Spooked

Spooked:
Britain, Empire and Intelligence since 1945

Edited by

Patrick Major and Christopher R. Moran

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2009

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1312-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1312-9

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PREFACE

Most of the essays in this volume arose out of the academic conference, 'Spooked: Cultures of Intelligence in Britain 1945-2001', convened at the University of Warwick, on 12 May 2007. (Where we felt there was a significant gap we have commissioned one contribution.) Organised by The Humanities Research Centre at Warwick (HRC), and attracting over 75 delegates from across the UK, the conference brought together some of the best and brightest scholars in the field, as well as some former intelligence practitioners, to explore, in a non-partisan forum, the history of British intelligence, broadly defined, and its role with respect to international relations and modern politics in the round. The editors are most grateful to the contributors for revising their papers for this collection. For his assistance and boundless energy on the day of the conference, a special debt of gratitude is owed to Dr. James Brown. Nor would the conference have been successful without the administrative talents of Sue Dibben, HRC Secretary, to whom we express our sincere appreciation and thanks.

Patrick Major and Christopher Moran, December 2009

INTRODUCTION

THE PURSUIT OF INTELLIGENCE HISTORY: METHODS, SOURCES AND TRAJECTORIES

CHRISTOPHER R. MORAN

This introductory essay is intended as a brief overview to the history of the academic study of intelligence. Divided into four sections – Absence, Emergence, Efflorescence and New Directions – it outlines the major themes and approaches that have characterised intelligence historiography, as it has been practised in Britain since 1945. The evolution of intelligence history, it will be suggested, has been rather like restoring a fresco – gradually illuminating hidden details until a full-bodied picture emerges. Attempts to re-establish that picture have ranged greatly in their style and quality, from the lurid works served up by the media and by the purveyors of conspiracy theory (appropriately described by Nicholas Hiley as 'lightweight meals that sit so heavily on the stomach'),[1] to the vast tomes written by official historians, born of patient work in the archives and historical scholarship. Writers on intelligence have been, and continue to be, a fissiparous bunch. It will be argued that the pursuit of intelligence history has been to a large extent shaped by forces and events in the real world. In the 1960s and 1970s, as public fascination and fear about espionage grew exponentially, following a string of high-profile fiascos (including the U-2 spy plane incident in May 1960; the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961; the Vassall spy-case in 1962; and the Profumo Affair in 1963), many authors made their name by looking at scandal. For the likes of Andrew Boyle, whose book, *The Climate of Treason*, led to the unmasking in 1979 of Anthony Blunt as a former Soviet agent, writing intelligence history was both a professional and a political activity, designed to shake the Establishment by shining a harsh and bright light on its unethical practices.[2] In the mid to late 1970s and then into the 1980s, as governments lifted the lid on Allied codebreaking

successes during the Second World War, so historians paid much closer attention to the role of intelligence. Similarly, in the 1990s, as the intelligence services themselves began to edge, slowly, towards the light (placing operations on the statute book, for example, and declassifying hitherto secret records), so the nascent discipline of intelligence studies entrenched itself in academe. In the twenty-first century, the history of Britain's intelligence services has enjoyed a further stimulus in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Madrid and London, as well as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thanks to the spooks of today, the spies of the past are no longer the supporting cast in some larger drama of international relations, but occupy front and centre on the historical stage. By way of a conclusion, it will be suggested that intelligence history, while presently booming, is fast approaching a tipping point. When the official histories of the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS/MI6) and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) hit bookshops in 2009, 2010 and 2013 respectively, much of the original fresco will have been restored. For the intelligence historian, therefore, plotting the future of the past has never been more important.

Absence

For a long time, intelligence history was a Cinderella among the disciplines, starved of recognition, and marginalised by its more successful scholarly sisters. In 1984, Christopher Andrew and David Dilks famously described intelligence as the 'missing dimension' in historical enquiry, conspicuous by its absence from the literature of both modern government and international relations.[3] Filling this significant lacuna was a task for which few serious historians had the stomach. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the UK intelligence community was the 'invisible man' of government, a state within a state about which questions were never asked, even in Parliament. Secret service work was wreathed in a miasma of secrecy; its practitioners – like members of a collegiate society – were spectral figures, known only to their fraternal and exclusive initiates. 'It is the essence of a Secret Service', declared Sir Austen Chamberlain (then Foreign Secretary) in December 1924, 'that it must be secret, and if you once begin disclosure it is perfectly obvious to me as to hon. Members opposite that there is no longer any Secret Service and that you must do without it'.[4] Governments, irrespective of their political persuasion, refused to avow the very existence of their intelligence agencies. As Sir Frank Newsam, Home Office Permanent Under-Secretary, wrote in October 1952: 'I was brought up in the tradition that the existence of the

Security Service should never be mentioned save in the highest circles, and, for a very long time, I never knew its address and have only recently entered its portals'.[5] It was often said that the British attitude to intelligence mirrored societal attitudes to marital sex or smuggling moonshine; that is, everyone knew that it went on but to 'speak, write or ask questions about it' was not the done thing.[6]

Much to the chagrin of independent historians, the taboo of secrecy surrounding intelligence was undergirded by the indefinite closure of service records. No matter how old or how sensitive, all documents that referred to intelligence found themselves in a historical 'Never-Never Land', withheld indefinitely from release to the Public Record Office (PRO), now the National Archives.[7] Section 3 (4) of the Public Records Act (1958, 1967), otherwise known as the 'blanket' exemption, gave the Lord Chancellor discretionary powers to hold back any file related to intelligence and the intelligence services. In 1982, the Wilson Committee on Modern Public Records highlighted absurd examples of closed material, including postal interception files from the eighteenth century and intelligence bulletins from the Battle of Waterloo. The dearth of primary source material discouraged even the most intrepid truffle-hunter, to whom accessible documentation was the lifeblood of good scholarship. Keeping the intelligence services walled off from public view was generally defended on the grounds of operational security. The agencies claimed, with some justification, that intelligence gathering would be jeopardised if its methods or sources were disclosed. In the field of Human Intelligence (HUMINT), for example, the secrecy of an individual's secret agency is very often a matter of life or death; indeed, since the danger of retribution against a spy is not necessarily restricted to a single generation, one should not assume that the passage of time concurrently diminishes the hazards of disclosure. Without a promise of absolute secrecy, moreover, it was feared that agent recruitment would diminish and service morale plummet. 'Secrecy is the breath of life to the clandestine warrior', intoned Rear-Admiral A. H. Taylor in June 1945: 'It is necessary for his own morale as well as for his security that he should know it will be faithfully observed'.[8]

Whitehall's commitment to keeping intelligence matters secret was so unyielding that officials often went to remarkable lengths to prevent disclosures from occurring. Nothing illustrates this better than the 'Spycatcher Affair' in 1986-8, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher tried unsuccessfully to suppress the memoirs of Peter Wright, an embittered former Assistant-Director of MI5. Ghost-written by Paul Greengrass (who would later direct the Jason Bourne films), *Spycatcher*

alleged that the late Sir Roger Hollis, an erstwhile Director-General of the Service, had been a Soviet super-mole, and accused MI5 of plotting against, snooping on and defaming, Harold Wilson in the mid-1970s.[9] Wright's allegations were neither novel nor discernibly damaging to national security. In March 1981, Fleet Street's greatest scoop-merchant, Chapman Pincher, had published *Their Trade is Treachery,* which forced Thatcher to admit in Parliament that Hollis had been investigated some years earlier as a possible Russian spy.[10] Unlike Pincher, however, Wright was an insider who had taken a lifelong oath of silence and whose account was less easily 'deniable'. In 1987, therefore, Her Majesty's Government (HMG) banned *Spycatcher* in the UK; prohibited newspaper reportage with a series of gagging orders; and sought a court injunction to halt the book's publication in Australia. The insistence on a blanket ban was ludicrous. *Spycatcher* had already been published in the United States and ranked first on *The New York Times* best-sellers list; thousands of copies had crossed the Atlantic and were washing up in second-hand bookstores.[11] The Affair descended into complete farce when the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, was dispatched to the Australian courtroom to present the government's case. Famously, during his time in the spotlight, Armstrong endured a torrid time, harried by a brash young advocate, Malcolm Turnbull, and ridiculed by the world's media for refusing to accept that SIS existed. Armstrong's credibility was fatally undermined when, caught off-guard under cross-examination, he was forced to retract his earlier evidence, conceding, in a priceless admission, that he had been 'economical with the truth'. Since open sales of *Spycatcher* overseas had rendered the question of secrecy a moot point, attempts to squelch publication ultimately failed, bringing mockery upon intelligence taboos.

With historians deprived of documents and governments determined to choke off public debate, the 'history' of Britain's intelligence services was written largely by investigative journalists and 'exposé merchants', relying on 'inside' information obtained from well-connected friends in Whitehall. With an impish pleasure for wreaking havoc, authors, such as Chapman Pincher, Nigel West and Andrew Boyle, focused on subjects perfectly calculated to rile the Establishment, including the Wilson Plot, the Cambridge Five and the purported duplicity of Roger Hollis.[12] (Now in his nineties, Pincher remains convinced that Hollis had been a Soviet agent. Like an ancient mariner who cannot sail the seas anymore, he is keen to tell his tale one more time, irrespective of what people might think or say.)[13] Sometimes referred to pejoratively as the 'airport bookstall' school of intelligence historiography,[14] this genre of spy literature first came to

prominence in the 1960s, a period known as the 'era of exposure' for the intelligence and security agencies.[15] In America, the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) ill-fated attempt to overthrow Cuban dictator Fidel Castro at the Bay of Pigs made front-page news, as too did the twin shoot-downs of the U-2 and the RB-47 in spring 1960. Later in the decade, as the public became increasingly disillusioned with the war in Vietnam, and as stories emerged that US-sponsored covert action was helping to prop up corrupt regimes in Central and South America, the CIA was seen in many quarters as symbolic of a nation losing its way. In Britain, the early 1960s were punctuated by a series of real-life spy scandals, beginning with the exposure of George Blake as a Soviet spy in 1961, and culminating with the revelation in 1963 that the Secretary of State for War, John Profumo, had shared his prostitute girlfriend Christine Keeler with a Russian spymaster. By the late 1960s, things had got a lot worse. In 1967, the *Daily Express* revealed that the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) routinely intercepted thousands of private cables, setting in motion a chain of events that brought personal obloquy upon the Prime Minister Harold Wilson and very nearly spelt the end for the D-Notice Committee, the joint government/media body whose purpose was to prevent the public disclosure of information that would adversely affect the defence of the realm. A year later, Kim Philby, the ruthless SIS traitor and 'Third Man' who had defected to the Soviet Union in January 1963, published his KGB-blessed memoir, *My Silent War* which remorselessly revealed the details of SIS personnel and relationships, and his own role as a Russian spy for over thirty years.

Philby and his band of turncoats became a 'magnetic spectre'[16] to a generation of sensation-seeking writers. Just about every 'airport' author with basic literary ability – and some without – tried to make a quick buck by peddling tall tales of treachery, betrayal, murder and whatnot. In pursuit of the 'Fourth Man' (eventually revealed as Anthony Blunt), accounts tended to focus on the cloistered quadrangles of Cambridge in the 1930s, and on the secret societies, such as the Apostles, that became Marxist cells and bacchanalian trysting places for the disaffected moneyed elite. The spate, if not surfeit, of books that were produced on Philby were in the main deeply critical of the former spy, suggesting that he had handed over thousands of state secrets and, in the process, caused hundreds of deaths. In what many regard as an unforgivable apologia, which may have cost him a knighthood and Nobel Prize, the novelist Graham Greene was a lone voice in depicting Philby as a misunderstood idealist, or 'passionate pilgrim', who sacrificed everything for the cause of the oppressed proletariat.[17] Greene – a close friend of Philby, following his time in SIS

during the Second World War – famously compared the spy to a persecuted Catholic in Elizabethan England. For many accounts, the real sin of the Cambridge Five was not betraying their country, but betraying their class.[18] The motivation for disclosure was to expose the Establishment for being so blinded by class prejudice and Bloomsbury worship that it failed to spot treachery within its ranks. Toffs to a man, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Philby, Blunt and John Cairncross had all climbed the greasy pole because they had attended the right schools and the right gentleman's clubs. Similarly, many accounts of the Profumo Affair were not espionage yarns *per se*, but commentaries on Britain's moral landscape, critiquing those who had become sexually liberated and Bohemian long before it was fashionable. By the late 1970s, one might argue that the spread of 'mole-mania', coupled with the felicitous cresting of the James Bond phenomenon, had created an unquenchable public appetite for sensational tales of espionage, a trend that continues today. As Oliver Hoare argues, 'Racy histories of secret services…have often been the norm'.[19] In academic circles, 'airport bookstall' accounts were frequently met with ridicule or outright hostility, and served only to devalue the credibility of intelligence as a respectable field of enquiry. In the years to come, it will be interesting to see if scholars attempt to rehabilitate or 'rescue' the airport bookstall school as a form of 'proto-history', which, despite its flaws, facilitated the transition period between the advent of intelligence agencies and the writings of the first historians.

Emergence

By the late 1980s, intelligence history had started to come of age, demonstrating how attention to the form, function and nature of espionage could challenge existing orthodoxies about international relations and modern governance. Its ascent was in part the corollary of seismic events in the United States. The Report of the Church Committee in 1975, which revealed in a full blaze of publicity that the CIA had engaged in a plethora of illegal acts against US citizens and foreign leaders, was a climacteric for the US intelligence community and 'provided scholars, in the Western world, at least, with hitherto absent incentives and reasons to study intelligence'.[20] In the UK, its emergence was more specifically linked to a series of accessibly written, authoritative and revelatory histories of wartime deception, published by respected intelligence veterans in the early 1970s. In 1972, the Oxford don, John Masterman, published *The Double-Cross System*, an account of the highly-successful XX Committee and its 'turning' of German spies into double agents during World War

Two.[21] With outstanding social connections (the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, was a former student), Masterman was *persona grata* to members of the Establishment, who shared the author's desire both to burnish the achievements of the system and to head off erroneous 'outsider' histories. Two years later, Group Captain Frederick Winterbotham, a former intelligence officer at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park, was allowed to publish the first English-language work dedicated to the Ultra secret – 'the greatest secret of World War Two after the atom bomb'[22] – and the influence of Enigma decryption on the course of the war.[23] Although hagiographic and unreliable in places (Winterbotham was accused of lacking 'the most elementary technical knowledge' of cryptography, as well as downgrading the Polish and French contributions in breaking German ciphers),[24] *The Ultra Secret* represented a significant milestone in the pursuit of intelligence history. Ultra ranked as one of the best-kept secrets of all time. In July 1945, amidst concerns that its revelation might preclude post-war rapprochement with Germany (whose leaders might claim that they were not 'well and fairly beaten', à la 1918), the JIC had considered it 'imperative that the fact that such intelligence was available should NEVER Be Disclosed'.[25] Published after 1945, the official histories of the Second World War were carefully doctored to maintain state security, and thus contained no reference to, or mention of, Bletchley Park. Despite his reputation as something of a loose cannon, a man wanting in constraint, and fickle in his loyalties to the rules of censorship, Winston Churchill was silent on the subject in his multi-volume memoirs of the conflict. As David Reynolds argues, for such a great aficionado of Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), Churchill made a 'considerable sacrifice', a point not lost on Bletchley veterans who, should their wartime Prime Minister have spilt the beans, may have followed suit.[26]

Winterbotham's account, therefore, opened up a brand new chapter in the public's understanding of World War Two and, in doing so, provoked a groundswell of academic interest in the role of intelligence, counterintelligence and deception. Knowing that the Allies had been in possession of event-influencing information, military historians who had once been enamoured of this general or that admiral lost faith, igniting a firestorm of historical revisionism. With the Ultra secret now in the public domain, Whitehall, perhaps unexpectedly, began to reassess its policy relating to the management of intelligence archives. Although done by 'creeping barrage' (spread over many years so 'as to generate the minimum public interest'),[27] from the mid-1970s HMG started to declassify its Great War SIGINT record, the 40 O.B. archive. In 1977, the

first batch of Enigma decrypts and other Ultra-related material was released to the National Archives. Two years later, ministers took a bolder step in authorising the publication of the first volume of Professor Sir Harry Hinsley's official history, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, researched and written with the help of several able hands, who, like Hinsley, had served at Bletchley Park during the war.[28] The brainchild of former Cabinet Secretary, Sir Burke Trend, Hinsley's multi-volume tome had been conceived as a 'counterblast' against the deluge of salacious outsider accounts.[29] Depending upon who was spinning the tale, British intelligence was increasingly seen as a safe haven for disillusioned toffs, more used to disgorging secrets to the enemy than defending the realm. In his widely-read 'Karla Trilogy' (1974-9), for example, John le Carré explored a world of betrayal, treason and murder, peopled by those who become what they behold.[30] Fair but forthright, unfailingly well written and meticulously researched (Hinsley and his team had been granted unrestricted access to official papers), *British Intelligence in the Second World War* garnered laudatory reviews and won wide-ranging praise from academia's most knowledgeable and discerning commentators. Intelligence officer-turned-scholar Walter Pforzheimer called it, 'the single greatest work on intelligence ever produced', setting the benchmark by which all other works on the subject must be judged.[31]

A class apart from the sensationalist books normally produced on the subject, Hinsley's history firmly contested the para-historian's attempt to annex intelligence to the domain of airport literature, and piqued the curiosity of an emerging generation of professional researchers. In the 1980s and early 1990s, scholars became less inclined to scoff, and became increasingly skilled at what one scholar has termed, 'archival intelligence hacking'.[32] Hacker-in-chief was Christopher Andrew, Hinsley's heir apparent, but the roll-call also included David Stafford, Julian Lewis and Bradley Smith. Drawing upon private papers, as well as so-called 'adjacent' records, such as Foreign Office and Treasury files, the aforementioned demonstrated that there was sufficient declassified material to 'fill in both the general outline of the missing intelligence dimension and much of its operational detail'.[33] Provided the author was prepared to weed through, canvass and weight each folio of inchoate documents, private collections were particularly bountiful; statesmen of the first rank, including Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, had routinely taken copies of confidential documents home with them – copies which, unbeknownst to the Cabinet Office, were often retained among their personal papers. Among Eden's stockpile, for example, formally deposited in the Birmingham University Library in 1990, was the first page of Sir Edward

Bridges' Top Secret Report into the disappearance of SIS frogman Lionel 'Buster' Crabb (not 'officially' declassified until 2006). Authors with a penchant for lateral thinking also started to prise UK records out of the archives and libraries of foreign states. With its 'sunshine laws' and landmark Freedom of Information Act, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on 4 July 1966, America was increasingly seen as an Aladdin's cave – or 'wonderland' – where any number of jewels and nuggets could be found.[34] The archive of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime counterpart of SIS and forerunner of the CIA, was said to contain 'not just isolated documents', but quite often 'entire files of British material'.[35] In his biography of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies ("C" during and after World War Two), the globe-trotting writer Anthony Cave Brown showed that both SIS and Special Operations Executive (SOE) materials were available for public inspection in the papers of "C"'s American equivalent, William J. Donovan, housed at the US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.[36]

The desire to open up the 'missing dimension' enveloped Christopher Andrew in writing what became a massively detailed history of the British intelligence services. Published in 1985, and stretching to over 700 pages, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* demonstrated the value of sustained and creative archival research.[37] In 1986, Andrew co-founded *Intelligence and National Security*, the first (and now most pre-eminent) academic journal in the field. The premise of its first issue was that intelligence represented a 'proper' subject of study for scholars in political history and kindred disciplines. Others soon shared this sentiment. As Keith Jeffrey has argued, a 'conclusive indicator' of the subject's new-found legitimacy was the acceptance of articles by traditional periodical outlets.[38] In 1986, for example, both *The Journal of Contemporary History* and *The English Historical Review* published articles on intelligence for the first time.[39] The proliferation of conferences and symposia was also instrumental in ushering in a growing scholarly appreciation for espionage-related topics. This is not to say, however, that the first generation of serious scholarship was problem-free and beyond critical self-examination. As stated by John Lewis Gaddis, the 'British School of Intelligence Studies' (as it became known) lent itself to 'buffism', preoccupied with a love of the particular and esoteric terminology.[40] Many works – framed within the parameters of organisation theory and institutional practice – elided context and expended little effort in showing how the intelligence services made a difference. In consequence, they were beyond the ken of the average student. Published fitfully between 1979 and 1990, the five volumes produced by Hinsley and

his coadjutors were a monument to the triumph, but also to the inherent problems, of intelligence history in its earliest manifestation. As Ralph Erskine noted of Volume 3, 'Hinsley makes too few judgements, and his book is definitely not bedside reading. Order of battle appreciations loom all too large'.[41] The pursuit of intelligence history demanded not only the centrifugal instinct to locate minutiae in the archives, but also a centripetal inclination to contextualise those details for a readership that might not be cognizant of basic contours and outline.

Efflorescence

In recent years, Intelligence Studies has gone from strength to strength, becoming a magnet for postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers around the world, and producing an impressive and variegated literature. The steady stream of scholarship that has accrued over the last two decades has coincided with an ever-growing public awareness about intelligence and international security. Following the high-drama of 1989 and the ending of the Cold War, hailed by contemporaries as 'Europe's Second Reformation' ('the most pivotal event of the twentieth century'),[42] the intelligence and security services entered a new phase in their history. As borders opened and free elections ousted Communist regimes across Eastern Europe, the intelligence community confidently anticipated a period of relative geopolitical calm and, in turn, placed greater emphasis on accountability and greater transparency. This new era of optimism and openness had an architectural metonym: the Berlin Wall.[43] During the Cold War, as made famous by John le Carré's breakthrough novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), the Wall was the literal and symbolic epicentre of the great game of espionage; by the early 1990s it had been torn down. The lifting of the veil began in 1989, when MI5 was placed, for the first time, on a legislative footing. The Security Service Act (1989) came into being partly as a response to complaints about unauthorised government surveillance. Four years earlier, MI5 had faced a barrage of media scrutiny when former officer, Cathy Massiter, provided evidence before the European Court of Human Rights that the Service had been illegally bugging the telephones of pressure groups, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), as well as political 'high-fliers', including Patricia Hewitt and Harriet Harman, then leading members of the National Council for Civil Liberties. In 1994, SIS and GCHQ joined the Security Service on the statute book, while the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) was established to oversee the 'policy, administration and expenditure' of the three agencies.[44] In the eighteen

months following her appointment as Director-General of MI5 in December 1991, Stella Rimington became the first spy chief to be publicly named; the first to pose openly for cameras; and the first to publish a brochure, entitled *MI5: The Security Service* (1993), describing the organisation's activities.[45] Perhaps even more surprisingly, on 7 May 1992, Prime Minister John Major acknowledged, in Parliament, that Sir Colin McColl was the incumbent head of SIS.[46] Hitherto, McColl and his predecessors had been ritually referred to as 'C', the fabled code name that originated with Captain Sir Mansfield Cumming, the first director of the service. It should be said that the British *glasnost* was not in isolation; the collapse of communism prompted most Central and East European secret services, previously little more than Soviet surrogates, to enshrine their responsibilities and powers in statute. Underpinning this new spirit of openness was a perception that intelligence as a whole was becoming less important. For statesmen and practitioners alike, the passing of Marxist-Leninism from the Soviet Union, the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states, and the purported universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of government, all pointed to a 'New World Order' in which intelligence would take a backseat.

By the early 2000s, however, this belief had been shown to be naïve. The post-Cold War era had not brought an end to conflict or instability, nor had it confirmed 'The End of History', in which secular free-market democracy reigned as the natural endpoint for all humankind. The intelligence services suddenly found themselves facing a host of new threats, from the development among transition countries of corruption, cartels and mafias, to the global spread of terrorism, organised crime, drug smuggling and human trafficking. The bipolar Cold War system had in a perverse way been a stabilising force for the intelligence community by providing it with a clear enemy and an overriding purpose: namely, to contain Russian expansionism. A world shorn of godless communism, however, deprived practitioners of that focus and required them to adapt to what seemed an increasingly insecure environment. Since 2001, few subjects have commanded so much attention and controversy as intelligence. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, debates about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), domestic surveillance, secret detention and rendition have all brought unprecedented notoriety and exposure to the work of the intelligence services. In a world of media plenty, in which news can be watched as it unfolds (the horror of 9/11 or the hideousness of the London bombings, for example, were magnified by 'real-time' television coverage), the importance, but also the limitations and abuses of intelligence, have never

been more visible. Faced with the threat of militant jihadism, public expectations of intelligence have soared to an all-time high, as have calls for greater transparency about what is being done to combat this new menace.[47]

The British government has played an instrumental, if not always positive, role in dragging the intelligence community into the sunlight. In the summer of 2003, members of the Blair administration, in particular Downing Street's Director of Communications and Strategy, Alastair Campbell, came under heavy fire amid allegations that intelligence on Iraqi WMDs had been deliberately twisted in its representation to the public – or 'sexed up' – in order to present an exaggerated case for military action. The row centred on the publication of two highly contentious dossiers, which, using intelligence-derived information (including both HUMINT gathered by SIS and – for the first time – JIC assessments), claimed that Iraq had reconstituted its nuclear weapons programme and could 'deploy [chemical and biological] weapons within 45 minutes of a decision to do so'.[48] Asking the JIC to produce material for public consumption was an act without parallel in the annals of British politics. Tony Blair, writes Christopher Andrew, 'finally laid to rest the traditional taboo that British governments do not mention their intelligence services'.[49] As the months passed without any sign of the nuclear, chemical or biological weapons about which Blair and his security apparatchiks had ominously warned, breaking this taboo proved disastrous. Ministers were accused of 'spinning' intelligence to sell the war on a false premise; the intelligence services, historically unswayed by the partisan interests of a party or class, were criticised for compromising their independence and succumbing to 'undue' or 'improper' political influence. As Richard Aldrich argues, 'the opening up of intelligence has followed the law of unintended consequences'.[50] Officials only intended to disclose snippets of information. What they achieved, however, was something akin to intelligence in a goldfish bowl, encouraging ceaseless scrutiny by an increasingly inquisitorial Parliament and a decreasingly deferential media. The Hutton Inquiry, which reported on 28 January 2004, and posted virtually all of its evidence on the internet (including sensitive documents written only weeks before), was totemic of the slide towards greater openness.

In a bid to earn public confidence, each intelligence service now places job advertisements in the national press, organises 'milkround' career presentations, and maintains a website delineating objectives and staffing. Generally speaking, MI5 is more 'open' than its sister service, SIS. In its latest step towards greater transparency, on 6 January 2009 Jonathan

Evans became the first serving Director-General in the Agency's 100 year history to meet the press. During the interview, he emphasised the importance of having a large well-funded organisation to perform as the country's first line of defence against domestic terrorism, and revealed that MI5 staff will rise to 4,100 by 2011, more than double the number at the time of the 9/11 attacks. The timing of this revelation is no coincidence, claim critics. At a time of global financial crisis and truncated budgets, MI5, like other government departments, needs to demonstrate its importance. This cannot be done by walking the path of least disclosure.

Historiography has benefited immeasurably from the two-decade waning of intelligence taboos. Declassification of documentary evidence, especially older material, has gone hand-in-hand with the more general 'opening up' of intelligence agencies. The process began with the Waldegrave Initiative on Open Government in 1993, which saw the release – for the first time – of historical records generated by the secret services, and afforded independent historians the opportunity to assist in the formulation of retention and release policy.[51] By the millennium, hundreds of files relating to SOE, MI5 and Ultra had been transferred to the National Archives, though few related to the period beyond 1945. Since 2000, the flow of declassified material has been considerable, leading some to speculate if an archival 'wonderland' is upon us. To date, MI5 has declassified approximately 4,000 'pieces' of 'historically significant information' (in official usage, a piece may represent a whole file or a particular portion of it), including wartime material on German spies and double agents, and early Cold War files on Soviet intelligence operations.[52] SIS, despite retaining its own archive, has released a number of documents held in the files of other departments, and approved the declassification of all surviving SOE records, for which it has been the custodian. Secret departments, rather than retaining entire documents, increasingly extract or 'white-out' sensitive passages; this technique is known as redaction and has been used by the CIA since the 1970s. The opening of new repositories from Eastern Europe has also provided historians with a partial, if revealing, glimpse at intelligence activities and mindset 'on the other side of the hill'. Materials bearing on the work of the East German Ministry for State Security, more commonly known as the 'Stasi', have revealed a web of foreign espionage in Britain during the Cold War. By reference to a vast array of German sources, in *The Stasi Files* Anthony Glees suggested that some 100 Britons operated – wittingly or unwittingly – as 'agents of influence', including prominent CND members and, most controversially, Lord Roper, former Director of Studies at Chatham House.[53] It should be said, of course, that former

Eastern bloc reading rooms do present problems. Although the Communist system was, above all, *akribisch* – that is, obsessive about documenting itself – officials often talked 'newspeak rather than brass tacks even behind closed doors'; files relating to agents and informants, moreover, are notoriously patchy.[54] In a memorably bitter review, Paul Maddrell attacked *The Stasi Files* for inflating its subject matter, and accused Glees of committing the cardinal sin for any historian, of failing to authenticate the reliability of his evidence.[55] Caveat lector!

In Britain, where the work of 'spin doctors' has a particular resonance, the sincerity of intelligence declassification has been the subject of much debate. For Ken Robertson, open government has been tantamount to a carefully co-ordinated publicity stunt by a wilier secret state intent on 'policing its past', providing officials with both the opportunity to rhapsodise about greater transparency and, at the same time, exert greater control over the pace and content of disclosure. Newly released files, it is said, only disclose what governments deem safe to put on public view. Following Robertson's example, Peter Gill argues that Whitehall has become increasingly skilled at what he calls 'burying', a strategy whereby the public is bombarded with a mass of largely insignificant information.[56] The first tranche of SOE material, which included hefty batches of files on sabotage devices (such as incendiary cigarettes and exploding rats), as well as papers setting out plans to assassinate of Adolf Hitler, was presented to the public as one of the biggest 'windfalls' of the end of the Cold War. Such material is all well and good, auguring, as it did, a more 'open' future. It would be well to bear in mind, however, that such programmes of document release might also serve as the perfect matador's cape – waving ostentatiously to draw the eye away from the critical area and channel attention into thin air.[57] Richard Aldrich is another scholar to warn against taking the Waldegrave Initiative at face value. Before entering the public domain, he reminds us, official records are meticulously 'pre-selected, cleaned and processed' by the Whitehall machine. With no external assurance that what is released is 'necessarily an analogue of reality', what is to stop the researcher from becoming an official historian, albeit once removed?[58] Documents written by actual spies require perhaps the most careful handling. As Bernard Porter writes, 'The reason for this is that all spies and secret agents are liars, trained in techniques of deception and dissimulation, who are just as likely to fake the historical record as anything else'.[59] Some researchers, therefore, have turned to oral history – 'growing their own records' – in order to corroborate the accuracy of their archival findings.[60] This too, of course, has inherent flaws. Memory is inevitably diminished by the passage of time, especially when the subject

in question was cloaked in secrecy. It is often polluted by what has been absorbed from subsequent experience and discourse, or, in the case of the once-powerful, corrupted by a self-conscious desire to entomb their reputation. As Philip Davies convincingly argues, the most effective intelligence scholar should not use witness testimony to the exclusion of all other material, but should 'triangulate' his research through a mutually-supporting triad of archival, secondary *and* oral sources.[61]

Although the scope of historical writing on intelligence is today so wide that it is difficult to pigeonhole scholars into discrete research communities or sub-schools, I should like to suggest, using some very arbitrary boundaries, and taking my cue from Wesley Wark's earlier treatise *Espionage: Past, Present, Future?*, that certain 'projects' are presently being pursued.[62] The first might be called the 'Research Project'. The main task here is to establish the historical framework of intelligence, rediscovering and interpreting its growth, performance and relevance. Centred on the 'episodic treatment of intelligence in peace and war', with a chronological focus on the period from the creation of the Secret Service Bureau in 1909 to the end of the Cold War,[63] the 'Research Project' involves a prolonged immersion in archival sources and favours the case study methodology. Many texts are understandably prone to narrative and description. Without such work, however, intelligence history would remain conjectural, even conspiratorial and misconceived, and heavily laden with epistemic blind spots.

Rubbing shoulders with political science and giving rise to what is often referred to as 'intelligence theory',[64] a second 'project' concerns itself with the question, 'What is Intelligence'? Defining intelligence, as Michael Warner explains, is far more complicated than painting a caricature of 'some shadowy figure…skulking in a dark alley'; moreover, how we define it has significant implications for practitioners and scholars alike, shaping the work and remit of oversight committees, as well as influencing declassification policies by elucidating what are and are not activities that governments are required to keep secret.[65] Until recently – in the much-quoted words of Walter Laqueur – 'all attempts to develop ambitious theories of intelligence have failed'.[66] Officialdom stuck to a very rigid definition of intelligence as 'information about things foreign' – capabilities, intentions or activities; in academic writing, meanwhile, the term was defined *de novo* by each scholar who discussed it. Today we tend to think about intelligence in terms of a three-part schema.[67] Firstly, as a series of key interrelated steps, through which information (typically unavailable by way of 'open' sources) is requested by governments and commanders, then collected, analysed and disseminated to the client. This

is commonly known as the intelligence 'process' or 'cycle'; secondly, as a value-added product, used by decision makers at the tactical, operational and strategic levels; and thirdly, as an 'institution', encompassing the role performed by cognate pursuits, such as covert action, deception and clandestine diplomacy. Building on the work of Mark Lowenthal, a long-time veteran of the US intelligence community, Warner's definition – 'Intelligence is secret, state activity to understand or influence foreign entities' – is as apt as it is succinct.[68] This said, in the twenty-first century, it is arguably getting harder to build a convincing taxonomy of intelligence. The increased production and consumption of intelligence by private groups, such as water suppliers, electricity companies and airlines, threatens the platitude that it is organised by the state, for the state. The proliferation of 'open source' intelligence (OSINT) has certainly muddied the water, 'blurr[ing] traditional distinctions between intelligence and information and the barrier between secret and non-secret'.[69] Although OSINT under one name or another has been around for centuries, with the rise of the internet, global communications and round-the-clock media, the ability to search this material at the click of a button has given it much greater prominence. Moreover, as Philip Davies opines, a formally constituted definition of intelligence arguably belies the inherent incongruousness in interpretation between different countries and institutions.[70] In Washington, for example, intelligence is not intelligence until it has been analysed and fed to its consumers as a 'finished' product; in London, by contrast, where raw data is routinely communicated to policymakers without an intervening stage of all-source analysis, the same condition does not apply.

A commitment to inter-disciplinary synergies has become one of the hallmarks of intelligence historiography. The involvement of historians and political scientists, as well as co-partners in English, Sociology and Law, has made it a distinctive research cluster. Certain intelligence scholars would consider themselves as 'hybrid' or 'hyphenated' historians, taking their research and perspectives beyond the academy. Although there is still much toffee-nosed disparagement of those who write for non-academic audiences, for many in the community, the development of a synthetic literature that 'connects' intelligence history and public policy is essential.[71] History, proponents claim, can be quarried for 'lessons learned' and can inform current and future practitioners. The most vocal spokesman for the 'Public Policy Project' has been Christopher Andrew. From salutary warnings about the dangers of failing to heed the lessons of history, Andrew has moved to the assertion that modern political culture is awash with 'Historical Attention Span Deficit Disorder', a widespread

belief that the past is 'irrelevant to present and future policy and intelligence analysis'.[72] For example, had decision-makers prior to the Iraq War become *au fait* with failed British attempts to estimate Soviet nuclear capability during the Cold War (of which there is a sizeable secondary literature), they would have realised that making an approximation of WMD stocks is fraught with difficulty and can lead to a certain intellectual blinkering. The need to relate historical analysis to contemporary problems has led to the establishment of dedicated research centres, such as the Brunel Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies (BCISS) and the Buckingham University Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies (BUCSIS), fostering close links with practitioners and offering degree programmes in both historical and policy-orientated contexts.[73] Designed as 'career-relevant' degrees, MA programmes are invariably filled by those in quest of, or presently engaged in, security-related employment. Academics at Brunel and Buckingham also double up as consultants, providing custom-made academic packages to both professional and corporate clients.

The most common way to connect history with policy is, of course, to write full-scale histories, which analyse all stages of the intelligence cycle and seek to identify trends and themes from past to present. With all the resources of state at his or her disposal, including access to former agents and personnel, it has been suggested that the best person to undertake such a task is the official historian: 'Just as intelligence chiefs have to be able to tell policymakers what they do not want to know, so official historians have to be free, on occasion, to tell intelligence agencies uncomfortable truths.'[74] In October 2009, MI5 will mark its centenary with the publication of an official history, written by Christopher Andrew; Keith Jeffrey has been commissioned to pen a similar volume on behalf of SIS, covering the history of the Service from its beginnings in 1909 to the early Cold War. Although both authors have promised to deliver 'warts-and-all' histories, delineating mistakes and controversies as well as successes, their appointment has raised more than a few eye-brows. As Len Scott and Peter Jackson explain, 'For some academics the Ivory Tower should remain a sanctuary and provide a panorama on the world outside'.[75] Is it not profoundly unfair, critics argue, that Professors Andrew and Jeffrey will be able to feast their eyes on materials denied to the remainder of their profession? For Anthony Glees, the risk of white-washing is all too great: 'I don't think governments should write their own history. Academics should not become ambassadors or politicians, or work for the secret service'.[76] Christopher Andrew, on account of having twice co-authored officially sponsored histories of the KGB (with the aid of Soviet defectors,

Oleg Gordievsky and Vasili Mitrokhin), has been labelled by more cynical voices as a 'court historian'. This is perhaps too strong. Andrew and Jeffrey, who throughout their respective careers have railed against the official position that there could be no middle ground between total secrecy and total disclosure, have to preserve their academic standing at all costs. Sanitising the historical record now, knowing that the documents in question will in due course enter the public domain, would be making a rod for their own backs.

If not endangered, then certainly outnumbered, a small group of intelligence historians are engaged in dissecting the seamier side of espionage. The so-called 'Civil Liberties Project' (also known as the 'para-political' school) conjoins two scholarly agendas.[77] The first is a programme for researching intelligence history by way of non-official sources, including biographies and diaries, satirical magazines, obituaries, editorials and other cultural miscellanea. The second is a strategy for writing intelligence history from the 'bottom up', moving beyond the intensively cultivated field of high politics to explore the private experience of spies and their most intimate details, such as sexuality, social class and political orientation. Among the most vociferous proponents of the 'Civil Liberties Project' are Robin Ramsay and Stephen Dorril. Their investigations deftly survey the heartless aspects of the secret state, upending established orthodoxy by rendering Western and Eastern intelligence services as equally contemptuous and equally corrupt. *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* was in itself an exposition of the basic tenets of 'para-political' approaches. In the Preface, Dorril writes: 'In order to unravel the activities of SIS, one has to dig deep and sift carefully, in the manner of an archaeologist, but also acculturate, like some intrepid anthropologist, to a strange and secretive society whose intricate social and professional networks are familiar to their members but quite baffling to the outsider'.[78] What emerges from Dorril's 900-page tome is that SIS, determined to keep Britain at the top table in an age of post-imperial decline, became a law unto itself, implicated in the surveillance and infiltration of dissident groups; the secret funding of propaganda and smearing opponents; and the formulation of 'disruptive action', including assassination plots, against such leaders as Mohammed Mossadeq, Slobodan Milošević and Muammar al-Gaddafi. Few mainstream authors support the 'para-political' belief that what the intelligence services do is nefarious and disproportionate to the threat posed by the nation's enemies. Peter Hennessy, in his excellent study of the Cold War secret state and contingency planning in the event of Soviet attack, makes an impressive case for the view that the intelligence community, far from being a rogue