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Never-Never Land and Wonderland? British and American Policy on Intelligence Archives

RICHARD J. ALDRICH

Wesley K. Wark, a noted intelligence historian, once defined the status of British secret service archives as a 'Never-Never Land'. In an elegant essay on British archival policy in the 1980s he explained how, prior to 1981, departments of state were told that secret intelligence materials were 'never released to the PRO'. Subsequent to the Wilson Committee White Paper of 1981 this guidance was changed and departments were thereafter instructed that 'the word never should never be used'. The Wilson Committee considered that, in the fullness of time all such records would eventually find their way into the public domain.¹ But for those outside Whitehall this intriguing double negative seemed to signal little material change and secret service archives remained 'a far-off place' that no independent historian was ever likely to visit.²

By contrast, the experience of historians working on secret service records in the United States is continually identified by writers as being very different. The American National Archives are often represented as nothing short of a 'Wonderland' where all sorts of treasures are on public view and where specialist archivists, not least the legendary John E. Taylor who presides over records that originate with the CIA, conjure up the most remarkable things. Sensitive British records that are not open to public inspection in the Public Record Office at Kew are reportedly available there in profusion. Moreover, it is widely held that items that are not immediately available in the National Archives can be summoned magically through the Freedom of Information Act.³

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The 1990s have seen a number of important changes in policy and practice relating to the management of secret service archives on both sides of the Atlantic. In Britain, the Waldegrave Initiative on Open Government has resulted in the participation of independent historians in the review process and in rapid decisions to release substantial amounts of intelligence material for the 1940s. There have also been positive responses to the specific requests of historians for closed material and as a result significant parts of 'Never-Never Land' are now open to visitors. Meanwhile in the United States there have also been notable changes, albeit in practice rather than principle. Surprising materials continue to be released into the National Archives, but problems caused by the Freedom of Information Act have rendered this archival Wonderland perhaps a little less productive than it once was.⁴

At the point of writing the Waldegrave Initiative has been operating for a year and it is perhaps an opportune moment to review the new archival elements of this policy in a comparative Anglo-American frame. Accordingly, this essay has two objectives: first, to assess the importance of the recently released papers, focusing on the Joint Intelligence Committee and new evidence on Pearl Harbor as a case study; second, to employ this as a reference point for a wide-ranging comparison of British and American policy on intelligence archives, particularly regarding wartime and post-war materials.

The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and Pearl Harbor

It is now widely appreciated by historians that the story of the higher management and control of British intelligence during the Second World War was unique. Between 1936 and 1941 there evolved, albeit a little uncertainly, an efficient and centralised mechanism for co-ordinating the numerous British clandestine organisations and for ensuring the careful assessment and distribution of the intelligence they collected. This mechanism was the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), consisting of intelligence chiefs and chaired by a senior official of the Foreign Office, normally the Head of the Services Liaison Department. The JIC were served by a Joint Intelligence Staff who helped to draft their papers and were organised in a way not dissimilar to their opposite numbers, the Joint Planning Staff. Together these committees constituted the engine room of wartime strategic thinking. This system for the coherent and rational management of a rapidly expanding intelligence community was essential if material derived from codebreaking was to be disseminated in time to have an influence on operational planning. It was also essential for complex deception operations that required sophisticated co-operation between

deception planners, MI5 (the Security Service), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) then based at Bletchley Park.⁵

The success of the British system has been contrasted with the equivalent German story, in which Hitler deliberately pitted different organisations against each other. Equally the American wartime experience was characterised by the lack of a centralised authority. In the post-war period the success of the JIC system was underlined by the way in which London imposed it upon regional commands, creating additional JICs in Germany, the Middle East and the Far East.⁶ It is also illustrated by the way in which the JIC system was admired or emulated by Australia, Canada and the United States.⁷

Given the central importance of the JIC, the release of most (but not all) of its papers and minutes to 1941 has understandably been widely welcomed. At the same time some have paused to question the value of this particular release, noting that their contents have been largely pre-figured in the magisterial five-volume history of British intelligence during the Second World War with its extensive treatment of the development of the JIC. Moreover, for many years historians have been aware that perhaps half of the pre-1945 JIC papers (but not the minutes), and at least 30 post-war JIC papers and minutes are available elsewhere, scattered through other categories of files in the PRO.⁸ The same question will doubtless be asked of the SOE archives, since much SOE material has long abounded in the PRO classes and in Washington. In reality then, how valuable has the release of JIC for 1936–41 been?

The newly available JIC files have undoubtedly contained surprises, even for diligent readers of the official history. This can best be illustrated by focusing briefly upon the vigorous debate initiated by revisionist historians writing on Churchill and Britain's possible foreknowledge of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Sunday 7 December 1941.⁹ The minutes of the JIC for 1941 cast real doubt upon their suggestion that Churchill received such intelligence and blocked its transfer to the Americans. Above all, the revisionist case is undermined because of the multiplicity of conduits through which this sort of information was being passed to the Americans as early as July 1941. Churchill was simply not in a position to exercise detailed control over what was passed to the Americans. The recently released minutes of the JIC for 6 June 1941 reveal the precise structure of Anglo-American intelligence co-operation in the Far East. They show that American intelligence personnel had already been attached to the Far Eastern Combined Bureau, which presided over the 'collection, collation and dissemination' of all Britain's intelligence in that region, including signals intelligence.

Prior to June 1941 much of this Anglo-American exchange had concerned intelligence of interest to the army planners. Now, on 6 June 1941, Britain and America resolved to extend this exchange to intelligence on naval matters and ship movements in the Far East. The British Admiralty were reportedly 'very anxious to co-operate'. London instructed the Far Eastern Combined Bureau that 'there should be a full exchange of intelligence between British and American officials in the Far East', including signals intelligence. The exchange of information from such secret sources required the routine approval of the local SIS chief in Singapore, but the only information that London required Singapore to withhold related, not to codebreaking, but to the fledgling Special Operations Executive station there. This was because the Special Operations Executive was beginning to conduct sensitive operations into neutral Thailand, exploring the possibility of a *coup d'etat* against the government in Bangkok which some considered to be increasingly pro-Japanese. Instructions to exchange intelligence material on the basis of 'the fullest co-operation' were also issued to British personnel in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Chungking, Bangkok, Manilla and Peking. Accordingly, the multiplicity of links between British and American intelligence developing throughout the Far East from the summer of 1941 renders it improbable that Churchill exercised detailed control over the exchange of individual documents.¹⁰

One particular revisionist account of Pearl Harbor has gone so far as to suggest that on 5 December 1941, Britain's JIC met and discussed the impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor at length. This author, Constantine Fitzgibbon, writing in 1976, claimed to base these assertions on a letter received from none other than Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, wartime chairman of the JIC. How do these claims compare with the JIC minutes for the fateful week prior to Pearl Harbor? The minutes, which are entirely extant for this period, reveal that the JIC did not even meet on 5 December. It met on 3 December and on 9 December and did not mention Pearl Harbor at either meeting.¹¹

The minutes of the JIC will be valuable to many historians for as many different reasons. But their release also serves to underline a number of wider points about the nature of secret service archives. It is increasingly clear that sensationalist accounts of important historical events, or malignant interpretations of the actions of politicians and officials, result not from the early release of intelligence records, but from their prolonged closure. Files that are closed for an absurd length of time are an invitation to entrepreneurial writers to speculate in an over-imaginative way on the nature of the 'dirty secrets' that such archives supposedly contain (why else, these authors ask, would they be closed?) Academics may eventually establish the truth of the matter and expound it in tomes that will find

their way on to the dusty shelves of university libraries. But the public mind is increasingly informed by the conspiratorial versions of contemporary history, often piled 50 deep in the high street book-stores. The damage done to the wider public understanding of Britain's history by such books is unlikely ever to be undone.

Above all, the lesson to be learned from the eventual release of JIC records is that serious researchers and governments share a clear vested interest in the prompt release of such materials. The fact that these and many other intelligence documents released under the Waldegrave Initiative are remarkable only for their dullness is, paradoxically, very important. After all, one of the elementary rules of textual analysis for all historians when considering a document is to reflect not only upon what is there, but upon what is not there.

British and American Archives Compared

What are the essential differences in the way in which the British and the Americans have managed the release of secret service archives? Most obviously, while Britain is releasing the archives of the JIC, of the Special Operations Executive and of Churchill's signals intelligence summaries (Dir/C) at approximately the 50-year point, the Americans released most of their equivalent materials at the 40-year point. Much of the British signals intelligence archive, notably for the Far East (but also some material relating to wartime Europe), remains to be released and as yet there has been no discussion of the release of wartime SIS materials. Meanwhile the Americans have released almost all their wartime signals intelligence and their Office of Strategic Services (OSS) records to 1947. OSS fulfilled the functions of both Britain's SOE and SIS during the Second World War.¹²

The result of this early American release has been the appearance of high quality academic histories of these subjects. In the 1980s, as a direct result of this *de facto* 40-year rule, American historians were able to locate retired OSS veterans and conduct interviews that could be compared with the written record. On the one hand almost all the participants had safely reached retirement, while on the other hand enough still survived from the policy-making level to ensure that conducting interviews was a rewarding activity for historians. A rich and sophisticated literature on the history of OSS is now emerging from the synthesis of oral testimony and written records. By comparison, as SOE records become available in 1994, there will be very few survivors still available to talk about the policy-making level. When wartime SIS archives are released the written record will doubtless stand alone, devoid of accompanying oral testimony.

This is worrying when one reflects on the arcane and technical nature of some secret service activities. The full meaning of the some of these documents will not necessarily be self-evident to future historians.¹³

Another observation worth making is that the American authorities do not make a squeamish distinction between secret service activities conducted during war and peacetime. Remarkably, the CIA are now depositing hundreds of files relating to its changing internal organisation for the period up to 1953, including a great deal of correspondence by such luminaries as Walter Bedell Smith and Allen Welsh Dulles. Moreover, many American National Intelligence Estimates (the equivalent of British JIC papers) are available for the mid-1950s.¹⁴ This has ensured that diplomatic and military historians working on post-war American subjects have been able to integrate the intelligence dimension into their wider work. The slower release process in Britain tends to encourage the writing of a separate 'intelligence history' that is sometimes devoid of context.

Yet the exciting CIA releases of the early 1990s, described above, pale beside the extraordinary post-cold war initiative begun by CIA Director Woolsey in 1993. The CIA have recently announced that its Historical Review Group is now declassifying political and economic National Intelligence Estimates on the Soviet Union through to 1984, a process that will be completed by the spring of 1994. The CIA's own in-house journal *Studies in Intelligence* is also being declassified. Declassification of the first 11 cold war covert actions will begin in 1994. The operations for which records will be released include: France and Italy in the 1940s and 1950s, North Korea in the 1950s, Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Indonesia in 1958, Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s, the 1961 Bay of Pigs. The Congo and the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and Laos in the 1960s. In March 1994, the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence, together with the Truman Library, hosted a conference for historians on the CIA during the Truman period, taking this opportunity to explain this magnificent programme in detail.¹⁵

The American interpretation of the subject of intelligence is also commendably broad. In Britain the debate has focused narrowly upon the release of 'secret service' records held by SIS, MI5 and GCHQ. In the United States proper recognition has been given to the importance of somewhat less secret Army, Navy and Air Force intelligence activities. Prior to 1953, in both Britain and the United States, armed service intelligence personnel outnumbered those in the 'secret services' such as SIS and the CIA. Typically, in occupation areas like Austria, the local CIA station was marginalised by a much grander programme of military intelligence operations. This is not just a question of numbers but of relevance.

For a British historian writing on the subject of British defence policy or strategic planning in the immediate post-war period the most valuable intelligence materials might well be those relating to RAF intelligence rather than those of the 'secret services'. Yet the vast blocks of service intelligence records withheld in Britain for the period after 1945 pass almost without comment. In contrast, most American service intelligence records have now been released for the period up to 1955. These records contain important material concerning how United States Air Force intelligence analysed the Soviet Union and its impressions of Soviet strategic airpower. Historians have been delighted by what they have found in such service records, meanwhile government officials have been pleased by the way in which this development has relieved pressure for the release of much more sensitive records, typically post-war National Security Agency (signals intelligence) material.¹⁶

A further respect in which the United States advances a broad definition of intelligence records relates to its commendable emphasis upon regional or 'theatre command' intelligence records. Britain and the United States administered large areas of the world during the 1940s and 1950s and as a result have generated vast regional archives, typically relating to Germany and Austria. These files are of importance not only to British and American historians, but also for academics from the many countries under Allied control. While many of the British intelligence papers relating to the occupation of Germany and Austria are yet to be released, by contrast all of the voluminous files of the United States European Command (EUCOM) and Far Eastern Command (FECOM) are available, including the registry files of their regional intelligence headquarters.¹⁷ Some of the finest studies of American policy in Germany and the Far East have drawn extensively on these types of files.¹⁸

A final area in which there is something to be learned from good American archival practice is captured records. During the 1980s historians of Asia were surprised to find that the CIA released into the American National Archives the files of the Shanghai Municipal Police, an extensive British-run security agency. These materials, which included files on Sun Yat-Sen and Ho Chi Minh, had enjoyed a chequered history. Captured by the Japanese at the outbreak of the Second World War they had fallen into the hands of the nationalist Chinese in 1945. In 1949, with the communist victory in China these records were once again in peril and they were eventually offered to the CIA and transferred to Washington, DC. Although relating to the pre-war period these records were examined with interest by security authorities on account of the information they contained on previous associations between serving Western officials and Asian communists. Academic historians of Asia in the 1980s, perhaps

the last of many groups to make use of these records, pronounced them invaluable.¹⁹

Britain also presides over captured archives. A good example are the German Security Service records relating to Soviet espionage in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, the so-called 'Red Orchestra'. German wartime security operations had been highly effective and had damaged Soviet espionage in occupied Europe by 1944. German records therefore offered a very full picture of the nature and techniques of Soviet espionage and were acquired by British Special Counter Intelligence Units as they entered Germany in 1945. Thereafter the CIA were allowed to inspect them to compile a classified internal history of Soviet military intelligence operations in Europe. Yet while this American history, based on materials held in Britain, has long since been declassified and published, the fate of the files themselves remains something of a mystery.²⁰

British Intelligence Documents in the American Archives

British intelligence reports in the files of the Shanghai Municipal Police in Washington are but one example of the profusion of British secret service materials that have reportedly long been available in the American archives. Tales of the existence of such materials in Washington assumed legendary proportions during the 1970s and 1980s. How accurate were these reports and how has the American system of managing sensitive British records changed?

Two important distinctions can be drawn. The first is simply chronological: for the period up to 1945 a vast quantity of British intelligence records of many different types abounds, much of it not yet available in the Public Record Office. Its extent defies comprehensive description here, but some indication can be given by referring briefly to historians who have already exploited these materials. John Costello, in a recent study, *Mask of Treachery*, has demonstrated that both Special Branch and MI5 materials appear regularly in low level State Department files. Bradley F. Smith, in a path-breaking study of Anglo-American co-operation in the field of signals intelligence to 1947, has illustrated how much GCHQ-related material is available in Washington DC.²¹ Perhaps the most concentrated source of British material is contained in the archive of the American wartime Office of Strategic Services, now running to many tens of thousands of files. Approximately three to five per cent of this material is of SOE, SIS, or MI5 origin or discusses British intelligence in detail. A historian at Harvard has recently completed a detailed study of co-operation between OSS and wartime MI5/SIS employing unprecedented amounts of British secret service documentation from OSS files.²²

These are not just isolated documents, there are often entire files of British material.²³

For the period after 1945 the story is rather different. Archivists in the United States often refer to some sort of agreement between the State Department and the British government detailing the categories of material that London requests be withdrawn from American files. These guidelines have been enforced with much more rigour in relation to post-war materials. Accordingly, there are relatively few MI5 or SIS records for the post-war period, the primary exceptions being occasional reports relating to Soviet agents that have found their way into declassified FBI files. Perhaps only 200 or 300 pages of material relating to GCHQ are scattered through many different collections of papers, most of which deals with electronic intelligence (ELINT) and communications security (COMSEC) rather than communications intelligence (COMINT).²⁴ Perhaps less than ten per cent of post-war JIC papers are extant in Washington, again in a very scattered way, in different types of military and diplomatic files.²⁵

The case of post-war JIC papers seems to offer some indication of how industrious the American archivists have been in seeking to remove British material. Various cover notes in American files often refer to two or three 'attached' British JIC reports at a time, but the papers have usually been removed. We know that after 1945 the British continued to send large numbers of their JIC reports to the Americans via Britain's JIC Washington located at the Embassy, hinting meanwhile at British hopes of reciprocation. In contrast the flow of American JIC reports to Britain had ceased on V-J Day, initially thwarting London's hopes for continuing post-war intelligence exchange. The British tactic of continuing to bombard Washington with unreciprocated JIC reports eventually paid dividends. On 25 September 1946 the American JIC concluded: 'If it is desired to continue to receive the British JIC intelligence estimates it is submitted that it must be done on an exchange basis, otherwise the source will dry up. Since there are many areas, particularly in parts of Europe, the Near East and the Middle East, where the British sources of information are superior to those of the United States, it is believed desirable that the United States J.I.C. continue to receive such estimates. This view is reinforced when the world situation is considered.' They recommended that exchange now proceed on a 'quid pro quo basis'. Thereafter, intelligence estimates were routinely exchanged and delegates to major post-war Anglo-American conferences departed London for Washington armed with new JIC material. Only a minority of these exchanged papers have survived and for those seeking JIC papers after 1945 the American archives are not a Wonderland.²⁶

This assertion about the paucity of post-war material must be qualified by drawing a second distinction. It has already been remarked that the United States defines its intelligence archives broadly. The vast collections of American service intelligence and regional intelligence contain a great deal of British service intelligence material. Typically, in the papers of American organisations like EUCOM and OMGUS a substantial proportion of the papers of the British Intelligence Division, Control Commission Germany are to be found for the 1940s and 1950s. It is faintly disturbing that a reasonable history of this important British organisation could be written in Washington but not in London, where the main records have been incinerated.²⁷

The Government–Historian Interface

The United States has generally handled the release of its intelligence records in a wise and often generous way. However, the American system for response to the specific requests of historians for declassification of closed materials is less impressive. The presidency of Jimmy Carter during the 1970s saw the United States introduce Freedom of Information Act legislation. In principle its objectives were commendable, enshrining the idea that government information belonged to the people whose taxes paid for it to be generated. Henceforth, the inherent presumption was that documents should be released on request and the burden of proof lay with government departments to demonstrate any need for them to remain closed. However, by the 1980s an increasing gulf was opening up between principle and practice. Perversely, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), at one time a centrepiece of the American archival system, was actually beginning to restrict access to documents.²⁸

Two things had gone wrong. In 1982 the US government chose to modify FOIA guidelines, allowing government departments wide areas of exemption. This could often be challenged only by resorting to time-consuming and expensive legal action. More importantly, the FOIA system was being abused by the American public who submitted an avalanche of frivolous requests that absorbed considerable amounts of government time and resources. In the early 1990s, many government personnel who had previously been assigned to the routine and rapid declassification of large blocks of records had to redeployed to search, often unsuccessfully, for individual documents requested under FOIA. The result has been that some American diplomatic and military records for the late 1950s are still not available due to personnel shortages caused directly by FOIA. Some British Foreign Office records are now being declassified several years ahead of equivalent American series. Nor has

the material secured through FOIA been of sufficient value to offset this problem. American historians have noted with dismay that the print out of FOIA requests for 1991 reveals that well over half of them were for material on sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs).²⁹

In contrast the revised British system, backed by a recently announced Advisory Council, offers at least the potential for a more effective and rational system of response to requests. Moreover, the presence of independent historians is a particularly welcome development likely to inspire confidence amongst the academic community. This system appears to be well placed to make judgements about priority amongst what will be an increasing flow of British requests and is also less likely to be hijacked by frivolous requests or by demands for unrealistically large quantities of material by one particular lobby group. While the absence of an American-style legal right of access enshrined in law appears on the face of it, a disadvantage, in reality the extensive litigation that the American FOIA system sometimes inspires is one of its least attractive aspects.³⁰

Are there any positive lessons to be learned from the American experience of responding to specific requests? The American State Department certainly has some important advice to offer. Faced with increasing backlogs of unprocessed material it has made available a hand-list of categories of documents that they still hold for the period prior to 1970, with their approximate quantities in shelf-feet. The thinking behind this is commendably logical. How can historians make informed requests without knowing what types of records government still holds? These lists, often provided in a very preliminary form, have nevertheless allowed records officers to gain a more informed view of the priorities expressed by historians. This is supplemented by more informal contact between those who manage the records and those who use them.³¹

Published Documents and Classified Histories

The last two years have seen promising developments in terms of the published information on intelligence in both Britain and the United States. The prospect of more British published intelligence documents has improved because British officials are taking a greater interest in the use of sanitisation to release documents. This is not a wholly new development, for sanitised files have been making their way to the PRO for many years. Nevertheless, this technique will apparently now be exploited more frequently, bringing with it both new problems and new possibilities. The problems relate largely to the efficient use of time by hard-pressed Departmental Record Officers, since the physical process of blanking out specific sensitive passages on a page is extremely time

consuming. Quite simply, an hour spent sanitising a specific document is an hour not spent declassifying another file. This is a problem also recognised in the United States where sanitisation is primarily employed for documents requested through FOIA, and is only rarely used voluntarily by those reviewing records for routine release.

The advantages of sanitisation are also considerable. In the field of intelligence the presence of a single name or a brief reference to a type of source can close a lengthy and valuable document. In the United States, the most impressive use of sanitisation has been made by the CIA to facilitate a published volume of CIA documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis. This 370-page book includes raw agent reports, estimates, material on how intelligence was disseminated to policy-makers and retrospective studies conducted immediately after the Crisis reviewing the performance of the CIA. A proportion of these documents are sanitised, a few rather heavily, but this volume stands as a powerful testament to the potential value of this technique.³² The trend towards published intelligence documents is gathering pace in the United States with the prospect of two volumes of *Foreign Relations of the United States* devoted to the American intelligence community 1946–50 scheduled for publication in 1994.³³

1 The expressed intention of British Departmental Record Officers to make greater use of sanitisation makes it more likely that we will see published intelligence material in series such as *Documents on British Policy Overseas (DBPO)*. To the surprise of many, a recent volume of *DBPO*, contained the fabled 'Global Strategy Paper' for 1950, albeit with three lines dealing with Asia deleted.³⁴ This approach could certainly be extended to JIC papers for the same period in the way that many equivalent American NIE papers are routinely included in the American *FRUS* series.³⁵ A volume of *DBPO* focused upon the work of the post-war JIC would be an ideal reflection of the new Open Government policy and of forthcoming JIC releases into the PRO. Equally, it might well be possible to choose a particular event, perhaps the crises in Czechoslovakia and Berlin in 1948, and produce a volume of related British intelligence material that would stand alone, in much the same way as the Americans have done for Cuba in 1962.

A separate area that offers promising developments is the field of official history. The official history of intelligence and special operations is something that Britain seems to do particularly well. One of the virtues of this sort of history is that it allows the many historians working on wider subjects, typically international history, to take some account of the intelligence dimension even though the primary papers are, in many cases, not available. After all, international historians far outnumber

specialist intelligence historians and, moreover, intelligence is often best understood set in the context of wider developments. Official histories have done much to encourage this contextual approach. While the SOE papers for France are due to be opened in 1994 or 1995, historians have long been able to turn to M.R.D. Foot's acclaimed official study. Equally, while SIS papers for the Second World War are unlikely to be available for some time, many important questions that have confronted historians of this conflict are resolved by the magisterial official series on British intelligence.³⁶

Perhaps what is needed is an official history of British intelligence during the early cold war, 1945–54. The majority of British historians working on the wider international history of the post-war period do not want to spend hundreds of hours rummaging through the low level files of Britain's Intelligence Division, Germany. But there are certain basic questions concerning the nature of Britain's picture of Soviet capabilities and intentions that most cold war historians would like to have answered by an official history. There are already promising developments in this direction, the year 1993 saw the publication of a 'semi-official' history of the Intelligence Corps from its origins in the mid-nineteenth century through to the 1990s. Four chapters, accounting for a full quarter of the text, cover the post war period. The discussion of the post-war period is deliberately selective and it is overtly stated that Northern Ireland is omitted (readers will also note that Army signals intelligence operations are conspicuous by their absence). Nevertheless this book is an auspicious development.³⁷

It is worth dwelling for a moment upon the parallel American experience. There is no American official intelligence series that can compare with the impressive British official volumes on intelligence or SOE in France. However, the Americans have been quick to release many of the internal classified historical studies that the intelligence services produced years ago for their own reference purposes. For the wartime period the obvious example is the Signal Research Histories, summarising much of the 'take' from signals intelligence operations against the Axis and describing the development of American signals intelligence organisations. More recently, the CIA have declassified sanitised versions of their internal official histories of the development of the CIA for the periods 1945–50 and 1950–53.³⁸ This material is not without its problems for the quality of these volumes is at best uneven. Moreover, the National Security Agency (the American equivalent of GCHQ) has presently decided not to release any chapters of an internal history covering 1940–52.³⁹ Nevertheless, the fact remains that for the many American international historians working on the early cold war period, the CIA internal histories are sufficient to answer important questions. Similar British

internal studies exist and consideration might well be given to their release, albeit in a sanitised form.

Finally we should consider the field of memoirs. The 1980s were a period when the literary efforts of retired British secret service officers were greeted with concerted official hostility. This approach might be contrasted with the American system by which retired intelligence officers are required to submit their memoirs for clearance, a process which usually results in sections of the memoir being sanitised. It is not only historians who have benefited from memoirs that have appeared under this regime. Arguably, the widely quoted memoirs of William Colby, have done much to encourage a sympathetic view of the place of the CIA in American post-war history. Some have even interpreted this post 1975 wave of approved memoirs as an attempt to offset some of the damage done to the reputation of the CIA during the various Congressional enquiries of the 1970s, notably the Church Committee. Whatever their motivation, they have undoubtedly contributed to a more balanced picture of American post-war intelligence.⁴⁰

There is now a strong case for Britain to look again at a similar system of official clearance for memoirs. The most forceful argument for this is derived not from the past American experience, but from future developments in the former Soviet Union. In the early 1990s numerous retired KGB officers, some of them quite senior, sat down and began to write their memoirs. Their numbers are increasing and as a result we will soon have a growing picture of British intelligence in the post-war period, albeit from a dubious source. It will be dubious not only because some of these officers are bitter, unreconstructed communists with an axe to grind, but also because retired KGB officers naturally wish to present the achievements of their own service in the best possible light. There is a growing danger that the history of British intelligence will be written by its enemies. One has only to recall the damage done by Kim Philby's propagandistic memoir, *My Silent War*, which remains one of the most widely read accounts of SIS.⁴¹

In 1993 there were unconfirmed reports that the British government had made representations to the Russians asking them to keep certain aspects of their archives relating to Britain closed. However successful this approach was, it will not address the problem of KGB memoirs. At the same time there have been welcome signs of a more balanced British approach to secret service memoirs, most obviously provided by the unopposed publication of the memoirs of Desmond Bristow, *A Game of Moles*. However, if full advantage is to be taken of this slightly bashful shift of policy, some formal mechanism for the clearing of secret service memoirs needs to be instituted.⁴²

What, in conclusion, are the important lessons to be learned from recent developments in the British and American archives? The sternest lesson to be derived from the American management of their intelligence materials during the last ten years is that their sheer volume presents significant problems. During the period 1945 through to 1989 the Western intelligence community enjoyed steady growth and so the quantities of old intelligence records awaiting declassification will increase for the foreseeable future. At the same time these types of records are awkward and time-consuming for officials to process for release.

In order to deal with these sorts of problems a government requires not only a carefully considered Open Government policy. It also requires the commitment of adequate resources and the effective management of those resources through a clear dialogue with historians. Historians, given a picture of what governments hold in their archives, will readily articulate their priorities. After all, resources for serious historical research are increasingly limited and thus the appetite for records is finite. Yet at present demand and supply are not sufficiently co-ordinated. Everything that is routinely declassified is not immediately required by researchers, nor is everything required by researchers given priority by departments. There will also be a growing need to screen out excessive or frivolous requests. There are encouraging signs that a sensible system that fulfils some of these requirements is now emerging.

There is also a need for a climate of greater trust between historians and departments of state. This will develop only slowly, for intelligence historians who took an adversarial view of official policy in the 1980s have largely concluded that they have been proved right by the nature of some of the documents released in 1993. One can only wonder at those who have hitherto maintained that the terrible things would happen if the public were allowed to gaze upon, for example, records relating to secret postal interception for the period 1742–1792.⁴³ Accordingly, it is hardly surprising that intelligence historians initially greeted the announcement of the Waldegrave Initiative in 1992 with profound scepticism. This attitude is now changing with release of several thousand files relating to wartime SOE, to JIC and to Churchill's personal summary of signals intelligence materials (Dir/C). This event understandably caught the imagination of the press, but perhaps the most impressive development was the rapid response to detailed requests by researchers for particular files. There is still some way to go before a balanced policy on all aspects of British intelligence archives emerges but historians were pleasantly surprised by the reality of the Waldegrave Initiative as it unfolded in its first year. The experience of 'Never-Never Land' will not be forgotten quickly, but at the same time there are indications that something wonderful has begun to happen.⁴⁴

NOTES

1. Wesley K. Wark, 'In Never-Never Land? The British Archives on Intelligence', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.35, No.1 (1992), pp.195–303. Wark's other publications include *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1985) and (ed.), *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence* (London: Frank Cass, 1990).
2. On the problems of British intelligence archives see also the remarks of Christopher M. Andrew in *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985), pp.xv–xvii, in 'Whitehall, Washington and the Intelligence Services', *International Affairs*, Vol.53, No.2 (1977), pp.390–404, and in 'Historical Research on the British Intelligence Community', in R. Godson (ed.), *Comparing Foreign Intelligence* (London: Brassey's, 1988), pp.43–64.
3. Typically John Costello identifies the National Archives in Washington as the key resource for his study of Anthony Blunt, describing it as 'a model national institution', *Mask of Treachery: The First Documented Dossier on Blunt, MI5 and Soviet Subversion* (London: Collins, 1988), pp.12–13.
4. Cmd. 2290, *Open Government* (London: HMSO, 1993). This essay covers recent American and British, but not Canadian developments. On Canada see Gregory S. Kealey, 'The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, The Canadian Security Intelligence Service, The Public Archives of Canada and Access to Information: A Curious Tale', *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol.21 (Spring 1988), pp.199–226; Larry Hannant, 'Access to the Inside; An Assessment of Canada's Security Service; A History', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.8, No.3 (July 1993), pp.149–59.
5. On the origins of the JIC see: Andrew, *Secret Service*, pp.483–5; F.H. Hinsley *et al.*, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vol.1 (London: HMSO, 1979), pp.36–43, 93–100, 291–99; Wark, *Ultimate Enemy*, p.117.
6. Michael Geyer, 'National Socialist Germany: The Politics of Information' in Ernest May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.310–47; Edward Thomas, 'The Evolution of the JIC System up to and during World War II', in Christopher M. Andrew and Jeremy Noakes (eds.), *Intelligence and International Relations, 1900–1945* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, Exeter Studies in History No.10, 1987), pp.219–34; Richard J. Aldrich, *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945–51* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.16–23. For an example of the discussion of the work of regional JICs see JIC (47) 50 (0), 2nd Revised Draft, 'Reports by the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East)', 12 September 1947, L/WS/1/1050, India Office Library and Records.
7. See for example, Christopher M. Andrew, 'The Growth of the Australian Intelligence Community and the Anglo-American Connection', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.4, No.2 (1989), p.222; Ray Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (New York: Acropolis Books), pp.32–3, 123–8.
8. Much of the material still closed in the JIC files for 1936–41 appears to concern signals intelligence. (One is tempted to speculate that this relates to the monitoring of neutral countries.) For later JIC material that has long been available see for example: JIC (46) 38 (0) Final Revise, 'Russia's Strategic Interests and Intentions in the Middle East', 14 June 1946, DO 35/1604, PRO; JIC (50) 65th mtg. (3), 23 July 1950, AIR 2/5882, PRO.
9. Revisionist accounts of Pearl Harbor, suggesting either British or American fore-knowledge, have proliferated since the 1950s. However, the recent revival of the debate over Churchill's role can largely be attributed to one book: James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into War* (London: Michael O'Mara Books, 1991). For commentary on this debate see Richard J. Aldrich, 'Conspiracy or Confusion: Churchill, Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.7, No.3 (July 1992), pp.335–47.
10. JIC (41) 15th mtg (1), 6 June 1941, CAB 81/88, PRO. On SOE and a *coup d'état* in

- neutral Thailand see the remarks of Victor Cavendish-Bentinck at FE (41) 16th mtg., 'Infiltration - Thailand', 13 May 1941, CAB 96/2, PRO.
11. JIC (41) 36th mtg, 3 December 1941 and JIC (41) 37th mtg, 9 December 1941, CAB 81/88, PRO. The supposed letter from Cavendish-Bentinck is claimed by Constantine Fitzgibbon, *Secret Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (London: Hart-Davis, 1976), p.255 and the issue is fully discussed in D.C.S. Sissons, 'More on Pearl Harbor', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.9, No.2 (1994), pp.373-9.
 12. American signals intelligence records are located in Record Group 457, while Office of Strategic Service Records (OSS) are kept in Record Group 226, both at the National Archives, Washington, DC. The OSS records are so vast that they have had to be broken down into approximately two-hundred further sub-classes which are referred to as 'Entries'.
 13. A fine example of a history of OSS which benefited from the combination of both primary record and oral testimony is Robin Winks, *Cloak and Gown: Scholars in America's Secret War* (London: Collins Harvill, 1987).
 14. See, for example, NIE-64, 12 December 1952, Box 254, CI Reports, President Secretaries File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.
 15. *CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence Newsletter*, Issue 1, December 1993. It is worth noting that the CIA's Historical Review Panel, formed in 1985, includes independent academic historians such as John L. Gaddis, George Herring and Gaddis Smith. I am grateful to Wesley K. Wark for drawing some of these recent developments to my attention.
 16. Air Force Intelligence Records are presently held in the National Archives in Record Group 341, while Naval Intelligence material is held at the same location in Record Group 38. Most Army Intelligence in Record Group 319 is now held at the Federal Record Repository at Suitland on the outskirts of Washington DC, partly because of its considerable size. We might also note that the United States is presently beginning to consider the release of early cold war signals intelligence materials.
 17. Typically the files of Far Eastern Command (FECOM) are kept in RG 332 at WNRC, Suitland.
 18. Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Linda Hunt, *The Secret Agenda: The United States Government, Nazi Scientists and Project Paperclip, 1944-1990* (New York: St Martin's, 1991); John Gimbel, *Science, Technology and Reparations: Exploitation and Plunder in Post War Germany* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).
 19. The Shanghai Municipal Police Files are located in Record Group 263 at the National Archives. An example of a study that has made use of these files is Bernard Wasserstein, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988). On their use by Senator McCarthy see 'Disclosure of Chinese Government Confidential Intelligence and Police Files Concerning U.S. Officials to Congressional Committees', 3 May 1951, 110.3, Box 26, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 1953-5, Lot Files RG 59, USNA.
 20. Central Intelligence Agency, *The Rote Kapelle: The CIA's History of Soviet Intelligence and Espionage Networks in Western Europe, 1935-1945* (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1979). The British government has suggested that the original files might have been returned to the German archives but searches there have proved fruitless. I am most grateful to Professor Donald Cameron Watt for his guidance on this matter.
 21. Costello, *Mask of Treachery*; Bradley F. Smith, *The Ultra-Magic Deals and the Most Secret Special Relationship* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1993). Costello's study contains an appendix with examples of British security materials culled from the American archives.
 22. Tim Naftali completed his doctorate in 1993 at Harvard on OSS counter-intelligence (X2) and its close relationship with MI5 and the counter-intelligence sections of SIS. I am grateful to him for guidance on this matter. Nelson MacPherson, a Canadian doctoral student now completing a study of the OSS London office has reportedly encountered voluminous British material.

23. It is hard to know where to begin when offering examples of British materials in the OSS files. Gems include correspondence from Kim Philby in a re-organising post-war SIS, H.A.R. Philby to Lt. Commander Winston M. Scott, OSS X-2 Branch, 71 Grovesnor Street London NW1, 29 April 1946, File 779, Box 63, Entry 171A, RG 226, USNA. An example of British material available *en bloc* is the reports of Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME), the regional manifestation of MI5 during the war. A few of these reports appear sporadically in the PRO but in Washington they are available in a collated form for 1945 at Folder 81, Box 19, Entry 120, RG 226 USNA.
24. RDC 5/99, 'Replacement of the Present Combined Cypher Machine', 13 July 1949, Box 185, 311.5 TS, 1949-50, RG 319, USNA. This is a significant document in which the British Chiefs of Staff proposed to their American counterparts nothing less than 'a full and complete interchange of cryptographic principles and policy on a reciprocal basis'. RDC was the designation given to memoranda from the British Chiefs of Staff to the American Joint Chiefs of Staff.
25. Typical examples include British JIC Report, 'Russia's Strategic Interests and Intentions in the Middle East', 14 June 1946, Reel 7 (M-1642), Entry 190, RG 226, USNA; British JIC Report, 'Perimeter Review as at 9th December 1952', File 2-36282, Box 69, DI/HQ Series, RG 341, USNA. It might also be noted in passing that closed Joint Planning Staff papers detailing short-term thinking for nuclear war have long been available in the United States, see for example JP (48) 69 (Final), 'Plan Doublequick', Box 115, P&O 381.TS, RG 319, USNA.
26. United States JIC Report 370, 'Exchange of Intelligence Estimates and Evaluations Thereof Between the United States and the British Joint Intelligence Committees', 25 Sept. 1946, Reel 7, (M-1642), Entry 190, RG 226, USNA. The manner in which some original papers from JIC London were re-written before being handed to the Americans as papers produced by the British JIC Washington begs all sorts of awkward questions. On JIC papers and Anglo-American conferences see Ian Clark and Nicholas Wheeler, *The British Origins of Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.126.
27. The case of Britain's Intelligence Division, Control Commission Germany, is instructive. In 1993, under the auspices of the Waldegrave Initiative, the author requested declassification of records of this important organisation, which presided over many intelligence aspects of the British occupation, both military and civil. However, the MoD have established that almost all of these records were destroyed during a previous review. No new 'initiative' will repair the damage done during more censorious decades. MoD Deputy Departmental Record Officer to author, 1 Feb. 1994, D/CS (RM) 1/6/1/3.
28. The best guide to the procedures of the Freedom of Information Act remains Allan R. Adler, *Litigation under the Federal Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act: Fifteenth Edition* (Washington, DC: American Civil Liberties Union, 1990). For recent cases see *Freedom of Information Act Case List: September 1991 Edition* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Information and Privacy, 1991).
29. On changes in FOIA legislation see Sigmund Diamond, *Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community, 1945-1955* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.4-9. A vast print-out of FOIA requests can be inspected at the National Security Archive (co-located with the Brookings Institute), Suite 500, 1755 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036. Many FOIA requests themselves are now taking years to answer. The author of this essay made a FOIA request to the CIA on 4 May 1992 but in April 1993 the CIA were still unable to give an estimated completion date. A completion is unlikely before 1994-95. Notwithstanding this, the CIA staff themselves are unfailingly kind and helpful. John H. Wright, Information and Privacy Coordinator, CIA, Washington, DC, 20505, to author, 14 April 1993.
30. The Advisory Council system is outlined in Cmd. 2290, *Open Government*, p.70. However, it might be noted the Council may have to meet more frequently than it does at present to make a real impact. Given that areas such as defence and security are likely

to attract appeals, there is also a paucity of twentieth century historians with experience in this field.

31. See, for example, Gerald K. Haines, *A Reference Guide to United States Department of State Special Files* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985). Most of the collections listed in this large handbook are still closed but can be successfully applied for. The American system of assigning a specialist archivist to look after those conducting serious long-term research is superb.
32. Mary S. McAuliffe (ed.), *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (Washington, DC: CIA History Staff, 1992).
33. Two volumes of *Foreign Relations of the United States*, each of c.1500 pages, dealing with the American intelligence community 1946–50 are due for publication in Sept. 1994. For details of other forthcoming volumes in this series see *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), No.2 (Fall 1992), p.34.
34. 'Global Strategy', 7 June 1950, *DBPO*, Series II, Vol.IV, Korea June 1950–April 1951, Appendix I. See also Anne Deighton, 'Say it with documents: British Policy Overseas, 1945–1952', *Review of International Studies*, Volume 18, No.3 (1992), pp.397, 400.
35. See for example, NIE 12.5–55, 'Current Situation and Probable Developments in Hungary', 29 March 1955, *FRUS 1955–57*, XXV, pp.16–23; NIE 10-58, 'Anti-Communist Resistance Potential in the Sino-Soviet Bloc', 4 March 1958, *FRUS 1958–60*, X, Part 1, pp.7–11.
36. M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France* (London: HMSO, 1966); F.H. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence Upon Strategy and Operations*, Vols.I–V (London: HMSO, 1979–91).
37. Anthony Clayton, *Forearmed: A History of the Intelligence Corps* (London: Brassey's, 1993), pp.ix–x.
38. The Signal Research Histories are available in Record Group 457 at the National Archives. The two declassified CIA volumes are: A.B. Darling, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Instrument of Government to 1950* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); Ludwell L. Montague, *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence, October 1950–February 1953* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). In the latter volume, Chapter 20, dealing with the CIA's relations with its allies has been deleted in its entirety.
39. This classified volume is Thomas L. Burns, *The Origins of the National Security Agency, 1940–1952* (Fort Meade, MD: NSA, 1989). The NSA hopes that a modified version of this volume will eventually be published, David W. Gaddy, Center for Cryptologic History (D9), NSA, Fort G. Meade, Maryland 20755-6000 to author, 5 Oct. 1992.
40. William Colby, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1978). See also Cord Meyer, *Facing Reality: From World Federalism to the CIA* (New York: University Press of America, 1982) and David A. Phillips, *The Night Watch: 25 Years of Peculiar Service* (New York: Atheneum, 1977).
41. On the vexed question of Kim Philby's memoirs see E.D.R. Harrison, 'Some Reflections on Kim Philby's My Silent War as a Historical Source', in Richard J. Aldrich and Michael F. Hopkins (eds.), *Intelligence, Defence and Diplomacy: British Policy in the Post War World* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp.205–25.
42. There have been unconfirmed rumours of British approaches direct to Boris Yeltsin in an attempt to keep certain archives closed, David Connert, 'Tell-Tale Spy the British want to keep in the Cold', *The Independent*, 13 June 1993, p.5. Desmond Bristow's recent autobiography, *A Game of Moles: The Deception of an MI6 Officer* (London: Little, Brown & Co., 1993) appeared with remarkably little fuss, perhaps because of its unsensational nature.
43. These records were released into the PRO at class HD 3/17 in 1993. A thirty-two page guide to the intelligence material for the period from 1740s through to the First World War which was released in 1993 is now available: Louise Atherton, *Top Secret: An Interim Guide to Recent Releases of Intelligence Records at the Public Record Office* (London: PRO, 1993).

44. An example of something wonderful is JIC (62) 93 (Final), 'The Threat Posed by Soviet Missiles in Cuba', 26 Oct. 1962, attached to C (62) 166, CAB 129/111, PRO. This paper was located by Stephen Twigg and Len Scott of the Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, during work on a project on the command and control of British nuclear weapons. I am indebted to them for drawing it to my attention.