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Article Title: 'Grow your own': cold war intelligence and history supermarkets

Year of publication: 2002

Link to published version:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02684520412331306450>

Publisher statement: None

“Grow Your Own”

Cold War Intelligence and History Supermarkets

Richard J. Aldrich

This essay examines the impact of new records upon the history of Cold War intelligence. It considers the wave of reforms which began with greater transparency in Gorbachev's Soviet Union in the 1980s, but it gives primary attention to subsequent efforts by Whitehall and Washington to embrace a new culture of ‘openness’ in the 1990s, often using releases on intelligence as a high profile ‘flagship’. This was marked by the efforts of William Waldegrave in 1993 to change the criteria for release in Britain, and the Clinton Executive Order of 1995 affecting substantial American materials that were more than 25 years old.¹ This essay has two objectives: first, to review the impact of newly declassified intelligence materials upon the wider context of history of the Cold War that lies outside the immediate realm of intelligence studies. Second, to consider the impact of recent declassifications upon our understanding of the narrower and more institutional territory of the secret service organisations themselves. It closes by offering some reflections on the prospects for further declassification in the 21st Century and the extent to which this will offer new opportunities. It seeks to argue that while new archives are always valuable, excessive focus on new releases, encouraged by strong media attention, can result in a culture of ‘release-dependency’. Some Cold War history already betrays a reluctance to move the frame of investigation beyond a single archive. Historians might be well advised to complement new releases with investigations of their own, perhaps through oral history.

The Contextual History of Intelligence and the Cold War

New archives relating to intelligence and indeed other secret service activities - including covert action, domestic security and black propaganda - have undoubtedly had a major impact upon the writing of broader Cold War history. What is equally clear is that the impact has been uneven. In some areas, such as the history of the cultural Cold War, the release of new material has generated very considerable interest. In other areas, such as mainstream diplomatic history, the impact is less noticeable. What is also clear is that, in common with other major areas of contemporary historical debate, the release of new archives does always not serve to resolve controversies, but it can serve to re-ignite old conflicts that have smouldering quietly for some time. The scale of new Cold War archives is also leading to a certain amount of 'Balkanisation', simply reflecting the difficulty of any single text or single scholar encompassing the Cold War at all its different levels and complexities. This has interesting consequences for intelligence history, given that secret services take the role of informing diverse sections of government, or even acting as interlocutors between sections of government. Intelligence is sometimes difficult to locate in this fragmented landscape.²

There has been remarkably little consensus about the importance of either intelligence or other secret service activities to the diplomatic history of the Cold War. Recent declassifications have emphatically not resulted in the opening of the majority of Cold War intelligence records in any country, but important bodies of papers have been released. They have allowed researchers to glimpse both the immense scale of the records that await declassification and the intense importance that some Cold War leaders attached to intelligence. We might argue about the importance of secret government, but what is no

longer in any doubt is that secret government was 'big government'. Indeed between 1940 and 1989 secret services probably grew faster than any other facet of the national security apparatus of developed states. Yet, despite the increasing archival confirmation of a gargantuan size of the secret apparatus after 1945, historians of Cold War diplomacy have been divided over the extent to which they should pay this subject sustained attention.

The majority of diplomatic historians have expressed little interest in intelligence. Exemplars of this approach are Melvyn Leffler and Michael Hogan, whose important large-scale studies of Truman's National Security Policy, published in 1994 and 1999 respectively, are remarkable for their avoidance any discussion of covert or clandestine subjects, even in their treatment of containment policy in Eastern Europe or NSC-68. Their consideration of Truman's National Security machinery is especially puzzling. Truman presided over the creation of the CIA, the creation of the National Security Agency and the passing of a National Security Act that permitted covert action to accelerate to substantial levels by the early 1950s. Yet the NSA and its predecessors are invisible with these studies and the CIA passes almost unnoticed, but for a couple of position papers. Although one might plausibly argue that discussions of such matters should await a moment when more substantial archives are available, lacunae on this scale raise substantial methodological issues that surely warrant explicit discussion. Yet these considerable areas of Truman's national security apparatus are passed over in silence.³

Contrast these studies of Truman's National Security Policy with a broadly contemporaneous study of Eisenhower's National Security Policy by Robert R. Bowie and Richard Immerman. The broad approaches are not dissimilar, looking at both policy and process, and also

drawing on similar types of archival materials. But in the case of Bowie and Immerman, the subjects of intelligence, covert action and psychological warfare are integrated into the study. Typically, the authors discuss the problems of analysing the work of the Solarium Exercise's 'Task Force C' that dealt with the possibility of pressurising the Soviet Union through psychological warfare and covert action. Despite the heavy sanitization of such material, the authors came to the conclusion that sufficient detail could be gleaned to analyse the American position on roll-back. An extended discussion of the perceived problems of liberation-type activities is offered, including that of 'dragging along reluctant allies'. Covert action and psychological warfare in the Middle East are also discussed and the military problem of 'how much is enough' is connected to the detailed literature on intelligence estimates and strategic assessment.⁴

Similar contrasts exist in the literature on British post-war foreign policy. Discussions of Anglo-American relations provide a good example. David Reynolds has commented that intelligence links lay 'at the heart' of what made the Anglo-American tie so different from other alliances.⁵ Yet some historians, including David Reynolds and John Charmley, tend to see it as a separate subject and have not interested themselves greatly in intelligence matters. Other historians such as Peter Hennessy, John Young and John Dumbrell have incorporated such themes, or have felt inclined to devote separate sections to them in their studies. This varying practice extends not only to diplomacy but also to strategy. We might contrast recent accounts of British nuclear weapons policy by John Baylis on the one hand, and by Stephen Twigge and Len Scott on the other. Both represent very substantial accounts that are meticulously researched. The former seems to view intelligence as a detached subject which has little bearing on nuclear weapons, while the other integrates intelligence matters closely.

Moreover, in all these cases, the decision to include the subject in, or leave it out, is not much discussed.⁶

Inevitably, historians who have focused expressly upon containment and the Eastern Bloc have found it all but essential to integrate covert and clandestine aspects of policy. This trend is denoted by the work of Bennett Kovrig and more recently Gregory Mitrovich. Mitrovich has sought to argue that covert action and propaganda constituted a significant part of American containment policy, associated with a complex debate about how far this might undermine, rather than contain, the communists. He shows that the complexity of this debate was connected to the difficulty of making accurate intelligence estimates of the resilience of Soviet society and economy. More importantly, Mitrovich explicitly offers words of methodological caution. He argues that our reappraisal of the nature of the Cold War under the impact of new intelligence archives has only just begun, suggesting that when these extensive materials are fully released the Cold War landscape is likely to be changed in ways that we may not yet appreciate.⁷

One mainstream Cold War historian who expressed an early interest in the fields of intelligence studies was John Lewis Gaddis. In a landmark essay, written at the time of the collapse of the Soviet empire, Gaddis sought to review the significance of intelligence studies for students of the Cold War, taking a somewhat agnostic position. Gaddis remarked on the ghetto-like existence of intelligence studies, with its specialist newsletters and conferences. He chose to emphasise a question that he attributed to Robin Winks, himself an intelligence historian, which he deemed the ‘So What?’ question. For intelligence studies to really make its mark, he argues, it would have to devote less time to cataloguing operations and expend

more effort in demonstrating how it made things different. Even ten years later, few could argue with his observation that some of work in the area of intelligence studies is the equivalent of ‘military buffism’ – a kind of secret service train spotting. Indeed with its arcane terminology and complex compartmentalisation, one might argue that few subjects lend themselves better to ‘spotterism’. Some historians are content to catalogue operational details and matters of trade craft, while expending little energy in investigating their broader importance. Substantial studies of intelligence and decision-making have been completed - for example Christopher Andrew’s study of secret intelligence and the American presidency - but this contextual approach is still the exception rather than the rule.⁸

New intelligence archives have resolved specific questions, but they have not helped to resolve wider issues such as the question of Cold War responsibility. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, once ‘Exhibit A’ for those liberals who wished to make the case for a sinister Western Cold War security apparatus that had spun out of control, have now been shown to be guilty of espionage for the Soviet Union. John Gaddis remarks that the evidence against these sorts of characters is ‘conclusive’ and that in this area the study of Cold War espionage is ‘shifting from the realm of speculation to the reality of the archives’. He adds that the multiple volumes that have appeared on the subject of Soviet espionage in America, drawing on both American and Soviet materials, allow us to ‘triangulate’ the subject and so provide an excellent basis for reassessing the role of Soviet espionage in early Cold War history.⁹ But selective releases from the Venona programme and from KGB archives in Moscow have done little to resolve large-scale issue of Cold War responsibility, and indeed even the ongoing debates over individual allegiances have also been remarkably complex.¹⁰ A number of the new studies reviewing Soviet espionage in the United States are very clear in

identifying the Soviets as the Cold War aggressors. It is early days yet, but arguably, new intelligence records have already shown the potential to re-ignite the long-running debate over Cold War responsibility and has led to some erosion of the 1980s post-revisionist consensus. Studies focused on intelligence have begun to spawn interpretations that might be regarded as new traditionalism and indeed, new revisionism.¹¹

A range of fresh Soviet materials, especially the recently released Venona decrypts of Soviet intelligence traffic, together with a flood of new Soviet memoirs, selected materials released from archives in Moscow and the revelations of the Mitroshkin archive, have come together to paint a picture of vast Soviet espionage and subversion in the West.¹² They still do not tell us in any detail what Stalin gained from espionage or how he used intelligence. They do show that the scale of these Soviet activities in the West were on a breath-taking scale, and indeed, would be difficult to credit if the documentation were not so compelling. One can argue that the outline of these things was always known. But the extraordinary detail that we now have about a country which closely integrated its overt foreign policy with nasty clandestine activities, arguably results in a *qualitative* change in our understanding of the Soviet regime that renders it yet more malignant and dangerous.¹³

There is something of the blind man and the elephant about this process, since studies of intelligence are often tightly focused on one service, or on a limited episode that is hard to reconstruct. Just as those who work on the KGB have tended to conclude that the Soviets were nastier than we thought, so it is with many who have chosen to study new materials on the CIA or the FBI. Accordingly, parallel revelations about the scope and scale of American covert action, particularly inside Western democracies, have also served to strengthen the

revisionist perspective. These include recent studies of the connections between American universities and the intelligence community and also notably unflattering studies of J. Edgar Hoover.¹⁴ A new revisionist outlook has emerged amongst historians of the Cultural Cold War. Particularly influential has been the work of Francis Stonor Saunders on the CIA-sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom. Saunders is amongst a number of historians who have begun to document the scope and scale of CIA covert funding, not only of trade unions and political parties in Western Europe, but also all manner of cultural, intellectual and artistic movements. The extensive interviews in Saunders' book with figures such as Tom Braden, which take certainly it beyond the pale of what the CIA might have wished to release, lends it additional interest. Saunders and similar authors have emphasised the disparity between the claims that these Western artistic movements were free and independent, and their inner reality, which was that of complex 'state-private networks'. The fact that the largest cultural events that took place in both Eastern and Western Europe during the Cold War were direct manifestations of the clandestine apparatus of either Washington or Moscow has inevitably led to observations of moral equivalence. The alleged connection of public figures such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Arthur Koestler and George Orwell with activities sponsored by either the CIA or Information Research Department has also given a considerable prominence to this debate. The British release of IRD files has provided fascinating material on these networks and is a rare example of an area where releases in the UK are broadly in step, or even ahead, of those in the United States.¹⁵

Scott Lucas's study, *Freedom's War*, represents an interesting example of a revisionist study that draws heavily on recent archival releases in both Britain and the United States relating to propaganda and culture. Lucas asserts that ideology played a critically important part in

shaping the American policy during the Cold War. From the outset, Lucas takes issue with the mainstream interpretation offered by most American historians, who tend to argue that American policy during the Cold War was both defensive and pragmatic. By contrast, Lucas asserts that ideology formed the central element in an aggressive American crusade of freedom against Soviet Union, a crusade which has been neglected by more conventionally-minded historians of American foreign relations. In making this observation, Lucas urges us to shift our attention to a different plane of activity, to move from the diplomatic and the military to the informational and cultural, where American Cold War strategy was not only more ideological, but also more aggressive. Lucas is also one of the more active proponents of the idea 'state-private networks'. He suggests that the reason that the role of ideology, and its central place in American policy, has been neglected is because so much of psychological work was done through organisations that were outside government. Ideology, he insists, manifested itself most clearly in persistent efforts to mobilise cultural and social activity through civil society: industry, labour unions, student groups, women's organisations, professional bodies, academic institutions and public foundations.¹⁶

A strong sub-theme that links intelligence and new revisionism is the Cold War in the Third World. Writing on secret service during the Asian Cold war is a good case in point. Michael Schaller, Bruce Cumings and the A.R. and G. McT. Kahin have all given a prominent place to CIA and other covert activities in their critical characterisations of American policy in post-war Asia. For American scholars, clandestine activities are often interpreted as an instrument employed to address the gap between American protestations of promoting freedom and democracy, set against the American impetus to intervene when Third World countries set off down the road of neutralism and non-alignment. By the mid-1950s, these

scholars would argue, the focus of the CIA was on Bandung as much as Berlin.¹⁷ Although we have also seen a growing interest in British clandestine activities in the Third World after 1945, an overtly revisionist tone has been less evident.¹⁸ Perhaps this reflects a tendency to these matters through a colonial rather than a Cold War prism, or perhaps Cold War interest in Britain has simply focused upon attempting to claim a British 'share of the Cold War action', rather than assessing the nature of British responsibility. Nevertheless, there is a distinctly new revisionist tone to the work of Stephen Dorrill and several other British writers.¹⁹

Alongside the established debate over responsibility, we have seen a growing interest in the question of whether intelligence activity as a whole rendered the Cold War more stable or more dangerous. This question is more complex than it first appears at the outset. It requires complex calculations that set the possible risks of gathering intelligence against the supposed benefits of a more transparent world. The conventional wisdom has emphasised a story of gradual shifts towards less provocative collection instruments, combined with the argument that the resulting improvements in strategic intelligence did much to calm tensions and to slow the arms race. Operations with human agents against Communist countries during the first decade of the Cold War were almost universally disastrous, whether launched into the Soviet Union, China or North Korea. This prompted a shift towards more technical operations including sigint and aerial photography, both of which were gathered by aircraft such as the famous U-2 spyplane operating from the mid-1950s. The loss of the Gary Powers U-2 in 1960 accelerated a pre-existing commitment to deploy satellites, a genuinely less intrusive form of intelligence collection. Much has been claimed for these advanced collection platforms, including the U-2 and the Corona Satellite programme

New archives and new studies have produced diverse commentaries on the US spy-flight programmes of the 1950s. The decision-making process surrounding the flights now appears more decentralised, with emerging evidence of a parallel series of USAF flights by various types of aircraft that do not seem to have been as tightly controlled as the CIA's U-2 programme. Moreover, recent studies have questioned the effectiveness of U-2 material in curbing lobby-group pressure for more armaments to fill the so-called 'bomber-gap' and 'missile gap'. They have argued that prior to the arrival of satellites, there was enough intelligence to convince Eisenhower that these gaps were non-existent, but there was not enough to convince the sceptics, not could all the sceptics be shown all the material. More disconcerting has been an emerging picture of the risks involved in gathering such intelligence. Scott Sagan has unearthed documents demonstrating just how dangerous some U-2 flights proved to be, including one nuclear 'close call' during the Cuban Missile Crisis. This was the result of an errant U-2 flight from Alaska that mistakenly flew into Soviet Siberia, triggering fears in Moscow of an American first strike. No Soviet commander reasonably be expected to believe that such a hazardous venture at this moment of high tension was simply a blunder. The Siberian incident, which was the result of a routine atomic intelligence 'atmosphere-sniffing' mission, may represent one of the most dangerous Cold War moments that any historian has yet documented.²⁰

New materials on Soviet intelligence also contains episodes that are no less hair-raising. The Foreign Office has recently released material from Operation Foot, an initiative planned to 'give the boot' to over 100 Soviet intelligence officers in London in 1970-71. Anxieties about the disproportionate numbers of KGB officers at large in London had been growing

throughout the 1960s. But the matter was brought to a head by the defection of the KGB officer Oleg Lyalin in 1970. Lyalin was the kind of secret agent of the kind rarely seen outside paperback fiction. He belonged to a special section of the KGB – Department V - tasked with co-ordinating sabotage measures by KGB and Spetznaz units on the eve of war. His cover was an official of the Soviet Trade Delegation and he spent much time travelling to the North of England to buy samples of knitwear and woollen socks. But he was also conducting detailed war planning for parties of agents to be dropped by submarine.²¹ British officials could hardly believe their ears as the KGB plans for an extraordinary range of devious measures were unveiled. They included sabotage, assassinations and bombings for which Whitehall itself would be a target. All this underlined an alarming theme – the potentially destabilising aspects to the work of intelligence services. Their covert action wings were increasingly bent on disabling the machinery of the opposing government at a time when East and West were on the brink of war, and this hardly contributed to the possibility of successful crisis management. Having scared Whitehall with its covert war plans in the 1970s, the KGB went on to scare itself with its own paranoia of Western plans for a preventative war in the early 1980s. The KGB had misread the increasingly bellicose language of the incoming Reagan administration. These fears prompted the KGB in Moscow to implement Operation Ryan, an elaborate joint KGB-GRU intelligence scheme designed to give early warning of a Western pre-emptive strike. Moscow expected the West to use a NATO exercise as a cover for such an attack and so the NATO command post exercise Able Archer in October 1983 represented a particularly hazardous moment, perhaps comparable with the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Historically, intelligence practitioners have complained that the performance of intelligence services is under-rated because their most important successes cannot be revealed, while operations that go wrong quickly find their

way into the public domain. This reassuring tale has not been confirmed by some of the more recent releases. What we are sometimes glimpsing now are operations that went badly wrong forty years ago, but which we still know little about. The secret strivings of intelligence did not necessarily make the world more transparent or safer.²²

The Institutional History of Cold War Intelligence

The increasing pace of declassification under the Open Government initiative in Britain and the Clinton Executive Order of 1995 in the United States has resulted in a correspondingly greater flow of publications claiming to be based on new intelligence archives. However, the pattern of archival releases, and resulting publications, have not necessarily mapped the shape of Cold War intelligence precisely. The pattern of archival release is certainly uneven, but more importantly the overall direction of the historical writing on both British and American secret services has been driven less by the opening of files, and more by the level of coverage devoted to subjects by newspapers and the memoirs of retirees. Perhaps these two currents are to some extent mutually reinforcing. For some decades the history of CIA and FBI has been strong in the United States, and writing on MI5 and SIS, with a strong focus on the institutions themselves, has predominated in Britain. By contrast the signals intelligence agencies have been much more successful in keeping a low profile. Indeed, so secretive were the American NSA and British GCHQ that until the 1970s they enjoyed almost no public exposure and no memoir material had appeared in the public domain. In Cheltenham, the home territory of GCHQ, the local newspaper was forbidden to publish the names of the GCHQ football team when they played other local sides. But it was not only

obsessive secrecy that kept NSA and GCHQ secret. They were also regarded as ‘difficult’ and technical subjects by both academic historians and by more entrepreneurial writers. Few have been brave enough to attempt these subjects. Instead, the culture of intelligence history in Britain since the 1950s has been dominated by moles and defectors. Since the 1980s the United States has also developed and increasing a taste for ‘moles’ with a string of high profile miscreants, including John Walker and Aldrich Ames, spawning a vast literature. Perhaps it is public taste – the demand for detailed lives of the mole superstars - as much as the pattern of record release, that has shaped the terrain of Cold War intelligence history.²³

We have long known that the signals intelligence giants - NSA and GCHQ - dwarfed their sister secret services. As others have noted, during that the 1950s the CIA had achieved a budget twice the size of that of the State Department, but the NSA had achieved a budget twice the size of that of the CIA. In Britain, GCHQ employed approximately 11,000 staff during the 1960s and presided over a further 4,000 related military personnel, rendering them more than four times the size of either SIS or MI5. During the Cold War, Whitehall regularly gave GCHQ budgetary priorities over the other secret services. But despite the fact that NSA and GCHQ were the leviathans of Cold War intelligence the number of detailed books written about them can be counted upon one hand.²⁴

The detailed story of signals intelligence and its impact remains the largest, and arguably the most significant, missing piece in the Cold War jigsaw puzzle.²⁵ When decrypts for the Cold War period are finally released we can expect the historical landscape to be reshaped substantially. A large number of decrypts have been released for the period between 1914 and 1945. These include not only Axis communications but also the traffic of more than 40

other countries that the British and the Americans were intercepting during this period. It is now clear that a similar widespread pattern of successful interception continued into the post war period. These records, when they become available, will be of interest to a correspondingly wide range of researchers. A small foretaste of what awaits us is offered by intercepted messages between Jean Monnet and Charles de Gaulle in late 1945, pertaining to the future administration of Germany, and which are now available in the PRO.²⁶

Another important institutional element that has been largely absent from the Cold War landscape has been the organisations of defence intelligence or service intelligence. Biographies of well-worn subjects such as Kim Philby and Anthony Blunt, have filled library shelves, while we remain without any substantial account of British post-war naval intelligence. In both Britain and the United States service intelligence organisations were often very large and recent generous releases of their records have begun to attract the attention of historians. This is especially true in the area of defence scientific and technical intelligence. British materials in this area, presided over by the MoD, represent some of the most exciting materials on post war intelligence to have been deposited in the PRO and historians have been quick to begin detailed investigation of these records.²⁷ Intelligence history is infamous for its addiction to abbreviations and acronyms. The result of new documentary releases has been a pressing need to acquaint ourselves with some new ones. Until the mid-1950s, CIA covert operations in Austria were dwarfed by the activities of US Army, Navy and Air Force intelligence units. In Britain, relatively unknown bodies such as the Scientific and Technical Intelligence Bureau (STIB) and deception units such as the Department of Forward Plans (DFP), played important roles. Defence intelligence has continued to play an important thing during the latter years of the Cold War and beyond,

driven partly by the determination of the armed services to stay ahead of their bureaucratic rivals in the intelligence game. In the 1980s the US Army was busy developing its own private CIA - then called Intelligence Support Activity (ISA). ISA proved to be resistant to Congressional inquiries and changed its name to an unknown designation in the 1990s.²⁸

Many such misapprehensions and distortions would be corrected by the extension of the official history programmes on British secret service during the Second World War, onwards to the Cold War period. These began with the remarkable and path-breaking work of M.R.D Foot on *SOE in France*. During the 1980s, a period widely acknowledged to have been characterised by intense government secrecy, the magisterial volumes prepared by Sir Harry Hinsley and his team provided an ideal way of bringing the subject forward. (Albeit the semi-privatised SOE histories produced in the mid-1980s are best passed over in silence.) Official histories of intelligence may not always please that small but vocal lobby group 'the unofficial historians of intelligence', but they do serve a much wider constituency. Most readers of intelligence history - indeed most international historians - do not wish to see every last file of some obscure intelligence collection unit declassified as a matter of urgency. Nor do they want imperfect historical speculation, drawn from the limited range of intelligence files that have so far been made available for the Cold War. They would probably prefer an authoritative account, based on privileged access to all relevant materials and professionally researched by a well-resourced team of scholars, even if some names, even some chapters, have to be excised from the published version. In an ideal world, the year 2006 would see the publication of several volumes of official intelligence history covering the period 1945-1956, dealing with each of the three secret services, together with military, naval and air intelligence. This programme could be repeated at ten years intervals.

A decision to revive the official history of British intelligence, addressing matters more than fifty years old, would transform the landscape more than any other practical option. It would also provide a stern challenge to those entrepreneurial writers who choose to place an arcane interpretation on events, to the detriment of the public understanding of this important subject. But such a decision seems unlikely, and one cannot help feeling that a significant opportunity has been missed by the authorities.

Are we likely to witness a global Glasnost for most Cold War intelligence records in the early 21st century? The answer has to be a resounding 'no'. Departmental Record Officers have worked long and hard to release what they can. (It is worth recording here that government departments have worked wonders in processing a greatly increased volume of files against a background of declining resources.) As yet few substantial bodies of Cold War secret service records have been released, compared to the sorts of materials recently opened for the Second World War. STIB and IRD records are exceptions to a general rule of continued closure for this period and this is unlikely to change in the near future. Accordingly, some would suggest that we are far away from a substantial and authoritative account of this conflict, so much of which was carried out by covert or clandestine means. The picture is not much brighter in archives outside Britain. Former Eastern Bloc materials have complicated matters where releases to some researchers cannot be cross-checked by other historians. In China, substantial Cold War documents have also been released, but so far intelligence has remained a subject that is strictly off limits.²⁹ In the long run, the prospects for substantial dividends are good, providing there has not been a widespread destruction of materials. Regrettably, this proved to be the case in the 1990s when US Directors of Central Intelligence promised to release substantial papers on a early covert actions, including events Iran in 1953, only to

discover subsequently that some Iran materials had been destroyed. In the event, it was the surfacing of an unauthorised copy of a classified in-house CIA history of the Iran operation of 1953 that has shed new light on this episode. Meanwhile many papers that have been released by the CIA for the Cold War period seem to be long analytical reports on Soviet coal mining in the Urals, and while it is good to see them declassified, historians are not going to be fighting with each other to be the first to read them.³⁰

The fact that the release of most Cold War intelligence records is proceeding at a constabulary pace is important to different sets of people for different reasons. It will not please those historians who like to conduct interviews. This process can be invaluable in clarifying the meaning of a document and can be especially important in some of the more technical areas, such as atomic intelligence. To some historians, the current rate of release seems purpose-designed to open up the records just as the last valuable witnesses are shuffling off the mortal coil. British releases of SOE records at approximately the fifty year point have tended to follow this pattern and sadly, relatively few witnesses remain to help us understand the newly available materials.

Conversely, some officials currently serving within the secret services will regard even a glacial rate of release as being too hasty. They also have valid arguments to make. Their concerns are not only focused on the minutiae of keeping specific secrets closed for an appropriate length of time. They are also focused on the more elusive, but nevertheless critical, issue of maintaining the reputation of secret services for effective secrecy. This is a direct operational concern that will impact upon their effectiveness. Realistically, who would wish to risk their lives as an agent providing information for a secret service that did not have

a reputation for fanatical secrecy? In the last two decades Western secret services have been required to recruit agents from countries with unpleasant regimes in the hope of discovering more about subjects such as nuclear proliferation. Their agents sometimes offer information not so much because of a love of the West, but more out of a commendable humanitarian concern over military-scientific activities that are dangerous to us all. But such people are not going to be inspired to work for a secret service that is releasing files at the twenty-five year point and crowing about it to the newspapers. Agents in these high-risk positions might rightly point out that, long after their deaths, information about their activities could still make life very uncomfortable for surviving family members, since authoritarian regimes have long memories. Arguably, an obsession with secrecy is the lifeblood of a good secret service and this is directly related to its ability to recruit valued agents. In this respect, intelligence historians and secret services are always likely to enjoy an adversarial relationship.³¹

For the historian there are further anxieties that have little to do with the passing of time. When the doors to the secret vaults finally swing open, will departmental record officers prove to have selected for preservation what historians really wanted? Even if secret services ask historians what they want to be kept - and MI5 went out of its way to consult historians in a recent exercise - will current historians be able to second-guess what their successors will want to see in 50 years time? For example, current intelligence history often takes the form of biography, of institutionalist accounts focused on the services themselves or of contextual studies that weave intelligence into the wider fabric of Cold War history. Most of this work is focused upon either low-level operations or high-level policy. But in future decades, if someone wanted to write a social history of MI5, capturing the work-a-day life of a broad range of its employees, would this be possible? In the case of MI5 the chances are better than

most, for additional opportunities to capture the richness of its past are now provided by a commendable series of ongoing in-house interviews. This innovative programme gives historians an important signpost about what they themselves should also be doing.³²

British Cold War historians have not always cut a dashing profile, quietly waiting in line behind the Fleet Street journalists who pore over the latest releases on the 1st of January each year, they often appear feeble supplicants before the state. Perhaps they should follow the example of their American colleagues and conduct more interviews. British researchers often hold the United States up as a model environment for the contemporary historical researcher and point to the existence of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). But the American FOIA is now a rather toothless beast and instead the powerful bite that is demonstrated by American Cold War intelligence historians has more to do with their willingness to go out and make their own data. The main obstacle is that interviewing can be expensive, frustrating and time-consuming. Indeed, the primary disincentive to conducting interviews in Britain is probably the *comparative* cost-effectiveness of researching in the PRO, with its efficient ordering system and its well-catalogued collections. In an era when academic historians are beset by production pledges, the fact that a day in the PRO is likely to deliver a more reliable dividend than an interview, is a powerful incentive to stay on the well-worn path to Kew.³³

Yet there is a hidden cost - for historians are ultimately what they eat. The fare on offer at the PRO is certainly filling and available at a subsidised price. But it is also pre-selected, cleaned and processed by officials who are the institutional successors to those who we wish to study. This is not to suggest that officials will necessarily attempt to distort the complexion of the written record. But it is to suggest that those studying intelligence who work largely in the

PRO have no external guarantee that what is preserved there is necessarily an analogue of reality. This goes for all historians of British overseas policy in the Twentieth Century, but it applies particularly to historians of intelligence where institutional cultures of early documents destruction are stronger. Ultimately, historians who feast only on the processed food available in the PRO's efficient history supermarket may begin to display a flabby posture. There is no such thing as a free lunch and the hidden tariff at the PRO is a pre-selected menu.

Self-evidently, material deposited in the PRO will always be of considerable importance. But we will have to wait a very long time before a representative range of Cold War intelligence materials arrives there, and even then we will struggle to know exactly how representative they are. Meanwhile, it is striking that a recent account of Cold War submarine operations - with a substantial intelligence component - has been written by people who have not been to the archives. Instead the authors have been busy with their dictaphones. One suspects that for the next few decades some of the more interesting Cold War history will be written by those who visit the history supermarkets a little less, and instead invest some time in the organic process of growing their own records.³⁴

¹ For intelligence archives policy in the 1980s see W.K Wark, 'In Never Never Land? The British Archives on Intelligence', *Historical Journal*, 35, 1 (1992): 196-203. For a sceptical view of the 1990s see P. Gill, 'Reasserting Control: Recent Changes in the Oversight of the

UK Intelligence Community', *Intelligence and National Security*, 11, 2 (1995): 313-4. The views advanced in this essay incorporate some reflections on the research in British and American archives for R.J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: British and American Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001) which was mostly undertaken in the period 1988-99.

² For broad discussions of the Cold War and intelligence see C.M Andrew, 'Intelligence and International Relations in the Early Cold War', *Review of International Studies* 24, 3 (1998): 321-30; J. Ferris, 'Coming in from the Cold: The Historiography of American Intelligence, 1945-1990', *Diplomatic History*, 10, 1 (1995): 87-116.

³ M. J. Hogan, *Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); M. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁴ R.R. Bowie and R. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 135-7, 169-71, 219-20. This study is interesting on Eisenhower's ambiguous message to his administration on the subject of roll-back.

⁵ D. Reynolds, '“A Special Relationship” ? America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War', *International Affairs* 62 (Winter 1985/1986), 11.

⁶ D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th*

Century (London: Longman, 1991 2nd edition); J. Charmley, *Churchill's Grand Alliance: A Provocative Reassessment of the "Special Relationship" between England and the U.S from 1940 to 1957* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1995); P. Hennessy, *The Prime Ministers: The Office and its Holders Since 1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2000); J.W. Young, *Winston Churchill's Last Campaign: Britain and the Cold War 1951-55* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); J. Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship; Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (London: Macmillan, 2001); J. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy, 1945-64* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); S. Twigge and L.V. Scott, *Planning Armageddon: Britain, the United States and the Command and Control of Western Nuclear Forces, 1945-64* (London: Harwood, 2000).

⁷ B. Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1991); G. Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-56* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). See also Corke, S. J., 'Bridging the Gap: Containment: Covert Action and the Search for the Missing Link in American Cold War Policy, 1948-53', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20, 4 (1997): 45-65.

⁸ J.L. Gaddis, 'Intelligence, Espionage and Cold War Origins', *Diplomatic History*, 13, 2 (1989): 191-213, and reprinted in J.L. Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 87-104. See also J.L. Gaddis, 'The Insecurities of Victory: The US and the Perception of the Soviet Threat after World War II', in J.L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 20-47 and J.L. Gaddis, 'Out of the Woodwork', *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 April

1999, 10-11. C.M. Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

⁹ Gaddis, 'Out of the Woodwork', 10.

¹⁰ C.G. Cogan, 'Review Article: In the Shadow of Venona', *Intelligence and National Security* 12, 3 (1997): 190-195; H.B. Peake, 'OSS and the Venona Decrypts', *Intelligence and National Security* 12, 3 (1997): 14-34. For an example of a careful evaluation of the evidence on Harry Hopkins see Eduard Mark, 'Venona's Source 19 and the 'Trident' Conference of May 1943: Diplomacy or Espionage', *Intelligence and National Security* 13, 2 (1998): 1-31.

¹¹ I draw the term 'new traditionalism' from Douglas J. Macdonald, 'Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War: Challenging Realism, Refuting Revisionism', *International Security*, 20 3 (Winter 1995): XXX.

¹² For non-Venona material see particularly C.M. Andrew, and O. Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990); C.M. Andrew, and V. Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic, 1999); N. West, and O. Tsarev, *The Crown Jewels: The British Secrets Exposed by the KGB Archives* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

¹³ On Venona see, C.M Andrew, 'The Venona Secret', in K.G. Robertson, (ed.) *War, Resistance and Intelligence* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 203-25; E. Breindel and H.

Romerstein, *The Venona Secrets: The Soviet Union's World War II Espionage Campaign Against the United States and How America Fought Back* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); R.L.Benson and M. Warner, (eds.), *VENONA: Soviet Espionage and American Response, 1939-1957* (Washington, DC: National Security Agency/Central Intelligence Agency, 1996); J.E. Haynes, and H. Klehr. *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); A. Weinstein, and A. Vassiliev. *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America -- the Stalin Era*, (New York: Random House, 1999).

¹⁴ S. Diamond, *The Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community* (New York: Free Press, 1992); C. Simpson, (ed.) *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1998); A. Summers, *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J Edgar Hoover* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1993); C. Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). For general statements of new revisionism see Bruce Cumings, "Revising Post-Revisionism Revisited," in Michael Hogan, ed., *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relation Since 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 127-39 and 'Still the American Century', *Review of International Studies*, 25 Special Issue (December 1999): 271-99.

¹⁵ F.S. Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999); H. Wilford, 'The Information Research Department: Britain's Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed', *Review of International Studies* 24, 3 (1998): 353-70; H. Wilford, 'Unwitting Assets?': British Intellectuals and the Congress for Cultural Freedom', *Twentieth*

Century British History, 11, 1 (2000): 42-60; P. Deery, 'Confronting the Cominform: George Orwell and the Cold War Offensive of the Information Research Department, 1948-50', *Labour History* 73 (1997): 219-25.

¹⁶ W. S. Lucas, *Freedom's War: The US Crusade Against the Soviet Union, 1945-56* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ M. Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); M. Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, II: The Roaring of the Cateract, 1947-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); A. R. Kahin and G. McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995); Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (Boston: Little and Brown, 2000). Interestingly, Gaddis's most extended discussion of the CIA is in the context of the Third World, see, *We Know Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 166-72.

¹⁸ See for example Matthew Jones, 'Maximum Disavowable Aid: Britain, the United States and the Indonesian Rebellion, 1957-8', *English Historical Review* CXIV, 459 (1999); 1179-1215; David Easter, 'British Intelligence and Propaganda during the 'Confrontation', 1963-1966', *Intelligence and National Security*, 16, 2 (2001): XXX ; Philip Murphy, 'Intelligence and Decolonization: The Life and Death of the Federal Intelligence and Security Bureau,

1954–63’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29, 2 (2001):

¹⁹ S. Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London: 4th Estate, 2000); M. Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy since 1945* (London: Zed, 1995); Mark Curtis, *The Great Deception* (London: Pluto, 1999). One could argue that there is a discernible group of critical writers on intelligence in Britain, but they are not focused primarily on the Cold War.

²⁰ S. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President, 1953-69* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984); S. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organisations, Accidents and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993); S. Sagan, ‘Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management’, *International Security* 9, 4 (1985): 99-139; P.J. Roman, *Eisenhower and the Missile Gap* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). See also D. Dunn., *The Politics of Threat: Minuteman Vulnerability in American National Security Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1998) for a downbeat appraisal of the value of strategic intelligence and its ability to inform weapons policy in the 1970s.

²¹ G. Walden, *Lucky George: The Memoirs of an Anti-Political* (London: Penguin, 1995), 144-8.

²² Andrew, and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 435-8; Andrew, and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 415-8; B.B. Fischer, ‘The 1980s Soviet War Scare: New Evidence from East German Documents’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 14, 3 (1999): 186-97; Mtg. in FCO, 25 May 1971, in G. Bennett and K.A. Hamilton, (eds.) *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series III, Volume I, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968-72 (London: HMSO, 1997), 339-43.

²³ On the Ames case alone see J. Adams, *Sellout: Aldrich Ames and the Corruption of the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1995); P. Maas, *Killer Spy: The Inside Story of the FBI's Pursuit and Capture of Aldrich Ames, America's Deadliest Spy* (New York: Warner, 1995); T. Weiner, D. Johnston, and N. A. Lewis. *Betrayal: The Story of Aldrich Ames, An American Spy* (New York: Random House, 1995); D. Wise, *Nightmover: How Aldrich Ames Sold the CIA to the KGB for \$4.6 Million* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995); P. Earley, *Confessions of a Spy: The Real Story of Aldrich Ames*. (New York: Putnam's, 1997).

²⁴ Andrew, *President's Eyes Only*, 5, 216-20; J.W. Young, 'George Wigg, the Wilson Government and the 1966 Report into Security in the Diplomatic Service and GCHQ', *Intelligence & National Security*, 14, 3 (1999): 198-209, P.H.P. Davies, *The British Secret Service: A Bibliography* (Oxford: Clio, 1996).

²⁵ For the most detailed current studies see: J. Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace: America's National Security Agency and Its Special Relationship with GCHQ* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1983); J. Bamford, *Body of Secrets* (New York: Morrow, 2001); N. West, *GCHQ: The Secret Wireless War, 1900-86* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986).

²⁶ Samples of the traffic of some 40 countries, including France and China, are contained in HW1 alone. Intercepts of French, Portuguese and Greek traffic for late 1945 relating to the post-war administration of Germany from the British STARKEY series are now open, see for example, Jean Monnet to Charles de Gaulle, 15 September 1945, HW 39/16.

²⁷ P. Maddrell, 'Britain's Exploitation of Occupied Germany for Scientific and Technical Intelligence on the Soviet Union', Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 1998.

²⁸ Jeffrey Richelson deals with ISA in his article '“Truth Conquers All Chains”: The U.S. Army Intelligence Support Activity, 1981-1989', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 12, 2 (1999): 168-200.

²⁹ See for example Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

³⁰ *Washington Post* editorial, 1 August 1997; *New York Times* editorial, 19 July 1998 .

³¹ C.f. the essay by Gillian Bennett in this issue, xx.

³² C.f. the essay by Stephen Lander in this issue, xx.

³³ A good example is the Foreign Affairs Oral History Programme located at the Lauinger Library, Georgetown University.

³⁴ S. Sontag, and C. Drew, *Blind Man's Buff: The Untold Story of American Submarine Espionage* (NY: Public Affairs, 1998); J. Ring, *We Come Unseen: The Untold Story of Britain's Cold War Submarines* (London: John Murray 2001). An example of how interviews may be combined skilfully with archival survey in this area is C. Pocock, *The U-2 Spyplane: Towards the Unknown - A New History of the Early Years* (Atglen PA: Schiffer Military History, 2000)