telling the story

"I Thought We Were Supposed to be Winning?"

for all the world to see. The major casualty of Tet turned out to be the American people's faith in their president, their government and their army.

The ripples of the Tet Offensive spread far and wide long after the attack petered out over the next month or so. The usual bitter rows broke out between the intelligence agencies. The CIA pointed out that the Saigon estimates of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong casualties in Tet alone came to more than the official MACV estimates of total NVA/VC strength before the attack. Either the casualty figures were inflated or the CIA must have been right all along. They must have been deceived by the military in Saigon and McNamara's Defense Department. A new squabble erupted.

A disillusioned Robert McNamara resigned, unable to come to terms with the failure of his methods and his own responsibility for the war. His replacement, Clark Clifford, was ordered by Johnson to make a complete review of US strategy in Vietnam. To his astonishment, Clifford could not find a single senior officer who believed that the war could be won using the methods the USA was employing.

Washington never trusted MACV again. Anti-war demonstrations and protest increased. In March, President Johnson, worn out by his burdens, announced to a stunned nation that he would not compete with Robert Kennedy and seek re-election for a second term of office. Much later, the world was to learn just how badly the protesters' gibes of "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" had struck home on a Texan politician who genuinely believed he was doing his best.

In April General Westmoreland's relief as C.-in-C. MACV was announced. By December 1968, Richard Nixon was elected President, promising to bring the boys back home. Westmoreland was long gone, kicked upstairs in the unkind judgment of his critics to become a pliant Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, responsive to the politicians' whims as ever.

The inevitable round of official inquiries was launched to identify the reasons for the surprise at Tet and a major shake-up of the intelligence structure was put in hand - too late. The whole course of American policy reversed. The US public wanted out, and an escape from the sticky clutches of the tar baby that was destroying presidents and reputations, and taking an ever-increasing toll of their sons. The American political belief in their cause and their will to win the war in Vietnam had gone. Despite Tet's military failure, General Giap's prize was eventually handed to the North Vietnamese by the Americans themselves.

On 14 April 1968, after a gallant defence and no fewer than 30,000 aircraft sorties in support of the firebase, the Khe Sanh garrison forced the battered NVA survivors to withdraw across the border, having inflicted at least 5,000 North Vietnamese casualties and probably many more. It was hailed with relief by America as a great victory.

Just two months later, on 23 June 1968, the USA abandoned the Khe Sanh firebase for ever. On 29 March 1973, the last American troops left South Vietnam, and only three years later, on 30 April 1975, the victorious North Vietnamese Army entered Saigon as rulers of a united Vietnam.

As an American military intelligence officer sadly observed, "It all started to come unglued at Tet."

*"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."
Yom Kippur, 1973*

If a defeat caused by a catastrophic failure of intelligence such as Pearl Harbor can spur a nation into reforming its intelligence affairs, then paradoxically a great victory assisted by brilliant intelligence can lead to complacency and disaster. Thus it proved for the small state of Israel after its mauling at the hands of the Arabs in October 1973.

On the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, 6 October 1973, the Syrian and Egyptian armies fell on the extended borders of "Greater Israel" and inflicted grievous losses on the surprised and shocked Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). After a bitter struggle lasting eighteen days the invaders were flung back with heavy loss and Israeli territory recaptured, but the damage was done. The myth of Israeli invincibility and intelligence omniscience, so carefully nurtured after the brilliant military successes of the Six-Day War of 1967, had been shattered for ever. The gallant little state that always triumphed over the odds despite struggling for its very existence surrounded by hostile Arab neighbours emerged as just another country caught unawares by its adversaries because of incompetent intelligence.

The roots of Arab-Israeli enmity went deep. In its most simple form the dispute was over the land of Palestine, which Jewish settlers had begun taking over piece by piece during the first half of the twentieth century. The Jewish Diaspora had for nearly two

millennia dreamed of a return to its Judean homeland, which had been put to the sword by Titus in AD 70. The Roman legions put down the Jewish Rebellion of that year with all the efficient savagery peculiar to Imperial Rome in the Ancient World and scattered its population throughout the Mediterranean. "Next year in Jerusalem!" was the historic toast of these dispersed Jews. By the end of the Second World War this had begun to look a possibility, as Zionism, the nineteenth-century movement to re-create the Biblical homeland of the Jews, received powerful reinforcements from a war-shattered Europe.

The politics of guilt is rarely a sound recipe for even-handed reform. So it proved for the Jews of Europe. Horrified by the evidence of the Holocaust, and burdened with numerous displaced Jewish survivors, the victors of 1945 turned a blind eye to the new flood of Jewish refugees heading for Palestine to reinforce the half-million who had poured in during the 1920s and 1930s. Even the British, theoretically the UN power mandated to keep order in Palestine, made only half-hearted attempts to exert their authority over the intransigent and desperate Jewish refugees flooding into Palestine and their protective gangs of freedom-fighters, terrorizing the British and Arabs alike. In 1947 the British relinquished their responsibility for Palestine with obvious relief, leaving Arab and Jew to fight it out. After Auschwitz and Belsen, nobody wanted to be seen to be standing in the way of a new Jewish homeland.

Even so, the state of Israel came into being like some latter-day Outremer, an interloper on the edge of a hostile Arab world. By the West it was seen as a haven and a return to an historic home for the Jews. To the Arabs, on the other hand, Israel was an artificial imposition that had acquired Arab - and particularly Palestinian - land by a mixture of bribes, blandishments, terrorism, theft and corruption. The Arab world felt no guilt for Hitler's treatment of the Jews: rather they pointed to Jewish settlers' treatment of their Arab neigh-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

hours and to the land battles of the 1930s. Thus was born a bitter enmity between new settlers and indigenous inhabitants.

On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was formally declared. On 15 May 1948, the armed forces of Egypt, Syria and Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq fell on the new nation simultaneously in an all-out bid to destroy it at birth by pushing the cuckoo in the Middle East nest, as they saw Israel, straight back into the Mediterranean Sea. They failed. With the courage of desperation and the moral fervour of their centuries-old crusade, the new Israelis flung back their Arab enemies at every point, despite being outnumbered many times over. Battered, defeated and licking their wounds, the Arab invaders retreated, astonished by the ferocity and fighting power of the Jewish state. Israel was born in bloodshed and straight away tempered in the fire of victory on the battlefield, although the Islamic world never accepted this state of affairs. Israel's very right to exist and the dispossession of the Palestinian people from their land became the irreconcilable poles of a dispute that has continued to this day.

Another war erupted in 1956, when the Israelis conspired with the French and British to attack Nasser's Egypt after he nationalized the Suez Canal. The result was the same as in 1948: Arab humiliation, Israeli triumph. The sore festered on. In 1967, surrounded by threatening Arab armies preparing to attack yet again, and desperately outnumbered, Israel struck first in one of the most dramatic pre-emptive strikes in the whole history of the bloody twentieth century. At dawn on 5 June 1967 the Israeli Air Force destroyed their Egyptian and Syrian counterparts on the ground, and then, with total air superiority, threw the Syrians off the Golan Heights on Israel's northern border, captured Jerusalem from the Jordanians in the east and seized the Gaza Strip and the whole of the Sinai peninsula from a soundly beaten and fleeing Egyptian Army in the south. Greater Israel was born.

By 1968, and for the first time since it came into being, Israel as a state could feel territorially secure behind defensible borders. In the north, the Golan Heights gave security and relieved the settlers on the kibbutzim from the need to raise their children under shell fire. In the east the small but professionally competent Jordanian Army had been pushed out of the West Bank and was now penned across the River Jordan. And in the south the Sinai Desert, once a 150-mile buffer zone between the Israeli and Egyptian front lines, had been replaced by a new border: the Suez Canal.

These extended frontiers may have given political and territorial security to Israel but, confronted by unwavering Arab hostility, they had also to be manned and protected like so many watchtowers ranged along on the battlements of a medieval castle. This was a heavy burden in men and *materiel* for a small country. It also obscured the loss of the old buffer zone in the south. Before 1967, Egyptian forces had to traverse 150 miles of Sinai Desert to get at their Jewish opponents. Now all they had to do was cross 150 yards of Suez Canal. This was to prove a crucial difference in 1973.

The combatants of the Six-Day War were still hosing out the carbonized flesh from burnt-out tanks when fighting broke out again, albeit at the level of artillery duels and guerrilla attacks. As the Egyptians stoked the pressure, beginning six years of "no peace, no war", Israel began to confront the realities and the cost of her new strategic position. In the month of July 1969 alone, the Israeli Defence Forces lost 36 killed and 76 wounded in action; and between January and July 1970, Israel sustained nearly 500 casualties. This rate of attrition could not be sustained for long, and so on 9 September 1969, the IDF set out to teach their Arab tormentors a sharp lesson.

In what became known as the "ten-hour war" Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal and, using captured Egyptian ar-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

moured vehicles manned by 150 Arabic-speaking soldiers, invaded Egypt on an extended punitive raid. This tiny force under its false colours spread mayhem in the Suez town area, causing 450 casualties, collecting vital intelligence and destroying three air defence radar stations. After ten hours, the Israel commandos coolly re-embarked, and, to add insult to injury, brought with them two of the latest Soviet T62 main battle tanks, captured in the confusion. To make the point, the Israelis crossed the southern end of the canal again later in 1969 and dismantled a brand new Soviet P-12 radar system under the very noses of the Egyptians and their alarmed Soviet advisers.

Despite these demonstrative successes, Israel realized that some real defensive barrier was now needed. Lieutenant-General Chaim Bar Lev, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army, gave his name to what was to become a line of fixed fortifications along the length of the Suez Canal. The Bar Lev Line eventually became a hundred-mile chain of sand-covered mutually supporting forts with deep shelters, minefields and weapon-firing pits, backed by a maze of trenches, covered roads, water-storage tanks and dug-in tanks and artillery. With the Bar Lev Line, Israel had exchanged the flexible sweep of mobile armoured warfare for her own version of the Maginot Line. To further ensure that no one could sneak across the canal in rubber boats, selected forts also had underground oil and petrol systems with special pipes that could pump oil onto the canal and, set aflame, incinerate any would-be canal-crossers.

Israel needed the Bar Lev Line. The Egyptian war of attrition rumbled on for more than a year and a half before President Nasser accepted a ceasefire in July 1970. The Israeli population heaved a collective sigh of relief; no more would they have to live with daily newspapers marking the body count with black funereal borders every morning. Both sides

took advantage of the lull. The Egyptians began to move forward the new air defence missiles and radars provided by their Soviet sponsors. Their aim was to provide a dense belt of anti-aircraft missiles over the whole length of the canal. In their turn the Israelis poured concrete - and cash - into building up the Bar Lev Line to new levels of solidity to keep the Egyptians at bay. One estimate for the expenditure on defence infrastructure for Sinai in 1971 is half a billion US dollars at 1970s prices.

In this the Israelis were helped enormously by money provided by Jewish donors overseas. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, and motivated by a mixture of pride, guilt and religious fervour, the Jewish Diaspora had trebled its contributions to the State of Israel. Money given by individuals and non-governmental bodies, many of them American, increased from about \$400 million in 1967 to \$1.2 billion after the Six-Day War. This income, together with generous US aid, enabled the living standards of the average Israeli family to increase faster than any other developed nation at the time, despite a defence budget that would have bankrupted another economy. Paradoxically, war was helping to fuel Israel's national income. Israel needed this cash from overseas. Even with it she was forced to cut defence spending by \$68 million in 1972.

Other events fuelled Israel's growing confidence, too. In the "Black September" of 1970, King Hussein of Jordan's patience finally snapped and he ordered the regiments of his Arab Legion to evict the Palestinian guerrillas busily setting up a state within a state and conducting their own bloody squabbles inside the Hashemite kingdom. In the words of one observer, "The well-trained Bedouin regulars slaughtered the [Palestinian] terrorists . . . they should not have tried to put up a fight against real, well-trained infantry." Suddenly, with the flight of the Palestinian guerrillas to Syria and the Lebanon,

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

for the first time since 1948 Israel's eastern border with Jordan was relatively tranquil.

On 28 September 1970 came even better news for Israel: President Nasser of Egypt died. At a stroke the mouthpiece of Arab Socialism, Pan-Arab Nationalism and the Soviet Union's principal client in the Arab World was no more. His successor was Anwar Sadat, one of Nasser's original group of nationalist Egyptian officers. A devout Muslim, Sadat was more patient and thoughtful than the flamboyant and excitable Nasser. From the start he said quite openly that to achieve her goals, Egypt would have to fight. Despite this, Sadat was a pragmatic politician who initially pursued a parallel policy of diplomacy in a search for a peaceful solution. Perhaps unwisely, he declared that "1971 will be the year of decision."

Sadat's Year of Decision started badly. Egyptian diplomatic initiatives were rejected or ignored, although in some respects they paralleled many aspects of Israeli thinking. Poor negotiating at the United Nations and hardening attitudes on both sides caused yet another mini-crisis, and in spring 1971 both sides began to reinforce the canal. Realizing that any attack by Egypt across the Suez Canal would now be met by a fully alerted and partially mobilized IDF, Sadat ordered the Egyptian Army not to fight. For his internal opponents - and probably to their Soviet backers - this was the last straw and a coup against Sadat seemed imminent. The new President had fumbled his big battle in the Year of Decision, claimed his detractors. He would have to go.

The plotters, led by the pro-Soviet Ali Sabry, had miscalculated. Sadat may not have attacked the Israelis as they expected, but that was merely common prudence, not lack of resolution. He moved against the pro-Soviet faction in the Arab Socialist Union Central Committee on 25 April with a speed and ruthlessness that surprised many and his opponents

most of all. Within a week, AH Sabry and his fellow conspirators were safe under house arrest and any other opposition to the President of Egypt had prudently disappeared underground. The Soviet Union, which may well have encouraged the Ali Sabry plotters, pretended that nothing had happened, and Sadat, who needed Soviet arms and aid, pretended equally to be ignorant of any Soviet involvement. Both parties settled down to a new and harmonious - if slightly wary - relationship to discuss their mutual interest: the curtailment of US-Israeli influence in the region. To seal their new deal, Sadat signed a fifteen-year Treaty of Friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union for arms and foreign aid.

For the rest of that year, Sadat's strategy drifted. He had to be content with vague Russian promises of aid, unreturned letters and calls, and being fobbed off as the Soviets vacillated. Moscow seemed not to be bothered, and Sadat's approaches to the Americans fell on equally deaf ears. Weeks turned into months as 1971 dragged on inconclusively. Even a long-postponed summit meeting in Moscow in February 1972 left Sadat with no real progress. Egyptian frustrations were starting to fester.

Sadat realized that time was running out. Jokes about the Year of Decision and his leadership circulated among the wags in the cafes and souks. Like Nasser before him, he knew only too well that an Egyptian leader had to act if he wanted to survive. Every day that passed increased dissent in the Army and unrest on the streets. In fact we can trace Sadat's frustration and his thinking very clearly in an address to the leaders of serious student riots in Cairo on 25 January 1972, just before he flew to Moscow for his inconclusive meeting with Premier Brezhnev: "[The decision] to go to war against Israel has already been taken . . . this is no mere words; it is a fact."

Again, the Soviets stalled. Arms supplies would be "diffi-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

cult". Sadat emphasized the need for military action against the Israelis. The appalled Soviets, with an eye on the growing policy of *detente* and superpower stand-offs, could not tolerate any resumption of fighting. By June 1972, Sadat had had enough of pointless meetings with the Soviets and diplomatic inactivity. He issued a questionnaire directly to the Soviet Premier, Brezhnev, bluntly warning that Egyptian-Soviet relations depended on the answers. Yet again the Soviets ignored the Egyptian President and talked of "a general relaxation of tension in the region".

Anwar Sadat decided to strike. The Soviets had built up a massive military presence in Egypt by summer 1972. The air defence of Cairo was covered by 200 Soviet fighters complete with Russian air and ground crews. The SAM umbrella over the canal was manned by an estimated 12,000 Soviet experts. In addition there were 5,000 other military advisers. "The Soviets," avowed one Egyptian officer, "were everywhere." But the Soviet presence was generally unwelcome. Their arrogance and contempt for the Egyptians infuriated a proud people who looked back to a golden age of the pharaohs when their civilization had led the world. Educated Egyptian officers found their Soviet counterparts ignorant and boorish. Worst of all in the Muslim world, they showed little respect for Islam.

On 8 July 1972 Sadat summoned the Soviet Ambassador and told him that all, repeat all, Soviet personnel must be out of Egypt within ten days. With the Soviet Ambassador, Vinogradov, visibly stunned, Sadat left the meeting. Later he said, "I felt that we all needed some kind of electric shock." Sadat meant what he said. On 17 July, the Soviets began to pack their bags and leave. The expulsions strengthened Sadat's domestic standing enormously. The Army was glad to be rid of their patronizing advisers, and the mosques were openly delighted to see the back of a pack of godless heathens.

Once the euphoria and sense of liberation had worn off,

however, Sadat's concerns grew again. His gesture had not solved Egypt's real problems. Hoped for peace-feelers from the USA and Israel failed to materialize. The Egyptian economy continued to be squeezed to near suffocation by the need to maintain the country as an armed camp, and social unrest, always a powerful attention-getter for Egyptian rulers, became an evermore serious threat. Sadat had to do something to break the logjam before it was too late. Sometime in late 1972, he made the fateful decision to attack Israel.

The first evidence of his resolution probably came at a closed meeting of the Arab Socialist Union Central Committee on 14 November 1972. From that moment President Sadat's Egypt began planning to resume the long-running war with Israel by launching a full-scale surprise attack across the Suez Canal to seize limited chunks of occupied Sinai from the Israelis. The goals were mainly political. Israel would be given a short sharp shock. The Arab and Islamic world would see Egypt in the forefront of the battle against the detested Jews. At home, Sadat's firmness and resolution would be applauded. It would reinforce his position as Egypt's leader in every way.

Having just evicted the Soviets, Sadat realized that he would still need allies. Egypt could not fight Israel on her own. Sadat needed three things for his enterprise: money, guns and a diversion. The money came from the oil-rich Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, who welcomed Sadat as a conservative bastion against the potential excesses of radical leaders like the wild-eyed Colonel Qaddafi of Libya. The guns and other arms could be acquired from the long-suffering Soviet Union, but this time without massed legions of advisers; and the diversion would be provided by Egypt's partner in the humiliating defeat of 1967, Syria. In the last months of 1972, President Sadat of Egypt and President Assad of Syria began to build a secret military coalition to strike Israel by a surprise attack on two fronts simultaneously.

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

The Egyptian Army had not been idle since their humiliation in the Six-Day War. At the end of 1972 Sadat appointed General Ahmed Ismail Chief of Staff with strict instructions to prepare for war. Ismail was no socialite or political appointee. On the contrary, he was a highly competent and professional commander, and his impact was felt rapidly within Egyptian military planning circles. His particular expertise had been gained at the Soviet Staff College, which meant he knew how to plan an attack. Like the well-trained general staff officer that he was, General Ismail put in hand a thorough appreciation of the situation, and he wisely insisted that the "enemy forces" paragraph, the IDF, was to be made the subject of a completely separate appreciation.

From the point of view of the Egyptian General Staff planners the Israel Defence Forces had five great advantages. The first four were guaranteed arms supplies from the USA; a high preponderance of technological weapons systems; Western standards of training; and air superiority. The fifth and final Israeli advantage Egypt could do little about. Ismael was realistic enough to accept that a people who understood that their opponents could suffer many defeats but that Israel could not survive even one would fight to the bitter end. He made sure that any plan would be for limited objectives only. Israel was not going to be pushed back into the sea.

Nevertheless, Ismail reckoned that with good staff planning he could nullify the first four of Israel's advantages. More interestingly, he also identified what he believed to be a number of potential Israeli weaknesses. An enemy's weaknesses are always much more interesting than its strengths. The Egyptians pondered long and hard on the Israelis' failings, chief of which, they decided, was a potentially fatal overconfidence caused by a combination of arrogance and a superiority complex from constant victory.

It is an irony of history that both sides tend to draw

different lessons from the same war. The victors invariably tell themselves that their success was entirely due to their brilliant generals, superb tactics, superior equipment and the matchless courage of their soldiers. The defeated tend to brood on their mistakes, note well their enemy's strengths, work out just how their conquerers actually won and resolve how best to ensure that it will be their turn to get it right next time.

Thus it proved after 1918 when the British quietly forgot their success at Amiens on 8 August 1918, when they combined tanks, aircraft, mobile artillery, good communications and a devastating surprise combined-arms attack to break through on a narrow front, in their desire to get back to "real soldiering" in Aldershot after the war. The Germans, on the other hand, studied the lessons of what Ludendorff called "the Black Day of the German Army" and by 1938 had come up with the tactics, doctrine and equipment for a sustained attack using the ideas pioneered by the British and Australians at Amiens twenty years before. The Germans called it *Blitzkrieg*.

Thus, reasoned Ismail, would it be for the ever-victorious Israelis, revelling in the hubris of their 1967 successes and declaring triumphantly that the Israeli armed forces were the best and most battle-hardened in the world. While this pride in Israeli martial superiority was well justified in view of events, it had begun to acquire more than a streak of arrogance by 1972. Unfortunately, it was also founded on a less attractive belief that the Jews were in some way racially superior to Arabs. Many earlier Zionists had viewed the Arabs as "feudal, backward and pre-nationalistic". This was a core belief of many pillars of Radical Socialist Zionism like Chaim Weizmann and Vladimir Jabotinsky and, despite the more tolerant views of liberal elements within Zionism, even David Ben-Gurion, the "Father of the Jewish State", firmly believed in a permanently divided and backward Arab world. At a time when eugenics was accepted as hard science

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

such beliefs were widely held, and their echoes still infected some Israeli thinking.

The Israelis had other, more concrete weaknesses. To their perennial problem of an inability to sustain a long war or heavy casualties was added a new dimension: long lines of communication. Traditionally Israel had always enjoyed the advantages of Napoleon's favourite strategy, the "central position". With short internal lines of communication and surrounded by enemies, Israel had always been able to concentrate forces rapidly in time and space to meet a threat from any direction. But now she was stretched. The gains of the Six-Day War meant that she could be pulled in one direction or another. Greater Israel had imposed a strategic problem: from the Golan Heights to the Suez Canal meant a 72-hour re-deployment for an armoured brigade, and possibly longer.

The Egyptian staff analysed every aspect of Israel's strengths and weaknesses before developing an operational concept for the coming battle. The plan capitalized on the seven main conclusions of the Egyptian intelligence appreciation:

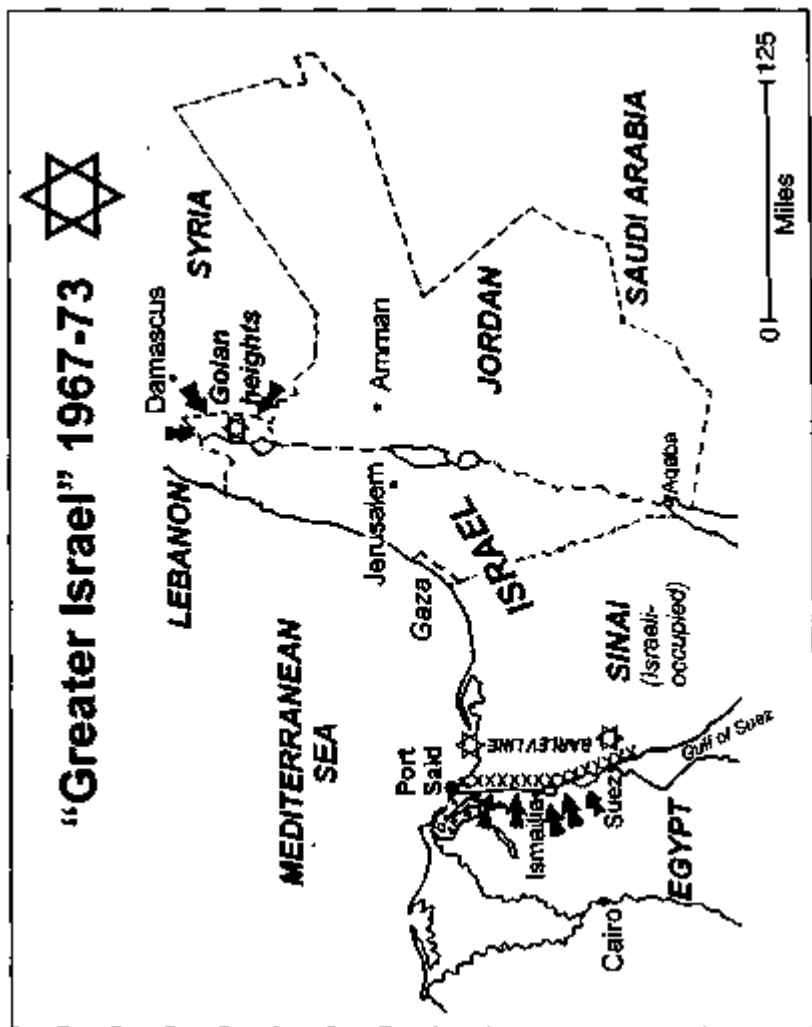
1. Strike first by surprise to pre-empt the Israelis.
2. Use massive force on as wide a front as possible to disperse any attempt at a counter-attack.
3. Maintain an air defence umbrella over the ground forces at all times to keep the Israeli Air Force off the backs of the ground troops.
4. Force Israel to disperse resources between widely separated geographical combat areas.
5. Blunt any Israeli counter-attacks by emphasizing defensive weapons and fighting from defensive positions.
6. Force Israel to incur heavy casualties.
7. Ensure that Egyptian forces have the most up-to-date and technologically superior weaponry to match Israeli systems.

The last requirement, for technologically advanced weapons, sent the Egyptians speeding back to Moscow, demanding either the latest MiG-23 fighter-bombers or Scud surface-to-surface missiles from their long-suffering Soviet arms storemen. It took time, but by autumn 1973, Sadat's troops had the hi-tech weapons called for by "The Plan" which had now acquired a name: Operation Badr.

Normally, the wide-ranging and well-organized Israeli intelligence service would have picked up the first signals that something was brewing. With their superlative humint nets in the Arab world the Israelis rarely failed to tap into some loquacious and well-informed source when the need arose. The Egyptian General Staff operation planning officers would have been a particular target, at any time. On this occasion something went wrong. It may have been better Egyptian security, but, although Israeli intelligence was aware of Egyptian plans, they failed to react as before to a growing threat. In addition, the intelligence that was collected was distorted by a number of self-imposed and deliberate Israeli misconceptions. In Chaim Herzog's sardonic reference to the situation within the Israeli intelligence establishment of 1972-3, "eyes they have but they see not". It was a perceptive summary of the failure of Israel's much vaunted intelligence system in the run-up to Yom Kippur.

The roots of the problem lay deep inside Israel's recent history and political organization. Israel is a small country and intensely politicized, partly because of her people's love of a good argument but, more important, also by a voting system of proportional representation. This made every Israeli Cabinet an uncomfortable alliance of differing views and differing agendas and increased the need for "dual track" government. The result was a large and volatile Cabinet coalition which was essentially the public face of government (at one stage 30 per cent of the Knesset was in the Cabinet),

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."



and a much smaller kitchen cabinet that really ran the country. Golda Meir, the Prime Minister in 1973, certainly ran Israel precisely on those lines.

In 1973 the only organization that saw all collected information, processed and interpreted it and gave all-source evaluations and briefings to ministers was the Army, or more accurately AMAN Military Intelligence. The Mossad, or Secret Intelligence Service, ran overseas operations; Shin Beth, the equivalent of Britain's MIS or the Bundesrepublik's BFV, was limited to internal security, and the Foreign Ministry's Research and Evaluation Staff evaluated diplomatic traffic. All other intelligence - sigint, techint, order of battle, logistics intelligence, foreign liaison sources, targeting, overhead reconnaissance and foreign country assessments, even nuclear security (LAKAM) - was controlled by the military.

This unique situation had arisen because of Israel's growth as a warrior nation from the very start. Military Intelligence had always been dragged into the smoke-filled inner councils of Israeli Prime Ministers to say their piece - usually at two o'clock in the morning. In a nation in arms every crisis was by definition a *military* crisis. Even when briefing the Cabinet, the Minister of Defence always took not just the Chief of the Armed Forces but also the head of Military Intelligence. MI was the dominant national intelligence agency and its uniformed head was consulted directly as a matter of routine by every government and cabinet.

This is a dangerous position for any intelligence officer, however senior and however clever. Objective and often painful truths sometimes need to be uttered by fearless intelligence officers to their political masters without regard for the political consequences. Somewhere between 1967 and 1973 the rigid line between intelligence and policy in Israel was breached. Some commentators claim it never really existed. Military intelligence became national intelligence; and na-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

tional intelligence became a matter of national *policy*. The line between military and ministerial responsibilities became blurred. This cosy arrangement invariably spells disaster somewhere along the line. So it was to prove for Israeli intelligence.

The real problem lay in the membership of the inner policy-making group in Israel. With the passage of time Golda Meir ignored the squabbling and contentious ranks of those outside her political magic circle and relied more and more on the favoured few. Israeli national security policy became an isolated and clandestine affair characterized by excessive secrecy, personal relationships, party loyalties and, most dangerous of all, a sense of self-righteousness. One fierce Israeli critic of Meir's methods at the time, Professor Perlmutter, described it scathingly as "a group interested primarily in its own fierce sense of exclusivity and collegiality." This inner group was not going to disagree; its whole informal existence hinged on the belief that only its exclusive military and ministerial members really understood the finer points of Israel's national security needs. More sinister, the inner group believed that it was the *only* group really qualified to arbitrate on Israeli national security policy. To conceit was added conspiracy; to arrogance was added the moral rectitude of "group think". Any critic within the Group proclaiming a contrary view risked the ultimate rejection: exclusion from the Group and the secret inner sanctum of the nation's defence policy.

With this dangerous arrangement institutionalized at the heart of its national affairs, Israel began to evaluate the first indications of an Egyptian build-up during 1973. From the start the whole process was bedevilled by political considerations imposed by Golda Meir's inner circle. The first of these was a classic example of "group think" supported by politicians and military alike. The Arab armies and air forces had received such a thrashing in 1967, ran the thinking, that they

would never dare to take on the Israelis again unless two conditions were fulfilled. In the first place Egypt needed to be able to overcome Israeli air superiority before she would dare to attack, and for the second, only a joint Syrian and Egyptian attack could succeed. As neither condition was anywhere near to being fulfilled, reasoned the Israelis, then Israel was safe from any serious threat. Certainly the Arabs would try to attack again, but not now. They were just not strong enough. These political judgments became Israeli national policy, overriding any contrary views culled from intelligence; it was a classic example of confusing political aspirations with hard facts.

This astonishingly arrogant view of Israel's adversaries was known to senior defence planners as the "Concept". The Concept was even peddled as a serious policy of deterrence when combined with Israel's new extended borders. An Arab attack was now claimed to be so difficult that Greater Israel's overwhelming military strength and well-defended frontiers were nothing less than a deterrent to war. By holding on to the 1967 gains, both territorial and psychological, Israel was doing nothing less than guaranteeing peace in the region. Israel's ownership of the conquered territories was a good thing. This was a bold claim, and that it was being made publicly by uniformed military intelligence officers to visiting delegations as a political policy should have worried dispassionate observers. Intelligence officers had crossed an invisible line and were now firmly cast in the role of "policy advocates and not information assessors", in Edward Luttwak's phrase.

Other factors were working against Israeli Military Intelligence in the spring and summer of 1973. Already burdened with the preconceptions of the Concept and a falsely rooted idea of regional deterrence, the intelligence community now had to view developments through a number of other distort-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

ing prisms imposed on them as "policy". The first of these was the cost of mobilization. For example, in May 1973 the Israeli Chief of Staff, General Elazar, ordered a partial mobilization, recognizing clearly a rising incidence of Egyptian attack indicators. The heightened regional tensions resulting from a PLO uprising in Lebanon and a civil war there that looked like spilling over into northern Israel. An attack failed to materialize; although the main Egyptian assault was initially planned for May, Sadat postponed it because of the trouble in Lebanon which he felt would detract from his great blow against Israeli prestige. This partial mobilization cost Israel \$20 million, which the economy could ill afford. Thereafter at the back of every Israeli intelligence analyst's mind was an invisible brake on the answer to the question, "Are these intelligence indicators serious enough to indicate war - and thus mobilization?" The flawed thinking behind the Concept and the high cost of any mobilization began to corrupt the honest intelligence answer, which should have been, "That is a political judgment, Minister."

Another factor that blunted intelligence assessments was the frequency of Egyptian mobilization. Since Sadat had taken over three years before, there had been at least three major Egyptian escalations of tension leading to call-ups and serious troop redeployments in Egypt, all spotted and monitored by the ever-vigilant collectors of Israel intelligence. In 1971, to calls from the Cairo press that war was inevitable, the Egyptians had mobilized, deployed their Army HQ into the desert, called up reservists and civilian vehicles, and marched tanks and floating bridges towards the Suez Canal. Nothing happened.

During the second major alert, in 1972, the interested Israelis watched the same thing unfold again, but this time without civilian mobilization or bridges moving to the canal. One difference was a sudden frenzy of building activity on the

western bank of the canal as tank ramps, potential crossing-points and ever higher Egyptian ramparts were constructed under the bemused gaze of the IDF conscripts manning their Bar Lev forts. Again, nothing happened. There were two more major mobilizations in 1973: one in May, following the outbreak of fighting in Lebanon and to which Israel's General Elezar had reacted so strongly; and the final one in October 1973 for Yom Kippur.

The drumbeat of regular mobilization has an effect on intelligence observers. First it desensitizes them - "Oh, it's just the Egyptians up to their old tricks again" - and second it conditions them to accept *abnormal* activity as a *normal* pattern of behaviour. Added to the constraining girdle of the Concept and a reluctance to be seen to cry wolf again and cause unnecessary expenditure, it is perhaps not surprising that the Israeli military intelligence system's reaction was decidedly muted when Sadat's fourth and final mobilization was identified in early October 1973. The Israelis had seen it all before; everyone knew that the Egyptians would not dare to attack Israel again until they had a decent air force and a full alliance with Syria. That was, after all, Israeli political-military policy - the Concept said so.

The Egyptians played on this in their deception plan for Operation Badr. They had three real secrets to conceal: their agreement with the Syrians for a simultaneous onslaught; their technical and other preparations for war; and finally the exact date and time of their attack. The last was in some ways easy to conceal because even the Egyptian commanders did not know. During 1973, Sadat kept changing his mind and postponing "Y-Day".

To conceal their political deal for a joint attack with Syria, the Egyptians and their northern ally resorted to a classic subterfuge that Machiavelli would have recognized. They lied. Even though the final broad arrangements were secretly

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

agreed by the now "federal" general staffs of the armed forces of Egypt and Syria on 1 April, a senior Egyptian general was glumly playing up the problems by predicting on 22 April that there was still a long way to go before Egypt and Syria could co-operate properly militarily and that "political and military problems [still] inhibit any joint action". The misleading signals continued throughout the summer of 1973 as Egyptian diplomats flew all over the Middle East in a baffling series of "initiatives" that smacked of growing desperation on the part of Anwar Sadat. In reality Sadat was stitching together the broad Arab political support he would need on Y-Day. No initiative ever quite succeeded; nothing was ever definite. In one observer's phrase, "It looked like the desperate calculations of a born gambler."

The network of political deceit extended particularly to Israel's principal ally and guarantor, the USA. President Nixon had won the 1972 election by, among other things, openly wooing the Jewish vote. Wily Egyptian diplomats ensured that Secretary of State Rogers and his successor in summer 1973, Henry Kissinger, were sucked into the tangled web by stressing Egypt's need for negotiations to secure an equitable and peaceful settlement. It worked. Despite the alarm bells ringing in Washington, Henry Kissinger was eventually dismissive of the military threat. Indeed, in one meeting with Abba Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister, just *two days* before the Yom Kippur War, both men airily assured each other that the general intelligence picture from both countries was reassuring, with little prospect of an early war.

Henry Kissinger should have been a little less smug. In the middle of 1973, as the secret Egyptian build-up began to gather pace, his own State Department's INR (Intelligence and Research Bureau) produced an internal analysis of the Middle East situation. Unusually, it was a predictive document. Intelligence agencies are frequently reluctant to commit

themselves to predictions (although that is their prime task) for prediction can notoriously go wrong. No one wishes to lose bureaucratic credibility by "being courageous", "making unsubstantiated speculations", or, worst of all, *being wrong*. In the words of an anonymous British JIC analyst, "We don't have a crystal ball, you know." The INR in Washington was different. It had after all been proved right in the long-running internecine battle between US intelligence agencies that had accompanied the Vietnam War, on which it had been determinedly pessimistic.

So it was with the US-INR paper of June/July 1973 on the Middle East situation. Although the INR paper did not have the status of an NIE (National Intelligence Estimate), it drew broad support from the CIA, an old ally against the US military's Panglossian assessments on Vietnam. Both the CIA and the State Department's INR forecast a war in the Middle East by autumn 1973. (DIA, true to form, disagreed with CIA.) Henry Kissinger, a man who generally believed he knew better than his own intelligence specialists, not only ignored his own department's findings but also appears to have failed to alert his Israeli clients and allies to the misgivings now surfacing in Washington.

It was always going to be much harder for the Egyptians to hide their second secret, the technical and military preparations for war. Even if they had tried, they widely assumed that Israeli intelligence collectors would soon spot the growing military build-up. By late summer 1973, for example, the Syrian armed forces had imported from the Soviet Union over twice the amount of arms that they had imported in the whole of 1972. The Egyptians had brought in even more.

General Ismail's planning staff realized that the Israelis were bound to counter-attack any assault across the Suez Canal. This was established IDF doctrine and had almost always been successful in the past. These quick counter-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

attacks relied on two hammers to smash the Arab troops consolidating on a hard-won position: air superiority overhead and a scythe of tanks and armour on the ground. The Egyptians took a leaf out of Rommel's book. For a year and a half in 1941 and 1942, the C.-in-C. of Panzer Korps Afrika had attacked by seizing ground and then holding it defensively, allowing waves of counter-attacking British tanks to beat themselves to death against a well-armed and concealed German anti-tank screen. Although Rommel's successes were strategic attacks, his desert tactics on the ground were essentially *defensive*. To do this he had relied on technologically superior defensive weapons of the time: the superb 88 mm Panzer Abwehr Kanone (PAK) and its smaller brother, the 57 mm long-barrelled anti-tank gun, mounted on both tanks and in PAK artillery. The charging British tanks were just picked off in the open.

The Egyptian battle plan called for a reworking of Rommel's operational principles brought up to date. They planned limited attacks across the Suez Canal to seize ground and inflict a humiliating reverse on the Israelis. The political reverberations of this would then rumble around the world, which was all Sadat wanted: a political blow by a sharp military success. To do this the Egyptians needed a defensive umbrella of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) over the Suez Canal and extending into the Sinai Desert, to cover their army as it crossed the canal. That would fend off the stooping hawks of the Israeli Air Force. On the ground the Israeli tanks could be relied upon to hurl themselves forward in furious counter-attacks against the Egyptian invaders.

To blunt their fury, the General Staff called for as many of the new Soviet anti-tank weapons as possible, especially the new generation of anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) known by its NATO identification as the Sagger. The small, suitcase-sized wire-guided weapons could be carried by two men and

worked by one. With a range in flat desert of 1,500-2,000 metres a man hiding behind a rock could, by the early 1970s, track and kill a moving tank over a mile distant. The Sagger, especially supplemented close in by the new rocket-propelled anti-tank grenades (RPG-7) from the Soviets, was a formidable weapon and represented a major shift in the constant tactical struggle between attacker and defender. Suddenly every infantryman, suitably equipped, could become a long-range tank destroyer.

These air defence and anti-tank weapons also had the beauty of being weapons for a *defensive* posture. Israeli analysts, who were tracking the flood of Soviet arms into Egypt and Syria in summer 1973, naturally drew the conclusion that the Arabs were only rearming to *defend* themselves, and not to attack Israel. The deception over arms procurement worked. Although intelligence analysts identified no less than 1,000 first-line SAM missiles of the secret Soviet SAM 6 system in Egypt and Syria, backed by dense belts of the SAM 3 and older SAM 2, they were not unduly concerned. So the Arabs were constructing the thickest air defence belt in the world on the Suez? Let them waste their money; Israel had no intention of attacking. Not every weapon system demanded by the Egyptians was defensive, however. Both Sadat and Nasser before him had pressed the Soviets for the latest MiG-23 swing-wing penetration bombers. The Soviet Union, mindful of the Americans' recent debacle in Vietnam, where a super-power had been sucked into virtually open-ended support for a major war by a client state, flatly refused.

With hindsight, it is difficult to appreciate the sheer scale of the Egyptian rearmament between 1970 and 1973. The Egyptian Army was effectively re-equipped and retrained with the complete range of modern Soviet weapons from AK-47 rifles to (just prior to the outbreak of fighting in October 1973) Scud missiles. The Scuds, with a 180-mile radius of fire, could by no

stretch of the imagination be described as defensive, but by then the die was cast and their presence was seen as a deterrent to counter any deep Israeli attacks on Egyptian population centres. The conclusion of the Israeli analysts was that the bulk of arms and technology shipped to the Arabs was for defence or, at worst, to deter an Israeli attack.

The third and final secret the Egyptians strove to hide was the date and time of their attack. If, in Chaim Herzog's words, they were to fall on the Israelis like a "wolf on the fold" then they had an absolute need for total security if they were to surprise an unwary and unprepared adversary. The date of the attack was the subject of considerable debate within the coalition's secret planning cell. The final decision was taken surprisingly late, in August 1973, only two months before Y-Day. The so-called Federal High Command Planning Staff of Syrian and Egyptian commanders eventually decided on 6 October as the agreed date. The reasons were complex and a mixture of the practical and psychological.

The sixth of October would be a moonlit night and also one when the normally fast currents in the Suez Canal would be sufficiently slow to allow floating bridges to be safely built and anchored in mid-stream. The less tangible psychological reason had a particular significance for the Islamic world: 6 October that year was the tenth day of Ramadan and the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad's victory at the Battle of Badr near Medina in AD 624. Badr established the Prophet Muhammad as both a political and religious leader. The symbolism was obvious. An intelligence purist would argue that this choice of code name was therefore an unnecessary risk and a potential breach of security.

In the Arab world, however, the power of gesture must sometimes outweigh the restrictive corset of security. "Badr" proclaimed that the Egyptian and Syrian attack was more than just the continuation of hostilities in the Middle East; it

was also a message as clear as any muezzin's call of the resurgence of Islamic might against the all-conquering Israelis. In fact it encapsulated almost precisely Sadat's goals for the attack, which were that it should be a spectacular military triumph, Islamic, limited and political, and for both domestic and international consumption. Badr it was to be.

Perhaps surprisingly General Ismail's staff planners found the attack date relatively easy to conceal from prying Israeli intelligence. In this they were aided by the relatively short time (seven weeks) for the secret to leak out. Sadat's formidable internal security apparatus helped, but in the end the secret was kept by the best method of all - the planners did not tell anybody. The startled Syrian Defence Minister was only informed on 1 October: Y-5. The Egyptians told a bare minimum of officers using the most ruthless need-to-know criteria. At one stage it was limited to just fourteen Egyptian and Syrian officers. Even that was felt by the Egyptians to be about ten people too many, given the talent of the Mossad (Israel's SIS) for finding senior Arab officers with access to classified information and encouraging them to reveal their innermost secrets by the traditional methods of the second oldest profession. The upshot was that the Egyptians made a considerable deception priority the deception of their *own* officer corps.

After the war, the baffled Israelis questioned their Egyptian prisoners of war closely about how much they had known before the attack. The answers startled the interrogators. Egyptian junior officers and men only learned of the attack on the morning of 6 October, and even then, many of them thought that it was just the start of another day's exercises. In one bizarre example, a staff colonel only realized war was imminent when he saw his commanding general take out a prayer mat and suddenly drop on his knees to face Mecca at the start of a hastily called meeting. In an even more extreme

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

case, an Egyptian assault engineer platoon only realized it was not an exercise when they were told to uncrate their rubber boats and put them in the canal. "So we won't be going back to barracks tonight then, sir?" one soldier is supposed to have enquired of Lieutenant Ibrahim of 16th Division as they began to paddle across the canal. In Chaim Herzog's words, "The Egyptian planners had succeeded in misleading not only the Israeli Defence Forces and practically all the intelligence services in the West, but the bulk of the Egyptian Army as well!"

As September 1973 rolled on the final preparations for war were made. This was the most dangerous time for the Egyptians. A concerted effort was made to keep up diplomatic pretences at the UN, as by now the Israeli intelligence collection boards would be filling with indicators of activity. They would note troops moving forward, reservists called up, bridge equipment on the move, ammunition outloaded, leave cancelled, new radio nets active, and unusual aircraft maintenance. It would all add up to a pattern that spelled "indicators of attack".

Israeli intelligence had seen it all before, however. There had already been over twenty separate mobilizations of Egyptian reservists for training since the beginning of 1973. This was the third deferral of *demobilization* for Egyptian troops in 1973, although the Israeli analysts noted that the unfortunate conscripts had been told that it was only a temporary postponement - they would now be released on 8 October. The ploy was yet another example of the strategy of deception by repetition that worked so well to dull Israeli intelligence's reactions.

Everything else was normal. There was no call-up of civilian transport, no civil defence preparations, and even Sadat himself was banal and repetitive in his speech on Nasser Day, 26 September: "I have not broached the subject of

fighting because there has been enough talk. I only say that the liberation of the land . . . is the main task." By the standards of Arab rhetoric this was routine stuff and hardly worth including in any critical intelligence analysis looking for the presence of the politically abnormal or the absence of the normal. However, it must be said that Israeli intelligence failed badly over Sadat's speech. A moment's thought should have suggested that picking up a lethal weapon while stating blandly that the user intends his neighbour no harm is suspicious under any circumstances.

The political and diplomatic round continued as normal, too. The repercussions from the shooting down of thirteen Syrian warplanes by the Israeli Air Force in an aerial battle following Syrian provocations in mid-September still rumbled on, but were slowly dying down. In the circumstances it seemed hardly surprising that Syria had mobilized some extra troops and was apparently hastily trying to fortify its southern border opposite the Golan Heights. This was clearly a defensive precaution following Israel's recent and aggressive aerial ambush. Besides, Radio Moscow seemed to confirm it by broadcasting to the Middle East that an *Israeli* attack was imminent and that Syria should "prepare to defend itself.

As September turned into October the dam of security and deception began to leak. Uneasy Washington intelligence analysts in the State Department warned Kissinger that trouble was brewing, probably on or about 30 September. They reckoned without his ego. Apparently convinced of the inevitable success that would accompany *his* negotiations at the UN in November, Kissinger ignored his experts. The Director of the CIA complained later that even he despaired of getting an urgent appointment with the great man, so busy was Kissinger with own brand of personal shuttle diplomacy.

It is rare for there to be a hero in intelligence matters. Cerebral analysis and desk work far from the battlefield lack

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

the glamour and appeal of those who risk their lives in battle. Perhaps that is why they are so rarely decorated. Physical courage that risks life in harm's way deserves its proper reward. However, a genuine Israeli hero now appeared. One with *moral* courage.

In the Sinai, a young Israeli intelligence officer in General Shmuel Goven's Southern Command Intelligence Staff had been conscientiously "ticking the boxes" as he filled in a standard "indicators and warning collection plan". He cared little for preconceived concepts or the national assessment. Lieutenant Benjamin Siman-Tov just methodically followed the intelligence cycle for the Egyptian order of battle in his office at Southern Command, and by 1 October 1973 he didn't like what he could see. Nearly all the attack indicators showed a build-up and many of the indicators were red, not green and "confirmed safe". Furthermore, too many indicators were still showing black, meaning "unknown - no answer yet from the collection agency". Accordingly, Siman-Tov drafted a short paper to his CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Gedaliah, pointing out that the Egyptian combined arms exercise on the other side of the Suez Canal was, in his opinion, based on an objective analysis and interpretation of the available evidence, nothing less than a sophisticated deception plan to mask an imminent Egyptian attack.

There are few things more irritating than a clever subordinate. They make their presence felt like a stone in a shoe. In fact, one of the greatest tests of leadership is the ability to listen to inspired subordinates' views and judge their merits without resentment, jealousy or dismissing them when they do not agree with the management line. But restless subordinates undoubtedly pose a challenge for ambitious leaders and managers, especially politically aware officers or public service officials.

History doesn't record what Lieutenant-Colonel Gedaliah,

the Chief Intelligence Officer, Israeli Southern Command, said to his alert order of battle officer when he produced his memorandum. What it does record is what Gedaliah did with the 1 October paper and another follow-up paper which Siman-Tov submitted on 3 October. Gedaliah did something unforgivable which was to cost him dear: he deliberately suppressed the Lieutenant's report. Normally even a contentious position paper, suitably marked with the disagreement of the branch chief, would have been circulated upwards for comment in the argumentative, free-wheeling atmosphere of the Israeli Army of 1948 to 1967. But the Army's new commander, General Elazar, wanted to tighten things up. He ruled that the Israeli Army was to become "more like other armies". He held conferences on discipline. He insisted on regular postings and a career structure for the officer corps. Elazar's reforms encouraged a lieutenant-colonel to sit on a subordinate's intelligence report because he didn't agree with it. The Director of Military Intelligence, General Zeira, eventually did see the report in March 1974. By then it was six months too late for Siman-Tov, Gedaliah, Chief of Staff Elazar, DMI Zeira and indeed for Israel, although to his eternal credit General Zeira promoted the young man on the spot.

With yet another chance missed, the days turned to hours. By dawn on 5 October both Egypt and Syria were on alert on Israel's frontiers. Egypt had 194 artillery batteries in the line and all five infantry divisions. Israeli officers in the Bar Lev Line warned that it looked as if an attack was imminent. GHQ demurred, but inside the inner councils of the Israeli military a bitter quarrel took place. On one side of the disagreement there was General Dayan, Minister of Defence, and General Tal, Chief Inspector of Armoured Forces, who both argued passionately for war and mobilization; on the other side, Chief of Staff Elazar (perhaps mindful of the unfortunate and

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

expensive mobilization of May) and his Director of Military Intelligence, General Zeira, arguing equally forcibly that the Egyptians and Syrians were in fact mobilizing *because they were scared of Israel*. The irony is that Siman-Tov's paper may have tipped the scales in the hawks' favour, but the paper was safely tucked away from senior officers in the safe of the Chief Intelligence Officer, Southern Command.

The disagreement within Israel's senior military circles culminated in an unscheduled meeting of Golda Meir's National Security Committee on Wednesday 3 October (Y-3). As usual the crisis meeting was attended by the uniformed members: Dayan, Tal, Elazar, Zeira's deputy Sahev, and Zamir, the head of the Secret Service. The meeting examined all the evidence, and, despite Zamir's unease (he had a secret tip-off), concluded that the Arab build-up was *defensive*, as a reaction to the Schonau Incident.

It is impossible for us to understand the atmosphere in that last week before the Yom Kippur War without realizing just how much politicians' eyes were focused on an obscure terrorist attack on the Austrian border. On 28 September two gunmen claiming to be Palestinian revolutionaries seized five Jewish emigrants and an Austrian customs official. Apart from the usual demands for an aeroplane to an Arab country, the incident sparked an agreement by the Austrian Chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, to close the transit centre for Soviet-Jewish emigrants at Schonau Castle. The Israelis were horrified. A major plank of their immigration policy had always been to encourage the Ashkenazi Jews of northern Europe over the oriental Sephardim. As the numbers of those displaced by the Holocaust faded in Europe, the Russian Jews were the only remaining source of Ashkenazim.

The Schonau Incident became a *cause celebre* and Israeli political activity focused on it. Despite the problems at home, Mrs Meir made a major diversion on her return trip from the

Council of Europe at Strasbourg on 1/2 October specifically to lobby the Austrian Chancellor (who was himself a Jew) to rescind his "betrayal of Jewish interests" and to protest at his freeing of the Palestinian gunmen. Margaret Thatcher was not the first female premier to wield a handbag to good effect.

To the intelligence analyst the whole incident smacks of a *maskirovka* operation. The Soviet Army had for years had a doctrine of masking its intentions by every means possible. Western military staffs were invariably amazed at just how much effort was made by the Soviets to divert and deceive the enemy. No Russian staff planner would dare to submit an operational plan without a specific deception or *maskirovka* sub-plan. Western planners usually grumbled that it would be nice to have so many resources to divert, although interestingly the only other army that gave anything like the same weight to this doctrine was the Israeli Army.

The Syrians were linked more closely with the Soviet intelligence bureaucracy than any other Middle East country. The KGB and GRU maintained a strong presence in Damascus, and the Syrian secret services and their Palestinian clients were well infiltrated by "socialist" idealists and informers. President Assad's Baath Arab Socialist Party was the nearest thing to the Soviet system in the Middle East. The Schonau incident was a remarkably timely coincidence, if one believes in timely coincidences that just happen to divert Israeli attention immediately before a major Syrian attack. The gunmen claimed to be from an unknown group of Palestinians, but they were recruited from Sa'ika, the guerrilla group run by the Syrian Army and its secret services. There is no direct proof, but the conclusion must be that the Schonau incident was probably a deliberate Syrian deception to divert attention away from the coming attack.

It worked. Public indignation inside Israel at the release of the Palestinian terrorists ran high. Combined with the shoot-

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

ing down of the thirteen Syrian jets in September, the atmosphere of political crisis deepened. Would Israel retaliate for Schonau? No wonder the Syrians were reinforcing their border, concluded Mrs Meir and her kitchen cabinet on 3 October. Evidence of this version of events is that Golda Meir spoke for over two hours at the meeting - on Schonau.

By 4 October (Y-2) events began the final descent to war. Soviet families were evacuated from Syria and Egypt and further confirmation of the massive build-up on Israel's borders poured in. On Friday morning, 5 October (Y-1) the alarmed Israeli generals reported to Golda Meir, but following a meeting in Minister of Defence Dayan's office they advised her that the General Staff and Military Intelligence assessment was that the likelihood of war remained low. General Zeira, the head of Military Intelligence, emphasized several times that the Arab troop concentrations revealed by Israeli photo-reconnaissance flights could be for either attack *or* defence - which was true. However, as an insurance the meeting decided to place the Israeli Regular Army on the highest stage of peacetime warning: a "C Alert". The next step in the alert process would be the call-up of reservists for war. To ensure that this would be possible, Mrs Meir confirmed that reservist mobilization centres should remain open and manned during the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, on 6 October.

It appears that one of the main reasons for the low-key Israeli response was the knowledge that their US mentors, who only ten days before were warning that hostilities looked imminent, had now reduced their threat assessment. In the US view, war was not imminent and the Arab moves were purely defensive. Kissinger had said as much to Abba Eban the day before.

There is in intelligence a well-known syndrome known as "circular intelligence" or the "daisy chain". What happens is that one agency reports an unconfirmed fact or assessment.

This is subsequently picked up and repeated in a second agency's assessment as a straightforward report. The first agency then sees it in someone else's report and seizes on it as independent proof that their own information has now been confirmed by another source. In the jargon, B-6 information (B means a "normally reliable source" and 6 means "not confirmed information") suddenly becomes B-1 intelligence ("information from a normally reliable source now confirmed by other sources"). This is dangerous stuff and mechanisms exist inside the professional analytical intelligence process to stop it happening.

No such mechanism existed between Israel and Washington's intelligence exchange in 1973. The CIA and State Department had reduced their previously high assessment of the probability of war only because the *Israelis* had not been concerned by the Arab build-up. After all, if the Israelis - who had most to lose and had the best sources - were not alarmed then that was an important intelligence fact. The USA had downgraded its assessments accordingly.

When the Israelis saw that the USA was not worried by the build-up, they confirmed their earlier judgments. If Washington was unruffled, concluded Mrs Meir and her inner policy group on 5 October, then why should they be? It was a classic and vicious example of "circular intelligence". Each side was reporting the other as a reliable source. Everyone left the 5 October meetings uneasy and with a feeling that something was wrong. The combination of arrogance, flawed assumptions, suppressed information, circular intelligence reports and clever enemy deception had combined to lull Israeli intelligence and its political masters into a false sense of security. Against all the odds, General Ismail's deception plan had succeeded.

When the telephone rang before dawn on 6 October 1973, General Zeira "just knew it was bad news". It was. An

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

unidentified source called him at home with absolute confirmation that Israel would be attacked that day on two fronts "probably at 18.00 hours". An appalled Zeira immediately telephoned the head of the Israeli Army, General Elazar.

The telephone call was wrong in one important respect: the Arab attack *had* originally been planned for 18.00, but two days before the Egyptians and Syrians had compromised for practical reasons and agreed that the attack would now be brought forward to 14.00 local time. In fact, Israel's national command authorities now had less than seven hours to react to the telephone warning.

When Elazar got Zeira's call he immediately called his chief, Defence Minister Dayan. Dayan confirmed the warning: *he* claimed that he had just been phoned by a "personal informant from abroad" to alert him, too. Some experts believe that this call may have come from a secret Jewish source of Dayan's in the US Defense Intelligence Agency. There are other, unconfirmed reports that a worried King Hussein had tried to stop the bloodshed. If true, the King took the secret with him to his grave. At the crisis meeting with the Prime Minister at 8 a.m., there were only two decisions to be made: first, how to pre-empt the now obvious Arab build-up (Syrian units were reported redeploying into attack formation), and second, to order general mobilization.

The meeting decided to do neither. A pre-emptive air strike could not guarantee success against a well-dispersed Egyptian Air Force and risked jeopardizing Israel's principal asset, its own combat planes, against an unknown missile defence before the war had even started. On the question of mobilization, General Dayan, the hero of the 1956 and 1967 wars, dismissed General Elazar's demands for full mobilization with the airy assurance that Dayan's own measures - to call up a few senior commanders and tank reservists - would be sufficient. A furious Elazar was directed only to implement this

partial mobilization. In fact Ela/ar disobeyed this order and was vindicated at 13.00 when a now thoroughly alarmed Israeli Cabinet ordered full mobilization. Dayan later took much of the blame for the debacle.

In the blizzard of recrimination and self-justification that surrounded the *post mortem* after the war it is difficult to untangle the various claims and work out just who knew what and when, and who advocated which course of action. It did not matter. What we do know is that at 14.00 the door burst open on a Cabinet meeting in Golda Meir's office where the normal heated Israeli disagreement was in full voice, this time over whether the attack would begin at 18.00 hours that day or earlier. Her military secretary silenced the meeting by announcing baldly: "Prime Minister, the war's begun." The startled Cabinet recalled later that the distant wailing of an air raid siren broke the silence that followed.

The Yom Kippur War went exactly as Anwar Sadat had intended - at first. As planned, Egypt and Syria struck in unison at 14.00 hours and achieved both strategic and tactical surprise in south and north. The first the Israelis knew about it on the Golan Heights was when a flight of Syrian jets suddenly appeared and started strafing their tanks while the dismounted crews were making lunch. The crews abandoned their meal and rushed for their vehicles. The survivors' next meal was two days later.

On the Suez Canal the lookouts in the Bar Lev Line gradually became aware that all the usual crowd of cheerful civilians and soldiers strolling around on the far bank had quietly disappeared. The next thing they knew was a devastating artillery barrage crashing down on the roof and, ominously, laying down a curtain of fire to cut off any retreat. Through the smoke and dust the startled defenders saw thousands of rubber boats crossing the canal packed full of Egyptian assault infantry.

"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

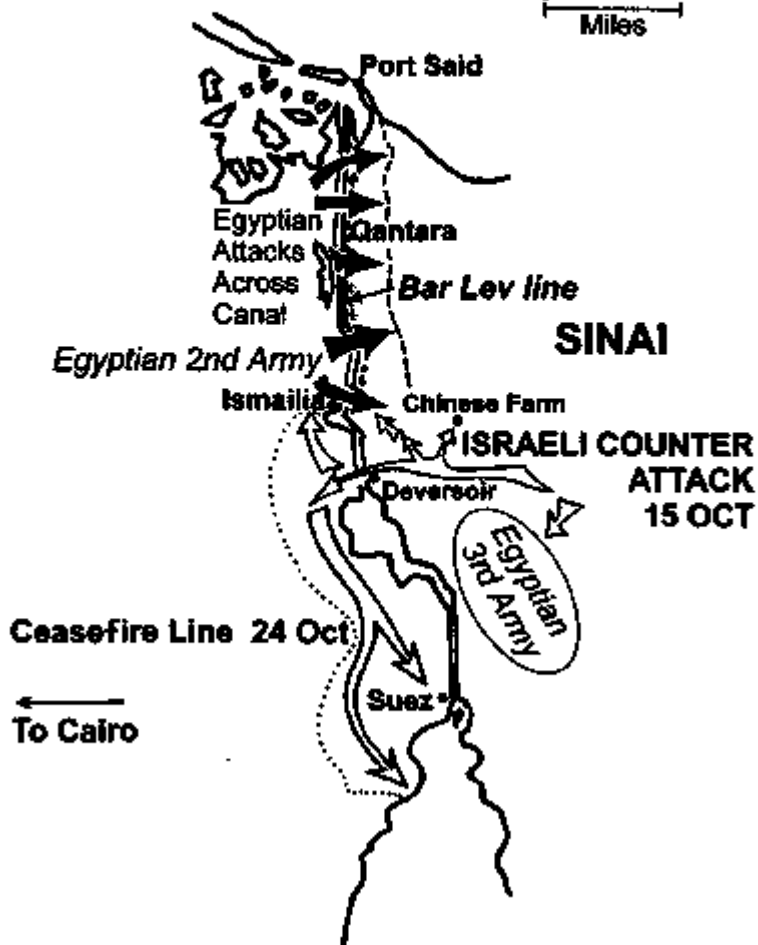
The Bar Lev Line was only half-manned. In the gaps the Egyptians now deployed their secret weapon: Magirus Deutz high-pressure water pumps. Blasting canal water at hundreds of pounds per square inch, the water jets cut through the Israeli's carefully constructed sand ramparts like so many laser knives. The horrified defenders saw their defences opened up with surgical skill and the very latest Soviet floating bridges swinging out across the canal to allow a flood of tanks, personnel carriers and guns to race into Sinai. The whole operation took less than three hours.

The Egyptians had their own surprises, too. Their specially trained sapper teams crossed the canal to plug the Israelis' "floating fire" outlets under cover of smoke screens. Contemplating the rusty nozzles and plugged-up holes they realized that they need not have bothered. The Israelis had long ago abandoned the concept. The current was too strong and dispersed the fire obstacle too quickly downstream.

The Egyptian attack across the canal shook the Israelis and demonstrated the soundness of Ismail's planning. By 8 October, the Egyptian Army occupied the whole east bank of the Suez Canal to a depth of about ten miles and awaited the inevitable counter-attack. Sure enough, the Israeli armour obliged. Tanks on the ground and aircraft overhead hurled themselves against the the invaders to eject them from Sinai. Both ran into Egypt's new defensive weapons. The SAM air-defence umbrella hacked Israeli pilots from the sky. In the desert the Israeli tanks were stopped dead by the new anti-tank-missile screen and suffered appalling casualties from "little men with suitcases". Some knocked-out M48s were literally festooned with trailing wires from the dozens of missiles fired at them. Puzzled survivors of the Israeli tanks wondered just how the needle-sharp jets of the lightweight shaped-charge warheads had all been aimed at the most vulnerable parts of the US tanks where fuel and ammunition

Yom Kippur 1973 Suez and Sinai

0 20
Miles



"Prime Minister, the War's Begun."

were stored. The answer was simple: the Egyptian techint staff had asked the US manufacturers for the sales handbooks, and then their soldiers had been trained to aim for the vital parts.

While the battle raged for the Golan in the north, the weakness of the Egyptian plan became evident in the south. Having seized a limited objective but lacking depth inland in Sinai and by now opting to defend the whole length of the Suez Canal, the Egyptians were in their turn vulnerable to a narrow surgical strike anywhere. The Israelis turned the tables. On 15 October, in one of the most daring and brilliantly conceived counterstrokes in Israel's military history, General Ariel Sharon, recalled to the colours by Dayan at the outbreak of war, sliced through the Egyptian southern defences at night and crossed the Suez Canal at the northern end of the Great Bitter Lake near Deversoir. Once across, the plan was for Sharon's armour to fan out and blow a hole through Egypt's defensive SAM belt.

The plan succeeded beyond all expectations. Around 01.35 on 16 October, having fought their way through the administrative leaguers at the junction of the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd Armies in Sinai, the Israeli engineers cut through the barbed wire on the canal. By dawn the Israeli armour had a brigade three miles across the canal inside Egypt. Once across their tanks dashed around with impunity, shooting up everything in sight and sowing chaos and confusion in the Egyptian rear. Running out of targets, two tank brigades then turned north and south respectively. By 21 October Israeli paratroop infantry were fighting on the outskirts of Ismailia in the north on the road to Cairo, and in the south Israeli armour had reached the Red Sea at Suez, actually sinking two Egyptian torpedo boats by tank fire as they fled out to sea. The Israeli armies had cut the umbilical cord for the Egyptian 3rd Army in Sinai, now cut off from Egypt and trapped in the Sinai Desert without food, ammunition, water or hope. By 24 October,

the war was over. The Soviet Union and the United States began to mobilize and go to nuclear alert defence conditions to support their warring clients. It could not last. No one was willing to risk a nuclear exchange over the Arabs and Israelis fighting in the Sinai and Golan - again. The UN Security Council saved the Egyptians from further humiliation and Israel from more casualties, and negotiated a final ceasefire.

The intelligence lessons of Yom Kippur are very different from other wars. There can really be no excuse for the Israeli failure. Pearl Harbor was bad organization; Tet was internal feuding. Yom Kippur was none of these things. By a savage irony, the Israeli failure in 1973 can be traced directly to their triumphant and emphatic victory in 1967.

The first failure was the cardinal sin of any intelligence officer, organization or commander. The Israelis, flushed with success, discounted the Arabs' ability to learn from past mistakes. They discounted the Arabs' new weapon systems. Above all, they failed to take the revitalized Egyptian staff planning, Egyptian training and Egyptian bravery into account. It was the classic mistake. At every level Israel underestimated her enemy.

When the war was over, the Israelis captured vast amounts of Egyptian maps, code books and plans. (Fortunately for the Israelis, the IDF soldier can be relied on to turn in captured material, unlike his British counterpart who has a tendency to "liberate" anything interesting from a pistol to a top-secret map as a souvenir either to show his Mum back home or to sell to his mates in a pub in Aldershot.) To their horror, the Israelis discovered ample evidence that Egyptian intelligence was more than ready for the battle. Most shocking of all was the discovery of an Arab translation of Israel's pre-war and secret code map of Sinai, including the codes and nicknames for every location. As was usual in the stress of battle, Israeli

radio operators had further compromised security by arguing in open speech. As a result, for the first week many of Israel's moves in Sinai had been an open book to the Russian-trained Egyptian sigint service.

Underestimating the enemy and over-confidence led directly to the second Israeli mistake: a curious inability to draw the right conclusions from a given set of facts. Thus the simultaneous build-ups in Syria and Egypt never appear to have been linked. The likelihood of an attack was just plain ignored. There seemed to be an absolute assumption that the Arabs could not attack until Israel's own political criteria for any Arab attack had been met. Sadly for Israel, Egypt in particular seemed not to have read Mrs Meir's kitchen cabinet agreed preconditions for war.

Israeli technical intelligence also contributed to the debacle. In 1973 Soviet ATGMs such as Sagger and SAMs such as the SAM 6 were seen as new and deadly battlefield threats - certainly by NATO who gave them their code names and probably passed Israel a lot of intelligence material under the counter through the US DIA. Confident of repeating her 1967 victories by boldly handled armour, Israel dismissed the new weapon systems as merely defensive. No proper evaluation of their battlefield impact appears to have been done by Israeli operational research. Perhaps the Israelis thought that the simple peasant conscript Arab soldier would be unable to operate an anti-tank missile under fire for thirty seconds. Both on the ground in Sinai and in the air over the Golan, many Israelis were to die learning the real truth about the new weapons' capabilities and the capabilities of their adversaries. Israeli techint failed.

The final crucial mistake by Israeli intelligence was ossification. When Israel was young and "everybody knew each other", genuine all-source debates took place among decision-makers with the intelligence experts chipping in their

views. It worked. Somewhere along the line, Military Intelligence pulled all the strings into its hands and "bureaucratized" intelligence. Hierarchies were established, chains of command imposed, unwelcome voices excluded and, most dangerous of all, heretical views suppressed. Even as late as 4 October, when Brigadier Joel ben Porat, Head of Intelligence Collection, expressed his concerns to his boss, an angry General Zeira snarled back at him: "You just stick to collecting intelligence and let those with the responsibility do the assessing!" Military Intelligence had become powerful, political and sometimes inefficient.

As a result, the intelligence capabilities that had kept Israel informed and a step ahead were turned into just another intelligence bureaucracy. However, unlike its American and British counterparts, the Israeli Military Intelligence effectively had a national monopoly of all-source intelligence. No bureaucratic rival existed to challenge its assessments; and perhaps worst of all, its unrivalled access to even an official membership of national policy committees and the inner councils of state ate away at any pretence of intelligence objectivity.

In the ultimate test, Israeli Military Intelligence failed the nation in 1973. Despite having all the intelligence at its disposal, it was corroded from within by prejudice, politics, cronyism and just plain bad analysis. When we consider the sheer quality, expertise and range of Israeli intelligence resources, which had served the nation so well from the start, it is tempting on Yom Kippur to *reverse* Boulay de la Meurthe's scathing dictum: "It is worse than a blunder, it is a crime."

"Nothing We Don't Already Know." The Falkland Islands, 1982

There is a splendid story told in Whitehall about a retiring Foreign Office mandarin being interviewed on the steps at King Charles Street by the BBC in about 1950. The interviewer asks the self-satisfied official what has been his biggest problem in a distinguished career of over forty years.

Sir Humphrey replies promptly, "The War Office."

Surprised, the reporter asks why the War Office should be a problem for the FO.

"Because every Friday one of those damned fools from the War Office would come rushing into my office with a Top Secret file under his arm and tell us that there was a terrible crisis somewhere in the world. Then he'd demand to know what we chaps in the Foreign Office were going to do about it to stop a war breaking out. Terribly excitable people. My job was to calm 'em down and send 'em off to brief their Minister that the FO had the situation *completely* under control and not to worry about it. Then we could all get down to the country for the weekend."

"Did it work, Sir Humphrey?"

"Invariably. Terribly excitable people, the War Office. We just calmed 'em down and sent 'em away happy; every week. And, do you know, we were proved right on almost every occasion."

"*Almost* every occasion, Sir Humphrey? So you were wrong sometimes?"

"Very, very occasionally. In fact, in all my forty years in the FO we were only wrong twice."

"And when was that, Sir Humphrey?"

"Er, as I recall . . . 1914 and 1939!"

This story, which tends to be greeted with a thin smile by any Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) official, contains all the ingredients of the intelligence debacle that led two countries with a history of long and friendly ties to a major war in the South Atlantic in 1982.

The Falklands War came about through a combination of complacency, government misunderstanding and failure of national policy - on both sides. For the British the failure of policy over the Falklands was directly attributable to the deliberate ignoring of intelligence by Whitehall bureaucrats and their various political masters over the years. The Falklands War was not the result of just one or two mistakes, or poor organization, or even contempt for an inferior enemy; behind it there lay a long history of institutional arrogance and complacency.

The British have a reputation for hypocrisy among their neighbours. Well deserved or not, it is based not just on an ability to say one thing and do another (such as the frequent outbursts of public morality in the popular press) but also on a curiously dishonest ability to make a virtue out of necessity. Thus, an idea that is unacceptable can sometimes be rejected by the British as either not existing at all or as meaning something completely different which just happens to fit into the existing framework of policy at the time.

To take one example: in the 1960s, when NATO stood on the western side of the East German border, its likely enemy was the Soviet Union with 20,000 battle tanks in East Germany alone. At the time, everyone knew that the best defence against the tank was another tank. But tanks are expensive,

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

and NATO had a serious numerical inferiority. The US and German armies agonized how to get more tanks to make good their tactical weakness. By a remarkable feat of mental gymnastics, the cost-cutting British acknowledged their own deficiency in armour but airily dismissed the tank problem by saying that it didn't really matter; their new anti-tank concept did not need that many tanks after all. Their tactical doctrine was specially designed to use fewer tanks, so no more were needed. Tanks were, in fact, an unnecessary extravagance in an already over-burdened defence budget. This piece of double-think fooled no one at the time, but it illustrates a mental process that many foreign observers find at best self-deception and at worst pure hypocrisy.

There is a name for the phenomenon whereby people ignore something that does not fit their view of the world and pretend it does not exist, or will go away. Psychologists call it "cognitive dissonance", an irritating piece of psychobabble that means nothing more than a child closing its ears and crying, "I'm not listening, I'm not going listen, it's not true!" Cognitive dissonance in a toddler's temper tantrum may be a source of amusement or irritation to the onlooker. In intelligence it can be lethal. Cognitive dissonance in the British civil service and government in 1982 was a major cause of the Falklands War. The British ignored the many intelligence warnings because they did not accord with what the British wanted to happen or with their Foreign Office's rather superior view of the world. British servicemen were to pay a heavy price for Whitehall's miscalculation.

The roots of the Falklands dispute lay quite simply in the ownership or sovereignty of the remote group of islands in the South Atlantic first recorded by a Dutch navigator in 1600. In 1690 a Captain James Strong named the sound between the two main islands after a British Admiralty Minister, Viscount Falkland, and sailed away from the little cluster of islands 400

miles to the north-east of the southern tip of South America.

To complicate matters, the first settler on the Falklands was a Frenchman, de Bougainville, in 1764; he built a fort, Port Louis, on the eastern island. The islands were first known as *les Malouines*, because they reminded the French of the islands off St Malo. A year later, in 1765, the British hove into sight again and, without knowing that the French were on *East Falkland*, landed on *West Falkland Island*, raised the flag, claimed the territories in the name of King George III and sailed away. They never realized the French were there.

A year later, the first British settlers arrived and were stunned to discover a thriving French settlement at Port Louis on *East Falkland*. At the time, France and Spain were allies, so as the area fell under Spanish global jurisdiction, the *les Malouines* were transferred to Spain in 1767 (becoming *Islas Malvinas* in the process) and Port Louis became Puerto Soledad. Within three years, the Spanish had evicted the British. A diplomatic wrangle ensued, conducted with all the haste of seaborne eighteenth-century diplomacy. By 1790, an agreement left the Spanish in sole charge under their colonial government in Buenos Aires, and a bronze plaque was all that remained to mark the British claim to *West Falkland*.

With the collapse of the Spanish Empire in Latin America, the islands became derelict and the haunt of pirates. Eventually, in 1832, a US warship, the USS *Lexington*, cleared Puerto Soledad of its brigands and unilaterally declared it "free of all government". On whose authority this ringing declaration was made is an interesting point. Into the confusion sailed the Royal Navy with a well-armed battleship and in 1837 declared the islands to be part of the British Crown territories. *Les Malouines* were now the *Falkland Islands*. So they were to remain until 1 April 1982.

The Argentines subsequently claimed the islands, which

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

they call Las Malvinas, when they threw off Spanish colonial rule in the early years of the nineteenth century; the British claimed the islands because they had occupied them continuously since 1837 and, much more important, because the tiny population of the islands were British citizens and stubbornly wished to remain so, as was their right.

Anyone who has ever visited the Falkland Islands cannot fail to be surprised at their remoteness and bleakness. A Spanish priest said, in the 1760s, "I tarry in this miserable desert, suffering everything for the love of God." His view was echoed by a British Royal Marine lieutenant of the time who wrote: "I declare this to be the most detestable place I was ever at in all my life."

Two hundred years later, in the early 1980s, another Royal Marine officer described the islanders, or Kelpers as they call themselves, as "a mainly drunken, decadent, immoral and indolent collection of drop-outs . . . at all levels and with few exceptions". This was a harsh judgment. By 1982 the islanders were a curious group, apathetic and relying on the generous teat of British tax money and the almost feudal suzerainty of the Falkland Islands Company for their economic survival. One Trade Union British Labour MP described them as "company slaves". This small, self-centred and fragile society had only one unifying attribute: the overwhelming majority wanted to remain under the British Crown. Under the United Nations' principles of self-determination this was a powerful brake on the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office's understandable policy of not allowing the views of 1,800 backward islanders to stand in the way of good diplomatic relations with 250 million South Americans. Unfortunately for the Foreign Office in Whitehall, it meant that the Kelpers had an effective veto on any FCO policy that did not suit their narrow interests.

In the overall scheme of withdrawal from Empire, the FCO

had long regarded the Falklands as an irritating minor administrative problem. Argentina had equally long regarded the Malvinas as a matter of national honour and British sovereignty as a post-colonial affront. Most of the countries which made up the United Nations agreed with the Argentines. The stumbling block for both sides was the stubborn refusal of the Falkland Islanders to acknowledge the geographical realities and their insistence on remaining British. Under Article 73 of the UN Charter, which guarantees the right of self-determination of peoples, they had rights and they were determined to exercise them. Looking at the dubious politics of the various regimes in Argentina since 1945, it is hard to fault their preference.

Matters came to a head in 1965, when the UN General Assembly passed an Argentine-inspired Resolution (2065) calling on Britain and Argentina to negotiate a settlement. Armed with the moral authority of a UN anti-colonial Resolution, Argentina proceeded to press her claim with vigour, forcing the world-weary British FCO to engage in UN-led negotiations on a subject they would have preferred quietly to go away. The two sides' aims were clear: in Simon Jenkins's words, "The Argentines didn't really want a colony; they only wanted ownership." And the British wanted neither the colony nor the ownership, but were stuck with the indignant islanders hanging round their neck like some ancient mariner's albatross and crying self-determination. For the FCO it was all very tiresome, the more so because they failed to mobilize any real political support for their policies.

The discussions dragged on for nearly seventeen years, and ended in a war. By one of those peculiar reversals of role it was the British who were forever changing both negotiating position and negotiators through a succession of governments, while the Argentines, backed by a single team of long-standing experts with a clear political aim, kept up the pressure. So

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

much so, that as yet another junior British Foreign Office Minister fumbled through his brief at his first meeting, one of the experienced Argentine negotiators is supposed to have murmured dryly in a stage whisper "and *we* are supposed to be the unstable regime!"

While the Argentine negotiating position on the Falkland Islands remained consistent between 1966 and 1982 the same could not be said of Argentina itself. Internal Argentine politics had suffered a kind of delayed fascism. Up to the 1930s, Argentina had been very much part of Britain's commercial sphere of interest; the Buenos Aires railway network was but one part of Britain's export of the industrial revolution, and the North British Locomotive Company relied among others on regular orders from Argentina. The Argentine Navy was modelled on the British Royal Navy, although the Argentine Army was modelled on and influenced by the Prussian or German Army. During the early and middle years of the twentieth century thousands of Italians, Germans and Spanish flocked to the Mediterranean climate and splendour of Buenos Aires and the glories of the Plate. They brought new ideas.

These new workers fuelled a late outpouring of nationalist and socialist sentiment, embodied in the person of General Juan Peron. Not for nothing did fleeing Nazis try to escape Germany in 1945 for what they saw as a safe haven in Argentina. Peron's dictatorship relied on what he called "integral nationalism" to harness the industrial masses in support of what looked suspiciously like a one-party fascist state rooted in one-party national trade unionism, headed (naturally) by a strong and charismatic leader.

Peron's nationalist vision infected all aspects of Argentine thinking. From being a trivial international dispute the Malvinas question was elevated to a national cause, taught in the schoolroom, uniting all classes and fundamental to Argentine national identity. Against this raw political fundamentalism

on one side and the stubbornness of the Falkland Islanders on the other, the elegant sophistication of the FCO's Winchester and Balliol attitudes often appeared weak, indecisive and mendacious. Lingering relics of Empire were sometimes a patent embarrassment to the "Rolls-Royce minds" of the FCO, anxious to be rid of the responsibilities of colonial administration and keen to get back to "real" diplomacy.

For the British FCO is resolute upon not actually being responsible for anything. Making policy and expressing "views on the situation" are the core ethos of Whitehall. In a supposedly non-political civil service where every high-flyer strives to become "political" and at the very least "brief the Minister", the Foreign Office has always represented the purest form of unaccountable bureaucracy. Not for nothing has the FCO taken such great care to ensure that other departments take responsibility for administration and actually *doing things*. That way, others take the budgets and the blame. The FCO deals in ideas and in policy. In the bitter words of a Ministry of Defence intelligence staff officer after a particularly slippery meeting with the Foreign Office in the 1980s, "They're tarts - absolute bloody Whitehall tarts. They sit around that bloody committee table and pontificate, knowing they've got power and influence without any responsibility. Well, where I come from, that's a tart's privilege. We've got to make *real* decisions. We've got to make the decision to spend public money, while they can sit back." This view, while at times unfair, was not uncommon in Whitehall in the 1980s.

The FCO's well-bred distaste for rampant Argentine nationalism was justified in one respect: Argentina *was* inherently unstable. The instability led to a dangerous volatility in dealing with matters of national policy. In 1973, the ageing Peron returned to power ushering in a wave of crude nationalism. Immediately the carefully constructed artifices of the FCO's policy of quietly negotiating to sell off the Falklands to

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

Argentina by a combination of subtlety, stealth and salami cuts was blown apart. Instead of being a low-key affair inaugurating a new communications agreement with Argentina, the first civilian flight between the Falklands and the mainland became instead a Peronist triumphal pageant with Argentine admirals in full rig posing proudly for the photographers as they heralded the first stage of the regaining of *nuestras Islas Malvinas*. The Falkland Islands Governor had to restrain the Kelpers and call out the Marines. The Postmaster reckoned it set back progress twenty years. Eventually the fuss died down, but the new umbilical cord with the mainland was always regarded with suspicion by the islanders, as a Trojan Horse and a potential threat to their independence. Relations cooled rapidly between Buenos Aires and Whitehall.

By 1976, Argentina had fallen apart internally with major civil unrest by left-wing guerrillas, the Montaneros, and a new hard-line military junta in government. The military strongmen of Argentina cracked down hard on dissent, and the basements of police stations and naval barracks began to fill with political agitators detained until further notice. The Mayor of Cordoba, unable to contain the civil unrest, begged the local army commander for help. Suddenly the army was on the streets, ostensibly in aid of the civil power but in reality taking over the responsibility for the so-called "Dirty War" between left-wing revolutionaries and an establishment determined to resist political terrorism even if it meant turning a blind eye to legal niceties. US-built Ford Falcons prowled the big cities packed with grim-faced young men with short hair and guns under their coats looking for troublemakers. And as the helicopters took off full over the Bahia de la Plata and came back empty, the lists of *Los Desaparecidos* (The Disappeared) grew longer, and the wailing mothers outside the Casa Rosada in the Plaza de Mayo grew daily more numerous.

Faced with civil unrest and dictatorship in Argentina, the Falkland Islanders' intransigence grew. They were already angered by the 1976 Shackleton report that depicted them as virtual bond serfs to the Falkland Islands Company. Now not only was the FCO trying to hand them over to Argentina by stealth, but the FCO was also about to sell British citizens into the clutches of a brutal military dictatorship armed with electrodes and rubber truncheons. It was, in political and PR terms, a trump card. In Simon Jenkins's vivid phrase, "To Labour MPs as much as Tories, the idea of sacrificing the victims of capitalism to the torturers of Buenos Aires was unthinkable." In London, the Falkland Islands lobby became evermore vocal and powerful.

As the dispute dragged on, it hotted up. In 1976, the Argentines quietly occupied South Thule, a desolate island in the South Atlantic. Not only did the FCO fail to react, it never even raised the issue in Parliament. The Argentines noted the British passivity as a discreet encouragement to proceed - with care. Only one note jarred the proceedings. In 1977, the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, spotted an FCO assessment at the bottom of his red box that the Argentines might be planning another escapade in their salami steps towards sovereignty. In a scene worth of *Yes, Prime Minister*, he overrode his protesting officials and ordered a nuclear submarine to patrol off the Falklands as a deterrent to any Argentine adventurism. (Callaghan was an ex-naval man.) Although the aggrieved FCO later claimed that it was a pointless and expensive exercise, as the Argentines could not possibly have known that an SSN (nuclear hunter-killer submarine) was on station, the balance of evidence is that the Argentine Navy, which was growing evermore bellicose on the Falklands issue, *was* deterred in 1977. The crisis faded. Sending a gunboat - or a nuclear submarine - still worked with the Argentines.

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

By 1980 there was a new occupant in Downing Street: Margaret Thatcher. The new FCO Minister with responsibility for Latin America was Nicholas Ridley. He decided to "sort the Falkland Islands problem out once and for all". To the unease of the Falkland Islands lobbyists, he proposed a "leaseback" deal, whereby the legal title to ownership of the islands would be transferred to Argentina, which would then lease back the islands to Britain for ninety-nine years. The settlers' way of life would be protected and guaranteed, Argentine pride over sovereignty would be satisfied and, the FCO fervently prayed, the problem would go away. It was an elegant and practical solution to a tricky problem.

It didn't work. Ridley reckoned without the Falkland Islands lobby. In 1980 Parliament rejected the proposals out of hand, giving Nicholas Ridley "the worst day of his political life" in the process. Ridley left the baying House of Commons "white-faced with shock". The Falklands lobby had blocked the only solution in sight. The Islanders had won.

Argentina had one last try. In a tense session in 1981 in a private room at the UN in New York, the urbane Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister, Carlos Cavandoli, tried every blandishment to overcome the Falkland Islanders' doubts. In a scene likened by one observer dryly to "Satan's Temptation of Christ" the polished Cavandoli confronted the real block to Argentine ambitions when he met a delegation of Falkland Islanders, silkily offering every inducement available: special autonomous regional status, language, customs, money - anything. The Islanders refused, despite offers of schools, hospitals and roads.

One source in the Falklands in 1982 claimed that the Argentines were so desperate for any progress at the New York meeting that they had even offered "a million dollars a family" for agreement to Argentine sovereignty. Allegedly this degenerated into a counter-demand by the islanders for "a million

dollars a *head*", and then amazingly, "but only for *real* islanders", which was apparently defined by Kelper traditionalists as "British citizens born on the Falklands". (It must be stressed that this story comes from a single unconfirmed source, but, if true, shows that even sovereignty had its price. It also shows that Argentine patience must have been sorely tried.)

Argentine frustrations increased. By 1981 internally the battle against the left-wing rebels had been won, but it had been a messy victory with a bitter legacy of brutality, torture and military repression. Argentine politics were in turmoil, with unrest on the streets, hyper-inflation and mass unemployment. The military government was locked in a bitter international dispute with Argentina's neighbour, Chile, over the Beagle Channel round Cape Horn. In short, the ruling military junta of General Roberto Viola was beleaguered and in trouble at home and abroad. Only two shafts of light illuminated the political future: the new US administration's courting of the Argentine junta to build an anti-communist alliance in Latin America (which implied a degree of much-needed international recognition and respectability); and second, renewed hope that the Falklands issue might be resolved and deliver a national foreign policy triumph for the new junta, now led at the beginning of 1982 by Army General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri.

The Galtieri junta assumed supreme power in December 1981. Its three members were all military hard men, determined to sort out Argentina's problems and make a clean start. A "Thatcherite" package of free market economic reforms ripped apart the failed Peronist structure of wages, taxes and jobs, and a new Foreign Minister, Nicanor Costa Mendez, came back to office with an equally tough brief on foreign affairs. Backed by Reagan's America, Argentina was now set to seize the initiative, assert herself in her international disputes and become the dominant regional power.

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

Galtieri's junta knew that they had to achieve results quickly. The economic reforms were painful and unless some kind of national success was assured, then the likelihood of major social unrest from the defiant unions and multi-party opposition was strong. A southern "winter of discontent" was almost inevitable. With inflation running at over 140 per cent a month, life for the 28 million Argentinians was desperate during that southern summer from September 1981 to March 1982. The junta's policy initiatives at the time have a flavour of desperation and genuine urgency; something had to be done. For the Falklands, Galtieri's junta ordered a simple twin-track strategy: push hard diplomatically at the UN, but prepare to seize the islands by force should the British not agree a diplomatic solution.

The British, and particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave the appearance early in 1982 of being caught like startled rabbits in headlights as the junta sought a showdown. The first inkling of impatience came in the preparations for Costa Mendez's new round of talks at the UN. An article in the Argentine press in January 1982 claimed that, "If the next round of negotiations with London fails, Buenos Aires will take over the islands by force this year." When the Argentine delegation left for New York, they were mobbed by a crowd at the airport. The British FCO dismissed such behaviour as Latin exuberance. The two sides were beginning to misunderstand their respective positions.

The roots of the misunderstandings were clear: the British did not understand the internal pressures facing the Argentine junta, and the Argentine had completely misunderstood the British government's position for the previous ten years. The real British policy on the Falklands was to procrastinate. The Argentine Foreign Ministry could see that clearly. Although some diplomatic progress had been made, every time the FCO had begun to address the problem the Falkland Islands lobby

in the UK cut in, making the wishes of the islanders the sticking-point, as the hapless Nicholas Ridley discovered. Even so, from the Argentine point of view, the British had given some very clear signals over the years, confirming that they were only talking for the sake of talking and really wanted to be free of their colonial burden.

These signals were never part of an integrated policy by successive British governments between 1965 and 1982; but the Argentines, who saw the Malvinas as their main foreign policy problem, believed they were. The Argentine believed that the British showed every sign of being willing to sell the pass and be rid of the Falklands. After all, the British had provided some unmistakable hints. In 1976 the Argentines had occupied Southern Thule in the South Sandwich Islands. The British had made only a mild protest. When a Falkland Islands communications agreement had been signed in the 1970s, the Argentine *military* had been encouraged to run LADE, the islands' airline link to the mainland, and the islands' fuel stocks were transported and managed by YPF, the Argentine national oil company. All of this had been accepted by the FCO as pragmatic political steps forward, and by the ever-suspicious islanders as giving them a better standard of living.

In 1981, two events occurred that confirmed the Argentine view. The Thatcher government announced that the ice patrol ship HMS *Endurance*, the Royal Navy's last presence in the South Atlantic, would be decommissioned the following year and would not be replaced. It is rumoured that a member of the Argentine Embassy actually telephoned the FCO and asked whether this represented a deliberate signal of a climb down. An embarrassed FCO replied that it was nothing to do with them, it was a Ministry of Defence (MOD) decision - which was true. At the time the announcement was seen merely as part of the cost-cutting going on all round Whitehall, making the new Tory Government deeply unpopular

with those sections of society accustomed to the bottomless pockets of the state or of their fellow taxpayers, depending on which side of the political divide people sat. (It is one of the forgotten byways of history that by 1981 Margaret Thatcher was one of the most unpopular British prime ministers in history. By 1983 she was winning landslide elections.)

To the Argentine Naval Attache in London, Admiral Allara, however, the withdrawal of a Royal Navy warship in the South Atlantic clearly meant that the British no longer felt any need to defend the Falklands. Taken with Defence Secretary John Nott's run-down of the Royal Navy in the 1981 Defence Review, here was a clear political signal to Allara and his two naval masters back in Argentina: Admiral Lombardo, the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet, and the moody but passionate naval member of the junta, Admiral Anaya, who was already bent on recovering the Falklands. Anaya disliked the British intensely and considered that a naval victory to recover the Malvinas would be the crowning glory for the Argentine Navy and himself as he ended his career.

The second supposed signal from the British to the Argentinians was a serious political miscalculation. In the 1981 British Nationality Bill, the Falkland Islanders suddenly lost their cherished right to full British citizenship. The Bill was designed by the British Home Office to keep out a flood of colonial immigration by offering full British citizenship to only so-called "patrials" - a status where at least one grandparent had been born in Britain. The Kelpers of the Falkland Islands were therefore excluded by definition. History does not yet relate what the Foreign Secretary made of this particular new law when it was discussed in Cabinet, if it was discussed at all in the context of its implications for the Falklands and foreign policy: but it is fair to assume that the Home Office was not greatly concerned about the Falkland Islanders when it proposed the legislation.

To Argentina, however, this looked like a clear British signal that the islanders' permanent veto on progress was being deliberately and rather skilfully end run by Mrs Thatcher and her Cabinet. What were in reality a series of random events and policy decisions were linked together by the Argentines to read like a coherent British policy, and it was a policy that clearly said "disengagement". The British were obviously slowly pulling back from the Falklands.

Although the FCO was blamed for the Falklands disaster, in all fairness it must be said that by the middle of 1981 Nicholas Ridley and his FCO team were beginning to be seriously concerned. They could not convince anyone in Whitehall to support their concerns, however, nor were they convinced that an Argentine invasion was a real possibility. An FCO protest about the decommissioning of HMS *Endurance* was met with a typically terse response from the MOD: "OK - is the FCO budget going to pay for her? If not, take it up with the Minister."

The FCO unease was reflected in a number of a Whitehall initiatives. The MOD was asked to draw up a paper to examine possible responses to any Argentine moves against the Falklands; and the Cabinet's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) was asked to draw up a threat assessment. Neither option was considered urgent (the MOD took six months to produce the planning document) and the British Foreign Secretary squashed his FCO officials' request to take the matter to Cabinet in September 1981. "Negotiations were the way ahead," insisted Lord Carrington, a judgment that later was to cost him his job.

The Foreign Secretary had before him at that meeting the JIC paper of July 1981 which spelled out a clear intelligence warning, albeit in that peculiar brand of mandarin known as "JIC-speak", a careful and anodyne blend of ambiguities, pregnant with every alternative linguistic possibility. The JIC assessment laid out all the obvious escalatory steps the

The Falklands War 1982 Relative Distances



Argentines could follow, but concentrated on diplomatic and economic measures as the priority. Crucial to the JIC assessment was the assertion that provided Argentina considered the British Government to be negotiating in good faith to transfer sovereignty at some point, the preferred path would be "peaceful means". However, like all good JIC assessments, the anonymous authors covered themselves by stating that "if on the other hand" Argentina saw no hope of a peaceful transfer of the islands then there would be "a high risk of its resorting to more forcible measures against British interests ... In such circumstances, military action ... or a full-scale invasion of the Falkland Islands could not be discounted."

This was serious stuff. Unfortunately no one seems to have taken any notice of it, least of all the Foreign Secretary at his meeting with Ridley and his Latin America Department in September 1981. The battered Ridley was then moved to the Treasury as part of the Cabinet reshuffle, leaving the FCO and its Latin America Department uneasily writing about their concerns to their ambassador in Buenos Aires. Ambassador Williams's reply was uncharacteristically undiplomatic, describing British policy as "a general Micawberism". He saw the dangers only too clearly: "If ministers were really not serious about negotiating with Argentina it would be better to say so now and face the consequences," he wrote in early October 1981. It seems hard to fault his judgment.

Lord Carrington's decision not to take the matter to Cabinet had stopped the affair dead. Despairing Foreign Office officials immediately pointed out the dangers of sitting on any intelligence that warns of military hostilities should a government refuse to negotiate, either seriously or at all. It was to no avail. Whitehall's obsession in 1981 was cost-cutting, not foreign adventures that were, frankly, unthinkable. It was inconceivable that the Argentines would ever use force. It could not happen; it was, in fact, cognitive dissonance.

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

If the British government did not take the Argentine junta seriously, it might have done had it paid more attention to the intelligence it was receiving. In all its travails between summer 1981 and the invasion in 1982, the junta was impelled by pressure and passions far removed from the calmer air of Whitehall. The junta was preparing to act. Later, the Franks Report (the British Privy Counsellor's report on the Falklands debacle after the war) dismissed any suggestion of complacency, claiming that: "the government not only did not, but could not, have had earlier warning . . . The invasion of the Falkland Islands could not have been foreseen."

This is disingenuous nonsense. Although the Argentine decision to attack was taken only three days before it happened, on 29 March 1982, armies and navies do not mount major maritime operations at three days' notice. It takes much longer to mobilize and prepare an amphibious force. Franks was attempting to erect a bureaucratic screen to obscure the difference between intelligence *intentions* and intelligence *capabilities*. The Argentine *order* to sail may well have been given with only three days to go, but putting together the capability, making the plan, assembling the ships, guns, stores, aeroplanes and men to invade the Falklands was the result of a decision made long before, in this case nearly four months previously. It should have been spotted, but lacking good intelligence resources inside Argentina the British were fatally blind to both Argentinian capabilities and intentions. Despite Franks's comforting assertion, the British should have been much more aware of what was going on.

The scheme to invade the Falklands was originally the brainchild of Admiral Anaya, the head of the Argentine Navy. At a private dinner on 9 December 1981 he had secretly offered the Navy's support to Galtieri in his coup against General Viola, in return for a promise that the Navy would be allowed to "recover the Malvinas" in 1982. Galtieri agreed

and went on to head the junta with Anaya as his naval member. Thus are cabinets assembled in military dictatorships.

The detailed plan was subsequently prepared in December 1981 by a small team in Admiral Lombardo's Fleet headquarters and briefed in great secrecy to the junta's senior military planning staff on 12 January 1982. It was not briefed to any civilian officials, even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interestingly, when that indefatigable observer of the South Atlantic scene, Captain Nick Barker of HMS *Endurance*, put in at the naval base at Ushuaia near the southern tip of Argentina on 25 January 1982 on a routine port call, he seems to have spotted that something was amiss immediately. He reported back that "something was up with the [Argentine] Navy . . . very standoffish." British intelligence in DI4 (Navy) failed to pick up on it.

Overseas intelligence is the province of three British agencies: the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, often known as MI6), Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the national signals intelligence agency, and the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS). The last of these, DIS, is usually channelled through an embassy's resident defence service attaches, who, like any other accredited diplomats, have an information reporting responsibility as well as a representational function.

In the early 1980s, with the Cold War in full swing, Argentina came low on the list of Britain's intelligence collection priorities. The service attaches, particularly the Royal Navy's, were charged with wooing their Argentine counterparts, not collecting intelligence. Their main task was to encourage Argentina to buy British defence exports. As the Argentine Navy was equipped with Type 42 destroyers - the same type as the Royal Navy's HMS *Sheffield* and HMS *Coventry* - the promotion of defence sales, particularly Rolls-Royce marine gas turbines, figured much higher on the list of

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

British service attaches' duties than intelligence collection, which risked upsetting both the host nation and HE the Ambassador. The SIS was represented by a single officer who was "declared" to the host government, and whose area of operations covered the whole of Latin America, not just Argentina. With GCHQ concentrating on electronic sigint, these three agencies were responsible for intelligence on Argentina.

In fact, there were just two key intelligence officers in place. The most prescient was the Army's Defence Attache to Argentina, Colonel Stephen Love. Love, a gunner by background, was also an experienced intelligence staff officer, spoke Spanish and had a wide background working with international organizations. By sheer coincidence, he also knew the SIS Chief of Station, Mark Heathcote. Heathcote's father had commanded the Royal Artillery Regiment which Love had first joined as a young officer twenty years earlier.

Heathcote's job as SIS Chief of Station was humint, the cultivation of human sources, people with access to valuable classified information who could be induced or encouraged to divulge it. Secret sources, as every journalist or detective knows, are the most time-consuming and difficult to cultivate and recruit. Running agents is expensive in time and money and can be wearing on the nerves - for both parties. In 1981, Whitehall cost-cutting extended to SIS offices and operations. Agents cost money. The fictional James Bond never had to put up with the realities of working for a cost-conscious MI6 in the early 1980s.

Heathcote's problem was twofold. In the first place he was a "declared" intelligence officer, in Argentina to co-operate with his Argentine hosts against the primary targets: the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The Argentine junta was passionately anti-communist, if nothing else. Heathcote even had a formal Argentine liaison officer, Hector Halsecchi,

seconded from Argentine Naval Intelligence. So, with an official LO breathing down his neck, it was going to be extremely difficult for Heathcote to target the Argentine High Command, the obvious place to look for spies or sources with access to Argentina's secret plans. Secondly, Heathcote's job in Latin America took his attention far and wide in the Spanish-speaking countries. Heathcote's SIS brief may have included the junta as a target; but there is no record of his success, even if he had risked playing such a dangerous game.

The Defence Attache's brief was even less likely to mine any rich vein of secret intelligence. If Love had engaged in any activity likely to bring discredit on the embassy, such as covert spying, Ambassador Williams would have run him out of Buenos Aires on the next flight. The more so since Williams, an international professional to his fingertips, realized only too well the potentially disastrous weakness of Britain's position and was determined not to do anything to make the position worse. (Williams was to pay dearly for his pragmatic approach later. After the war, diplomats who had taken the entirely sensible view that there was no point in taking a tough stance with Argentina unless Britain was prepared to back up its position with real force were quietly sidelined.) So the Defence attache was obliged to be discreet in his intelligence-gathering.

Defence attaches are invariably hampered by their slightly anomalous position as temporary diplomats among an embassy team of long-term professionals. Unless he is fully accepted in the hothouse intimacy of an embassy, usually as a commanding number three in the embassy after the ambassador and head of chancery, as a genial and courteous socialite, or as an incisive expert on the host nation - or any combination of these three - a DA is unlikely to have a really comfortable tour among his FCO colleagues. If professional relationships break down between the DA and others on the

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

embassy team then the tensions often result in trouble. A good DA is careful never to overstep the mark with his FCO hosts. He is, after all, paid for by the FCO, not by the Ministry of Defence. As a long-term DA once dryly remarked, "Never forget that the FCO only tolerate you . . . they never forget that they are the clever people even if they can't remember to wear matching socks. You must make them like you."

So it proved for Colonel Love. However, he was able to put together a perceptive and accurate dossier on his hosts. As Argentina at the time was run by a military junta, the *political* implications of his brief were more profound than is usual for a DA. Love could express military-political views in a way that mere diplomats could not, and he enjoyed unusually good access to the the military through the international freemasonry of soldiers. Love was also able to cull a wide range of open sources such as press, magazines, radio and TV together with trade magazines and journals. From this, during 1981 and early 1982, he began to see a consistent and alarming picture emerging. If London was being complacent, then Colonel Love was not. In early 1982 he visited the Falklands at his own expense, after much wrangling with his FCO paymasters, although the islands were theoretically not his responsibility.

Love's secret report of 2 March 1982 is a remarkable document, and a model of its kind. He spells out a clear warning of an increasingly hard line by the Argentine military and makes a clear connection between the need for general Galtieri's junta to make a bold gesture for domestic consumption and the use of force as a consequence of Anglo-Argentine negotiations breaking down. Colonel Love then goes on to make a sound military appreciation of the likely Argentine military courses of action: demonstrations of Argentine naval power in the islands as "shots across the UK's bows", or a surprise *coup de main* or invasion to seize the islands by force. He concludes, perhaps with one eye on the superior "politi-

calls" in the Foreign Office back in London: "I apologize . . . if I have worked with incomplete knowledge on territory which is theoretically outside my area of concern (and possibly arriving at conclusions contrary to official views to which I am not privy)." Colonel Love stands his ground, even on paper and in the eye of possible Foreign Office scorn: "However, I am sure that as the diplomatic exchanges reach crunch point, we, the intelligence machine, should be clearing our minds . . . on what the military threat comprises . . . and the forces which pose this threat are definitely my concern."

Colonel Love sent his memorandum to the Ministry of Defence (Defence Intelligence Staff), Defence Intelligence 4 (DI4, the department dealing with South America) and to Robin Fearn, the FCO official responsible for the Falklands. He also sent a copy Rex Hunt, the Governor of the Falkland Islands. The FCO wearily wrote on their copy, "I suspect that the Ambassador asked for this to be sent. It says nothing which we don't already know." Another hand added, "Yes, but it is useful nonetheless and has been copied to the MOD. My only concern is that this sort of unscheduled visit could be unhelpful." The MOD's copy appears never to have circulated outside branch level in the MOD, although a minute about it was distributed. It is alleged that Colonel Love had "a furious row" with DI4 when he got back after the war and discovered that his intelligence report had neither been circulated nor had his warnings been acted upon properly, in his view.

With the SIS concentrating on collaborating with the Argentines against communism in Latin America and the Defence Attache reduced to filtering Argentine press reports, a lot depended on GCHQ's sigint to give warning of any planned aggression against the British. Britain's sigint depended at the time on a secret agreement with the USA to share responsibility for the worldwide sigint target. This "UKUSA" agreement effectively carved up the world into

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

collection areas. Southern and Latin America was primarily an American National Security Agency collection task.

Sigint requires at least four basic things: a suitable place from which to collect signals, a linguistically qualified intelligence staff to collate and interpret the information, clear political direction as to target priority, and last the ability to break other nations' codes. Britain's GCHQ had no real collecting posts in South America, a limited Spanish-speaking staff and a low priority for collecting Argentine transmissions. J and K divisions of GCHQ were of different sizes - J covered the Soviet bloc; the much smaller K covered the whole of the rest of the world. GCHQ's main station for all of Africa and South America was on Ascension Island, tucked away inside the Cable and Wireless establishment at Twin Boats up Ascension's volcano.

The only other sigint asset available to GCHQ was HMS *Endurance* which had been put up for disposal at the end of 1982. Its captain, Nick Barker, said that "HMS *Endurance's* real weapon was her sigint and electronic warfare listening suite." The last capability required for sigint - an ability to break others nations' codes - is the most secret and protected area of all. Once an agency knows a code is broken it will simply change its systems, equipment or codes and the code-breakers have to start all over again. We do know that the British could read Argentine codes at the time. Ted Rowlands, a previous Labour Foreign Office Minister, said so in the House of Commons during the savage Saturday debate after the war broke out. He told Parliament that in his day as a minister (only two years before), "Argentina, in terms of intelligence, was an open book." We know from the resulting political row that this was a direct reference to British sigint access at the time.

The USA hoovered up transmissions from their station at Panama and almost certainly from its embassy in Buenos Aires. None of the sigint collected by any partner indicated

any special intelligence directed against the Falklands. By March 1982, the sigint being broken - of which there was plenty, according to later reports - was consistent with a maritime build-up. This was not unusual. The sigint analysts and DI4 knew that the Argentine Navy was about to conduct its regular annual naval exercise with its Uruguayan neighbours, so the preparations were assessed as part of the normal pre-exercise activity.

With no humint sources in place, defence and naval attaches hampered by restrictions and protocol, and ambiguous sigint, the only other viable intelligence source able to check on Argentine capabilities was overhead and aerial reconnaissance. The British had no overflight capability in the South Atlantic. The Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC) at RAF Brampton depended on whatever crumbs fell from their rich American cousins' table. The US National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) had two strategic assets - reconnaissance satellites and SR-71 Blackbird overflights. If either US overhead source did yield anything significant in the first three months of 1982 it seems never to have been reported to JARIC, let alone to the MOD and the British intelligence community. In the circumstances that is hardly surprising. The KH11 satellites were targeted mainly at Soviet activities in the northern hemisphere and not on the South Atlantic.

With all its possible intelligence sources and agencies emasculated, diverted or non-existent, Britain was flying blind into the Falklands storm. The British had one last hope of redressing the intelligence vacuum: "foreign liaison", the intelligence euphemism for other countries' information. With the British, that invariably means the USA. The Special Relationship was after all originally founded on an intelligence exchange between Roosevelt and Churchill, and has always been the real backbone of US-UK governmental relations.

Unfortunately, in the run-up to the Falklands War in 1982,

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

the Anglo-American link became curiously non-committal. It appeared that the Americans would not play ball, even with their closest ally. For America had its own agenda for Argentina. General Galtieri was to spearhead CIA Director Casey's anti-communist drive in Central America. The Americans needed a ready supply of cheap, ideologically committed, Spanish-speaking anti-communists, preferably experienced in dealing firmly with left-wing insurgents, to spearhead the CIA's drive against Sandanist Nicaragua. Casey even got \$19 million allocated to the programme and almost certainly gave his approval to Galtieri's 22 December coup against his predecessor General Viola when Galtieri visited Washington in November 1981.

The upshot of the sweetheart deal between Galtieri and the CIA meant that the British were effectively sidelined. America had always been pointedly cool about Britain's claim to the Falklands: the hemispheric imperatives of the Monroe doctrine had always placed the US in an ambivalent position over the issue. The end result was that even Britain's intelligence source of last resort, the USA, was not being completely forthcoming; at least until the real shooting war broke out.

The national organization responsible for overseeing Britain's all-source intelligence assessments is the Joint Intelligence Committee or JIC. The JIC rose to pre-eminence during the Second World War. The pressure of life-and-death events between 1939 and 1945 brought an accuracy, focus and urgency to both the JIC's current and longer-term assessments, which were rightly highly regarded. Churchill insisted on real predictions based on hard evidence and rigorous analysis during wartime. After 1945 the perils and alarms of the Cold War kept the JIC's skills honed. The result was that the JIC became not only a trusted source of national strategic intelligence assessments but also the filter mechanism that brought all sources of intelligence around one table to

smooth out the differences between the various agencies involved. It worked. The US Office of National Estimates could only envy the JIC's pre-eminence. The JIC's anonymous reports, devoid of departmental claims, did much to prevent the kind of interagency turf wars that have bedevilled US intelligence since 1960.

As always in Whitehall, however, a bloodless battle was being fought for control of influential resources that could impress ministers. A struggle had long been waged not just for the soul of the JIC's product but for control of the JIC itself. The FCO had managed to wrest control from the War Office in 1940. In the aftermath of Suez, a special new office inside the Cabinet Secretariat grew up to administer and direct the JIC on behalf of the Cabinet Office, not the FCO. However, the FCO still managed to control the JIC's deliberations to a marked degree by its permanent chairmanship of the committee. The FCO thus had two bites at influencing policy, not only as *primus inter pares* in the JIC's many regional subcommittees, the Current Intelligence Groups or CIGs, but also as the standing chairman of the final national assessment. It was an arrangement that suited the FCO's view of foreign affairs very well.

Despite the rising tide of both intelligence and political pressure between December 1981 and February 1982, the JIC did not make the Falklands question a major issue. Even the July 1981 Assessment (see page 275) was dismissed after the crisis by one informed source as little more than "an annual review updated by changing the names of the junta." There is no evidence that Galtieri's seizure of power in December 1981 was marked by any urgent new JIC assessment to take account of developments. The Latin America Current Intelligence Group (LACIG) met *eighteen* times between July 1981 and January 1982, but at no time does the Falklands crisis appear to have been on the agenda. Only when the final round of bilateral negotiations opened in New York in January 1982

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

did the FCO call for a new JIC assessment to act as a guidance document for the routine meeting of the Cabinet's Overseas and Defence Policy Committee scheduled for 16 March 1982. To compound their lack of intelligence, the British now added a lack of urgency.

No such bureaucratic inertia restrained the Argentines. After Admiral Anaya's naval staff had briefed the military planners on the secret Navy invasion plan on 12/13 January, all that remained was to see whether the military option for the dual-track Argentine strategy would be required. Would the bilateral negotiations at the UN in early 1982 bring about an acceptable result?

The Argentine-UK talks of January 1982 were a fiasco. The British proposed the usual lengthy round of future diplomatic meetings, and came away yet again congratulating themselves on having stalled as elegantly as ever and bought a few more months to wear down the objections of the intransigent islanders. In any case, the continuance in office of Galtieri's increasingly beleaguered junta was far from certain. The Argentines came away well aware that the British were stalling yet again and convinced that negotiations were leading nowhere. The talks ended with the issue of a by now familiar short and bland joint communique.

In Buenos Aires the junta was furious: they had wanted to stoke the fires of diplomatic pressure under the British, not issue platitudinous communiques. Little did the British realize that their delaying tactics at the UN were the trigger for the other track of Argentine strategy: the decision to use force. To the horror of British diplomats, the Argentine government then issued its own unilateral communique the next day, on 2 March, stating baldly:

At a meeting in New York . . . representatives considered an Argentine proposal [for] meetings to achieve recogni-

tion of Argentine Sovereignty over the Malvinas . . . to achieve substantial results . . . as time is short. Argentina has negotiated with Great Britain . . . with patience and good faith for 15 years. The new system constitutes an effective step for the early resolution of the dispute. However, should this not occur, Argentina reserves the right to terminate the working of this mechanism, and to choose freely the procedure which best accords with her interests.

An alarmed Foreign Office immediately demanded clarification of this unilateral declaration. Both the Argentine Foreign Minister, Nicanor Costa Mendez and his UN negotiator, Enrique Ros, were reassuring; provided the talks went well, there was no problem. But it was too late. Whatever soothing assurances were given by the diplomats, the Argentine junta and in particular the Navy were now bent on the other option of the dual-track strategy. The fuse that led to the Falklands War had been lit.

What followed was pure farce, and a major distraction. To what extent it was a deliberate deception or test of British resolve has never been established. A team of patriotic Argentine scrap merchants suddenly landed on the frozen island of South Georgia, 800 miles to the east of the Falklands, on 19 March 1982 from an Argentine Navy auxiliary support ship, the *Buen Suceso*. The excited crew promptly ran up the Argentine flag, fired a volley of shots and sang the national anthem. Their leader, Senor Davidoff, declared that the 41-strong party was at South Georgia to fulfil an old contract to collect all the scrap from the old whaling ships at Leith Harbour, which was true, and offered the local British Antarctic Survey the aid of their doctor and medical staff if required. In Argentina, the C.-in-C. of the Argentine Fleet, Admiral Lombardo, was furious: this very public adventure in

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

South Georgia risked the whole security of his Malvinas invasion plans; the British were bound to be alerted by this pantomime. Admiral Anaya soothed his fears. The British would do nothing.

The FCO was nonplussed. The Falklands problem had become the "South Georgia crisis". The usual exchange of diplomatic notes began, with the Argentine Foreign Ministry pleading complete ignorance. Then on 22 March came news that *Buen Suceso* and Sr Davidoff's scrap team had departed from South Georgia. Tension relaxed, only to rise sharply when HMS *Endurance* was suddenly diverted to South Georgia when it transpired that ten Argentinians had stayed ashore after all, to remove them and take them to Port Stanley.

Colonel Love, who seems to have been the only person who was concerned by the growing crisis and who could see events from the perspective of Buenos Aires, the FCO and the armed forces of both Britain and Argentina, was by now thoroughly alarmed. On 24 March he sent a signal to the British Ministry of Defence reinforcing his earlier warnings. He specifically warned that HMS *Endurance* risked being intercepted (his colleague the Naval Attache had warned him that Argentine ships were at sea) and any attempt to lift the remaining Argentines from South Georgia would be a provocation that could encourage a "rescue mission" by the Argentine Navy.

Colonel Love was too late. By 25/6 March, three Argentine warships were heading for South Georgia, tasked with blocking HMS *Endurance*'s passage. Nick Barker wisely took to his heels and began playing hide and seek with the Argentine Navy in the watery wastes of the South Atlantic. Lord Carrington, now at last as seriously concerned as his attache in Buenos Aires, alerted Mrs Thatcher and the Cabinet with belated understatement that "a confrontation might need to be faced".

GCHQ confirmed that two frigates were heading for Falk-

lands waters, and the diesel-electric submarine *Santa Fe* had been ordered to land a special forces reconnaissance team on the Islands. There could only be one interpretation of such a set of orders. When tied in with clear intelligence indicators showing a clamp-down of civilian access to Puerto Belgrano on the Argentine mainland, loading of a 900-strong marine amphibious force, a major naval task force at sea heading east, diversions from the annual joint Uruguayan naval exercises, sigint reports of discussions about how many Royal Marines were in Port Stanley (the garrison was being relieved) and unusual patterns of Air Force activity, then the indicators and warning board screamed "invasion".

Armed with this intelligence picture, the JIC's Latin America Current Intelligence Group met on the morning of 30 March under the chairmanship of the Foreign Office. Despite access to all this information, the LACIG calmly concluded that *an invasion was not imminent*. The build-up could be explained, it claimed, quoting the words of Ambassador Williams in Buenos Aires, because "The Argentines intend no move in the dispute, but to let matters ride while they build up their strength in the area." The Ambassador's view was coloured by the denials from both Costa Mendez and Ros that there was any military pressure. Their line in response to the British Ambassador's increasingly searching questions was constant even at this late stage - that provided the British were negotiating in good faith, they faced no abrupt military action. It is conceivable that Costa Mendez and Ros knew no more, or at least not much more, because the junta distrusted politicians and had told Costa Mendez the bare minimum of military intentions in the name of security.

It seems incredible that the British national intelligence estimate could still be lulling themselves into such a false sense of security as late at 30 March 1982. With all the indicators available they - or the FCO members who domi-

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

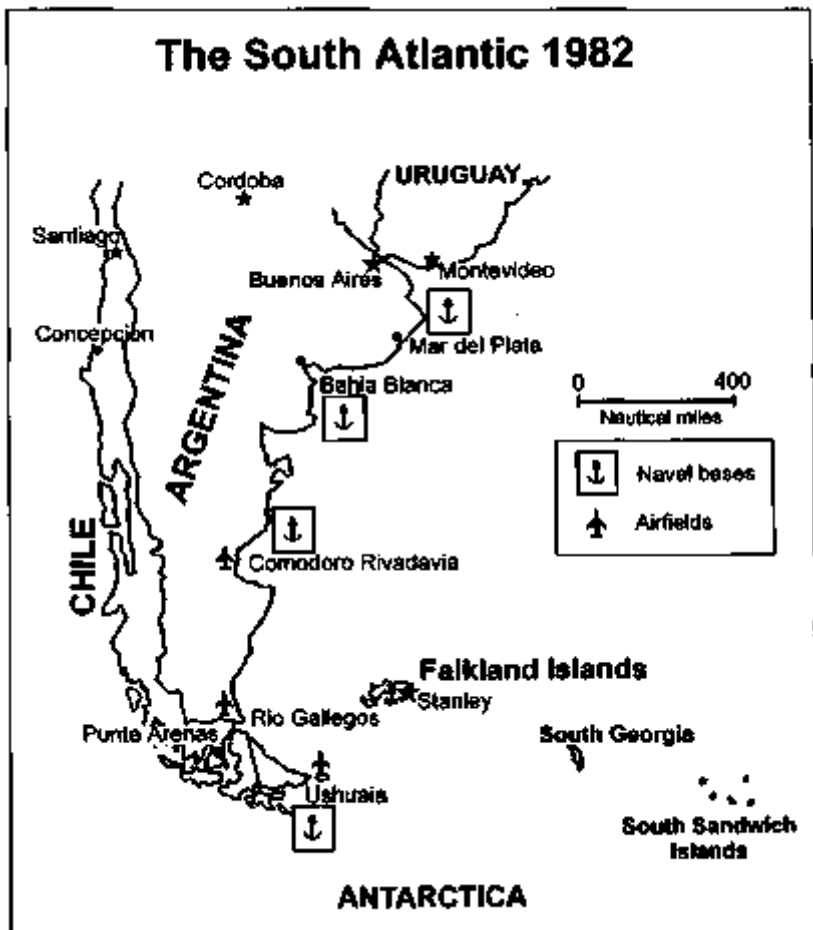
nated the JIC process at the time - appear to have deliberately ignored the facts. The reasons appear to be based on Whitehall's - and particularly the FCO's - deeply held illusions of reality. In the first place, the British had an absolute fear of provoking the Argentine military to violence. The alternative policy, of meeting the military threat head-on, would have meant turning the garrison down south into a "Fortress Falklands", and that would have been expensive. In a Whitehall in 1981 deep in the throes of cutting defence expenditure (ironically, the Argentine Navy had been offered the new carrier HMS *Invincible* at a knock-down price in 1981-by 1982 they probably wished that they had bought her while they had the chance) any policy advocating extra military spending "out of area" equated to lunacy. Beyond a token garrison on the Falklands, the *only* policy open to Britain was a diplomatic settlement. There was simply no alternative.

Second, the Foreign Office had convinced itself that the Argentine unilateral communique of 2 March should be taken at face value. In the communique, the Argentines had given a deadline for negotiations of the end of 1982. Surely no sovereign government was going to do anything as silly and violent as perform a volte-face and invade the Falklands.

The third misapprehension in Whitehall was fear of crying wolf. In 1977 a nuclear submarine had been sent to the South Atlantic at great expense, and Argentina had done nothing. The MOD had claimed that it proved military force works as a deterrent, but the FCO and the rest of Whitehall regarded it as a costly and pointless exercise. The intelligence community was determined not to be seen to be over-reacting.

Interestingly, these preoccupations were mirrored by the junta's own fears. Realizing Whitehall's strengths - nuclear submarines and a powerful international case should Argentina be seen to seize the islands by force - the junta knew that they had to move with a mixture of speed and restraint if the

The South Atlantic 1982



"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

Argentine plan to grab the islands with minimum fuss was to succeed. Thus, when the junta realized that the British were alert to the Argentine fleet at sea (20-2 March) they moved quickly to pre-empt any real trouble before the British could react. The decision to invade was almost certainly taken at a meeting on Friday 26 March and was aimed at securing a bloodless victory. (Whether it was taken collectively or just by Admiral Anaya, anxious to rehabilitate his Navy, has never been established.) On Saturday 27 March, Costa Mendez announced the decision to a stunned meeting of senior Argentine Foreign Ministry diplomats, and by Sunday 28 March, the intelligence was piling up on the LACIG and other intelligence analysts' desks, awaiting their return to work in Whitehall the following day.

Despite a flurry of last-minute activity, briefings and warnings, on 2 April 1982 Argentine Marines landed at Mullett Creek on the south-east coast of East Falkland. Undetected, they collected their equipment and trekked across the boggy hills to Moody Brook outside Stanley, and at dawn they attacked the Royal Marines' sleeping huts and sheds, raking the buildings with automatic fire and closing in with phosphorus grenades. They need not have bothered. Thoroughly alerted, not least by jubilant Argentine radio proclamations that an invasion was afoot, the Royal Marines were by now well dug in in defensive locations around the Governor's residence. The battle for the Falklands was on.

By 08.30 that morning, it was over. Surrounded by over 900 men equipped with heavy weapons and with nowhere to retreat, Governor Hunt ordered his tiny force of Royal Marines, outnumbered ten to one, to surrender, but not before they had shot down a couple of Argentine Marines who had incautiously exposed themselves. In pictures that went round the world and sent a ripple of shock through the British armed services, proud Royal Marines were seen with their hands up, surrendering to

Argentines. British officers later recalled that they had never seen such a wave of collective anger among serving soldiers as when they saw those pictures. The victorious Argentines shipped the Marines out, together with a protesting Governor Hunt and any islander who wanted to leave.

This later turned out to be a mistake as it gave the irate Marines the chance to avenge their humiliation. Some of the first troops to reoccupy the Falklands after the British Task Force landed were members of "Naval Party 8901", the original Royal Marine Falklands garrison, led by their commander, Major Mike Norman. Volunteers to a man, the British shipped the Marines straight back as Juliet Company of 42 Commando. Juliet Company went on to storm Mount Harriet with Colonel Nick Vaux's men in June 1982 as part of what is regarded professionally as the finest infantry night action since the Second World War.

The invasion was met by very contrasting reactions in Buenos Aires and London. In the Plaza de Mayo triumphant Argentines bawled themselves hoarse singing their national anthem and waved flags. Forgotten were the shootings of demonstrators in that very square the month before. To General Galtieri, it looked as if the old dictator's ploy of using a foreign military adventure to direct attention from domestic ills and unify the populace had worked to perfection. Voice cracking with emotion, he told the crowd that his Junta had only been "expressing the popular will". The crowd howled its approval.

London was shocked into silence. To make matters worse, the Cabinet lost touch, literally, with events. Suddenly there was no communication between London and the Falklands. For the whole of that "Black Friday", opinion drifted rudderless and angry. Whitehall was in trauma, "civil servants and politicians seemed to talk only in hushed tones as if contemplating some monstrous bereavement", in Max Hastings's phrase. One observer said that "there were little groups

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

muttering in corners. It was like the Roman Senate just before Julius Caesar was stabbed."

Having presided over a debacle, caused by, in her phrase "that hotbed of cold feet", the FCO, Margaret Thatcher now decided to fight. She had no choice. In the brooding atmosphere of recriminations and disaster that Friday, the debate in Parliament on Saturday would be crucial. British administrations had fallen for less; the ghosts of Eden and Chamberlain hovered in the wings. The Tory government of 1982, already desperately unpopular, looked trapped and wounded.

Thatcher stood her ground. Faced with a baying House of Commons, she acknowledged past failures and announced a decisive solution to restore British honour. Buoyed by Admiral Sir Henry Leach, the First Sea Lord, who had assured her (with an eye to saving the Royal Navy from the looming defence cuts, claimed the cynics) that it was possible for the Navy to win the islands back, and by her deputy, William Whitelaw, who told her that if she didn't stand and fight they could all be out of a job by Sunday, she ordered the dispatch of a large Naval Task Force to retake the Falkland Islands.

The announcement was met with jingoistic delight in Britain and astonishment by the rest of the world. Diplomatic sources muttered discreetly that if the Argentine junta had only known beforehand that the British would react so forcefully, they might never have tried to seize the Malvinas in the first place. But now it was too late for Argentina as well. There had been serious failures of intelligence on both sides. As one Argentine diplomat said after the event, "We never dreamed that the British would send a Task Force. If we had, the sceptics in Buenos Aires would have had powerful evidence to counter the Navy's proposals to invade."

The course of the Falklands War is well documented. As the British tried to cobble together a joint services Task Force

with its stores and impedimenta to fight a lonely battle 8,000 miles away, frantic diplomats tried to find a solution. But the Argentines had no intention of leaving the islands now that they had got them back. The British tabloid press raged about the plight of the islanders, now suffering at the hands of "a banana republic military dictatorship".

In fact that was a gross slur on the Argentine occupation. The Argentine armed forces were the mildest of tyrants on the Falklands. Led by the well-liked, amiable and courteous Brigadier Mario Benjamin Menendez, who had worked on the islands, knew the islanders well and spoke good English, their brief reign was, in many ways, a kind of normality. In the words of one islander,

I was never scared when the Argies were here. They kept themselves to themselves and were desperate not to upset us. You hardly ever saw them and they kept out of my way. The only time I was *really* frightened was when the British paras retook Stanley. They were like football hooligans with guns, shooting up things, looting and shouting, and I was even terrified they'd try to rape me . . . the Brits really were scary.

In fact the Argentines' most obvious enforcement of their regime, apart from the wartime curfew and blackout, was the insistence that everyone now drive on the right. When an islander shouted tyranny, the mildly amused Argentines pointed out that it would be safer for everybody, including the islanders, as Stanley was now stuffed full of 18-year-old conscripts driving trucks who had only ever driven on the right. Ruefully, the islanders had to agree.

Even so, the incontrovertible fact was that the Argentines had seized sovereign territory by force of arms. By the time the US-led diplomatic round at New York looked like coming up

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

with a compromise, the Royal Navy was ready. In a gradual escalation from maritime blockade to a full-scale air, land and sea war, the next two months saw warships sunk, burning aircraft tumbling from the sky and infantrymen with blackened faces grenading and bayoneting each other in trenches on dark mountains. On 14 June 1982, it was all over; the Union Flag flew over Stanley and thousands of cold and tired Argentine soldiers shambled out to Stanley airport to be shipped home, dejected and defeated. In many cases their officers had fled before the final British assault went in, to the bemusement of the Argentine conscripts and the utter contempt of their captors.

The cost was high. Over 1,000 men died and twice that number were wounded. Britain's blood and treasure were expended on a vast scale to retake the islands - ironically far more than the cost of keeping HMS *Endurance* or another couple of warships on station in the South Atlantic to keep an eye on British interests in 1981. After the war it would have been unthinkable to give the islands to Argentina, so, by one of those curious paradoxes of history, the Falkland Islanders ended up by merely exchanging one invading army for another. By 1986 an expensive new military airbase had been constructed to protect them and a large, bored tri-service garrison added to the cost of Britain's overseas defence commitments. There would be no question now of ceding the islands to Argentina for a long, long time.

With hindsight, it is clear that it could all have been avoided. Both parties to the dispute had misled the other. The difference between the Falklands crisis and many other international disputes is that neither party wanted to fight. A clear signal, or intelligence properly read, could well have altered the course of events.

There were two issues burning away at the core of the dispute. The British never really grasped just how strongly the

Argentines - rightly or wrongly - felt about *nuestras Islas Malvinas*. One had only to pick over the pathetic corpses of the dead Argentinian soldiers after the battle and see the congratulatory letters written by anonymous schoolchildren back home "to our brave soldiers in the Malvinas" to realize how deeply the claim to the islands was rooted in Argentine national life and culture. Every primary school pupil had gladly written to "my elder 'brother' in the islands". The Argentine threat was always serious. British ambassadors and defence attaches realized it and reported it; but through the distorting prism of Whitehall's self-interest and cool reason, Latin fervour was reduced to noises far off, a kind of comic opera.

This was a serious miscalculation. The more so, because if the Argentine threat was real, then the British were bluffing. Therein lay the second nucleus of the dispute. There was simply no way that Her Majesty's Government was going to defend the Falklands in 1979-81. It was unthinkable to Whitehall, preoccupied with cutting public expenditure after national near-bankruptcy had brought in the grey suits of the International Monetary Fund in 1978/9.

Mrs Thatcher put her finger on the problem in her speech to the House of Commons after the invasion: "Several times in the past an invasion has been threatened. The only way of . . . preventing it would have been to keep a large fleet there . . . No government has been able to do that . . . the cost would have been enormous." So, faced with a real threat, the British neither negotiated the problem away nor defended their position, until it was far too late. The British were not only bluffing but also they failed to make any effort to distinguish between Argentine sabre-rattling and the real thing should Argentina ever decide to call Britain's bluff.

The British were in a position not dissimilar to the Israelis before the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The Israelis had been led up

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

the garden path by the Egyptians so many times that they decided at the highest levels to ignore the tactical military indicators of an impending attack to concentrate only on *politically* inspired strategic preconditions as absolute indicators of hostilities (such as an alliance between Egypt and Syria). Confronted by regular Argentine sabre-rattling, the British went one stage further. They did not even develop a coherent set of *any* indicators of real attack. They either ignored the problem, believing that an invasion could never happen, or, at best, allowed Foreign Office officials to dictate the intelligence indicators that suited the Foreign Office. (Gradual withdrawal of the Argentine air links and no move against the islands while the FCO was still engaged in bilateral talks were among them.) This was pure moonshine, not least because the Argentines were not reading the FCO's script with anything like the same care and diligence as junior Foreign Office ministers. It highlights the principal intelligence failure at the heart of the Falklands dispute: the FCO never tried to see the situation from the enemy's point of view. There appears to have been no effort to draw up an intelligence appreciation of the threat to the Falklands from an *Argentine perspective*.

Any such appreciation would have highlighted two crucial changes in the situation by 1982: the Argentines had lost faith in negotiations with Britain to regain sovereignty, and second, Britain had clearly signalled her intention to disengage from the Falkland Islands. The islanders were no longer full British citizens, and the Royal Navy's guard ship was being scrapped without replacement. These were clear messages from the Argentine point of view. At this juncture, any normal government with a territorial claim might then have attempted to woo the islanders, invested money, begun a charm offensive and slowly smothered the suspicious and stubborn Kelpers with all the economic benefits that would flow from closer integration with the mainland of South America.

General Galtieri's junta was not a normal government, however, as the Foreign Office was only too fond of pointing out. No one needed to be an expert on Argentina to see that. The junta was a nationalist, authoritarian regime in desperate economic trouble at home and looking for some way to divert its discontented citizens from their domestic grievances. In the circumstances of 1982 the chance of such a group of politically desperate South American generals embarking on a long-term, politically sophisticated and expensive way of getting what they wanted was effectively zero. To think otherwise flies in the face of experience and logic.

Unlike many other critical intelligence judgments, this is not hindsight. It was as obvious then as it is now. The junta's defects were there for all to see, but the voice of reason appears not to have factored this common-sense judgment into any of the JIC or other British assessments made at the time, by diplomats, intelligence officers or, most damning of all, by those who claimed to be the real experts on foreign countries in general and Argentina in particular, and who effectively ran the various UK intelligence committees: the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The indictment gets worse. Even if the Foreign Office missed the significance of the junta's waning freedom of action before February 1982, they were given a warning served on a plate when Senor Davidoff and his team of muscular young men with short haircuts marched in step up the beach at South Georgia to begin their work as "scrap merchants" in March 1982. If ever there was a litmus test of British resolve, this was it. The landing, which almost certainly had naval connivance and pre-planning, caught the Argentine national imagination. The British, on the other hand, first vacillated and then exacerbated the situation by sending in HMS *Endurance*, a guard ship woefully ill equipped should force ever have to be used. No ultimatum was sent to General Galtieri, and British

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

diplomats adopted an air of only mild indignation at the United Nations.

The reason was simple: there were no indications of an invasion of the *Falkland Islands*, as the British saw it, and the FCO was going to advise nothing that might make the Argentines even more bellicose or cost the British taxpayer money. It was the economics of appeasement. The only credible military deterrent would have been a regular submarine patrol lurking off the Falklands, the one threat to which the Argentines had no answer. Expensive though this would have been, it might have bought time for the politicians and avoided Britain's bluff being so humiliatingly called.

None of this explains the extraordinary passivity and inertia in Whitehall before March 1982. It really was an extraordinary collective psychological failure. The only rational explanation seems to be our old friend "cognitive dissonance". It could not be happening, it did not fit with Whitehall's world view or the FCO's increasingly wayward script. It was a kind of "defensive avoidance" of an unpleasant reality. By the end, the British appeared to have no policy for the Falklands other than to hope and pray. In that situation the last thing an institution or an individual wants to hear is that something very nasty *is* going to happen. This may account, in part, for the failure to gather intelligence on Argentina and to ignore sound policy options to defend British interests if need be. Like some patient who suspects he might have terminal cancer, the last thing Whitehall appears to have wanted was an accurate diagnosis confirming its worst fears. This may explain the collective denial of an unpleasant reality in 1982. Once again, the British ability to see a set of facts and deny not just their meaning *but their very existence* played them false.

Self-deception based on poorly interpreted or ignored intelligence was not confined to the British, however. Argenti-

na's capacity for self-deception was in some ways even worse. Despite crude journalistic attempts to portray the junta only as a group of unthinking nationalists, there is ample evidence that there was a calculated strategy behind their actions and a clear attempt to increase tension as part of a policy to put pressure on the British government and test its resolve. The junta may not, in fact, have had much choice, becoming in Richard Lebow's phrase "prisoners of national passions they themselves had helped to arouse". Once having embarked upon their course, however, they had no way to go but forward. Backing down would have meant near-certain political disaster. Last week's triumph in the Plaza de Mayo could easily revert to last month's anti-junta riots. Taking the Falklands back for Argentina meant national unity and more political legitimacy. Just like the British, General Galtieri and his colleagues had a vested interest in misunderstanding the other side's intentions. Galtieri admitted as much later: "I'll tell you, that though an English [*sic*] reaction [like the Task Force] was a possibility, the Junta did not see it as at all probable. Personally I judged it hardly possible and totally improbable."

Galtieri had good reason to believe as he did. Britain's real views were unknown to him but her actions spoke volumes: Britain wanted to be rid of the Falklands problem once and for all. *The Times's* correspondent in Buenos Aires reported that Argentine officials believed that the British failure to respond to the Argentine provocations in March 1982 was a clear signal that they wanted no more to do with the problem. In this regard, British passivity and inaction encouraged the junta to invade.

The General was also encouraged in his course of action by universal professional opinion that the British could not retake the Falklands once they had been occupied. US admirals openly briefed correspondents that the British Task

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

Force would be "too weak, too small and too far from home to achieve its objective". Above all, the received wisdom was that the Task Force lacked sufficient air power. If professional naval opinion was united in this view across the world, then Galtieri may be forgiven for thinking he could win.

After the war, there was confirmation of this particular viewpoint from an unlikely source. During the Cold War, Britain maintained a discreet and highly sensitive official liaison with the Soviet Army. In July 1982, a Soviet general quietly requested an exchange of intelligence on any subject of importance with his British counterparts. Slightly stunned, the UK military officer agreed and, after checking with an equally surprised MOD, a British officer asked the Russian a searching question on the top technical intelligence priority of the time. The Russian officer nodded, thought hard and then gave a brief but - as it was later confirmed - entirely honest answer about the secret capabilities of certain Soviet equipment. When he had finished, he turned to the British officer: "Now, Tovarich, it is time for my question from MOD Moscow: how the hell did your Task Force *really* manage to retake the Falklands?"

General Galtieri's final intelligence miscalculation was a fascinating mirror image of his own position as a leader. Prudence suggests that an adversary faced with national humiliation and loss of office will do at least as much as you will. A proper analysis of their adversary would have told the junta that the odds were that the bellicose British in their pubs and bars would want to fight, even if the more delicate souls of their Foreign Office did not; and an elected leader who failed to reflect the popular mood and regain national honour would soon find herself out of a job and disgraced. The junta's misunderstanding of both the British character and its innate aggression was profound. Their intelligence services failed to brief them on either the British character or the implications

for Britain's other colonial territories around the world - Gibraltar, Honduras and Belize among them - if an invasion of the Falklands went unchecked. There were, therefore, solid reasons, obvious to any Argentine intelligence "Brit-watcher", why it was highly likely that Britain would meet force with force. The Argentine junta should have had this made clear to them. Mrs Thatcher was not the only leader let down badly by her intelligence services.

For the intelligence analyst there is something both frustrating and depressing about the Falklands War. There were ample indicators, but they were ignored. Everyone who was present in Whitehall at the time knew it was a war that should never have happened. Equally, there was genuine delight in the triumph of British arms. In particular, the Royal Navy had saved not just their reputation but their very existence. (Ironically, if Argentina had invaded a year later, the Task Force could never have been assembled. The ships would have been sold off.) Whatever the Franks Report said, however, the intelligence community knew the truth: Argentina was regarded as a backwater in the Cold War and had been ignored. Few intelligence officers specialized in Spanish or Rest of the World (ROW) targets. The Soviet Union was the main target.

The lessons of the Falklands War were many. Sailors learned that cheap plastic wiring in ships and cheap plastic trousers on men can be deadly as fire boils through a stricken ship. Intelligence officers learned that going to war with hastily photocopied pages taken from *Jane's Fighting Ships* and copies of private air-spotters' collections as the only current source of decent photographs of military aircraft taking off from obscure Argentine airfields is no substitute for up-to-date intelligence. The Defence Intelligence Staff learned that electronic warfare details of *allied* missiles - the pulse repetition frequencies (PRF) of the French Exocet anti-ship missile, for example - are every

"Nothing We Don't Already Know."

bit as vital as those of Soviet missiles, and often harder to obtain. Above all, Whitehall learned that Britain's national intelligence estimate cannot be entrusted to the ministry with the most interest in discounting intelligence that does not accord with its own policy advice to ministers. One of the first casualties of the war was the FCO's permanent chairmanship of the JIC. The Franks Report made sure that from 1983 on, the JIC became the responsibility of an Intelligence Co-ordinator working with an independent assessment staff; the FCO was now merely one of the members of the Current Intelligence Groups.

The most valuable lesson of all was the "curve of probability" or Threat Curve (see fig. 3), a graph which suddenly

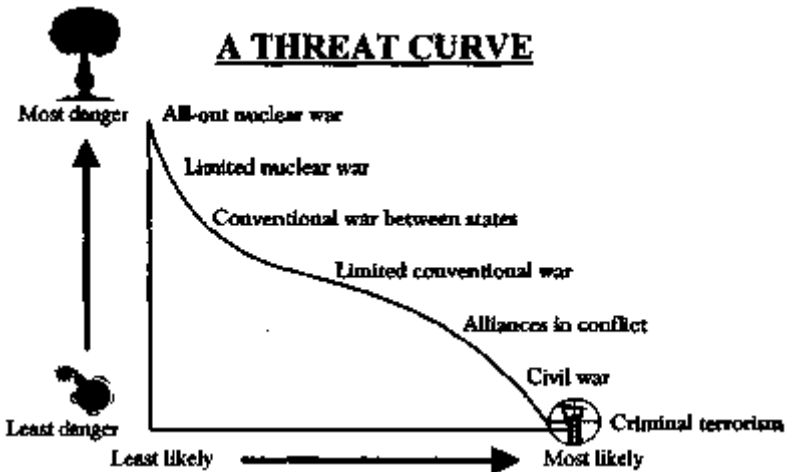


Fig. 3 The Threat Curve shows that the most dangerous threat (e.g., nuclear war) is usually the least likely. Terrorism is much more likely but poses fewer dangers to the state. The difficult judgment is usually halfway up the ladder - the Falklands War 1982 being the classic example. NATO's attack on Serbia and Kosovo in 1999 shows how easily limited military actions risk escalating into general war.

began to appear on the walls of intelligence offices all over NATO in the mid-1980s. The graph demonstrated the relationship between the most dangerous and the most likely intelligence threats to even the most obdurate policy-maker; and the Falklands War had occurred at the precise crossover point. Intelligence requirements were in future to be tailored to *probable risks* and not just the worst case. Attending the funerals of the dead British servicemen, Her Majesty's Government suddenly realized that there were other dangers in the world besides the Soviet Union. "Out of area" conflicts quickly became a fashionable study at staff colleges all over the world.

The final word on the Falklands deserves to be given to the FCO, a much-maligned body of men and women among their euphoric colleagues in the British armed services after the war. As the Royal Marines and the Paras of the victory parade marched through the City of London in October 1982, an aspiring FCO mandarin leaned across to a member of the Defence Intelligence Staff on the balcony overlooking the pageant.

"You know, Harry, this all shows the results of letting some desperately unpopular tinpot autocrat use a crazy foreign military adventure to court popularity and get off the hook at home."

The DIS man nodded knowingly, "Charles, you're absolutely right. Yes, Galtieri and the junta really blew it."

The FCO man snorted in disgust. "Galtieri? Harry, I'm talking about Margaret Thatcher!"

*‘If Kuwait grew Carrots, We
Wouldn't Give a Damn’
The Gulf, 1991*

If the Gulf War was not an intelligence blunder, then it most certainly came as a rude surprise. As Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army poured into the tiny independent oil state of Kuwait at the head of the Persian Gulf on 2 August 1990, the reaction of observers and intelligence officers around the world was the same: "I don't believe it!" Once the shock had worn off, the second reaction of the Western intelligence community was equally universal: "Mind you, with an army Iraq's size . . ."

What the invasion of Kuwait demonstrates perhaps more clearly than any other recent example of an intelligence failure is the clear distinction between *capabilities* and *intentions* in assessing intelligence. For if ever a nation had an obvious, ready-to-use military capability in 1990, it was Iraq. Iraq possessed an army with 5,000 tanks, 7,000 armoured infantry vehicles and 3,500 artillery pieces. There were up to a million Iraqi men under arms, *ten times* the size of the British Army. Iraq had more battlefield *helicopters* than the RAF and the British Army Air Corps had aircraft combined. It was an awesome military capability. The intelligence problem about Iraq in 1990 was really therefore quite straightforward. What would Saddam Hussein, a dictator with the fourth biggest army in the world, do next? The intelligence requirement was

that most difficult, dangerous and ephemeral of all intelligence requirements: what were Saddam's intentions?

The task for the intelligence analysts and the country experts was to be able to put themselves into Saddam's mind. The only way this can be done is either by being able to see Saddam's secret orders or by recruiting an unimpeachable source as close to the Iraqi President as can be risked. It was a tall order, but it was essential.

Since Vietnam, the US intelligence community has led the world in collecting intelligence. The ability of the US national agencies, and their allies, to collect information is awesome. From satellites overhead to the Mark 1 eyeball on the ground, the US intelligence community collected everything it could on potential enemies, which until 1993 invariably meant the Soviet Union and the Communist Bloc. In the process they collated an intelligence database of encyclopedic proportions. In fact, the US Strategic Air Command's secret target list was even known as the BE: the "Bombing Encyclopedia".

The most influential and eagerly awaited publication of the late 1980s for the Western intelligence community was a document called *Soviet Military Power*, a glossy red handbook published every year by the US Department of Defense's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). For the intelligence expert, this document (which fell in classification over the years until eventually it became an unclassified book given free to journalists as part of Washington's public relations exercises) was an absolute feast of good things: pictures from space of new surface-to-surface missiles being rolled out of a secret hangar deep in the Siberian *taiga*; close-up snapshots of the latest Soviet tank leaving the factory; grainy photographs of some unknown attack helicopter turning over a distant airfield; even a pin-sharp long-lens shot of a sophisticated new - purpose unknown - radar antenna sticking out of the top of the fin on a Red Banner Fleet nuclear submarine which had

never been seen before. It was all there, with charts, comparative tables and estimated performance figures. *Soviet Military Power* was an Order of Battle and Equipment (OOB&E) intelligence analyst's dream, and the genuine excitement at the arrival of the DIA travelling circus to brief the latest intelligence to NATO senior officers and their intelligence staffs should not be underestimated.

Whatever the value of *Soviet Military Power*, its arrival was not always met with unalloyed joy. Cynics, frequently from the signals intelligence community, would sometimes ask the question "Do you have any new information on Soviet *intentions!*" of the US briefer, who would then look hurt and mumble something about it not being his agency's responsibility, and anyway who could tell? The excited audience would then stare, irritated, at the questioner and the session would proceed, but the damage had been done, the bubble pricked. The truth is that *intentions* are always the real intelligence challenge. The invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the near invasion of Poland in 1981, the collapse of communism in 1989-92 and the rape of Kuwait in 1990 all took the intelligence community completely by surprise, despite the vast sums of taxpayers' money spent on intelligence equipment and resources and the highly trained staff needed to operate them.

The problem of divining intentions is both a cultural and a practical one. The cultural problem is embedded deep in our modern psyche as a particular way of looking at the world. In order to be dealt with, a problem has to have three distinct phases. First, *identification* that there is a problem; second, once the problem has been identified, it has to be *measured*; and last, once we know the size of the problem, we must be able to identify the *solutions* needed to end it. The key to this materialist logic is the measurement of the problem: quantification. It pervades all our lives and has even extended into

the humanities, where computers can now struggle to analyze the rhythms of Shakespeare. In Tom Wolfe's despairing cry, "Goddammit! They've even started to put literature into a white coat!"

There is an important link here with the intelligence world. The modern world runs on scientific method - it can measure problems. It has to, in order to solve them. The *tangible* is given greater value than the *intangible*. A fact can be measured, proved, prodded, demonstrated. Intangibles are harder; by and large, they cannot be exhibited or put on an overhead vufoil at a management meeting.

Human nature being what it is, organizations and individuals tend to do that which is easiest and can be most clearly demonstrated. For example, the sales executive who mutters to his chairman that he *thinks* that blue cars will sell better than red cars next year had better be able to prove it if he wants to keep his job. Hunches count for little. If he can say "I've guessed right eighteen times in the last twenty years, boss; that's a 90 per cent track record", then the hunch has been *quantified*; it is *a fact*. The chairman beams: these are "good numbers".

Thus it is in the world of intelligence. It is relatively easy to count tanks, ships and aircraft. The technical problems may be immense, the expense horrendous, but it can be done, given time, resources and technology. It is much harder to assess intentions. They cannot be measured. A politician or diplomat may say one thing at a cocktail party but change his mind next morning. Intentions rest on the shifting sands of the human psyche with all its inconsistencies and frailties. For example, the whole course of world history could have been altered if Adolf Hitler had answered "nein" in response to the question from his Chief of the General Staff "Do we proceed, mein Fuhrer?" on 31 August 1939. Intentions are to the intelligence world as "fuzzy logic" is to mathematics.

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

Not only are intentions difficult to assess, requiring, as they do, access, risk and expense (and even then there is no guarantee that they will be cost-effective, as they are unquantifiable), but intentions also defy *measurement*. In Berlin at the height of the Cold War, some agencies tried to measure their intelligence officers' effectiveness by the number of low-level agents they recruited. So an agent-handler running twenty agents, each making five reports a month from the East, whatever their quality, was more highly valued than an agent-handler with only one source, who never reported at all but had access to the East German government's intentions should a war ever seem likely. It is difficult to put a value on such a *potential* human intelligence source. In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that hard-nosed intelligence agency managers and their budget-holders find intelligence capabilities much easier to deal with than intentions. Humint is not only difficult to measure; there are no guarantees of success either.

The second problem about humint is essentially a practical one: it is very hard to do successfully. To consider just one example, from the James Bond end of the intelligence spectrum, the Gordievsky case. Oleg Gordievsky was a career KGB officer who was recruited by the British SIS (MI6) and run as an agent in place for six years. The risks both to Gordievsky and to his handlers were considerable. At any time he could have been discovered and executed. The value of the information he had was incalculable and may even have helped to end the Cold War more quickly than might otherwise have happened. When Gordievsky came under suspicion his KGB tails dogged his every step, and extracting him quite literally under the noses of his Soviet watchers ranks as one of the greatest "exfiltration" secret operations ever.

At no time could the British be absolutely sure that Gordievsky was genuine and not a "plant". Only the passage of

time has confirmed that he was, in fact, 100 per cent genuine and his intelligence equally good. As a humint operation, the Gordievsky case stands as a masterpiece of intelligence. But at what cost? How many similar operations were unsuccessful? Yet even if the Gordievsky case was only one of a hundred, the one per cent success rate turned out to be worth it in the end. The lesson is that humint is not only difficult to measure, but it is difficult to do. Confronted by a minister demanding "Will it work?" the intelligence officer can only shrug and reply truthfully, "We certainly hope so, minister."

All intelligence bureaucracies - certainly the accountable ones - will instinctively veer towards the quantifiable and the easy, especially when results are hard to prove. Saddam Hussein and his invasion of Kuwait proved just how short-sighted this very understandable professional bias can be. Despite the most sophisticated intelligence systems in the world, the USA and her major allies were caught by surprise by the invasion. The real reason was that they lacked humint - agents in place to alert them to Saddam's intentions. If there had been an Iraqi Gordievsky sitting at Saddam Hussein's shoulder in the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, then the West might have been forewarned and Kuwait saved without the expense of the Gulf War. But there was no Iraqi Gordievsky, and no really good humint on Saddam's intentions.

Lack of intelligence was only half the problem in the Gulf in 1990. The other half of the equation was the personality and actions of Iraq's ruler, Saddam Hussein. From the start of the war between Iran and Iraq in the early 1980s, the West consistently underestimated the danger Saddam Hussein posed to the stability of the region. Attention centred on the new revolutionary regime in Iran, controlled since the overthrow of the Shah by a theocratic Shi'ite Islamic government headed by the fanatical Ayatollah Khomeini.

The new Iranian regime had engaged US foreign policy

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

attentions from the start by invading the US Embassy in Tehran and taking its staff hostage. The disaster of Operation Eagle Claw, a bungled US rescue attempt that was aborted after a series of accidents, meant that President Carter's personal agony over Iran was only relieved by Ronald Reagan's election in 1980. President Reagan, in his turn, found Revolutionary Iran his major foreign policy preoccupation after the challenge of the Soviet Union. It was a preoccupation that led to the Iran-Contra scandal, via an obscure National Security Committee US Marine Lieutenant-Colonel called Oliver North and secret arms shipments to right-wing Nicaraguan "Contra" guerrillas as a means of freeing Iranian-controlled US hostages. It was all very messy and complicated and Iran remained intractably at the heart of the problem.

In this atmosphere of instability and Islamic fervour that threatened the conventions of international diplomacy, Iraq's decision to invade Revolutionary Iran in 1980 came as an unequivocal blessing to Western diplomats. The "mad mullahs" and their "revolutionary hordes" could beat themselves to death against Iraq's plentiful tanks and guns. With Iran locked in a bitter struggle with Iraq, stability of a kind returned for the next eight years as the two most powerful states in the region grappled themselves to exhaustion. In fact, Western analysts could view Iraq's war with Iran as being in the interests of the West and performing a service for the West's small oil-rich friends around the Persian Gulf. Saddam Hussein was doing the West a favour.

Saddam Hussein Takriti was an unlikely ally of the West. Born in Takrit in northern Iraq, he was raised in the hard world of the mountains and the mafia-like warlords and family clans that control them. Guns are as essential to a man in Takrit as a smallsword to an eighteenth-century gentleman, and it is alleged that Saddam had shot and killed his first man by the age of eleven. Saddam's subsequent rise

through the ranks of Iraq's Arab Baath Socialist Party owed more to ambition and force than to deep political convictions. Power meant more to Saddam than Arab unity, freedom and socialism. By 1970 he was Vice-President and by 1979 he had become president, taking over from the figurehead President Bakr in a bloodless transfer that recognized where power really lay in Iraq.

Saddam had no deep antagonism towards Iran. Indeed, in 1975 he had concluded a treaty personally with the Shah that removed many of the grievances between the two countries over the Shatt Al-Arab estuary at the head of the Gulf. But Khomeini's revolution altered the status quo. Two events in particular stung Saddam into attacking Iran: an Iranian-inspired assassination attempt on his deputy, Tariq Aziz, in the heart of Baghdad, and second, Khomeini's unremitting call to Iraq's Shi'ite majority to rise up against the "godless atheists" of the Baath Socialist Party. Saddam dared not tolerate this direct challenge to his regime and struck back hard. In 1980 he invaded Iran with half the Iraqi Army in what was effectively a limited punitive expedition across the border against a confused and weakened neighbour.

One of the consistent themes of new revolutionary regimes is their reluctance to mind their own business. From Revolutionary France to Bolshevik Russia and Khomeini's Iran, the urge to spread the good news to nervous neighbours appears to be irresistible. An equally consistent theme is the angry neighbours' resentment and invariable reaction - to attack the source of trouble to stop it exporting its dangerous heresies. So it was with Saddam's first Gulf War in 1980. Although he stopped his forces five days into Iran and called for talks, the Iranians did not share his restraint. To cries of "*Allah Akhbar*" the Islamic Revolutionary Guards of Khomeini's Iran hurled themselves upon the godless Iraqi invaders. Saddam's evil genie would not go back in the bottle.

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

By 1988, after an eight-year war that claimed over one and a half million casualties and saw the use of poison gas on a major scale for the first time since 1918, both sides signed a ceasefire of exhaustion. Saddam was now confronted by the task of reconstructing Iraq after a war longer than both of the century's world wars. Despite the general view that Iraq had won (Khomeini described the ceasefire as "a poisoned chalice from which he reluctantly drank"), the euphoria of victory could not last. Although the gloom in Tehran was matched by dancing in the streets of Baghdad, the Iraqi economy was in ruins. Experts reckoned that it would cost \$230 *billion* (at 1989 prices) and take fifteen to twenty years to rebuild Iraq to pre-1980 standard. The annual budget deficit was \$10 billion and Iraq owed over \$75 billion in foreign debt, much of it to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. After his war, Saddam confronted an economic catastrophe.

The obvious priority was to wipe out the foreign debt and demobilize an army swollen by war. The 1980 class of 18-year-old conscripts were 26 when the war ended - if they had survived. Yet few of them were demobilized after the war because Iran initially refused to sign a peace treaty. All Saddam's attempts to salvage his position failed in the eighteen months after the first Gulf War. The flood of demobilized soldiers onto an already destabilized economy raised unemployment and further weakened Iraq's recovery. Iran stalled for time at the UN peace talks, forcing Iraq to keep a large army on alert which continued the drain on the nation's economic resources.

To make matters worse, Saddam's attempts to bully the other Arab states of the region into cancelling the Iraqi war debt fell on unsympathetic ears, despite his claims that Iraq had been fighting the Khomeini regime to protect all his Gulf neighbours from Shi'ite fundamentalism. Saddam's neighbours were having none of it, and insisted on full repayment.

He raised the stakes in early 1990, demanding not just cancellation of Iraq's debt to his oil-rich neighbours but also ready cash by means of an immediate injection of \$30 billion. To these demands for aid, he also added a new, more menacing note: "Let the Gulf regimes know that if they do not give this money, Iraq knows how to get it."

These threats and demands were matched by a parallel drive by Iraq to cut back the overall production of oil in the Middle East. The point of this was to *increase* the world price of oil. The basic laws of supply and demand meant quite simply that if there was less oil available to Western buyers then the price of oil would go up; and if the price of oil increased, then Iraq, as a major producer-member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), stood to make a lot of money. Oil revenues were virtually Iraq's only source of income.

After the 1980-8 war, both Iraq and Iran had, as members of OPEC, demanded that their fellow members should reduce production in order to enable the two nations to recoup their war costs by selling more oil. The other OPEC members refused. Far worse, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait actually began to push the price of oil *down* by increasing their own production, thus choking off any hope of additional oil revenues to Iraq.

At the time, no intelligence analyst seems to have been able to identify just what a mortal threat this combination of dissatisfaction at home, bankruptcy abroad and non-cooperation from his neighbours posed to Saddam Hussein. Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown in the tense intrigues of Baghdad politics. He knew that his very survival as leader of Iraq was at stake unless he could deliver economic recovery after the war. In the circumstances, it seems hardly surprising that he began to take a tough line with, as he saw it, his tight-fisted and intransigent neighbours.

What is surprising is that the risks to regional stability were

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

not taken more seriously at the time. After all, Iraq was a nation in arms at the end of the war with Iran. By 1990 Iraq was still a nation in arms, but now in dire economic straits with a burning sense of grievance and an increasingly paranoid dictator making the decisions. The situation posed a potentially explosive challenge to the ordered complacency of the area's rich oil-producing sheikhdoms. If the Gulf States were in any doubt about the seriousness of Iraqi intentions, the Arab summit in Baghdad in May 1990 should have made Saddam's position abundantly clear. He told his guests that "for every single dollar off the price of a barrel oil . . . Iraq loses a billion dollars a year". He called for an OPEC adjustment to increase the price to \$25 a barrel. When his plea failed to elicit a response, Saddam resorted to threats. In his view the earlier decision by Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to increase their own oil production and so drive down the price was a violation of quota agreements and in effect a declaration of economic war on Iraq. To ensure that there could be no possible misunderstanding, Saddam added that, "War is fought with soldiers . . . but it is also done with economic means. Therefore we would ask our Arab brothers who do not wish to make war on Iraq - this is in fact a kind of war against Iraq. I believe our brothers are fully aware of our situation . . . but we have now reached the stage where we can no longer withstand this pressure."

Now this is a serious *cri de coeur* from a dictator who is mindful of loss of face and his public image, and a clear warning about his views and his likely course of action. Although the statement was made behind closed doors it soon leaked out to Western diplomats and Iraq-watchers. Saddam's concerns were being signalled very clearly to a wider audience, and no intelligence analysts could later honestly claim that they were unaware of Saddam's intentions should he not be given satisfaction.

The response of the Gulf States, especially the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, to Saddam's admission of weakness and thinly veiled threat was effectively to ignore it; they neither declared a moratorium on Iraq's debts and gave Saddam more money, nor did they cut their own oil production. In defiance of the OPEC guidelines, they increased it. As a result, the price of oil actually fell further.

Saddam's anger and frustration showed. In June 1990, he denounced the UAE and Kuwait as members of "a conspiracy against the region which serves Israel's interests". The mention of Israel was significant and ominous. Saddam was running up a flag designed to unite his "Arab brothers" against other Arabs. Just as "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel" in Dr Johnson's famous dictum, so any Arab call to rally against Israel is usually a prelude to bellicosity in one form or another, especially as Saddam had already shown considerable pragmatism by doing business with Israel during the war with Iran. At a time when he was in increasingly dire straits, Saddam was beginning to make warlike noises.

To add to his troubles, by the middle of 1990 Saddam was under serious pressure not just from his debts and regional difficulties, but also from a growing dispute with the West. Although Iraq had long enjoyed a special relationship with France - who, with the Soviet Union, had been a major supplier of arms - other Western nations had always been lukewarm supporters. Once the Gulf War was over their support for the Iraqi regime faded with their need to contain Revolutionary Iran; Khomeini's debilitated regime posed little threat to anyone by 1989. Iraq's record as an oppressive dictatorship suddenly became much more of an issue, and the reality of Saddam's totalitarian regime was not an appetizing prospect to the more delicate democratic palates of the West.

Britain in particular had cause for complaint. An Iranian-

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

born British citizen, a journalist called Farzad Bazoft was arrested and executed for espionage in the spring of 1990. Bazoft, a journalist for a London weekly, had been caught sniffing around a secret Iraqi rocket development complex. Quite what his true purpose was, and whether he was indeed a secret agent for someone as the Iraqis claim, remains unclear to this day. With a contemptuous disregard for Bazoft's passport or background Saddam ordered his execution as a signal to any other would-be spies or traitors in Iraq. As a gesture to cow internal opposition Bazoft's execution may well have worked; as a message to international public opinion it was a public relations disaster.

Saddam's timing was particularly poor as the Western media were already alert to Iraq as a story. A ballistics expert called Dr Gerald Bull had been assassinated in mysterious circumstances by unknown killers in Brussels. As Bull was the world's leading expert on long-range artillery and was building a so-called "supergun" for Iraq when he was killed, the case aroused intense interest, especially as the dirty tricks department of Israel's Secret Service, the Mossad, was blamed for his murder. At the same time, batches of high-quality machined steel tubes, almost certainly part of Iraq's new supergun, were impounded in the West.

To further attract the attention of Western investigative journalists, a mysterious consignment of electronic components alleged to be part of a nuclear initiation device was impounded at London Airport en route to Baghdad. Taken with the supergun affair it now looked as if Iraq was bent on rearming with new and deadly weapons which threatened the whole of the Middle East. As a result, by mid-1990 Iraq was fully in the Western media spotlight with a steady focus of damaging press stories on Iraq's poor record of human rights and attempts to rearm with weapons of mass destruction, and Saddam was not enjoying the criticism. Suddenly he was the "man in the black

hat" to the Western media, never noted at the best of times for sophistication in applying easy labels to complicated subjects. To Iranian enmity and the Gulfs contempt were now added Western hostility and personal criticism.

Israeli hostility could be taken for granted in Iraqi eyes. Ever since the successful Israeli precision bombing to neutralize Iraq's Osirak plutonium-producing reactor in 1981, Iraq had regarded Israel as little more than a temporarily quiescent enemy. It now appears that, to add to his troubles, Saddam had decided that Israel was conspiring to attack an enfeebled Iraq in the aftermath of the war with Iran. We now know that Saddam believed that any Israeli attack would end up with his own fall from power. We also know from Iraqi sources that the example of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu (who had recently been captured, tried and summarily executed with his wife) was at the forefront of Saddam's mind at this time.

Saddam's paranoia increased. Out of the blue, he began issuing threats against Israel accompanied by public denials that Iraq had developed nuclear weapons as the country "already controlled a large chemical armoury". "But," he added in a ringing denunciation of Israel, "By God we will make fire eat half of Israel, should they dare attack Iraq." Quite why Saddam thought Israel was planning to attack remains a mystery to this day. The most plausible theory is that Saddam was using the threat as a diversion from domestic problems for his own increasingly disgruntled citizens.

This fiery anti-Israeli rhetoric had two effects. Inevitably, it promptly won the backing of most of the Arab world, but it also scared the West, which began to view Saddam Hussein as an unstable warmonger. They were right, even though Saddam was not actively seeking a war. In fact he took great steps in 1990 to assure both Israel and the USA that his rhetoric was just that. "Iraq does not want war," he said, "We have fought

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

for eight long years and we know what war means." To make sure the message had gone home, he repeated it to a visiting British diplomat.

By June 1990, the alarm bells should have been ringing very loudly among the intelligence analysts of the West with the responsibility for keeping an eye on Iraq. The evidence was clear: a well-armed and bankrupt Saddam Hussein was now making increasingly desperate threats to both his neighbours and to Israel. The threats to Israel had earned him considerable prestige in the wider Arab world, but little money. As a result Saddam was like some new Nasser, but without the wherewithal to exercise his power to lead the Arabs. By any objective criteria the Iraqi leader was looking like a loose cannon in the Gulf region, unpredictable and dangerous. Saddam could not sustain his proud boasts, and he was in trouble. The only question was what he would do next. How would he support his belligerent claims? What were his *intentions!*

The events that led to the invasion of Kuwait were clearly signposted. Iraq had long claimed ownership of her tiny southern neighbour. Since 1871, when the Ottoman Mufti, Abd Allah, had ruled Kuwait as a sub-province of Basra (Iraq's southernmost province), Baghdad had asserted her territorial rights over "Iraq's seventeenth province". Kuwait was rich in oil, one of the wealthiest sheikhdoms in the Gulf and almost defenceless, a tantalizing prospect to any robust heir to the Assyrian Empire. To a personality like Saddam Hussein the temptation to solve his economic problems at a stroke must have been irresistible.

Not only did Iraq assert a claim to Kuwait, but she had tried to invade it before. In 1961, the failing government of the Iraqi leader, General Kassem, had mobilized for an invasion. Post-Imperial Britain, still with interests east of Suez, had moved to forestall the Iraqis by publicly landing marines and tanks to

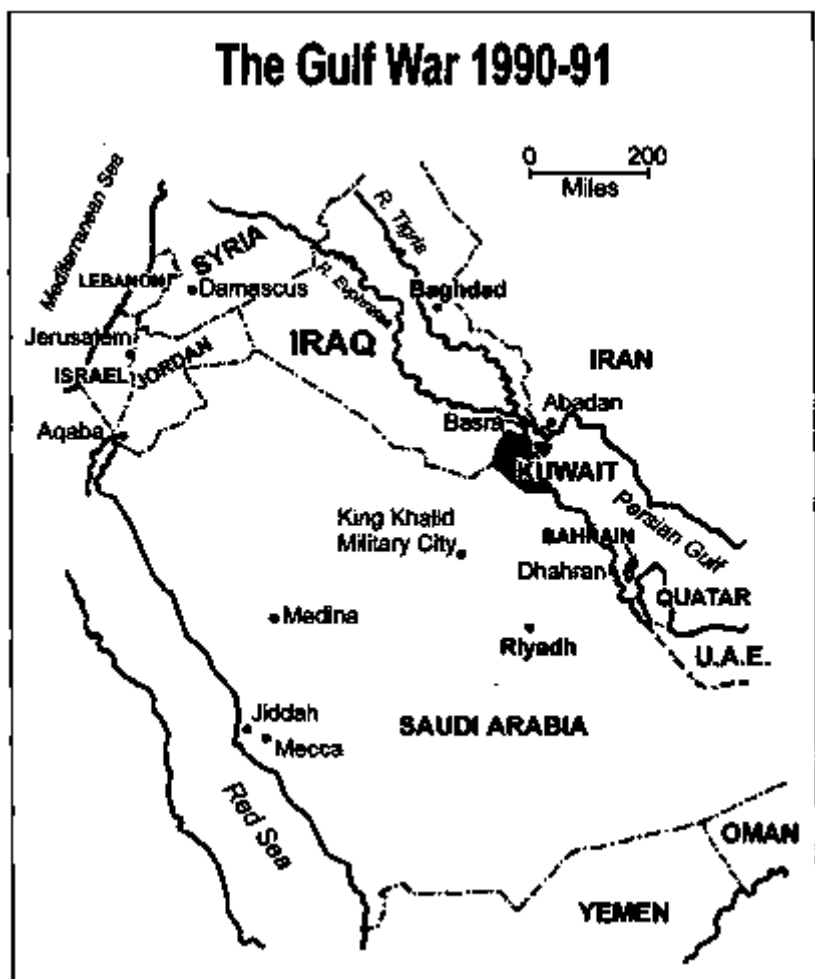
shore up the alarmed Kuwaiti regime. Other Arab states joined in. The show of strength worked. Deterred by the evidence of Britain's preparedness to use force, the Iraqis backed off.

For the intelligence analysts of Washington, London, Paris and Moscow, the picture about Kuwait could not have been clearer. Like some burglar intent on his next crime, Saddam Hussein had the motive, the opportunity and the means to invade Kuwait. Not only that, but his country had nearly done so before. Unless Saddam did something soon, he would be bankrupt at home and a laughing stock in the Arab world, just another self-important autocrat desperate to get his hands on his neighbour's money. Kuwait was the perfect victim for a spectacular international robbery. Saddam further helped the intelligence analysts in early summer 1990 by signalling his desperation in a string of personal attacks on Kuwait and the indifference of Kuwait's rulers, the al-Sabah family, to "the imperialist Zionist plot poised like a dagger over Iraq's back".

There is only so much humiliation that an Arab leader can endure, however. On 16 July 1990 came a clear sign that Saddam and his Revolutionary Command Council had had enough and were now embarking on a collision course with their uncooperative neighbours. Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Foreign Minister, accused Kuwait and the UAE of a hostile act against Iraq "by implementing a deliberate plot to glut the oil market with a quantity of oil exceeding that permitted by OPEC". Aziz claimed, rightly, that this had cost the Iraqi treasury \$89 billion in lost revenue. Furthermore, he alleged an obvious *casus belli* by accusing Kuwait of having stolen Iraq's oil by extracting a disproportionate share of oil from the Rumaila field which straddled their common border.

At this stage, the Western intelligence community should have been thoroughly alarmed. The mystery is why they were not. Part of the problem for Western intelligence officers when

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evaluating the nuances of Arab intelligence is the language difficulty. Arab rhetoric bears little relationship to the clearer, more coolly-worded signals pumped out from Western chanceries. In Arabic, the most blood-curdling threats are often merely linguistic expressions of various degrees of disapproval. With hyperbole a constant, it can be difficult to know precisely when an Arab threat is genuine, unless the listener is steeped in the culture. The problem for the analyst is not unlike that of the so-called Sovietologists, or Kremlin-watchers, who alone could interpret the impenetrable "party-speak" of Soviet utterances during the Cold War. For the Soviet Union, it was the language of Marxism that obscured reality and made divining truth difficult. For the Arab world some other criterion or intelligence discriminator is equally required to separate the genuine threat from the ritual denunciation.

On this occasion, intelligence analysts failed to spot the shift in the spectrum. The intelligence alarms that should have indicated a serious danger of conflict on 16 July 1990, only seventeen days before the invasion of Kuwait, seem not to have been triggered. For some unexplained reason the evident signs of increasing Iraqi desperation were seen as just another turn of the diplomatic screw by the Iraqi leader.

They should not have been. On 15 and 16 July 1990, two divisions of the elite Iraqi Republican Guard moved south very publicly and took up battle positions in the desert twenty miles north of the Kuwaiti border. As a US NATO intelligence analyst who worked the problem non-stop from August 1990 until March 1991 later said, this was "a bit of a hint" as to Saddam's intentions.

The very next day, Saddam himself raised the stakes still higher. Choosing the platform of a speech to the nation on the anniversary of the Baathist revolution he issued a direct challenge to Kuwait and the UAE, citing Kuwait's theft of Iraqi oil, deliberate overproduction of oil as a hostile act, and,

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

for the first time, border violations by Kuwait. This, he attested, amounted to a deliberate act of aggression. Finally, to add insult to injury, Saddam claimed that the perfidious Kuwaitis had conspired with Western and Zionist imperialists out to ruin the Arab cause. He demanded that the two "rogue states" come to their senses immediately "preferably by means of peace", but, should they choose not to, Saddam issued a clear warning, "If words do not work to protect us, then we have no choice but by effective action to put things right."

This sounds suspiciously like an ultimatum. It should have galvanized intelligence officers and policy-makers to action, especially when combined with Iraq's economic plight, the movements of elite armoured divisions and Saddam's paranoia. The final key was Saddam's closing remarks, which made sure that there could be no possible misunderstanding by his listeners. He said that "there was no time left for talking"; if Kuwait did not accede to Iraq's demands, "it would face the consequences."

America had, of course, spotted the troop movements. There is little in the Middle East, or anywhere else, that escapes the eagle eyes of the National Reconnaissance Office's (NRO) satellites. This, combined with the aggressive Iraqi statements, brought a clear and firm response from the Bush administration, warning Iraq that the USA would "stand by its friends" in the region. This apparently prompt statement from the USA was not as robust as it sounded however. It was meant only as a shot across the bows. In fact the US warning was based on a miscalculation that Saddam did *not* mean what he had said, and its effect was to alarm the very people it was meant to help.

The US State Department and CIA were convinced that Saddam was bluffing and intended no action; and the by now thoroughly alarmed Kuwaitis agreed, begging their American friends not to make any aggressive statements "because they

risked inflaming the situation". Saddam was only using threats as a bargaining counter, claimed the Kuwaitis, and anyway (in a chilling reminder of so many intelligence blunders) they had been here before. Saddam Hussein had made similar threats in the past. There was "no cause for alarm and the USA should refrain from making a difficult situation worse". The Kuwaitis were wrong in one respect, however. Saddam had indeed made similar statements in the past, but then they had always been in Arab councils, behind closed doors. He had never before made threats like this in public. Given his precarious position as the self-proclaimed leader of the anti-Zionist Arabs he now had much to lose should he fail to back his words with deeds, particularly at home.

America modified its own public statements to reflect Kuwait's concerns, but its internal actions show that not everyone in the US intelligence and policy-making community was convinced. By 24/5 July 1990, the US administration began to have serious doubts as to whether Saddam was merely "sabre-rattling", as he assured a concerned President Mubarak of Egypt. US KC-135 tanker refuelling aircraft began to deploy to the Gulf and a major joint exercise was announced, much to the concern of the Kuwaitis. There were alarming reports in the Baghdad press about "foreign troops intervening in the region". For Kuwait, "foreign troops" could mean two different things - US or Iraqi. They wanted *neither* and urged discretion upon Washington.

Looking back on the events of the last two weeks of July 1990, it is clear how the situation accelerated. Somewhere along the line, Saddam Hussein took the decision to begin the invasion process but it is difficult to see precisely when. A good human source within the Revolutionary Command Council would have been useful at this point. Conspiracy theories about a long-standing Iraqi plan to seize Kuwait do not hold water. Iraq had always had a long-standing wish to

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get its hands on Kuwait and its oil, and an equally long-standing *capability* to do so - indeed, Iraq had a permanent military capability to take Kuwait. The intention to act was always the key to any action. That final decision cannot have been long in the making. What is clear is that Iraq was obviously sabre-rattling on 15/16 July. By 25 July Saddam had decided to invade and the sabre was well out of the scabbard.

Two questions stand out for the intelligence analyst: could Iraq have been deterred, and second, what pushed Saddam Hussein from mere threats to risk taking action? It is clear that the first intelligence indicators that trouble was really brewing occur in about May 1990, when Saddam began his verbal campaign against the UAE and Kuwait over the price of oil. Of course this is being clever after the event, and common sense tells us that no country risks a crisis on the strength of a few utterances by a boastful and bankrupt neighbour, even one ruled by a paranoid dictator. Any reasonable assessment at the time would have given Saddam the benefit of the doubt, in the light of his predicament.

However, these preliminary indicators were subsequently reinforced by a steady drumbeat of aggressive statements and escalating demands. Somewhere between late May and July 1990, the isolated intelligence indicators turned from one or two alarms to dozens of threatening signals. A distinct pattern emerged on the indicators and warning boards of the Western intelligence agencies. Between May and July 1990, someone should have moved to deter Saddam from going too far.

The problem of deterring Saddam, even assuming that Western intelligence assessed an attack on Kuwait as a distinct probability, subsequently became mired in diplomatic ambiguity, with the USA trying to stand firm and yet at the same time weakening its tough stance by issuing curiously contradictory "clarifications". For example, when the US moved

KC-135 tanker aircraft and ships to the Gulf on 21 July "to lay down a marker for Saddam Hussein", in the words of the Pentagon, an aide to the Secretary to the Navy rushed to "clarify the situation" by telling the press that the ships were *not* on alert. On 24 July, when the Penatagon stated that the "US was committed to ... supporting the self-defense of our friends in the Gulf, officials specifically refused to confirm whether the US would go to Kuwait's aid if Kuwait were attacked. This was news management gone mad. The spin doctors' "clarifications" were damaging, not enhancing, the diplomatic signals.

This was confusing stuff. Was the US backing Kuwait in July 1990 or not? If, several years later, it is still not clear to us, then it was most certainly not clear to the Iraqis at the time. They were confused. Was this the famous ambiguity inherent in US deterrence theory - the final uncertainty designed to make an aggressor pause and reconsider? Or was it mere window-dressing, supporting the Kuwaitis with soft words but no deeds? What were President Bush's real intentions? On 25 July a doubtless puzzled Saddam Hussein decide to find out. He suddenly sent for the US Ambassador to Baghdad at one hour's notice in order to discover just what the USA was up to. The Ambassador, April Glaspie, had at last achieved the much sought-after diplomatic goal that had eluded her for the previous two years: a one-on-one meeting with the Iraqi dictator.

Accounts of what was to be the seminal meeting of the Gulf War differ. There are two main sources for what occurred that day: the transcript of Ambassador Glaspie's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington on 20 March 1991, and Iraq's official version of the dialogue, which has never been disputed by the US State Department. The meeting appears, rightly or wrongly, to have given Saddam Hussein the impression that if he did move against Kuwait,

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

then the USA would not intervene in any serious way. If so, it was a disastrous miscalculation by both parties.

Every meeting has its chemistry and its psychology. Unpalatable as it may be to Western liberals, feminists or intellectuals, to send a female ambassador to an Arab country is always a calculated risk. In a culture where only men control power and events, and "strong" men are much praised, female plenipotentiaries are always at a disadvantage unless they themselves can demonstrate that they are unusually powerful figures or are capable of wielding power forcefully. Political correctness may well humour the faculties of provincial universities but does not necessarily play well with Arab potentates. One of the lessons diplomats learn or should learn very early in their careers is that they have to deal with the world as they find it, not as they might wish it to be. The practice of diplomacy saps both idealism and illusion among its more successful practitioners: not every nation shares the same moral values.

Ambassador Gaspie certainly appears not to have impressed Saddam Hussein with either her or her country's resolve to defend Kuwait. No other aspect of Western miscalculation before the Gulf War has received anything like the same scrutiny as Ambassador Gaspie's first and only substantive audience with the Iraqi dictator. Critics claim that she gave the green light to Saddam, implying at best (and specifically stating at worst) that the USA would stay aloof from any Iraqi action in the Gulf. Needless to say, this claim was later strongly denied by the US Ambassador herself.

What is clear is that at such short notice the Ambassador had no time to seek guidance from Washington and had to represent America's interests within the guidelines of existing State Department policies which had been laid down weeks and months previously, and which may not have been entirely relevant in such a fast-developing crisis. On that hot afternoon in Baghdad, poor intelligence assessments, dated national

policy, Iraqi desperation and professional diplomatic caution came together in a fatal combination. For it is universally acknowledged that 25 July was the USA's last real opportunity at the policy-making level to deter Saddam Hussein from invading Kuwait.

Saddam began the meeting with a typically lengthy diatribe against his Arab neighbours and the United States. In particular, he laid great emphasis on Iraq's economic plight, complaining about his specific grievances one by one in great detail. He accused the USA of "supporting Kuwait's economic war against Iraq" and then, like many insecure bullies, he began to bluster: "If you [the USA] use pressure and force against us, then, by God, we know how to respond. We can deploy pressure and force against America, too. We cannot come all the way to the United States, but individual Arabs can, and they may reach you." Ambassador Glaspie understood that Saddam was threatening terrorism.

The Ambassador kept her cool in the face of what must have seemed typical Arab hyperbole. Her difficulty lay in separating bluster from real threats and identifying any constructive signals that the incensed Iraqi leader might offer her as negotiating points. It was a tall order for her first real meeting with a strange, angry, unstable and cunning Arab dictator. But Glaspie had her State Department guidance. Her instructions were to defuse any crisis, not add fuel to the flames of Saddam's truculence.

Glaspie attempted to calm Hussein, pointing out that there was no US hostility to Iraq and certainly no conspiracy against Iraqi interests. She emphasized that she had "direct instructions from the President to seek better relations with Iraq". Had the President not personally obstructed Congress's attempts (based on Iraq's dismal human rights record) to impose economic sanctions against Iraq recently? She went on to spell out the US position by saying, "President Bush is an

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

intelligent man. He is not going to declare an economic war against Iraq."

The meeting had by then developed a form and rhythm that were to have serious consequences. The brooding and forceful Iraqi President had listed his grievances and made threats about what he would do if he did not get his way. April Glaspie had soothed the sulky Arab, calmed him down and made reassuring noises that there was no real problem, they all wanted to be friends. Glaspie went further. Again acting on her dated instructions from Washington, she took the line that the US understood Saddam's economic plight over oil prices, even adding that there were many in American oil-producing states with an equal interest in oil prices at more than \$25 a barrel who sympathized with his point of view. Saddam allowed himself to be mollified, but added that he was still determined not to let Kuwait continue cheating on its OPEC oil quota. The US Ambassador soothed him further, adding "my own estimate after twenty-five years of serving in your area is that your aims should receive strong support from your brother Arabs." "The issue is not associated with America," she said. "The USA has no opinion on inter-Arab disputes such as your border dispute with Kuwait." In fact, Secretary of State Baker had directed "our official [i.e., US] spokesman to reiterate this stand".

Ambassador Glaspie then delicately counter-attacked by asked for clarification of Iraq's intentions over Kuwait, albeit posing her question "in a spirit of friendship, not confrontation". Now it was Saddam's turn to reassure the US Ambassador and soothe *her* fears. He assured her that his preference was for a peaceful solution to the dispute; "We will do nothing until we meet with the Kuwaitis. When we meet and we see that there is hope, then nothing will happen." However, he kept his options open, adding, "If we are unable to find a solution then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death,

even though wisdom is above all things." Arab rhetoric or genuine threat? It was for the US Ambassador to judge for herself. She was at the meeting.

Saddam Hussein then left the room, leaving the presumably bemused US Ambassador alone for thirty minutes while he talked on the telephone to President Mubarak of Egypt who was trying to mediate in the crisis. When he returned he was smiling and relaxed, and anxious to wrap up the meeting, telling Glaspie that "there was now no problem as Kuwait and Iraq would have full bilateral talks in Jiddah within the next week".

Whether the US Ambassador did or did not wring a promise out of Saddam Hussein not to resort to force, as she claims, is immaterial. While any meeting or conversation taken out of context can be made to seem misleading, there can be little doubt that the tone and message of the meeting in Baghdad on 25 July are clear. Ambassador Glaspie admitted later that the Iraqi transcript was "80 per cent correct". The fact is that, having made a grumbling and threatening complaint, Saddam had been appeased. In Lawrence Freedman's elegantly simple phrase, from Saddam's point of view "The USA was still offering him the hand of friendship while urging him to be good."

If diplomacy is about sending clear and precise signals at a time of crisis, then diplomacy failed badly that afternoon. Not only was the road from Basra to Kuwait and its oil riches now declared open, but from Saddam Hussein's perspective it looked as if the President of the United States, the only man who could close the gate, sympathized with him and was prepared to look the other way. However one considers the outcome of the meeting, it was an intelligence and diplomatic disaster. What perhaps makes it worse is that Ambassador Glaspie appears to have misread the mood and the consequences of the meeting. Confident that the crisis in US-Iraqi relations was now over, she reinstated her holiday plans

and cabled the State Department that "[Saddam's] emphasis that he wants a peaceful settlement is surely sincere". While Saddam may have lied to her in some unrecorded way, the transcripts of the meeting do not support that view.

One final chance for peace remained: the joint Iraqi-Kuwaiti talks at Jiddah in Saudi Arabia scheduled for 31 July. Although the weight of evidence is that nothing short of a total capitulation by Kuwait at the meeting could have stopped the invasion, there was still a chance of dialogue. However, the Kuwaiti approach at the meeting was incautious to say the least. If the USA was not going to stand up to Iraq, then little Kuwait was. To the astonishment of Iraq's Vice-President, Izzat Ibrahim, the Kuwaiti delegation offered only a token sum of cash in aid (\$9 billion) as a gesture of goodwill and agreed to consider writing off their portion of the Iraqi war debt, but only on condition that Iraq withdrew its territorial claims against Kuwait for all time. Ibrahim stormed out, back to Baghdad. The Kuwaiti delegation sat back to await the next round of what was clearly going to be a long and difficult session of Arab haggling.

Within twenty-four hours, it was all too late. Despite an urgent personal call on 31 July from King Hussein of Jordan to President Bush that the "Iraqis are very angry and really do mean business", the time for talking had run out. Only a direct American threat from the US President could have stopped Saddam, but thanks to Ambassador Glaspie the Iraqi leader would have construed that as a *change* in the US position. Even at this late stage, Kuwait was still reluctant to ask for American help for fear of incurring Arab wrath. The US was equally reluctant to intervene and risk inflaming a tense situation with 100,000 Iraqi troops deployed on Kuwait's border. Events now overtook diplomatic calculations. By the end of 2 August 1990, Kuwait had been invaded and no longer existed as an independent nation.

The intelligence paper-trail in those last few days is significant as an indicator of Saddam's true intentions. Some time between Ambassador Gasparie's meeting with him on 25 July and the Jiddah talks on 31 July, the Iraqis began to reinforce their forces in the south. They sent ammunition and logistic convoys to their forward divisions and deployed from box leaguers of armour into attack formations. In Washington, intelligence analysts immediately picked up the change in status, probably from a combination of satellite reconnaissance and signals intelligence, and alerted the White House and State Department that Iraqi force levels and capabilities were now consistent with a genuine intention to attack. The force was now "disproportionate to the task at hand if. . . it is really meant as a bluff, in the words of a DIA intelligence report of 30 July. The Pentagon and DIA continued that Saddam, in their opinion, "intends to use this force". This stands as a clear and timely intelligence warning, by any objective standards.

The rest of the US administration, however, trusting in Ambassador Gasparie's upbeat assessment, Saddam's soothing public utterances and a genuine belief that talks could still make progress, did nothing. A French source even claimed that Washington had an impeccable intelligence indicator of Iraqi intentions. The NSA allegedly had intercepted an Iraqi diplomatic assessment that listed America's track record of "inactivity and passivity" in the face of strong actions in the past: Cyprus 1974, the Chinese in Tibet and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 were apparently listed as examples where the USA stood back and did nothing. There could only be one reason for Iraq to be taking such a close interest in America's track record in the face of past provocation. If this French claim is true, it was yet another important intelligence indicator of Saddam's true intentions and thinking at the time.

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

It was all to no avail. In the early hours of 2 August 1990, two elite Iraqi Republican Guard units crossed the border to invade Kuwait. While the Soviet-supplied tanks of the Medina and Hammurabi Divisions raced southwards, a simultaneous *coup de main* operation seized the oil islands of Warbah and Bubiyan and special forces units attacked key points in Kuwait city. Within twenty-four hours the fighting was all over. Remarkably, the Kuwaitis took three hours after the fighting started before they finally called on the USA to help, and even then qualified their call for military aid with the plea that it be kept "confidential, so as not to inflame the situation".

Their plea was pointless. The situation was inflamed enough already with Kuwaitis being rounded up and shot. Kuwait had become an occupied province of Iraq. One gleam of hope for the future came, however, from a most unlikely humint source. The second in command of the Saudi Arabian Military Intelligence Agency dressed up as a wandering Bedouin and early in the occupation wandered inside Kuwait for three days noting Iraqi units before returning, undetected, to his relieved superiors to give them an up-to-date and accurate report of the deployments, equipment and morale of the Iraqi army of occupation. No amount of signals intelligence or satellite reconnaissance could give the kind of insights that this old-fashioned human intelligence reporting provided. Both have their place in the collation of good information.

Just as the Israelis had failed to spot impending trouble in 1973, and the British had ignored intelligence of the Argentine build-up before the Falklands War in 1982, so the United States had been lulled by its own diplomats and political establishment into pigeon-holing solid intelligence on Iraqi capabilities and intentions in 1990. Even so, the question about the intelligence mistakes of the Gulf War is not so much *how* the Bush administration missed all the indicators, but *why*. The failure

was certainly not one of intelligence collection or collation - the USA has a vast establishment for that - but of analysis and interpretation. Yet again, it seems to prove that US policy overall, and perhaps foreign policy in particular, is frequently not centrally controlled but prey to a number of competing domestic influences. These forces may have a vested interest in not acknowledging the gravity of a crisis, or, indeed, in admitting that there is a crisis at all. According to the *ABC* correspondent, John Cooley, speaking in 1991,

Strong but essentially parochial commercial interests, such as continued grain sales to Iraq and economic and banking crises at home, helped the Bush Administration, plus many Congressmen and others, to turn a blind eye to the nature and the obviously aggressive goals of Saddam Hussein.

Aided by Kuwait's terror of alienating the rest of the Arab world by openly asking for US assistance, that says it all.

It seems astonishing that the military success of the Gulf War, with at least 15,000 Iraqis killed and 30,000 wounded against less than 1,000 coalition casualties, can be regarded as in some senses a failure. The success of the military and logistics forces on the ground, the accuracy of the new smart weapons shown nightly on TV by clinical and rather smug Air Force briefing officers, gives the impression of unrelieved success. In fact, not all the pictures of smart weapons were released to the public. There is endless footage of smart bombs focusing stubbornly on obscure patches of desert, and even one - rapidly suppressed - sequence where a TV camera in the nose of a smart bomb shows a bridge, with people on it, getting ever closer. The last frame is of a terrified Iraqi civilian's face as he suddenly looks up. Then the screen goes black. The military wisely chose not to show this particular

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

technical achievement on primetime TV. NATO's subsequent bombing mistakes in Kosovo in the 1999 war serve only to emphasize the limitations of these supposedly smart missiles.

In the middle of all this military success and technological achievement, one area, sadly, failed in several respects despite the enormous sums of money invested in it: intelligence. Had the battlefield successes not obscured this failure, we would have heard much more about the shortcomings of US and allied intelligence both before and during the war. Long before the war, from the outbreak of the revolution in Iran in 1979, the West consistently underestimated the threat that Iraq under Saddam Hussein posed to Western interests and the Gulf region. Instead of being seen correctly as just one unstable factor in a highly unstable double-sided equation, Iraq was hailed as a valuable counter balance to Iran's brand of Shi'ite fundamentalism. The US actually secretly supported Iraq with several intelligence and training programmes.

This was a serious failure of both policy and intelligence analysis, the more so because the friends of the West in the Gulf had warned over and over again that Saddam Hussein's particular blend of tyranny, military capabilities and restless ambition were as destabilizing as anything the mad mullahs of Tehran could dream up. For some unexplained reason this advice was consistently overlooked and Saddam represented to the policy-makers of the West as a force for a more stable Middle East. The various Western intelligence agencies must bear a heavy responsibility for this Pollyanna-like misrepresentation and failure of analysis, particularly in the years 1985-9.

The judgment is all the more harsh because the intelligence agencies did not miss any of the intelligence available on Iraq before the Gulf War. On the contrary, they seem to have diligently collected it all. They just failed to understand the significance of what it really represented. As one CIA officer said ruefully afterwards, "All we needed was one goddam

agent on the RCC." Good spies giving good intelligence on dictators' fluid intentions can be difficult to achieve. It did not take a spy in the camp to discern just what sort of unstable tyrant Saddam Hussein was; there was a wealth of real evidence already available to Western observers.

The West had a long history of less than principled support for Saddam Hussein. In 1981, despite a determined Israeli sabotage attack on the Marseilles dock shipping the vital parts, the French completed the Osirak nuclear plant in Iraq. The Israelis promptly bombed the plutonium-producing facility to the undisguised fury of the French President, François Mitterrand, and the undisguised delight of the US Carter administration which had supplied the Israeli attackers with up-to-date targeting intelligence from their satellites.

Despite this initial setback Western military support flowed to Saddam throughout the 1980s. The French alone did \$2 billion worth of business each year and sold over \$5.6 billion dollars' worth of arms to assist Saddam's forces in the first Gulf war. The French were rapidly joined by the ever-hungry US arms companies. America began pumping arms into Iraq after 1982: helicopters, marine engines for warships, ammunition and spare parts. American aid grew as the war with Iran dragged on. In 1984 Congress approved the "tilt to Iraq" and the USA took Iraq off the official list of nations sponsoring terrorism. By the mid-1980s America was even giving free trade credits to Baghdad of half a billion dollars simply for the Iraqis to buy 150,000 tons of American rice.

The USA was not alone. Britain jumped on the commercial bandwagon of profiting out of Saddam's need for support. Up to the very moment Iraq invaded Kuwait, Britain was supplying radars, communications equipment and even - astonishingly - a nuclear development package including such dangerous toys as plutonium and thorium for nuclear reactors, to go with the jet engines, artillery fire-control systems

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

and new rocket-launcher artillery missiles from a Vickers company subsidiary. These goodies also included the supply of the potentially lethal chemicals thiodiglycol and thionyl chloride, whose only conceivable use was to make poison gases, and to ram the point home their antidote, Piptil, a nerve-gas suppressant sold by MCP Ltd.

Not everyone in the intelligence community was easy about this lethal trade to supply a murderous dictator with weapons of mass destruction. In March 1992 Robin Robinson, a highly-principled Quaker civil servant, resigned from the Joint Intelligence Committee Secretariat, citing his concerns about the hypocrisy of the British government's arms trade with Iraq.

It made little difference. Trade with Iraq was big business.

In one of the more murky moves, in the late 1980s a US-Iraq Trade Forum was established by a retired American Ambassador, Marshall Wiley, representing the world of the big arms manufacturers, big business and government. Companies like Exxon, Mobil, Bell, Lockheed and General Motors were rapidly signed up, and even US aid seems to have been channelled to Iraq through this semi-official body. When \$4 billion mysteriously disappeared from the Atlanta branch of the Forum's Italian bank, it came as no surprise to many that it was the US Treasury that intervened to block any public inquiry.

By late 1988 the Forum, with US government support, was openly hosting a major US high technology trade fair in Baghdad. In the words of Geoff Simons, the influential and well-informed writer on Iraq, "By the late 1980s US-Iraq trade was worth billions of dollars with dozens of US companies involved. There can be no doubt that Saddam's strength was created largely by US business ambitions."

The apogee of this unpublicized US support for the Iraqi regime and its murderous leader came on 12 April 1990, when a senior American delegation consisting of senators and government officials visited Iraq. It was accompanied by

the US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie. During the course of the delegation's meeting with Saddam in Mosul, it is alleged that Glaspie actually arranged a one-to-one telephone link with President George Bush so that the US President could personally endorse the delegation's trade proposals.

What these close and now embarrassing top-level trade links with Iraq explain is why Saddam felt in 1990 that the American government *was actually on his side*. Why, with all these intimate trading links, did the USA not see the threat sooner?

The West therefore had plenty of time to study Saddam. His origins, psychology, cruelty and the true nature of his regime were well understood by intelligence staffs specializing in the region from 1969 onwards when Saddam was appointed Vice-President and given charge of Iraq's internal security apparatus. The whole development of Saddam's regime and his personality was followed closely for the next two decades. The West should not have been surprised by anything Saddam did. In the words of one British intelligence officer, specializing in Arabia and the Gulf,

Saddam was a good old-fashioned Arab dictator. Everyone knew what he was and what he was capable of. He was devious, untrustworthy, greedy, ambitious and scared shitless of being topped in yet another Iraqi coup, just like so many of his predecessors. He came out of the Iran war broke, paranoid and desperate. He was also terrified of plots - after all, his own people did have about three goes at assassinating him in the seven months before he invaded Kuwait. To think that a psychotic dictator with 5,000 tanks is going to sit back alongside a defenceless neighbour, that just happens to be one of the richest countries in the world, while they stick two fingers up and tell him to push off because he's not getting any of their money, is just plain stupid. Especially when the US

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

Ambassador says that it doesn't matter if he robs the bank. Anyone who's studied the region for any length of time could have taken bets on him trying his luck. It was a simple intelligence matter of capabilities and intentions, and knowing your man. In the circumstances, what else was Saddam Hussein to do?

The poor intelligence assessments in the run-up to the Gulf War are only one part of the indictment. Even after the invasion and the subsequent outbreak of war in January 1991, there were serious failures of intelligence both in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

To begin with, no one seemed able to determine the exact size of the Iraqi armed forces. General Schwarzkopf went to war on 16 January 1991 believing that there were 600,000 Iraqis under arms. Later the true figure was revealed to be 250,000 at the most. The problem of numbers was compounded by poor assessment of the Iraqi units' combat effectiveness. The received wisdom at the time was that the Republican Guard in particular were well-equipped, battle-hardened and loyal, dedicated and well-trained. Some intelligence analysts, seeking an easy analogy, even described them as "Saddam's Waffen-SS", equipped with the most potent Soviet hardware.

This misreading of Iraqi competence came as a result of misreading the Iraqi victory in the long and costly war with Iran from 1980 to 1988. The truth was that the Iraqis won the first Gulf War by default. Instead of realizing that Iraq had not so much *won* as Iran *lost* (because of military incompetence and poor leadership at the higher levels), the intelligence assessments gave undue weight to Iraqi combat experience, equipment and professional competence. These delusions of Iraqi capabilities spilled over into the Gulf War assessments of 1990-1.

This overestimation of combat competence on the ground

extended far more seriously into the balance in the air, where numbers and capabilities are usually subject to intense professional scrutiny. It is not just the size of a nation's equipment that counts; it is also important to know whether a nation knows how to use that equipment properly. Nowhere is this more important than in technical areas such as air power.

Both Iraq and Iran possessed large quantities of sophisticated US and Soviet weapon systems. (The Shah had even bought top-of-the-range US F-14 fighters in the 1970s.) But neither side used them well. The Iranians could not maintain their US equipment, and the Iraqis, having thus obtained air superiority by default, proved themselves incapable of pressing home co-ordinated aerial attacks on the Iranian ground forces either as long-range interdiction or as close air support. Although air intelligence officers briefed these professional weaknesses regularly between 1981 and 1988, few high-level intelligence estimates before the Gulf War highlighted these serious Iraqi deficiencies; they all harped on Iraq's numbers (which were impressive) and little on performance. The end result was that even the capabilities intelligence, it seemed, was reduced to mere bean-counting, and flawed and inaccurate bean-counting at that. It was, in the words of one seasoned intelligence observer, "not OOB (Order of Battle) Intelligence's best performance".

The progress of the "100-hour war" after the allied ground attack on 24 February 1991 raised even more questions about modern Western intelligence. The course of the battles is well documented. Less well exposed are the failures of the US and Western intelligence agencies during the fighting to support the battle commanders on the ground. It seems to be an ironic paradox that the more effort and resources that were pumped into CENTCOM, General Schwarzkopf's HQ in Saudi Arabia, the less intelligence seemed to reach the fighting units in the field. Nimble minds may construe this as a triumph of operational

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

security, but to the angry commander of a battalion of fifty tanks advancing into the smoke, fear and danger of an armoured battle with an Iraqi Republican Guard division, this view gives little comfort. Frustrated senior officers in British armoured units said after the war to intelligence officers, in an eerie echo of the Falklands nine years before, "where were you?" The truth is that the flow of intelligence to senior operational commanders at division level *and above* had never been greater. The problem was the old one of dissemination; yet again it proved extremely difficult to get intelligence disseminated downwards.

The reasons were twofold.

The first is the classic problem that much intelligence is so secret because of the way it has been collected (sigint, overhead imagery, electronic warfare, etc.) that it cannot be passed down without risk of compromising the source. "Protect the source" is the clarion call of the really secret world. In the US system it becomes "Special Compartmentalized" material and can only be released to specially cleared personnel. The fear is that the enemy will find out just how much you *do* know.

One compromise of your ability to read an enemy's codes, and he will change them. Then you can't. Some secrets really do have to be kept. It is a serious problem and the genuine efforts of intelligence officers to release sensitive information "out of channels", supported by "collateral" press reports or any other credible source should not be underestimated. If the intelligence could only have come from one secret source, however, then the risk of disclosure, compromise and waste of taxpayers' money to buy expensive intelligence technology is just too great. Ultra in the Second World War is the classic example. In 1941-2 whole Atlantic convoys were hazarded to protect the Ultra secret from Doentiz's U-Boats. It is better to have one convoy cut to ribbons than to lose the ability to protect every future convoy.

To take just two modern examples: if Saddam's entourage

knew that at precisely 13.04 Baghdad time a US spy satellite was overhead for precisely twenty-seven minutes, then all military activity would freeze or go into the hangar for the next half-hour. If Saddam's Revolutionary Guard had suspected that every conversation between Baghdad and the divisional commanders in Kuwait was being intercepted, broken and transcribed by the American NSA at Fort Meade, Maryland, then all radio communications (apart from deception transmissions designed to feed misleading intelligence to the attentive allied listeners) would have switched overnight. As the highly security-conscious Iraqis used landline telephones, the second problem never seems to have arisen.

The second reason for the poor intelligence flow during the Gulf War was relatively new, but had begun to be a serious problem in Vietnam. There was simply *too much* intelligence. The system was flooded. One satellite pass overhead (and the US had up to six Keyhole satellites available, together with high-resolution radar that can see through clouds) or a photo-reconnaissance aircraft sortie meant literally thousands - truck loads - of pictures. These had to be looked at, analysed, interpreted and briefed to decision-makers in good time.

Suddenly technology had brought the kind of secret intelligence that was only available in 1944 to Churchill and Eisenhower into a form where every battalion commander could use it if he had access through a device called the Secondary Imaging Dissemination System or SIDS. SIDS was nothing more than a high-resolution, optical transmission device rather like an incredibly sharp fax machine. At least twelve went to the Gulf, but only four worked properly. However, SIDS meant that every combat unit could theoretically get access to the latest intelligence. And they knew it. So, not unreasonably, they wanted it.

With hundreds of ground and air force commanders screaming for pictures of their targets every day, the dissemi-

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

nation system for pushing out target intelligence collapsed. In the words of an Intelligence Officer at CENTCOM, giving testimony to the US Congressional Committee after the war:

Intel data could be passed in real time . . . but because of the lack of common imagery data dissemination systems, the component [single service] commanders, as well as the forward deployed units, could not always gain timely access to imagery intelligence.

In plain English, the IO was saying that the US Army, Navy and Air Force systems turned out to be incompatible and could not pass intelligence in time. To make things worse, once the battle was joined, the system collapsed completely under its own weight of information. The US 82nd Airborne Division, set out on the west to guard the open desert flank, claimed to have received better intelligence in the end from the French screening division on its left using traditional chinagraph and paper methods than from its own HQ US XVIII Corps. The old problem of getting very secret, compartmentalized intelligence into the hands of those who really needed to use it had proved to be too difficult in the heat of action, despite all the good intentions and the best technology in the world.

Another intelligence area of less than shining triumph during the war was the "Great Scud Hunt", where Allied intelligence tried desperately to locate the Iraqis' limited stock of Scud surface-to-surface missiles. The Iraqi leader deliberately targeted his missiles against Israel, in a frantic attempt to bring the Israelis into the war and so split the Arabs off from the allied coalition. It did not work, but the track record of allied intelligence in locating the mobile missiles in order to destroy them was dismal. As one derisive special forces officer said later, "We might as well have been hunting the Snark for all the intelligence we got on Scuds."

The final major intelligence failure during the war itself was the Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) row which erupted midway through the air campaign in January and February 1991. BDA is difficult at the best of times, but air targeting depends on accurate assessment of results to measure success. The problem is that a knocked-out T72 tank dug into a defensive position behind a pile of sand still looks from the air exactly like a combat-ready T72 dug in behind a pile of sand even after it had been holed, unless its turret has been blown off or it is a smoking heap.

Quite early in the campaign it became apparent from sigint and other sources that allied air force claims for tank kills were exaggerated. This is quite normal. Aircrew always exaggerate. They enjoy being shot at no more than other men, so tend not to hang around the battlefield and its flak a moment longer than is necessary to carry out their mission. And, in all fairness, a truck can easily look like a tank from an aircraft attacking at 400 knots. The inevitable intelligence policy of confirmation from other sources caused considerable friction with aircrews, who considered CENTCOM's estimates to be much too conservative. The air forces (argued the air forces) had spent a fortune in time and expensive weapons - they *must* have achieved better results. NATO's later efforts in 1999 against Serb armour in Kosovo were to be depressingly similar: air power has serious limitations.

Into this interservice dispute now came the pessimists of the CIA and DIA in Washington. They claimed that, far from being too conservative, the BDA results reported by CENTCOM were themselves exaggerated and should be reduced. An infuriated Schwarzkopf told the experts from Washington to "sort it out" with his harassed intelligence staff, and grumbled later that "he'd still be sitting on his ass after the war if he'd relied on the [intelligence] agencies to agree that the Iraqi military had been weakened sufficiently for the ground war to begin on 24 February 1991." As a matter of record, the

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

final confirmed attrition rates at the start of the ground forces' attack on 24 February are interesting. At that point the Iraqis had lost only 40 per cent of their tanks, 30 per cent of their armoured personnel carriers and about 42 per cent of their artillery to the strategic air campaign. This was a far cry from the extravagant claims of some aviators that up to 80 per cent of the Iraqi equipment had been destroyed, and that, "If the war had been just left to the air forces, they could have done the job on their own."

The BDA row festered on throughout the war and afterwards, poisoning relations between the Gulf and Washington, the ground forces and the air forces and proving, that, for all the "gee-whiz" technology, intelligence still couldn't be relied on to get it right when it really mattered. For the US armed forces, at least, the ghosts of Vietnam reared their heads again. In the words of the senior US Marine officer in the Gulf, Lieutenant-General Walter Boomer: "I remember being in Vietnam for two tours, and not getting a single piece of useful intelligence, not once. It has gotten better, but we still can't get down to the company level what they need to do the job."

The coalition forces succeeded in the Gulf, but the contribution of intelligence during the battles was sometimes far from the definition of "accurate information passed in a timely fashion to decision-makers to enable them to make correct decisions."

"Progress means deterioration" is not just the cry of technophobes. Anyone who has ever wished for the voice of an honest-to-God telephone receptionist instead of a pre-recorded message saying "press #1 if you know the extension you require" will understand how many commanders in the Gulf felt about the technology sold to them by slick intelligence salesmen from the US defence contractors.

When military's new techno-intelligence system was running

in real time - and when it actually worked - information would be passed directly to the operational commanders on the ground. Thus the J-STARS aircraft, which took radar images of enemy troops moving across the desert from a safe distance, were able to patch their radar pictures directly to the operational fire-control cells in the coalition divisions below, enabling the gunners to select and engage targets at will, without any reference to intelligence. "Intelligence" had become, in naval terms, "action (or operational) information". It worked.

When the intelligence came from super-sensitive or secret sources, however, such as high-resolution satellites using millimetric wavelength synthetic-aperture radar or from secret intercepts of high-level radio transmissions, then it had to be protected. The full intelligence cycle not just of collection but of collation, interpretation and dissemination had to be carried out in conditions of absolute security and only disseminated to those with a strict need to know.

In 1960, that would have meant a few overhead photographs or a single red-hot piece of signals intelligence. By 1990, however, it meant over 20,000 images from a single satellite pass, with aircraft bombed-up on the runway, "turning and burning", impatient for the photographs of their targets. Intelligence on the battlefield was no longer the sphere of a few highly trained and expert specialists. Intelligence had become a growth industry with a distribution problem for its product only rivalled by that other battle winner, logistics. During the Gulf War, the information revolution had transformed military intelligence and the military staff systems struggled hard to keep up, not always successfully. The information age had arrived.

Away from the blast furnace of the battlefield, older, calmer lessons remained. If battlefield and operational intelligence was less than perfect during the Gulf War, then it was plain old-fashioned diplomatic miscalculation and bungled national intelligence that got the West into the war in the first place. There

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

was no failure of technology or intelligence staff support systems before the Gulf War. There was a serious failure of human intelligence. The target was human too, of course: Saddam Hussein, the "onlie begetter" of the Gulf War. The whole war and the crisis that preceded it are to be found in his psyche, insecurity and his actions. Add to his personal problems a desperate need for oil and easy money, and much is explained.

The Gulf crisis was, in fact, a good old-fashioned mistake: an intelligence blunder of classic dimensions. Yet, using the information available at the time, it is now clear that a great deal was known about Saddam, and not just by retired intelligence officers specializing in Iraqi affairs. Nor were the intelligence failures limited to the Western intelligence agencies and Saddam's blundering. Saddam's fellow Arabs made the same mistakes as well. Prince Khaled bin Sultan, the senior Saudi General and Joint Forces Commander in the Gulf, later acknowledged that even the Saudi Arabian Intelligence Service - which tried to keep a very close eye on Saddam indeed - got it wrong, too. After the war, the Prince admitted ruefully that, despite a very clear Arab understanding of Saddam's temperament, character and regime, they too had misread the Iraqi leader's intentions. It was "a failure of human intelligence". Saddam, said the Prince, "had bluffed us". The aim of intelligence is to see through an aggressor's bluffs.

In a curious echo of the British and the Argentines nine years before, serious intelligence miscalculations and mistakes happened on *both* sides before the Gulf War. Iraq's intelligence system misled its leaders just as badly as did those in the West. It was obvious that the Iraqi dictator had little understanding of international affairs. His Revolutionary Command Council, as sycophantic a support group as any dictator could wish for, was unlikely to tell him the truth and risk being put up against a wall and shot, even if they had a separate view of events. It was the task of his intelligence

services to tell him the unvarnished truth. In a despotism like Iraq it is a brave man who tells the great leader what he does not want to hear.

Badly informed throughout, Saddam blundered into the *political* mistake of thinking that he could get away with his aggression without retaliation - partly encouraged by the US Ambassador - and the *military* mistake of believing that his armed forces could win any war. He was wrong on both counts and was lucky to escape unscathed. Even so, Saddam survived the Gulf War, to the surprise of many observers. To the astonishment of Westerners who have still not grasped what makes the Arab world tick, once Saddam saw that he could survive and that coalition forces were not bent on attacking or deposing him personally, he claimed a great victory against the Americans and their imperialist allies.

Had not his heroic Republican Guards stopped the USA and their lackeys dead on the Basra road, denying them the advance on Baghdad? It must be true, he trumpeted, for I am here and where are Bush and Thatcher? Gone! The victor of the Gulf War bestrode Iraq in the 1990s like some vengeful Colossus, putting down rebellion and tightening his grip on power. He erected victory memorials to his army's "defeat of colonialism". Like his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, he even had bricks with his name cast in the clay to commemorate his heroic triumph for all time in new buildings that would immortalize his reign. Saddam never entirely deluded himself, however. He learned from his defeat, seeking to repair the damage to his regime and to build up his weapons capability to ensure that he would not be defeated again. In the words of a former head of Iraqi Military Intelligence, "Saddam's theory is war. He cannot survive without war."

Next time, Saddam determined, he would have weapons of mass destruction, especially chemical and biological weapons, to enforce his will. Once the UNSCOM weapon inspection

"If Kuwait grew Carrots, We Wouldn't Give a Damn"

teams were kicked out of Iraq in the late 1990s, there was little to impede his weapon development programme. The key to the instability in the Gulf remained, as before 1990, in the paranoia and instability of the dictator's character and the prospect of easy oil and money.

The Gulf War was the first test of President George Bush's New World Order and it succeeded. The coalition's vigorous response, with Moscow and the European Union supporting the new *Pax Americana* based on armed enforcement, established a global precedent. In terms of lives - but not Iraqi lives - the war was relatively cheap. The coalition lost only 223 killed and 697 wounded. Ironically, many of the allied casualties were caused by trigger-happy young American pilots, bringing the old German D-Day joke up to date: "When the USAF comes over, *even the Allies duck . . .*"

The Gulf war also made clear that aggression against a neighbour is an international issue in itself and can be punished, should the nations concerned wish to do so over an important issue like oil. The US and Western economic interest was, in the words of the secret US national policy guidance document, "for a secure guaranteed flow of cheap oil from tame oil-producing states who could be manipulated at will". Lawrence Korb, an Assistant US Secretary of Defense, spelled it out in 1990, "If Kuwait grew carrots, we wouldn't give a damn."

In order to influence the future we have to understand the present. The present will always reflect human nature, where greed and the thirst for land or power, the battle for resources - oil, water or minerals - and the unremitting lust for conquest still lie deep in the psyche of the powerful. These catalysts for conflict remain unchanging in all ages and all societies. Only by knowledge of the present and the past can we control the future. Intelligence is our warning mechanism against future Saddams.

Not just their capabilities: their intentions too.

Will It Ever Get Any Better?

Any examination of intelligence disasters reveals the same old problems coming round again and again. It is easy to see the main problems of intelligence; they tend, hardly unsurprisingly, to follow the intelligence cycle. More depressing is that many of the problems of incompetence did not come from the bowels of the intelligence organizations, but from the *users*.

Stalin is perhaps the best - or the worst - example of a bad user. He had the details of Barbarossa placed in front of him from almost every intelligence source imaginable: yet he ignored them all. The intelligence was wasted. Not only that, it was a high-risk option for any of his intelligence officers to tell him the truth. Against such stupidity or deliberate blindness, even the best intelligence service in the world (a fair description of the Soviet NKGB and GRU in 1941) was effectively neutralized. The moral is clear: users of intelligence - the customers - are just as much part of the intelligence process as are the specialist intelligence operators and staffs. It is the users who set the requirement for intelligence and are the recipients of the end result. They alone are ultimately responsible for the quality of the intelligence they are given and the uses to which it is put.

Where the *providers* of intelligence seem to go wrong is not in their ability to carry out the individual parts of the intelligence cycle, such as the collection of secret information, but mainly in their organization and their ability to disseminate effectively. To take one example: the USA had no intelligence organization before Pearl Harbor, but the various US agencies

Will It Ever Get Any Better?

were collecting intelligence like mad: the FBI, the Army, the Navy and the State Department were all in possession of highly revealing indicators of Japan's plans. The problem was that no one was pulling it all together and briefing the President in a timely and integrated way. The problem was lack of organization.

A cynic might say, "what's new?" Certainly the concept of competing intelligence agencies seems to be so embedded in the US system that an observer might be forgiven for thinking that Washington is *still* incapable of controlling them, and that the Americans have chosen to adopt Whitehall's technique of pretending that an enforced necessity is really a virtue. Such an explanation should fool no one, because the Gulf War (like later events in Kosovo in 1999) showed with an eerie sense of *dejd vu* that the same problems that had dogged US intelligence in Vietnam are still around: bitter differences of opinion between the CIA and the military targeting mistakes and internal feuding about the advice to be put forward by the collection agencies. The truth is that the USA still cannot coordinate its intelligence agencies properly in a crisis, however much information it collects. It cannot manage its assets. Like medieval barons, the big intelligence agencies feud between themselves for power and influence at the presidential court.

Even if intelligence is available and is well managed, there is still no guarantee that it will be used properly. Before the Falklands War the British had excellent indicators of trouble from Argentina but allowed their Foreign Office to manipulate the intelligence system to filter out any unpleasant facts that did not fit its own policies. To a degree the Israelis did the same before the Yom Kippur War, although for an entirely different reason. At least the Israeli politicians' interference in the military intelligence system in 1973 was designed to keep the decision to order an expensive national mobilization in the hands of those with the final responsibility for it. On the other

hand, with the Falklands War, before 1982 the British effectively allowed one government department to keep an unpalatable truth out of the hands of the politicians who would have to answer for events. It seems that there is no one consistent theme to account for all these intelligence blunders.

There are consistent patterns of behaviour that derive from human nature, however. For example fear is often a motive. In 1941 Stalin was just plain scared. With Hitler's victorious legions massing on his frontier, who can blame him? Incompetence however, rates higher than fear of a potential enemy; Pearl Harbor and the British loss of Malaya are triumphs of institutional bungling. Add to this a contempt for the Japanese at the time, and both events become monuments to the folly of underestimating your enemy. Underestimating of the enemy is perhaps the only theme common to intelligence disaster, because from underestimation of an enemy comes the misreading of an enemy's intentions. There is no shortage of examples: in the Falklands, in the Gulf, at Yom Kippur in 1973, enemy intentions were wilfully misinterpreted because it was felt that the enemy would not do the very thing for which he had prepared over many years, and for which he had built up a substantial and obvious capability.

The blend of inefficiency, internal feuding and underestimation of potential adversaries produces a consistent result, as steady as a drumbeat: the big intelligence organizations can always be relied on for one thing - to get it wrong. It is a frightening track record. In 1991, after the Gulf War, Daniel Moynihan rounded on the American intelligence establishment in the *New York Times*: "For a quarter of a century the CIA has been repeatedly wrong about every major political and economic question entrusted to its analysts." He was right.

The CIA is not alone in this, we can be sure. There was no rush of British intelligence agencies in 1978 warning that the Shah was soon going to be toppled in Iran, or that the Russians

Will It Ever Get Any Better?

were going to invade Afghanistan in 1979. Nor was there a clamour from the big agencies that Saddam Hussein was about to do something foolish in Kuwait; and if the Israelis knew at the time, they weren't telling anyone.

Since then things do not seem to have improved. The very first scapegoats of the renewed fighting that broke out between India and Pakistan in 1999 were the Indian intelligence agencies who were publicly castigated for "being too busy feuding among themselves to have alerted the government to the danger."

The truth is that all the big intelligence agencies are basically incompetent and moribund, more interested in bureaucratic survival after the end of the Cold War than in taking risks to predict future events. Despite the best military intelligence collection equipment ever seen in history, the American agencies could still bungle the attack on a well-armed group of political gangsters in Mogadishu at the cost of heavy casualties to their own soldiers, and manage to place a cruise missile accurately onto the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, when every tourist map clearly showed its location.

Knowing the position of every tank in the Balkans was not enough to ensure the triumph of NATO policy in Yugoslavia, either. On the contrary, the over-supply of information, added to excessive secrecy, almost certainly made things worse in Kosovo. The knowledge that ex-military attaches from Belgrade, armed with the latest local information on the ground, were probably sitting in the offices of the DIA, while in another building the secret-squirrel "targeteers" of the CIA and NRO were poring over satellite pictures so secret that only they were allowed access, and encouraging US decision-makers to bomb the embassy of a fellow Security Council member, just makes the big intelligence agencies look stupid.

The intelligence community seems to be obsessed more with clever collecting than with working out what it all means. The problem is of great antiquity. Even the Bible, in the book of

Proverbs, makes a clear distinction between "wisdom" and mere knowledge; the two are not the same. It is, after all, the correct interpretation and the dissemination of intelligence that is more important.

Any study of intelligence leaves us with the perennial question: what is intelligence for? Clearly it is to enable responsible people to make informed decisions. As we go into the next millennium even this definition may be changing as the information revolution catches up on the fading dinosaurs of the big intelligence agencies. Where once a spy could be put in or a satellite launched to collect a few hidden secrets, we now live in a world awash with information. "Intelligence" is available to anybody. Secrets that men would have killed for fifty years ago are freely available today on the Internet. And if they are not there this year, they soon will be as the worldwide networks double *every year*. With this growth of information technology, even the big sigint collectors like the NSA and Britain's GCHQ can hardly buy new supercomputers fast enough to tap into the flood of electronic intelligence.

In this climate the need for intelligence has changed. The difficulty of collecting the secrets has now become the challenge *offinding* the secrets among the mass of information pouring like a torrent past our nose. The difficulty is spotting the real facts we need and fishing them out as the flood pours by. The intelligence experts now have to be able to identify and retrieve the essential information quickly and in a usable form for the decision-makers.

The information revolution means that the truth really will be out there, if only we knew who has got it *when we need it*. The key intelligence players of the future will not be the collectors but the disseminators of accurate intelligence. It is now a logistic problem. It is no use if US National Reconnaissance Office has exact satellite pictures, in real time, of a NATO target in the Balkans but are unable to get the

Will It Ever Get Any Better?

intelligence to the SAS sniper team lying up in some damp wood waiting for their man to appear. The problem is becoming one of *dissemination*, because unused intelligence, however expensively and cleverly collected, is useless intelligence. Stalin's intelligence officers, if they were still alive, would doubtless be nodding their heads in fervent agreement.

Does the information revolution really change anything in intelligence at the top? The answer is still probably not. For whatever pearls of information are put before any nation's policy-makers, so long as there are human beings in the system then the system is vulnerable to the vanities and frailties of humanity: another Mountbatten, too ambitious and concerned with his own advancement; another complacent government thinking "it can't happen to us", like the British in Malaya; or another foreign service taken in by lying and deception, like those duped by Saddam Hussein in 1990. Human nature will not change.

Intelligence blunders will become very expensive mistakes in the future. The world in the twenty-first century will need to keep a close eye on who really does have nuclear weapons or other instruments of mass destruction tucked away in their production facility or even their garage out the back; for we are entering an age when the power to wage war is passing from the hands of governments back to individuals and groups. Terrorists, drug-traffickers and fanatics from extremist groups of all kinds will soon have access to the kind of awesome killing power until now the preserve of the nation-state. Electronic communications devices and security toys that were once the monopoly of governments can now be bought freely by any terrorist group with the money.

To confront this potent new threat, governments will still need intelligence, properly organized, properly resourced and properly managed. They will need to listen dispassionately to the evidence brought before them by their expensive staffs and

make sure that their system is as bungle-free as possible. Above all, they will need to see that their intelligence system can get to the very centre of a potential enemy's brain, because at the end of the day the purpose of intelligence is still to avoid nasty surprises - no more and no less.

In fact, the intelligence problem has not changed, and goes to the very heart of the historic intelligence conundrum. The most expensive intelligence collection toys can tell you what an enemy has got and where it is: but it still needs an agent in place or a spying device to tell you what an enemy is going to *do*. It is our old friend, capabilities versus intentions, that cannot be "technologized" away. We still need that oldest of weapons: a good, old-fashioned, honest spy in the enemy camp who can remember which side he is supposed to be on in a crisis, and can warn us in time to act.

With such a historic intelligence requirement, perhaps it is best to leave the final word to Sun Tzu, a Chinese general writing in about 510 BC. In his *Art of War*, he looked carefully at the problems of intelligence and espionage. Sun Tzu was a shrewd and perceptive observer not only of the military but also of their relationship with politicians and civil servants. He wrote: "A hundred ounces of silver spent for intelligence may save ten thousand ounces spent on war." It is an aphorism that has stood the test of time.

Sun Tzu also wrote probably the most profound insight into intelligence ever, and one that should hang on the wall of every president, prime minister, civil servant and general: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear a thousand battles. If you know yourself and not the enemy, for every victory you will suffer a defeat. But if you know neither yourself nor the enemy, then you are a fool and will meet defeat in every battle."

That remains the best advice for avoiding intelligence blunders.

Suggested Reading List

Hundreds of books are available on the subjects covered in this book, reflecting almost every point of view. For further details of the various operations that I have covered, the reader may find the following books the most helpful and worth consulting:

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Glossary

Abwehr	German Military Intelligence (WWII)
Agency	an organization that collects and disseminates intelligence collected by its sources (e.g., MI6)
AMAN	Israeli military intelligence
BDA	Bomb Damage Assessment
BFV	Federal German Security Service
Bletchley Park	British WWII code-breaking centre
BND	Federal German foreign intelligence service
C3	Command, Control and Communications
CIA	US foreign intelligence agency
CIG	UK Current Intelligence Groups
COMINT	Signals Intelligence
compartmentalized	information protected by special internal procedures and restricted to a limited readership
DIA	US Defense Intelligence Agency
DIS	UK Defence Intelligence Staff
Double Cross	UK WWII committee playing back turned MI5 double agents against the Germans
DSO	UK Defence Security Officer
EEI	Essential Elements of Information
Enigma	German WWII cypher machine
FBI	US internal security service
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FHO and FHW	WWII German military intelligence staffs
G2	General Staff Branch 2 - Military Intelligence and Security
GCCS	WWII UK Government Code and Cipher School
GCHQ	Government Communication Headquarters - UK sigint agency
GRU	Soviet military intelligence service
HUMINT	Human Intelligence - spies, interrogation and agents
IDF	Israeli Defence Forces
INU/O	WWII Soviet foreign intelligence analysts
INK	US State Department policy advisory group
ISSB	Inter-Services Security Board
I&W	Indicators and Warnings
J2	<i>Joint</i> military staff intelligence branch
J Stars	US high-tech real time radar surveillance plane

Glossary

JARIC	UK Joint Air Photo Reconnaissance Centre
JIC	UK Joint Intelligence Committee
KGB	Soviet secret intelligence and security service
LACIG	UK Latin America Current Intelligence Group
LAKAM	highly secretive Israeli "technical" intelligence service (nuclear)
Langley	CIA headquarters
LCS	London Controlling Section - UK WWII deception staff
MACV	US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
Magic	intercepted WWII Japanese high-level code
MIS	UK security service
MI6	UK secret intelligence service (SIS)
MI-8	US WWII code-breakers
MOD	UK Ministry of Defence
MOSSAD	Israeli overseas intelligence service
NIE	US National Intelligence Estimate
NRO	US National Reconnaissance Office (satellite)
NKVD,NKGB	forerunners of Soviet KGB
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NSA	US National Security Agency (sigint)
ONE	US Office of National Estimates
ONI	US Office of Naval Intelligence
OOB	Order of Battle
OP-20-G	US Navy WWII code-breakers
PI	Photographic Interpreter or Intelligence
PR	Photographic Reconnaissance
Purple	US WWII code-breaking of Japanese top-level signals traffic
RCC	Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council
RVN-J2	South Vietnamese joint military intelligence
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SIS (UK)	MI6
SIS (US WWII)	US Army code-breaking office (Signal Intelligence Service)
SOE	UK WWII Special Operations Executive
Source	a device or individual for collecting information; sources are controlled by <i>agencies</i>
TechInt	technical intelligence
Twenty Committee	UK WWII double agent controllers (hence 'XX' = 'double-cross')
UGS	Unattended Ground Sensor
UKUSA agreement	USUK secret treaty to share Sigint
Ultra	UK WWII codeword for intercepted Enigma traffic
VCIGS	Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff
Venona	highly secret decoding operation of 1940s NKGB spy signals traffic
Y service	general title for interception (<i>not decoding</i>) of unknown radio signals

Index

- Abwehr 24-9, 37, 68, 70, 91, 149
Afghanistan 310, 335, 356
Allara, Admiral 274
AMAN 233
Amt Mil 29
anti-tank tactics 240-1
Arab Socialist Union 224, 227
Ardennes Offensive (1944) 177, 184, 201
arms suppliers 319, 339-40
Arnhem, Battle of (1944) 2
ARVN 173, 179, 187-8, 202-8, 213
Asche, Agent 21 *see also* Schmidt, Hans
Assad, President 227
ATOM *see* missiles
Atlantis 126
Australia 107, 114, 131
Austria 249-50
Automedon MV 125-6
Axis questionnaire 68-9, 71, 97
Aziz, Tariq 315, 323

Ba'ath Party (Iraq) 314
Badr, Operation (1973) 231, 237, 242
Baillie-Grohmann, Rear-Admiral 144
Bar Lev Line 222-3, 253-5
Bar Lev, General 222
Barbarossa, Operation (1941) 38-59
Barker, Captain Nick 279, 290
Barzof, Farzad 320

Bastogne (1944) 184
Batavia 70, 75, 80, 82
battle tactics 111, 113, 240-1
BDA (Bomb Damage Assessment) 185, 347-8
Ben-Gurion, David 229
Bevan, Colonel John 18, 24-7, 31-3, 35-6
BFV 233
bin Sultan, Prince Khaled 350
Black September 223
Bletchley Park 20, 23 *see also* FECB; GC&CS
Blitzkrieg 229
Blunt, Anthony 49
'body count' 192-3, 196
Bodyguard, Plan 19-20
Bomber Command (British) 141-3
'Bombing Encyclopaedia' 309
Bomer, Karl 54
Bonaparte, Napoleon 8, 230
Bratton, Colonel Rufus 85
Brest Litovsk 38, 45, 57
Brezhnev, Leonid 225-6
Briggs, Ralph 89-90
Brooke-Popham, Sir Robert 110, 115
Brutus, Agent 27
Bulge, Battle of the (1944) 177, 184, 201
Bull, Dr Gerald 320
Burgess, Guy 49
Burwell Report (1941) 79
Bush, George 326, 329, 331-4, 336, 341, 351-2

C3 186, 188
Cairncross, John 52
Canaris, Admiral Wilhelm 28, 36-7, 108
Carrington, Lord 275, 277, 290
Carter, Jimmy 314, 339
casualties 41, 59, 60, 102, 133, 159, 169, 171-2, 181, 196, 208, 217, 221-2, 337, 352
CENTCOM 343¹, 346-7
Churchill, Sir Winston 13, 18, 47, 51-2, 76, 78, 102, 107-8, 125, 132, 136, 140, 160, 286, 345
CIAS, 166, 184-6, 189, 190-1, 211, 216, 245, 251, 326, 347, 355
CIG 287
Clausen Inquiry (1945) 93⁴
Clausen, Colonel Henry 79, 93[^]
cognitive dissonance 262, 302
Cold War 7, 177, 279, 286, 305, 312, 325
Combined Chiefs of Staff 126, 134, 142, 144-5, 160-1
Concept, The 234-5, 237
Congress, US 87, 93, 101, 331, 339, 346
Costa Mendez, Nicanor 271, 289, 291
COVSN 172
Crerar, General 141-2, 164
Crete 107
Cronkite, Walter 208, 215

Index

- 'crossover point' 196-7
Cyprus 78, 335
Czechoslovakia 23, 43
- Darwin wing 114
Da Nang (South Vietnam) 171, 203
Davidoff 289, 301
Davidson, General 204, 215
Dayan, General 248-51, 254, 256
deception plans 30, 52, 55, 178, 198
defence attaches 280-2
Desert Shield, Operation 342-52
Desert Storm, Operation 342-52
DIA 186, 258, 309-10, 335
Dien Bien Phu 168-9, 174, 177, 180, 188, 201
Dieppe 16, 18, 35
Dirty War (1976) 268
DIS 279, 283
Double Cross Committee 24, 33, 36, 149
DSO 122-3 *see also* MIS
Dutch East Indies 63, 70, 74, 90-1, 105
- Eban, Abba 238, 250
Eden, Anthony 57
Egypt 218-59
Eisenhower, Dwight David 16-17, 187, 345
Elazar, General 236, 248, 252-3
Endau Harbour 116
Endurance, HMS 273, 275, 279, 284, 291, 297, 301
Enigma code 20-1, 35, 51, 65, 70
- Falklands War (1982) 8, 261-307, 336, 355
'famous five' 49
FBI 48, 68-70, 97-8, 354
FCO 14, 140, 266-7, 272, 282, 287, 291, 300, 302, 354
FECB 77, 90, 114-16, 121
Finland 40, 45
- Fitin 50
Fortitude Operations 25-6, 30, 33
fourteen-part message 84-5, 98-9
France 137, 167, 220, 335, 339
Franks Report 278, 305-6
Freedman, Professor Lawrence 333
Fremde Heere Ost (FHO) 10
Fremde Heere West (FHW) 17, 31, 34-5
French, Colonel 87
Friedmann, William F. 65
FUSAG 27, 31, 33
fuzzy logic 311 *see also* intelligence intentions
- Galtieri, General Leopoldo Fortunate 271-2, 278-9, 288, 303, 307
Garbo, Agent 27, 35, 36
GC&CS 77, 121
GCHQ 279, 281, 283, 357
Gedaliah, Lieutenant-Colonel 246-7
Gehlan, Colonel
Gestapo 139
Giap, General 168, 174-7, 180, 204, 209, 210, 217
Glaspie, April 329-35, 341
Golan Heights 221, 232, 254, 256
Gordievsky, Oleg 52, 312-13
Great Darwin Handicap 131
Great Terror, The (1937) 40
Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere 71
'Great Game' 122
Greece 130, 137, 167
'group think' 234
GRU 49, 250, 252, 257 *see also* Soviet Intelligence Service
- Haig, General Field Marshal 13, 192
Halsecchi, Hector 280-1
Hart Inquiry (1944) 93
Hasse, General-Major Conrad 152-3
- Hastings, Max 295
Haw-Haw, Lord 142
Haydon, Major General 147
Herzog, Chaim 231, 242, 244
Hess, Rudolf 56-7
Hewell, Walther 101
Hitler, Adolf 2, 14, 16, 18, 28, 36, 45, 47, 101, 149, 219, 311, 355
Ho Chi Minh Trail 182, 188, 198
Hoover, J. Edgar 68-9, 97
Hopkins, Harry 84
House of Commons 140, 270, 284, 296, 299
Hovey, Joseph 211
Hue (North Vietnam) 203, 205
Hughes-Hallett, Captain 145-7
Hunt, Rex 283, 294
Hussein, King 223, 334
Hussein, Saddam 7, 308-52
- I & W (Indicators and Warning) 14-15, 308, 310, 328
IDF 218, 220-59
IMF 299
Indiana USS 83
Indo China 75, 109
INR 238-9 *see also* State Department
- intelligence:
capabilities 5, 308
collation 10, 99
collection plan 9, 11, 97
cycle 4, 65
daisy chain 251-2
dissemination 12, 98
intentions 5-6, 308, 311, 352
quantification 310-12
requirements 9
targeting 354-6
technical 258
techno 348-9
underestimation 62, 96, 109-11, 229-30, 315
- Internet 356
INU 50

- Invincible*, HMS 292
Iran 315-16, 324, 338, 342, 356
Iraq 220, 308-52
Islam 226-7, 243, 313, 316, 338
Ismail, General Ahmed 228, 239, 243, 252
Ismay, General 161
Israel 216, 218-59
Izzet, Ibrahim 334
- J-19 (Japanese Code) 69
J2 (Joint Intelligence Staff) 186, 192, 203, 210
Jabotinsky, Vladimir 229
Japan 60-132
Japanese-Soviet Pact (1941) 70-1
JARIC 285 *see also* photo reconnaissance
Jeff, Agent 25
Jenkins, Simon 265
Jewish Dispora 218, 223
Jiddah Talks 333
JN-25 67
Jodl, Field Marshal 34, 51
Johnson, President Lyndon (LBJ) 171-2, 189, 191-2, 216
Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) 184, 189, 191-2, 216
Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) 8, 14, 57, 100, 150, 190, 238, 273-6, 286-7, 301
Jordan 221, 232, 324
Jubilee, Operation 146, 149, 162 *see also* Dieppe; Rutter
Junction City, Operation 172
junta, Argentine military 268-307
- Keitel, Marshal 34
Kelpers 264, 271, 274, 300
Kennedy, President John F. 167, 170-1, 194
Kennedy, Robert 216
Keyes, Admiral Sir Roger 136-7
- KGB 249 *see also* Soviet Intelligence Service
Khalkin Gol, Battle of 108
Khe Sanh (South Vietnam) 199-217
Khnoi Nghai (general uprising) 207
Khomeini, Ayatollah 313, 315-16
Khota Baru (Malaya) 112
Kimmel, Admiral 78-80, 82, 91-4
King, Mackenzie 141
Kissenger, Henry 238-9, 246, 251
Knesset 231
Kondor Legion 23 *see also* Enigma
Korea 75, 115
Kosovo 338, 347, 354, 356
Kra, Isthmus of (Thailand) 75, 115 *see also* Matador, Operation
Kramer, Lieutenant Commander 84-5
Kreisky 249
Krummacher, General 34
Krushev, General 194
Kuala Lumpur 112, 119-20
Kuhlentahl, General 34-5
Kuwait 308, 310, 313, 316-52
- LACIG 287, 291, 293 *see also* CIG
Laos 170, 198
Las Malvinas *see* Falklands War
LCS (London Controlling Section) 17-19, 23, 33, 35, 148
Leach, Admiral Sir Henry 296
League of Nations 61
Lebanon 220, 223, 232, 236-7
Lebow, Richard 303
Lexington, USS 263
'limited response' 177
Loan, Police General 207
Lombardo, Admiral 274, 279, 289
- Lovat, Lord 155, 162
Love, Colonel Stephen 280-3, 290
Lownds, Colonel 201
Luftwaffe 139
Lurline, SS 88
Luttwak, Edward 235
- MacNamara, Robert 185-7, 192-3, 201, 209, 216
MacNaughton, General 141
MACV 170, 180-2, 184, 187, 189-92, 196-7, 203-5, 210-11, 214
Magic (Japanese code) 65-7, 70, 84, 94
Maginot Line 222
Maisky, Ambassador 42
Malaya 3, 64, 105-32, 137, 355, 357
Market Garden, Operation 2
Marshall, General 67, 85-6, 138
maskirovka 250
Masterman, Sir John 24, 33, 36, 68
Matador, Operation 115
Matson Shipping Company 88
McEwan, Captain 126
Meir, Golda 234, 249, 252, 257
Menendez, Mario Benjamin 297
Menzies, Sir Stuart 28 *see also* SIS
MIS 24, 68, 122, 233
MI6 *see* SIS
MIS 65
Michel, Lieutenant Colonel 29-31
MiG-23 231, 241
Minh, Ho Chi 167-8, 169, 180, 207
missiles 305
AGTM 240-1
Sagger 240-1, 255-6, 258
SAMS 240-1, 255-6, 258
Scud 241, 346-7
mobilization 236-7, 251, 354
MoD (UK) 267, 273, 275

Index

- Molotov 43-5, 48, 57
Montaneros 268
Montgomery, General 143, 160, 164
Moody Brook (Falkland Islands) 294
Moon, Captain John 212
Morgan, Major 123-4
Mossad 233, 243, 320
Mountbatten, Captain Lord Louis 134-9, 141, 144-53, 156, 160-4
Mubarak 327, 333
Munich Agreement (1938) 41, 44
Mutt, Agent 25
- Nagano, Admiral 73
Nakajima, Colonel 116
Nasser, Colonel Gamel Abdel 220, 222, 224, 244
nationalism, Arab 224
Nationality Bill (1981) (UK) 274
NATO 7, 258, 261, 325, 347, 356
Naval Party 89, 295
Nazi Party 29, 38
Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon 351
nerve gas 340 *see also* arms suppliers
newspapers 73, 92
Niagara, Operation 200
Nicaragua 286
Nichols, Tom 92
NIE 190, 192, 197
Niosoviet Foreign Intelligence Office 42
Nixon, Richard 216, 238
NKGB 42, 353 *see also* Soviet Intelligence Service
NLF 169, 145
Nomoru, Ambassador 70-1
NORAD 14
Norman, Major 295
Normandy 30-5
North, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver
Nott, John 274
- NRO 285, 357 *see also* satellites
NSA 186, 202, 284, 335, 345, 357
NVA 172, 177
- oil 62, 227, 316-25, 332
ONE 186, 190, 197, 287
ONI 71, 81, 91, 93, 186
OOB 310, 343
OP-20-G 65-6
OPEC 317-19, 323, 332
Operation Rutter (1942) 139, 142, 148, 161
OPNAV 74
Orange (Japanese code) 66
Oshima, Ambassador 33
Osirak nuclear reactor (Iraq) 321, 339
Oslo package 28-9
Otto 51
Ottoman Empire 322
'out of area' operations 307
Outremer 219
Overlord, Operation 16-31
- PA-K2 (Japanese code) 69
Palestine 218-19, 249-50
Parkinson, Professor 166, 190
Pas de Calais 26, 33-5
Patton, General 27, 32-3
Pearl Harbor 60-100, 165, 210, 257, 355
Pentagon 329, 334
Percival, General 103, 123, 129, 131
Perlmutter, Professor 324-5
Peron, General Juan 266-7
Philby, Kim 49
photographic reconnaissance 26, 47, 148, 157
PhuQuoc Island 119
Piptil 340 (nerve gas antidote) *see also* arms suppliers
Poland 20-3, 44-5, 51, 55
Popov, Dusko *see* Tricycle Agent
Porat, Ben 259
- Port Stanley (Falkland Islands) 291, 294, 297
Prince of Wales, HMS 143
- Qaddafi, Colonel 327
Quart Doi Nhan Dan 174
Quang Tri (North Vietnam) 214-15
Qui Nonh (South Vietnam) 202, 213
- radar 83
Radio Hanoi 180
RAF 106, 159
Ramadan 242
Ranneft, Captain 90-1
RCA Radio 87
RCC313, 323, 327, 339, 351
Reagan, Ronald 271, 314
Red Cross 32
Red Orchestra 52
Reich Security and Intelligence Service 29
Reichswehr 28
Republican Guard (Iraqi) 325, 336, 342, 351
Repulse, HMS 143
revolution, impact on neighbouring countries of 315
Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty (1939) 43
Ridley, Nicholas 269, 273, 275
Rjewsk, Marian 21
Robbins, Captain 214-15
Roberts, General 141, 152, 156-7
Robinson, Robin 340
Rocheford, Commander 98
Roegge, Captain Zur See 127-8
Rolling Thunder bombing campaign (US) 188
Roman Empire 105, 219
Rommel, General 17, 240
Roosevelt, Theodore 60-2, 76, 86, 100, 138, 140
Ros, Enrique 289, 291
Rovno Incident (1941) 47
Rowlands, Tiny 284
Royal Dutch Shell 105

- Royal Engineers 131
 Royal Marines 294
 Royal Navy 96, 107
 RPG-7 241
 rubber 104, 106, 128
 RUC 187
 Rumaila Oil Field (Iraq/
 Kuwait border) 323
 RVN-J2 187
- Sabri, Aly 224-5
 Sadat, Anwar 224, 238, 244,
 254
 Safford, Lawrence 65-6, 89
 Saigon 181, 189, 198, 203
 Sandanistas 286
 satellite intelligence 285,
 345, 349, 356-7
 Saudi Arabia 227, 324, 336,
 350, 357
 Schellenberg, General
 Walter 29, 36
 Schmidt, Hans *see* Asche,
 Agent
 Schonau Incident (1973)
 248-50
 Schulze-Boysen spy network
 52
 Schwarzkopf, General 13,
 342, 347
 Schweiter, General 212-13
 Scie river 153, 155
 Second World War (1939-
 45) 16-164
 security 146, 152, 257, 344-5
 Shivers, Robert 97
 Sicherheitsdienst (SD) 27,
 29, 31, 37
 SIDS 345
 Signals Intelligence Service
 (US) 65-6
 Siman-Tov, Lieutenant 247-
 8
 Simons, Geoff 340
 Sinai desert 221
 Singapore 102-32, 137
 SIS (MI6) 26, 28, 72, 122,
 152, 157, 279, 312
 Six-Day War (1967) 218,
 228
 Smith, General Walter
 Bedell 190
- SOE 152, 157
 South Georgia Island
 (Falkland Islands) 289-
 91
 South Sandwich Islands
 (Falkland Islands) 273,
 293
 South Thule Island
 (Falkland Islands) 269,
 273
 Soviet Army 16, 226, 304
 Soviet Intelligence Service
 38-9, 42, 46, 49, 52-3,
 59
Soviet Military Power 309-
 10
 Soviet Union 38-59, 222,
 226, 241, 307
 Spain 23, 28, 34
 Special Branch (British)
 123-4
 St Nazaire raid 138
 Stalin, Joseph 16, 38-59, 70,
 77, 133, 140, 355
 Stark, Admiral 67, 85-6, 92
 Suez Crisis 220, 224-56
 supergun 320
 Syria 218-59
- Tahiti 78
 Tal, General 248
 tanks 154, 156, 239-41, 261-
 2, 347
 Taranto 96-7
 Task Force (British) 296,
 303
 Tate, Agent 17, 24, 27
 television 171, 206-7, 337
 Ten-Hour War (1969) 221
 Tet Offensive (1968) 165-
 217
 Thailand 74, 80, 109, 112,
 118
 Thatcher, Margaret 250,
 271, 273-5, 295, 299,
 305, 307, 351
 Thomas, Shenton 127-8
 Timoshenko, Marshal 50,
 55,
 tin 104, 106, 128
 Titus 219
 torpedoes 96-7
- Transjordan 220
 Tricycle, Agent 68-9, 71, 98
 Tsuji, Colonel Masanobu
 117
 Turkey 14-15
 Tuy Hoa (South Vietnam)
 211-13
- UAE 317, 319, 323-5
 UGS 200
 Ultra 20, 65, 354
 United Nations 224, 244,
 246, 257, 264-5, 270,
 297
- units:
 battalions
 3 Commando UK 155
 4 Commando UK 155,
 162
 40 Commando UK 158
 42 Commando UK 295
 Calgary Tank 156
 Cameron Highlanders
 (Canada) 155
 Essex Scottish (Canada)
 156
 Regiment Mount Royal
 158
 Royal Hamilton Light
 Infantry 156
 Royal Regiment of
 Canada 155
 South Saskatchewan 155
- regiments
 570 German Infantry
 Regiment 153
 571 German Infantry
 Regiment 151
- brigades
 9 Marine, USMC 171
 173 Airborne US 211-13
- divisions
 I Cavalry (US) 214-15
 8 Australian 130
 9 British 131
 II British 131
 16 Egyptian 244
 18 British 130
 20 Indian 168
 82 Airborne (US) 346
 101 Airborne (US) 181,
 193

Index

- Hammurab Guards (Iraq) 336
Medina Guards (Iraq) 336
18 US Corps 346
corps
18 US Corps 346
armies
British 4th 25, 31
Egyptian 2nd & 3rd 256
German 15th 34, 163
UNSCOM 352
Urmansky, Ambassador 48
Urquhart, Major Brian 2
US-Iraq Trade Forum 340-1
US State Department 239, 246, 252, 326, 330-1, 354
Ushuaia (Argentina) 279
Vaagso Raid (1942) 138
Varengville (France) 153
Vaux, Colonel 295
Vendetta, Operation 30
Venona decrypts (GCHQ) 49
Vietcong 169, 175
Vietminh 168-70
Vietnam War (1961-75) 167-217
Villa, Brian Loring 138
Viola, General Roberto 271, 278
Vlieland, C. A. 129
von Cramer, General 32
von Paulus, General 2
von Roenne, Baron Alexis 17, 19, 24-7, 29, 31-6
von Rundstedt, Field Marshall 17, 149, 163, 184
von Schulenburg, Ambassador 47, 52-4
Warbah Island (Kuwait) 336
Wehrmacht 16, 31, 32, 151
Weizmann, Chaim 229
Welles, Sumner 48
Wellington, Duke of 8
Western Union Cables 87
Westmoreland, General 177, 184-5, 189, 192, 201, 203^{A*}, 215-16
Whitelaw, William 296
Wiley, Marshall 340
Williams, Ambassador 277, 281
Winds Code 81, 88-90
Wingate, Ronald (LCS) 18
wire taps 97-8
Wirtz, Colonel 204, 209
Wolfe, Tom 310
Woods, Sam 48
Y Service 25
Yamamoto, Admiral 73
Yamashita, General 117
Yankee Station 186
Yardley, Herbert 65
Yemen 324
Yom Kippur 218-59, 299, 355
Young, Peter 155
Yugoslavia 54, 356
Zamir 249
Zeebrugge Raid (1918) 136
Zeira, General 248, 251, 253, 259
Zeitler, General 32
Zero Fighter 113-14
Zhukov, Marshal 50, 55, 57
Zionism 219, 229, 323, 326
Zossen 27, 51