

EPILOGUE

In October 1985 Robert Gates, then Deputy Director of Intelligence, gave a paper to the Eleventh Convention of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers. The paper was titled "The Future of the Intelligence Community" and it examined ten major areas of concern that would dominate intelligence to the year 2000.

The trends in these areas were, Gates argued, going to be a mixture of new, specific problems, and a greater complexity of existing ones.

The first trend was the revolution in the way intelligence is communicated to policy makers, particularly electronic dissemination by computer. The second was the increasing difficulty of obtaining necessary data. Soviet camouflage techniques were already reducing the effectiveness of monitoring missile tests and sites. While information about the performance of the Soviet economy was increasingly restricted, even within the Soviet governing elites. The third trend identified by Gates was the problem of recruitment. There was a decline in the number of suitable potential recruits who could pass the polygraph, the main reason for which was drugs. However, once people joined the agency they tended to stay. The attrition rate was less than 4%, the lowest anywhere in either government or industry. The fourth trend noted by Gates was a revolution in relations with Congress which was playing, and would continue to play, a much larger role in foreign policy. The fifth trend was the use by the executive branch of intelligence for the purpose of public education. Under the Reagan administration this information was published to help win support for its policies in the press and in Congress.

The sixth trend, a corollary of the fifth, was the increasing dissemination of intelligence to traditional US allies and others. The seventh prospect already discernible was the dramatic increase in the diversity of subjects which the intelligence community was expected to address including foreign technology developments; genetic engineering; trends in worldwide food and population resources; religion; human rights; drugs; terrorism; high-technology transfers. This also led to a wider range in the users of intelligence right across the Washington bureaucracy. Gates ninth trend was the growing centrality of intelligence to foreign policy process of the government. In certain areas, Gates suggested, notably technology transfer, drugs and terrorism, there would be no effective policy without intelligence.

The tenth and final trend was that "intelligence is the only arm of government looking to the future". As the world became more complex and as policy makers needed more information, the intelligence community was the only sector of the government which was looking ahead. The community was faced with the constant uphill struggle of trying to convince a policy-maker to do something which would benefit the future. It was a problem of democracy's short horizons and brief attention spans which had faced Gates' predecessors and would prove no less pressing for his successors.

Gates defined these new trends in terms of a bureaucracy seeking to identify with

the other important government democracies. His imagination was reserved for methodology, not objectives or opportunities. But since 1985 the Cold War world has shattered and with it the old certainties in which the CIA was founded. Gates' trends are still valid but they will operate in a radically different context. The Gulf War, the disintegration of Soviet power and influence both in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself, the discrediting of totalitarianism of the right and left, these momentous changes had had enormous consequences in Europe, the Middle East, South America, Africa and the Far East. The US is now the only superpower and most of its former enemies are now competing for her friendship and favours.

Unpredictability is the keynote of the future. Since 1947 the agency has known who its friends and enemies have been but that is no longer the case. The agency has lost its future. The post-Cold War world requires a redefinition of US security objectives - and thus intelligence objectives - which is currently underway. What will be the role of the CIA? The US today needs an intelligence capacity which is not to say that it needs the CIA as it has been constituted so far. There is a school of thought which takes the view that institutions should be abolished after thirty years. If the CIA was abolished tomorrow it would not be recreated but even if it is not abolished it seems unlikely that the Agency will survive in its present form because of the changing world.

The agency has a deteriorated reputation. People see it as meddling, inefficient and not really necessary because of advances in technical intelligence. It has been displaced from centrality and today the very term "central" is just a piece of window dressing. It could be the National Intelligence Agency or the Civil Intelligence and be more meaningful today. "Central" meant just that. Intelligence needed a centre and the President needed a DCI who was as much the prime figure in intelligence as the Secretary of State was the prime figure in international affairs.

There has also been a sea-change in the assertion of democratic belief. There is more accountability to Congress and there has been a sharp decline in the ideal of secrecy, a growing refusal to accept a world of secrets upon which intelligence operations depend. An intelligence needs to think boldly and grimly and the questions today are:

- Japan
- energy supplies
- the future of the Soviet Union
- intelligence-enhancing drugs
- safe computer systems
- the greenhouse effect. What effect will it have on the sea level? On crops? Will there be more deserts?
- Population patterns and likely consequences
- Disease, particularly AIDS
- The World economy

These are the questions facing intelligence communities today the world over.

The CIA is both neglected and over-interpreted simultaneously. Intelligence as a great day-in, day-out enterprise has not been generally recognized. The last twenty years has told us that intelligence is much more crucial to what has happened and to policy formation than people thought: the release of the Ultra story required the rewriting of the history of the second world war. The great book-buying and television-watching publics are obviously interested in the subject, but for too long there has been no real academic or research base for the proper study of the intelligence world either in the United States or in Britain. The agency's reputation for being a rogue elephant - now, I believe, no longer so with knowledgeable people - came from the lack of an historiographical and historical perspective.

In studying the CIA I discovered much about America. Americans are so approachable. I was able to interview past and present officers and directors of Central Intelligence, and speak to them about serious matters seriously and in detail: something that is impossible to do with their opposite numbers in Britain because of British secrecy. In the United States, power is associated with publicity; in Britain, power is associated with secrecy. My experience with CIA people was a lesson in the openness of American society. A sense of the CIA's moderation came through, and the way that it maintained its sense of purpose over the decades without becoming drunk on power.

The U.S. today needs an intelligence capacity, which is not to say that it needs an agency in the way that it has been conceptualised so far. I have always had a sneaking regard for that school of thought that says you should abolish every institution every thirty years. If you abolished the CIA tomorrow, it would not be recreated. Something else would be. We may speculate on what that would be.

The moral self-confidence of the U.S. is sufficiently reduced since the time of the agency's start in 1947 that the notion that the CIA should be able to overturn a couple of governments if necessary would not be present in a recreation. The CIA's research and academic side would be utterly different: today it would be above all to do with communications and technical intelligence; all those people who came into the CIA in the 1940s and 1950s to provide psychological profiles and thesis-like analyses would not be there. Some years ago the agency came out with a report of what global warming might do to the cities of the U.S.: if the CIA was recreated, it would probably not be called upon to do much more of that type of work.

The agency was seen originally as a unique general staff of remarkably able men and women which was consulted on many subjects. Today, its people are still remarkable, but it is no longer unique. It is partly that other government departments have able people; partly that the agency has drawn back; partly that intelligence is no longer seen as a natural think tank. The radical changes in the geopolitics of the world recently have meant that the assertion of democratic belief is seen much less as an ideological affair than thirty years ago. The Left is as strong in support of the Chinese dissidents as anyone. The monkey is off the

back of the Right about being anti-Soviet and anti-Red Chinese. The communist system is so obviously clapped out: it lacks the attractions of a system on the move, a system that whatever else it is doing, is creative. With that, today's agency is both justified and dated at the same moment.

The agency has lost its future - not in the sense that the future is that of an insecure world - but that the agency is so obviously geared to a dated struggle for the world. That is not to say that struggles for the world are over; it is that in the post-1945 struggle, one side - the communist - has surrendered, and the other side - the democratic - has won. The CIA kept its eye on Libya and on terrorism, but Ghaddafi was not regarded as an agency target: when he became intolerable, President Reagan sent warplanes after him. The agency had much more primacy in terms of opportunities and resources when it started than it now has. The actual fabric of communication and technology has displaced the agency from centrality. The very term 'central' is now just a piece of dressing. It could be the National Intelligence Agency or the Civil Intelligence Agency and be more meaningful today. In 1947, central meant central. Intelligence needed a center, and the President needed a DCI who was as much the prime figure of intelligence as the secretary of State was the prime figure of international affairs.

Changes are to be expected in the history of any institution or country. Paul Kennedy had a blockbuster a couple of years ago with his book, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, making the point, in effect, that the seeds of its own decline and possible destruction are built into every great combination of men. It would be a mistake to think that the calibre of the agency has necessarily changed: what has changed is the world within which it operates, and the agency has naturally adapted itself accordingly.

I have been working in and with the BBC off and on for nearly twenty years. I am now beginning to savour the delights of working for a large organization. There is an averaging of sensibilities and judgements which is suitably educative, and the weight that journalists and commentators put on people and evidence often bears little relationship to the facts or to the realities of politics and power. Balance, all too often, is pitting X against Y without any regard for their relative status in the subject. But I want to stress that whatever politicians may think, there is relatively little malice, if any, in BBC story-telling.