



CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Sherman Kent and the Board of National Estimates Collected Essays

[Sherman Kent](#)

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Foreword

Sherman Kent is a larger than life figure in the history of the Central Intelligence Agency. His vigorous tenure as chairman of the Board of National Estimates from 1952 to 1967 was a major formative influence on the way that the Central Intelligence Agency and Intelligence Community prepare and present National Intelligence Estimates. Because of Sherman Kent's importance in the development of the American intelligence profession, the CIA History Staff is publishing this selection of his recently declassified writings on the occasion of the Conference on Estimating Soviet Military Power, 1950--1984, which Harvard University's Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History and the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence are cosponsoring in Cambridge in December 1994.

After he retired as chairman of the Board of National Estimates at the end of 1967, Sherman Kent wrote a number of monographs on intelligence topics for the CIA History Staff. In recent years most of those that he published later in the CIA's classified quarterly journal, *Studies in Intelligence*, have been declassified and made available to the public at the National Archives. Two of these works, however, are declassified and published for the first time in this volume. Kent left a single sealed typescript copy of his 1970 personal memoir, "The First Year of the Office of National Estimates: The Directorship of William L. Langer," for access only by permission of the author or the Chief or Deputy Chief of the History Staff. Those who read this essay--which Kent noted was "composed from memory 20 years after the fact"--will understand why he sequestered these unbuttoned comments on his Board of Estimates colleagues during his lifetime. The other previously classified and unpublished work is this volume's centerpiece, "The Law and Custom of the National Intelligence Estimate."

We are publishing these works as Sherman Kent wrote them, making only minor changes for format and obvious typographical errors; our editors have had to restrain their blue pencils from revising Kent's prose to conform to 1994 CIA editorial style and conventions. The text clearly indicates wherever material that still requires national security classification protection has been deleted. Many of these pieces have been declassified in their entirety, although the long essay, "The Law and Custom of the National Intelligence Estimate," has several sizable excisions.

Since 1992 this volume's editor, Dr. Donald P. Steury, has been a member of the CIA History Staff, where his research and writing have focused on the CIA's Soviet estimates. An Oregon native, he received B.A. and M.A. degrees at the University of Oregon and a Ph.D. in European International History from the University of California, Irvine. He joined the Central Intelligence Agency in 1981. Until 1992 he served as an intelligence analyst in the Office of Soviet Analysis (where he participated in a number of National Intelligence Estimates on Soviet military power) and its post-Cold War successor, the Office of Slavic and Eurasian Analysis. Dr. Steury is also compiling and editing a volume of newly declassified estimates on Soviet strategic forces that the History Staff will publish for the CIA Cold War Records series. As a close student of the CIA's estimative process and participant in it, Dr. Steury is extraordinarily well-qualified to edit and introduce this collection of Sherman Kent's writings.

We continue to owe a great debt of gratitude to our colleagues in the Historical Review Group of the Center for the Study of Intelligence, who declassified most of the works we publish here, and to the talented professionals in the Directorate of Intelligence's Design Center and Publications Center and in the Directorate of Administration's Printing and Photography Group who carried the volume through to publication.

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Introduction

Sherman Kent was perhaps the foremost practitioner of the craft of analysis in American intelligence history. [\(1\)](#) One of the architects of the US Intelligence Community, for nearly two decades he was at the head of its estimative machinery. He wrote one of the first books to systematically address the topic of intelligence analysis, a work that is still assigned reading in college courses and still stands as perhaps the most lucid of its kind. [\(2\)](#) Throughout his career he strove to imbue the intelligence discipline with a sense of professionalism, and as part of that effort he helped to found the CIA's professional journal [\(3\)](#) and inspired the formation of its Center for the Study of Intelligence (CSI).

On the other hand, as extensive as were his experience and analytical acumen, Sherman Kent's career was not unblemished. Just before the Cuban Missile Crisis he and his colleagues in the Office of National Estimates committed one of the greatest estimative blunders in the history of the US Intelligence Community. In 1962, the Intelligence Community not only failed to foresee the Soviet deployment of offensive missiles to Cuba, but also in September also published a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) that argued against any such prospective deployment. As head of the Board of National Estimates, Kent was responsible for this judgment and an active participant in the discussions that produced it. Soviet offensive missiles were discovered in Cuba only because the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), John A. McCone, chose to ignore the advice of his intelligence analysts and pressed for U-2 reconnaissance flights over the island. Typically, Kent later held up his own error as a lesson to be learned by future generations of intelligence analysts and emerged from the experience with his reputation and integrity enhanced. When he retired it was rightly seen as the end of an era. [\(4\)](#)

Born in Chicago in 1903, Sherman Kent spent much of his childhood in California and Nevada. In 1911 his father, William Kent, was elected to the first of three terms as a California congressman and from then until 1919 Sherman lived in Washington, DC. He attended Yale University, graduating in 1926 and receiving a Ph.D. in history in 1933. In 1941 Sherman Kent was rescued from what (one suspects) ultimately would have proved to be an unsatisfying teaching career at Yale by the imminent entry of the United States into

World War II.(5) Along with other rising intellectual talents, Kent joined Research and Analysis Branch (R&A) of the newly created Coordinator of Information (COI), later to become the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In January 1943 he became Chief of R&A's Europe-Africa Division. After the war, when the OSS was dissolved, Kent did a brief stint in the State Department's Office of Research and Intelligence (built on the bones of R&A) before returning to academic life. In late 1950 he joined the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to become the deputy chief of the newly created Office of National Estimates (ONE), working for his old boss at the OSS Research and Analysis Branch, the Harvard diplomatic historian William L. Langer.(6)

Together, Langer and Kent were to preside over a reorientation of the analytical components of the CIA. That this was needed was due less to any intrinsic flaw in the Agency's conception than to its inability to cope with the bureaucratic environment in which it existed. The CIA had been created as a national intelligence organization with capabilities that transcended and complemented those of the established intelligence units in the State Department and the military. The *national intelligence* produced by the CIA was intended to be a synthesis of the vast, often highly technical, knowledge possessed by the agencies that made up the US Intelligence Community,(7) which would be disseminated in a form easily accessible by the policymaker.(8) By its very existence, the CIA thus challenged the authority of the existing bureaucratic structure. No sooner was the Office of Reports and Estimates (ORE, the early CIA's analytical arm) established than it found itself balked on all sides. Internally, the intelligence process was hampered by bitter disputes over the proper coordination of analysis,(9) while externally ORE only managed to alienate the defense establishment as a whole by reporting on the limits to Soviet military power (thereby contradicting much of the rationale behind the funding of a large peacetime military) and by persistently bursting the bubbles of anti-Soviet hysteria that appeared during this volatile period.(10)

Forces hostile to the new intelligence organization as it then existed began to mobilize within a year of its foundation. In 1948 the newly formed National Security Council (NSC) established the Dulles-Jackson-Correa Committee to investigate the performance of the Agency, with results that were devastating to ORE. On 7 July 1949, the NSC accepted the committee's report and recommended the massive reorganization and reform of the CIA. The DCI, RAdm. Roscoe Hillenkoetter, resisted implementing the report's conclusions, but the final blow was struck less than a year later, after ORE failed to foresee the outbreak of the Korean war on 25 June 1950. After North Korea invaded the South, President Truman nominated Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, US Army, to replace Hillenkoetter as DCI, with a mandate for a complete overhaul of the agency. (11) "Beetle" Smith, who had been Eisenhower's Chief of Staff during the war, had known Langer as head of the Research and Analysis Branch of OSS. In November 1950, Smith brought both Langer and Kent into the CIA to put its analytical house in order.

This was more than a bureaucratic reshuffling. It was at once a reaffirmation of the principles that underlay the creation of a national intelligence organization and a rejection of the experiences of the CIA's first three years. The old Office of Reports and Estimates was broken up and replaced by the Office of National Estimates, with a research arm in the Office of Research and Reports. The intelligence reports produced by ORE were replaced by a new form of finished intelligence, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE).⁽¹²⁾

Responsibility for producing the NIEs lay with the Board of National Estimates, part of the Office of National Estimates. At the interagency Intelligence Community level, a supervisory Intelligence Advisory Committee reviewed the quality of the analysis, ensured that it represented the opinions of all participating intelligence organizations, and guaranteed the right of dissent for those that disagreed with the conclusions of an NIE, all or in part. Langer became the head of the Office of National Estimates and chairman of the Board of National Estimates, with Sherman Kent his deputy in each. When Langer returned to Harvard in early 1952, Kent succeeded him in both positions, where he remained until he retired at the end of 1967.

Under this leadership, the Board of National Estimates emerged as a body with the authority to issue even unwelcome substantive intelligence judgments, while remaining tolerant of dissent from within the ranks of the "departmental" intelligence organizations.⁽¹³⁾ Frankly elitist in its conception, the Board recruited many of its members from ivy-league university faculties, with a leavening of members from the military and the ranks of the professional intelligence officers.⁽¹⁴⁾ Clearly, Sherman Kent's model for the estimative intelligence process was strongly shaped by his prewar academic experience, and under his tutelage the Board of National Estimates seemed to have taken on the atmosphere of a faculty common room.⁽¹⁵⁾ The notoriety the Board thus earned as a haven for "liberal" east coast intellectuals may have reinforced its prestige and reputation for intellectual integrity in some circles, but in the end this reputation left it isolated in the intensely political environment of the Washington defense and foreign policy establishment. This level of detachment (or, if you will, isolation) was enhanced when the CIA moved across the Potomac to its new Langley, Virginia, headquarters compound in late 1961. More or less secure in its authoritative position as the sole source of estimative intelligence in the 1950s, the Office of National Estimates was increasingly under fire throughout the following decade. Finally, faced with the overt hostility of the Nixon administration, it was unable to defend itself effectively and in 1973 was reorganized out of existence.

Nevertheless, for the best part of a generation the Board of National Estimates stood at the pinnacle of the American intelligence establishment, for the most part with Sherman Kent at its head. His influence upon the growth of intelligence analysis, both as a process and as an institution, was at once far reaching and pervasive. It is difficult to imagine a man more qualified for this job than Sherman Kent. This California-bred, Yale-trained historian turned intelligence officer combined superb academic training with an instinctive grasp of the

problems at hand. Moreover, his no-nonsense, shirt-sleeve style could convey often highly speculative syntheses in a form congenial to the pragmatic minds of policymakers and military men alike. Kent's concern for the intelligence process, however, went beyond the immediate task of producing intelligence reports to a consideration of the nature of intelligence itself, to a passionate interest in the growth of intelligence analysis *as a profession*, and to its establishment as a scholarly discipline with a well-ordered methodology.

In thinking about intelligence, Sherman Kent nonetheless began with an understanding of national power that was well within the mainstream of contemporary American strategic thought. Kent's contribution was to apply thinking about strategy and national power to an ordered conception of intelligence analysis as an intellectual discipline. At its most fundamental level, his work began with implicit recognition of strategic intelligence (perhaps better thought of as strategic intelligence *analysis*) as a social science. Strategy, by definition, is a plan to achieve some given end. If we think of a national security strategy (or policy) as a blueprint for preserving the life and health of a nation, then there must be some idea of what that nation is: why does it function, how does it function, and what is essential to its survival? Conversely, a strategy to confront another nation in conflict--be it in war or cold war--must consider the strengths and weaknesses of a potential opponent in detail. Central to both lines of thought is a general conception of national existence: what comprises the nation-state, what makes it strong, and what is necessary to its survival and prosperity.

Strategic intelligence, to use Kent's term, thus takes as its subject the sinews of national life. In its most elevated form, it considers the nation-state to the depth and breadth of its being. This is what Sherman Kent called a nation's strategic stature: not just the means it possessed to wage war, but its total *potential* for war--the resources that are available, or might be made available; the population, industrial plant, and transportation net; the political and social structure, their stability, and the "moral quality of the people and their strength of values"--their willingness to be mobilized for war and the reasons for which they would fight--and, lastly, the political leadership, their strength and "genius (or want of it) for organizing men and materials into a community of life and strength."[\(16\)](#)

War, of course, is the most extreme form of confrontation between nation-states and (particularly in the nuclear age) one that is rationally considered only as a last resort. As the most fundamental component of its strategic stature, however, a nation's war potential could be seen as a benchmark for measuring its response to other, less violent, forms of confrontation and interaction. In the immediate postwar world, with the global strategic balance polarizing into opposing power blocs, such considerations took on a whole new importance. Moreover, one global war having just ended, the possibility of another such confrontation did not seem remote in the middle of this century. Indeed, the prospects for global war permeated American strategic culture and consistently stood uppermost in the minds of policymakers.

Thus, even though Kent's conception of strategic intelligence was built "in a context--and hope--of peace," its principal focus remained "the possibility of war and the mobilization of armed power." [\(17\)](#) In peacetime, he wrote, strategic intelligence did not differ "in any fundamental sense" from its wartime equivalent, but could be distinguished only by differences in "emphasis and direction." Whereas the strategic analyst in peacetime would concern himself with as-yet unmobilized war potential and general questions of policy and strategy, in wartime the "big question" became that of an enemy's full-developed military capabilities and their potential use in pursuit of specific strategic objectives. In an age of total war, "nearly all the factors of war potential" were still very much present in the wartime strategic calculations, but actively applied in a situation in which the life and health of the nation are measured by its ability to maintain "armed force . . . at maximum operational activity, without undue damage to overall strategic commitments, without overstraining or ruining the home war economy, and without shattering the staying power of the polity and society." [\(18\)](#)

In essence, Kent viewed strategic intelligence with the eye of the historian: focused on long-term trends, he tended to think of crises as "blips" in broader historical continuities. With Kent at the head of the CIA's estimative machinery, a system was created that was better adapted to studies in military economics or Soviet strategic forces planning than to plotting sudden shifts in the Soviet political leadership or to problems of strategic warning. Perhaps more important, the system established under Kent largely equated national intelligence with strategic intelligence. The result was an analytical world view that was at once comprehensive (since it viewed war potential as the ultimate expression of national power in all its forms) and curiously two-dimensional, concentrated as it was largely on the military aspects of the problems of national security. American intelligence analysts became encyclopedic in their knowledge of politics and economics, in the peoples and countries of the globe, but war, or rather the potential for war, remained their bedrock concern, especially with reference to the Soviet Bloc. From the Berlin blockade to the fall of the Soviet regime, the potential for all-out military confrontation with the USSR ran like a red thread through the fabric of US strategic intelligence, sometimes fading, sometimes growing in saturation and intensity, but always coloring the American perception, not only of the Soviet Union, but of the world in general. While perhaps appropriate to Cold War analyses of the Soviet "threat," it was a perspective that left the Intelligence Community less well prepared to deal effectively with the quite different questions that dominate the post-Cold War period.

It is perhaps inconceivable--or at least unlikely--that the CIA could have played any other role in Cold War intelligence analysis, but in retrospect this role appears to have contributed significantly to the complexity of national intelligence and to have virtually guaranteed that National Intelligence Estimates were prepared in an atmosphere charged with political energy. Balanced as it was between the policymaker on the one hand and the military leadership on the other, the Office of National Estimates could maintain its credibility as an

intelligence producer only by building a reputation for disinterested objectivity--a characteristic that was bound to be subject to close scrutiny by intelligence consumers. The situation was complicated, moreover, by the nature of estimative intelligence--to use Kent's terminology--which was unprecedented in history. Highly predictive in nature, the typical NIE consisted largely of informed judgments about future actions or situations that ultimately could not be proved, however well-founded they might be in experience or factual or theoretical knowledge. "Estimating," wrote Sherman Kent, "is what you do when you do not know." [\(19\)](#) The amount of speculation contained in an Estimate would vary widely, depending upon the subject matter, the amount of evidence available, and the scale of time involved. Inevitably, however, this kind of analysis would contain some portion of error, either because of a mistaken judgment or because the available evidence was misleading, incomplete, or just plain wrong. In general, therefore, NIEs would try to convey the full range of possibilities, even though they might come down firmly in favor of one particular set of conclusions. Even so, at bottom, the credibility of any given Estimate depended less on the quality of the analysis that it contained than upon the general credibility of the institution that produced it.

Under these circumstances, Kent recognized that the Office of National Estimates could be effective as an intelligence-producing organization only if it purported to be nothing more than it actually was (or perhaps ought to be): a group of scholars who were prepared to consider a situation dispassionately, objectively, and thoroughly; to study a topic with the intention only of coming to an understanding of it; and then to communicate their findings dispassionately, objectively, and concisely to the people who needed to act upon them. Intelligence, he wrote, was only one of "a score of forces at work" in national policy formulation. The policymaker might choose to listen to his intelligence advisers, or he might yield to the influence of any of a number of foreign and domestic interests and pressure groups. With these, no intelligence organization could ever hope to compete; rather, the intelligence officer's goal should not be to influence the policymaker's judgment, but to be relevant within his own area of competence and to be credible:

Let things be such that if our policy-making master is to disregard our knowledge and wisdom, he will never do so because our work was inaccurate, incomplete, or patently biased. Let him disregard us only when he must pay greater heed to someone else. And let him be uncomfortable--thoroughly uncomfortable--about his decision to heed this other. [\(20\)](#)

Thus, in the intelligence officer as scholar, Kent saw the means of dissolving the inherent tensions in the often delicate relationships between the policymaker, the military commander, and the intelligence producer. With no equities to protect save his own credibility, the intelligence officer could afford to make his pronouncements in the confidence that his own disinterestedness would protect him from charges of undue political influence. The concept of "disinterested objectivity" lay at the heart of Kent's thinking about

intelligence organization and colored ONE's relationship with successive administrations.

In an atmosphere in which interest *is* influence, the notion that an intelligence officer could be truly "detached" perhaps betrays a 'naivetè born of wishful thinking. At bottom, however, Kent was enough of a bureaucrat to see that ONE's reputation for dispassionate objectivity was something more than an end in itself. In Kent's view, the "national" status of ONE's finished intelligence made it a check on the aberrations of the individual intelligence services as well as the synthesized view of the Intelligence Community as a whole. One of the factors that distinguished the CIA from the departmental intelligence organizations was its ability to segregate analysis from other considerations (usually budgetary) that were external to the intelligence process. This was particularly true of the various military intelligence organizations where (he suggested) intelligence judgments were at least in part determined by the programmatic interests of the parent service. Thus, from Sherman Kent's perspective, it was difficult to dissociate Air Force judgments concerning the size of the Soviet bomber force in the 1950s from that service's own policy, which favored a large inventory of B-52s, while "for some time, it was the view in certain high quarters of the US Army that all-out conventional war between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces need not escalate to a nuclear war." "Indeed," wrote Kent,

the consequences of being the first to use nuclear weapons would be so horrendous that Army Intelligence, knowing that the US would not do it, was willing to estimate that the Soviets would likewise refrain. Hence, an estimate allowing for the contrary invited an Army objection. To draw a permissible inference is to point out the obvious. If postulated armed conflict, say, in Europe could lead to the sort of large-scale fighting of World War II and with conventional weapons, the Army had a very good reason (budgetary, doctrinal, pride of service) to keep pressure for a full strength ground force. Per contra, an estimate that held that small, conventional wars between the nuclear powers would inevitably and perhaps speedily escalate to all-out nuclear conflict (largely the mission of the USAF) would be virtually to estimate the US Army out of business.[\(21\)](#)

If Kent was forced to conclude from this that not all service intelligence judgments grew "out of a selfless love of country," he also acknowledged the importance of an underlying conflict of world views. In a statement that was meant to apply to the military services in general, he noted that, "In their scale of values, first came the country and second, the force necessary to protect and preserve it. They could not question the necessity of the latter, given their high-minded patriotism."[\(22\)](#) Since each service had its own idea of what constituted the necessary force, the intelligence process thus became an intellectual dialectic: no synthesis was possible without a thesis and an antithesis. If the task of the service intelligence organizations was to protect departmental interests and to put forward departmental viewpoints, that of the Office of National Estimates was to produce intelligence that did

justice to each of those viewpoints while retaining an overarching *national* perspective.

To preserve this aura of Olympian detachment, Kent concerned himself with the requirement for what might be called a realistic epistemology of intelligence analysis. No doubt this arose in part from Kent's concern for the growth of intelligence analysis as a profession and his desire to establish standards and systems by which analytical knowledge could become cumulative. He wanted to create what is now referred to as an institutional memory, so that each generation of analysts would not have to relearn the lessons of its predecessors.[\(23\)](#) At the same time, he doubtless believed that systematizing intelligence was necessary to establish the authority of the National Intelligence Estimate. In this regard, Kent's call for the creation of an "Institute for the Advanced Study of Intelligence," modeled after the Princeton institute, was as transparently elitist as it was far-sighted in its understanding of the enlightened interests of the profession.[\(24\)](#)

Like the wise men at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, those in Sherman Kent's institute would earn their keep by writing about their specialties, all of which would concern the doctrine, theory, or history of intelligence. Their output would be published on its own or in the CIA's professional journal, *Studies in Intelligence*, and would form the core of what Kent called a cumulative literature. It was here that Kent pinned much of his hopes for the future growth of the profession of intelligence as a well-ordered discipline, and, not surprisingly, Kent himself made some of the most perceptive contributions to *Studies in Intelligence* (most of which have been collected in this volume). Yet in the final analysis, although he tried to make the best of the results, one suspects that they were something less than he expected. His intelligence institute was never founded, while, in its absence, the classified journal, *Studies in Intelligence*, proved to be too dependent on harried and frequently overworked line intelligence officers to achieve anything like the consistently scholarly quality that he had hoped for.[\(25\)](#)

Intelligence analysis in CIA never achieved an explicit, broadly based, epistemological and doctrinal structure. For this, Sherman Kent himself must shoulder much of the blame. Like most historians of his generation, Kent was uncomfortable with theoretical constructs, preferring in their stead empirical judgments that were founded in an ordered methodology. This is not to say that his work lacked a theoretical structure, but that it was buried in the form of an implicit set of assumptions that comprised a comprehensive world view. Thus, when Kent asked rhetorically where "such disciplines as chemistry or medicine or economics" would be "if their master practitioners had committed no more to paper than ours," he was referring to the accumulation of empirical knowledge and methodological experience from one generation to the next, rather than the synergism between empiricism and theory that in fact drives these disciplines.[\(26\)](#)

Kent's methodological writings in *Studies in Intelligence* reflect the essentially empirical

framework that he applied to analysis. His essay, "Estimates and Influence," for example, combines a tidy summary of Kent's conception of the place that intelligence should occupy in the national security establishment with a masterful dissertation on the nature of estimative intelligence. Yet it provides only a superficial consideration of the epistemology of intelligence (in its discussion of the difference between "known," "knowable," and "unknowable"), even though such considerations are essential to his basic concepts of analysis. In "Words of Estimative Probability," Kent attempted to impose a charmingly useless vocabulary structure on an otherwise cogent discussion of the need for clarity of expression. Finally, although the articles in which he relates his own experiences as an intelligence analyst and producer all are informative, entertaining, and in their own way insightful, they contribute little to the fund of cumulative knowledge. The exception to this generalization is Kent's reflection on his own near-catastrophic failure in the Cuban Missile Crisis, where his self-analysis brought transcendent insight.

All this is only to say that Kent was a part of the time and place in which he lived. Kent has been criticized for failing to pay more attention to social science theory in his thinking about intelligence.⁽²⁷⁾ Yet since he came to intelligence analysis with the background and training of an historian, reinforced by his work with other historians in World War II, it is not surprising that he did not focus on the social sciences. In his contributions to the methodology of intelligence he helped to lay the pragmatic foundation upon which a doctrine and theory of intelligence analysis could be built, and he cannot be blamed if the practitioners that followed him failed to build on this foundation.⁽²⁸⁾

In the end, the fate of the Office of National Estimates hinged not on its credibility, or authority, or even its methodology, but on its ability to focus on the interests of the policymakers it was supposed to serve. The reverse of Sherman Kent's coin of detached objectivity was irrelevance. The substantive judgments of ONE's intelligence product were always subject to criticism, but by the late 1960s it was not the quality of the research that went into NIEs that was subject to attack, nor even necessarily the validity of the judgments they contained, but rather the essential usefulness of the intelligence product itself. The assault on the Office of National Estimates reached its height when another scholar, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, having complained about having to "fight his way through 'Talmudic' documents to find their real meaning," worked to circumvent ONE entirely and began producing intelligence reports in the National Security Council.⁽²⁹⁾ In 1973 a new DCI, William Colby, dissolved ONE and founded the system of National Intelligence Officers that exists today.

The question that brought down the Office of National Estimates, that of how closely to tailor the output of the intelligence process to meet the interests of the policymaker (as opposed to what the intelligence producers themselves believed to be important), antedates the creation of the Intelligence Community itself.⁽³⁰⁾ Although Sherman Kent wrote

extensively about the need to cater to the requirements of the policymaker--especially in *Strategic Intelligence*--one former analyst has noted that those "who served under Kent . . . have to take care to distinguish between the Kent of the book and the practicing Kent."[\(31\)](#) To the question, "How seriously should we in intelligence take the indictment which damns our estimating work as unnecessary, or misleading, or irrelevant?" Kent himself responded that while a misleading estimate was indeed damned, whether an estimate was unnecessary or irrelevant was not necessarily best determined by the recipient--thus implying that in Kent's view the Board of National Estimates was best equipped to judge these issues.[\(32\)](#) At some point, the Office of National Estimates crossed the line between scholarly objectivity and intellectual arrogance.

Sherman Kent's personal hour of reckoning came in 1962, when the Soviet Union decided to deploy nuclear-armed ballistic missiles to Cuba. The Board of National Estimates not only failed to predict this action (or anything like it), but argued resolutely against its likelihood, right up to the moment that offensive missiles were discovered in Cuba. On the face of it, the system created because of the strategic surprise that began the Korean war had functioned no better than its predecessor.

No one who remembers those days thinks of the Cuban Missile Crisis as other than a period in which the world was on the brink of nuclear war, when the slightest miscalculation could have pushed either side over the edge. At the time, this sense of crisis was only heightened by the American people's extreme sensitivity to any shift in the strategic balance (whether apparent or real) as well as by the Kennedy administration's preoccupation with Cuba. Under these circumstances the actual American response was one of the least extreme that might have been expected.

In retrospect, the Soviet decision to deploy missiles to Cuba now seems an act of desperation, a frontal assault on the American position in the Western Hemisphere that was unlikely to produce any lasting military advantage and, once discovered, was bound to result in the kind of direct confrontation that did ensue--one that could well have escalated to war. In fact, it was part of a high-stakes game of prestige and influence played by the Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev, whose motivations probably owed more to Soviet internal politics than to any reasoned strategic calculation.

It was also the kind of short-term perturbation in the strategic balance that played directly to the weaknesses of Sherman Kent's system of national intelligence. As such, it lay outside the world understood by the Board of National Estimates, in which power was built on a solid base of military-industrial strength and statesmen acted on the basis of cool calculation and measured response. Thus, when first detected in July 1962, the Soviet military buildup in Cuba was interpreted as defensive in character, the appropriate response to the previous year's disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion--an action that perhaps ought to have warned Sherman Kent and his colleagues of the folly that was possible in a Soviet-American confrontation

over Cuba. As it happened, the Board of National Estimates was reinforced in its preconceptions by the fact that offensive missiles were not deployed to Cuba until very late in the game. They were preceded over a three-month period by surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), coast-defense missiles, KOMAR-class missile boats and Il-28 BEAGLE light bombers, all of which fit neatly into the concept of a defensive buildup in Cuba.

At bottom, however, it was the lack of precedent for these Soviet deployments in the measured, action-reaction sequence of Cold War confrontation that led to the Board's failure to recognize the situation for what it actually was. Thus, although in September 1962 Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 85-3-62 patronizingly conceded that "the USSR could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba," such a development "would be incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it." Moreover, this estimate continued:

It would indicate a far greater willingness to increase the level of risk in US-Soviet relations than the USSR has displayed thus far, and consequently would have important policy implications with respect to other areas and other problems in East-West relations. [\(33\)](#)

In the end it was the Director of Central Intelligence, John A. McCone, who somehow tracked the aberrant course of Khrushchev's thought processes, kept the Intelligence Community on track, and perhaps staved off war. In a bizarre series of telegrams, written while he was on honeymoon in France, McCone badgered his Agency with warnings of Soviet missile deployments. Returning in September, he demanded that reconnaissance flights against Cuba be resumed, despite the presence of ever-more numerous SAMs on the island and despite the continued lack of evidence of anything beyond a defensive buildup. Finally, on 14 October, U-2 photographs revealed Soviet SS-4 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) in the early stages of deployment in sites about 50 nautical miles to the west-southwest of Havana. [\(34\)](#)

"There is no blinking the fact that we came down on the wrong side," Kent wrote two years later. "When the photographic evidence of 14 October was in, there was the proof." There was also no question that the Office of National Estimates had misread Soviet intentions throughout the summer and fall of 1962; yet if Sherman Kent was willing to acknowledge in retrospect that there were in fact "a handful" of indicators that ought to have warned the Board of National Estimates what the Soviets were about, he nonetheless stood by the intelligence judgments that were made. The problem, he argued, was the faulty judgment on the part of the Soviets, who had themselves misread US intentions with respect to Cuba in the months following the Bay of Pigs. In any intelligence estimate, he argued, the "other man's" decision will have been shaped by his diplomatic missions and intelligence service, which will have observed and reported the "things he must know prior to his decision."

These and other phenomena very considerably narrow the area of a foreign statesman's choice, and once thus narrowed it is susceptible to fairly sure-footed analysis by studious intelligence types. As long as all the discernible constants in the equation are operative the estimator can be fairly confident of making a sound judgment. It is when these constants do not rule that the real trouble begins. It is when the other man zigs violently out of the track of "normal" behavior that you are likely to lose him. . . . No estimating process can be expected to divine exactly when the enemy is about to make a dramatically wrong decision. We were not brought up to underestimate our enemies.[\(35\)](#)

At bottom, of course, Kent was correct: it is the quality of erratic and irrational behavior that it *is* erratic and cannot be predicted--one cannot know the unknowable. Yet one can detect the conditions and circumstances that give rise to erratic behavior and warn against it. Herein lay the intelligence failure, the same kind of error, one might argue, that allowed the United States to be surprised at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. It was to avoid this kind of mistake that a national intelligence capability was created in the first place.

"I find myself wondering a lot about Dobrynin," Kent somewhat wistfully observed, referring to the Soviet Ambassador to the United States. Was it possible that Anatoly Dobrynin, who had full access to the government and press of the United States, went along with the estimate that led the Soviets to deploy missiles to Cuba? Could he have failed to sense the "special place" that Castro's Cuba occupied in American foreign policy thinking? Could that sense of place not have been communicated to the right people in Moscow? Perhaps, Kent suggested, "we do not know some things about Soviet foreign policy decision-making that we should."[\(36\)](#)

During the crisis, Sherman Kent and other senior intelligence officers were sent out to the capitals of America's European allies, to explain what had happened, to explain why what had happened had not matched the intelligence that we had communicated to them, and to explain what the United States was doing to resolve the crisis, and why. Kent was sent to Paris, Brussels, and Ottawa, and, as was to be expected, he wrote up his experiences, to add them to the cumulative knowledge of the Intelligence Community.[\(37\)](#)

Sherman Kent remained the head of the Office of National Estimates for another five years following the Cuban Missile Crisis, retiring on 29 December 1967, after more than 30 years of government service. The system of national intelligence that he had built survived him by about five more years. Over the course of the 1960s the Intelligence Community grew and expanded its capabilities. Responsibilities shifted. In 1961 the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) was created, and by the end of the decade ONE, once at least nominally the hub of the

Intelligence Community, was little more than first among equals. In 1973, DCI William Colby abolished the Office of National Estimates and replaced it with the system of National Intelligence Officers that persists to this day. By the 1980s ONE was held up to new analysts as an example of an organization that had lost its way, by producing intelligence that was too "academic" in orientation (whatever that means), and by failing to pay adequate attention to the needs of the policymakers who relied on its judgment. No doubt these accusations were at least in some measure true. Yet one cannot but wonder whether the Office of National Estimates had lost its way, or whether the environment in which it existed had not changed to the point where it was simply not wanted. After all, ONE was nothing more nor less than one more government institution, and institutions must change with the times. If the counsel of wise men was not easily accepted in the 1960s, it was perhaps even less welcome in the decades that followed.

By seeking to provide more relevant or "engaged" intelligence analysis, the system that replaced the Office of National Estimates brought new problems: charges of "politicization" replaced those of policy irrelevance, while the effort to keep up with current reporting increasingly interfered with the kind of in-depth research that drove the estimates. To complicate matters, the end of the Cold War has raised diverse new issues, while the fluidity of the global balance of power and the changes that seem to occur almost daily in the international arena have brought a new conception of intelligence, one that owes more to journalism than to the scholarship in which the National Intelligence Estimates were conceived. In this environment, Sherman Kent's detached approach to estimative intelligence seems stolid and archaic--much as the medieval scholars must have appeared to the new men of the Renaissance. Yet we should allow none of this to influence our judgment of the Office of National Estimates in its time, of Sherman Kent's contribution to the methodology of intelligence, or of his formative role in the growth of intelligence as a profession.

Donald P. Steury

Footnotes

(1) Throughout this essay, the terms intelligence and intelligence analysis will be used interchangeably. The reader will be aware, however, that the word intelligence properly encompasses the collection of important information as well as its digestion and analysis.

(2) Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949).

(3) *Studies in Intelligence*, the CIA's professional quarterly, from which a number of the

articles in this collection come.

[\(4\)](#) During the crisis, Kent helped brief the details to NATO (see "The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962: Presenting the Photographic Evidence Abroad," in this volume) and later published a frank appraisal of what went wrong in *Studies in Intelligence* (his article "A Crucial Estimate Relieved," is also included in this collection). An excerpt from the pivotal SNIE and other important documents may be found in Mary S. McAuliffe, ed., *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992).

[\(5\)](#) Kent's field was electoral politics in 19th-century Bourbon France. His first book, *Electoral Procedures Under Louis Philippe*, was published by Yale University Press in 1937. Upon retirement, Kent resumed writing in his specialty, the results appearing as *The Election of 1827 in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[\(6\)](#) In fact, Kent did not return to teach at Yale until 1949: in 1946-1947 he taught at the new National War College and in 1947-1948 he received a Guggenheim Fellowship to write *Strategic Intelligence*. For a brief account of Sherman Kent's life and career, see Harold P. Ford's "A Tribute to Sherman Kent" in this volume.

[\(7\)](#) The "intelligence community" is made up of the intelligence gathering and reporting agencies of the US Government: the CIA, the FBI, the National Security Agency (NSA), the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the intelligence departments of the military services, the Department of Energy (originally the Atomic Energy Commission), and, later, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). Although the term Intelligence Community did not come into use until the mid-1950s or later, it is used here to describe the collectivity of US intelligence from World War II onward.

[\(8\)](#) The CIA was founded as a "national" intelligence agency with access to all available intelligence sources and information, as opposed to a "departmental" agency (such as the Office of Naval Intelligence), which studied only those reports that were relevant to its specialized field. After World War II, there was widespread belief that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor could have been foreseen had there been a single intelligence authority with access to all the information that existed in diverse places before the war. For an enlightened discussion of this situation see Harold P. Ford, *Estimative Intelligence: The Purposes and Problems of National Intelligence Estimating* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 3-25.

[\(9\)](#) For details, see Arthur B. Darling, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Instrument of Government, to 1950* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); and Ludwell L. Montague, *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). These two volumes are

declassified versions of in-house histories written from classified sources by the CIA History Staff.

[\(10\)](#) For example, the "war scare" of 1948. Relevant documents (among others) are ORE 1 *Soviet Foreign and Military Policy*, 23 July 1946; ORE 1/1 *Revised Soviet Tactics in International Affairs*, 6 January 1947; ORE 22-48 *Possibility of Direct Soviet Action During 1948*, 2 April 1948; and ORE 22-48 (Addendum) *Possibility of Direct Soviet Action During 1948-49*, 16 September 1948. All have been declassified and are in transit to the National Archives.

[\(11\)](#) For the Smith tenure as DCI, see Montague, *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence*.

[\(12\)](#) "Finished intelligence" is intelligence reporting in its final form, as it will be submitted to the policymaker. Generally speaking, finished intelligence is derived from a number of sources and is analytical or estimative in content.

[\(13\)](#) The intelligence organizations of the Department of State and the military, which (at least in theory) concerned themselves with the interests of their individual departments, as opposed to the overarching "national" concerns of the CIA.

[\(14\)](#) For example, of the 13 members of the Board of National Estimates in 1964-1965, only one had a professional military background--although six others had wartime military experience in some capacity and five more had wartime government service. One, Sherman Kent, had wartime analytical experience in the OSS. Four had Ph.D.'s; two had law degrees; and one, an M.D. Four attended Yale; four, Harvard; two, Princeton; three, Oxford; and two studied in Paris. Two were Rhodes scholars. Eight had faculty or academic experience--in most cases enough that the CIA qualified as a second career. For no one was this more true than for Sherman Kent himself.

[\(15\)](#) Kent's model of the "scientific method" as the basis for intelligence production perhaps came out best in his "Need for an Intelligence Literature" in this volume.

[\(16\)](#) HS/HC-7 CIA Progress Report; Office of National Estimates (ONE) Section I "Intelligence and the Problem of National Foreign Policy," 26 December 1951, p. 2. (This document has not yet been declassified.)

[\(17\)](#) *Strategic Intelligence*, p. 61.

[\(18\)](#) *Strategic Intelligence*, pp. 62-63.

[\(19\)](#) Sherman Kent, "Estimates and Influence," *Studies in Intelligence* (Summer 1968). See p. 35 in this volume.

[\(20\)](#) "Estimates and Influence." See p. 34 in this volume.

[\(21\)](#) Sherman Kent, *The Law and Custom of the National Intelligence Estimate*, Miscellaneous Studies, CIA History Staff, February 1976. See p. 82 in this volume.

[\(22\)](#) *Ibid.* See p. 82 in this volume.

[\(23\)](#) In the Intelligence Community, a "generation" of analysts might be as brief as four years, as analysts are trained and then pass on to other tasks, or are absorbed into management. For Kent's discussion of cumulative knowledge, see "Valediction" and "The Need for an Intelligence Literature," in this volume.

[\(24\)](#) Sherman Kent, "Valediction," *Studies in Intelligence* (Winter 1968). See p. 24 in this volume.

[\(25\)](#) The current Center for the Study of Intelligence, which was at least partly inspired by Kent's concept of an Institute for the Advanced Study of Intelligence, was not established until 1975.

[\(26\)](#) Sherman Kent, "The Need for an Intelligence Literature," *Studies in Intelligence* (September 1955). See p. 15 in this volume.

[\(27\)](#) Jack Davis, "The Kent-Kendall Debate of 1949," *Studies in Intelligence* (Summer 1991).

[\(28\)](#) As in the Davis article, *supra*. In fact, intelligence analysis as a profession now owes much more to the social sciences than to history. Most intelligence analysts in CIA are trained not as historians but as political scientists or economists, while those who work on technical topics are trained in the sciences and engineering.

[\(29\)](#) Lawrence Freedman, *US Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 49. There were, of course, other matters at issue, not least ONE's position on Vietnam, which was at odds with that of the administration.

[\(30\)](#) Davis, "The Kent-Kendall Debate of 1949."

[\(31\)](#) Davis, p. 92.

[\(32\)](#) "Estimates and Influence." See pp. 41-42 in this volume.

[\(33\)](#) Mary S. McAuliffe, ed., *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992), p. 93.

[\(34\)](#) The standard works on the Cuban Missile Crisis are Graham T. Allison, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown; 1971) and Robert Smith Thompson, *The Missiles of October: The Declassified Story of John F. Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992). No study of the crisis would now be complete without close consideration of the intelligence aspects, for which Mary S. McAuliffe, *supra*, is invaluable. See also her article in the *Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Newsletter* (June 1993, with a reply by Samuel Halpern in the December 1993 number of the same journal); Dino A. Brugioni, *eyeball to eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1991); and James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink. Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

[\(35\)](#) Sherman Kent, "A Crucial Estimate Relived," *Studies in Intelligence* (Spring 1964). See p. 185 in this volume.

[\(36\)](#) *Ibid.* See pp. 186-187 in this volume.

[\(37\)](#) Sherman Kent, "The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962: Presenting the Photographic Evidence Abroad," *Studies in Intelligence* (Spring 1972). See pp. 189-208 in this volume.

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

A Tribute to Sherman Kent

Harold P. Ford(*)

This tribute to Sherman Kent was first published in the 25th anniversary edition of Studies in Intelligence, Fall 1980. Its author, Hal Ford, is a veteran of the Office of National Estimates and its successor, the National Intelligence Council, who in 1989 published the book, Estimative Intelligence.

Whatever the complexities of the puzzles we strive to solve, and whatever the sophisticated techniques we may use to collect the pieces and store them, there can never be a time when the thoughtful man can be supplanted as the intelligence device supreme. . . . Great discoveries are not made by second-rate minds, no matter how they may be juxtaposed organizationally.

Sherman Kent(1)

With this issue the Studies bids an official farewell to Sherman Kent, who somewhat quixotically founded the journal in 1955 and has been its prime sustainer for a dozen years. The infusions of his vigor and polymath good judgment have been so much the wellspring of its life that it has reason to tremble a little at this severance. Yet he has borne himself the wise father, encouraging spontaneity and initiative, nudging here and checking there but fostering the independent child; and he has thus brought it to a stature that can stand the shock. It can take comfort, too, that he will not be altogether out of its reach for fatherly

advice. This is the end of an era, but the era's works go on.

The Editors of Studies in Intelligence, 1968[\(2\)](#)

It can be said in one sense that *Studies in Intelligence* owes its birth to a slow news day some years ago. As Sherman Kent later related that genesis, it was one quiet Sunday in December 1953 when he had the morning duty in Mr. Allen Dulles' office that Sherm memorialized Matt Baird, then CIA Director of Training, arguing that the discipline of intelligence badly needed an Institute for the Advanced Study of Intelligence and an accompanying learned journal. The idea of an institute, which Sherm wanted modeled after the *Institute for Advanced Study* at Princeton, was in his words put on a back burner by history[\(3\)](#) while the idea of a journal came to fruition in 1955.

In a more profound sense, the idea of *Studies in Intelligence* did not of course suddenly strike Sherm out of the blue, one Sunday in 1953, but sprang from a long and intensely held conviction that intelligence should be recognized and treated as a scholarly discipline, and to that end intelligence badly needed a professional literature. We thus pay tribute to Sherman Kent not only for kindling our journal--which with this issue celebrates a quarter century of contribution to intelligence theory, doctrine, technique, and anecdote--but more importantly for the vision, perseverance, and persuasiveness that has made him a principal father of the modern intelligence profession--as well as a splendid leader and colorful personality.

The professional integrity Sherman Kent intended for *Studies* long antedated that quiet morning in Mr. Dulles' office; indeed, it antedated Sherm's own career as an intelligence officer. While still a history professor at Yale, prior to World War II, his classes had been popular because his enthusiasm brought history to life, generously salted with his unique vocabulary; less popular at New Haven, however, was the rigor he demanded: he bestowed D's and F's with abandon when he encountered sham or lack of preparation--a characteristic some other young scholars, from the Staff of his Office of National Estimates, experienced on occasion some years later. Closely paralleling his theory and practice of professional intelligence were certain of the principles of the historian's calling Sherman Kent enunciated in his first book, *Writing History*, which he had written while at Yale. In many of its passages one need only substitute the words "intelligence officer" for "historian." One example:

When the evidence seems to force a single and immediate conclusion, then that is the time to worry about one's bigotry and to do a little conscientious introspection into why this particular conclusion stands out. Was it in the

material or was it in you? The command of Socrates, "know thyself," never gave richer rewards than in the world of what we've been calling systematic study.[\(4\)](#)

Later, during World War II, Sherm served as Chief of the Europe-Africa Division of the Research and Analysis Branch of the OSS, a direct predecessor of CIA's present National Foreign Assessment Center (NFAC). It was this exposure, he recounts, which brought him to believe passionately in the need for a literature of intelligence.

The more I talked with my OSS colleagues, the surer I was that a serious book on the intelligence business was needed. It became a compulsion; I simply had to get these thoughts off my mind.[\(5\)](#)

These thoughts began to take specific form immediately after the war, while Sherm was serving on the staff of the National War College and before returning to Yale in 1947. At this time Sherm was taking stock of U.S. intelligence and asking how the United States could avoid another Pearl Harbor in the years ahead. In a *Yale Review* article of 1946 he wrote:

The existence of controllable atomic energy, and the dead certainty that others besides ourselves will soon possess the technical secrets, place a new and forceful emphasis upon intelligence as one of the most vital elements in our survival.[\(6\)](#)

During the interval before Sherman Kent joined CIA (November 1950), he contributed to the art and practice of intelligence particularly through the publishing of his *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, certainly the most influential book of its kind yet to appear. This reputation began with the book's first appearance, the *New York Times* reviewer (William H. Jackson, himself a former OSS officer) greeting it with the bouquets that Kent

knows his stuff and writes it down with persuasion and force. The result is the best general book so far on any aspect of intelligence. É This book should be read by all high officials charged with responsibility for the security of the country and by all those who work in the field of intelligence.[\(7\)](#)

Princeton Press reprinted the book in 1951 and 1953, and published a revised (paperback) edition in 1966. Archon Books published an edition in 1965. Foreign editions include Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and pirated.[\(8\)](#)

The content of that familiar work need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that *Strategic Intelligence* conveyed refined versions of certain themes he had previously advanced in his 1946 *Yale Review* article, *supra*, plus numerous injunctions of pertinence to the intelligence

world of the 1980s. A few samples:

A last reason for the misunderstandings between intelligence producers and consumers is an understandable reluctance of the part of consumers to embark upon a hazardous task on the basis of someone else's say-so. After all, if anyone is going to be hurt it probably will not be the producers. I will warrant that the Light Brigade's G-2 was high on the list of survivors in the charge of Balaclava.[\(9\)](#)

The main difference between professional scholars or intelligence officers on the one hand, and all other people on the other hand, is that the former are supposed to have had more training in the techniques of guarding against their own intellectual frailties.[\(10\)](#)

When intelligence producers realize that there is no sense in forwarding to a consumer knowledge which does not correspond to his preconceptions, then intelligence is through.[\(11\)](#)

When the findings of the intelligence arm are regularly ignored by the consumer, and this because of consumer intuition, he should recognize that he is turning his back on the two instruments by which western man has, since Aristotle, steadily enlarged his horizon of knowledge--the instruments of reason and scientific method.[\(12\)](#)

Sherm still--and quite justifiably--considers this pioneer book to be basically sound: "The heart of the book is as solid as ever; the game still swings on the educated, thoughtful man, not on gadgetry."[\(13\)](#)

A year after *Strategic Intelligence* was published, Sherm left Yale for the CIA. The prime movers were in effect the Korean war, the distinguished Harvard historian William L. Langer, and DCI Walter Bedell Smith. The difficulties U.S. intelligence had had in calling the North Korean invasion of the South in June 1950, and especially the massive Chinese involvement that autumn, had led to a major shake-up of CIA's analytic process. One of the principal such changes determined upon by DCI General Smith was the creation of the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and the Office of National Estimates (O/NE)--to be headed by Dr. Langer, who had been the Chief of the Research and Analysis Branch of OSS. Beedle Smith proposed the NIE function at an October 20, 1950 meeting of the Intelligence Advisory Committee (the then NFIB). On that occasion there "was general assent" with the proposals of a memorandum the DCI had had prepared on "The Responsibility of the Central Intelligence Agency for National Intelligence Estimates."

- That IAC memo set forth the concept of the NIEs as authoritative interpretations and appraisals that would help guide policymakers and planners.
- The NIEs should command recognition and respect throughout the government as the best available and presumably the most authoritative estimates.
- It was the clear duty and responsibility of the CIA to assemble and produce these coordinated estimates.

Following the IAC's discussion of that memo, the DCI proposed that an Office of National Estimates be set up in the CIA "at the earliest possible time." In his opinion O/NE would "become the heart of the Central Intelligence Agency and of the national intelligence machinery."[\(14\)](#) O/NE was formally established just a month later, 20 November 1950.

Bill Langer, called upon by President Truman and Beedle Smith to head O/NE, thereupon put the heat on his former OSS R&A colleague, Sherman Kent, to come join the new office. Kent's recollection of being interviewed for the job by the DCI one Sunday in November 1950 (in the DCI's office), reminds us nostalgically of Beedle Smith's persuasive charm. Says Sherm:

I told the DCI I had doubts and wasn't certain about taking the job. Whereupon, putting on that annoyed cobra look of his, Beedle snapped, "Young man, if you think I make a business of coming down to my office on a Sunday morning to talk with people who aren't sure about taking the job you've got another think coming!" [\(15\)](#)

Sherm decided that maybe the job was the right one for him, after all.

At first joining the newly founded O/NE as a temporary consultant, Sherm stayed on to serve as Langer's Deputy until January 1952 when, upon Langer's return to Harvard, Kent succeeded him as chief of O/NE (AD/NE). He held that position until 31 December 1967.

Sherm had thus been AD/NE almost two years when he petitioned Matt Baird to establish an intelligence institute and learned journal. In that December 1953 memo he repeated certain of his long-standing concerns: a "sense of disquiet that Intelligence is a non-cumulative discipline"; a "sense of outrage at the infantile imprecision of the language of intelligence--I give you the NSCIDs for a starter"; and the fact that there existed no institutional memory--"what kind of a way is this to run a railroad?"[\(16\)](#) To remedy that situation Sherm proposed the Institute and the journal. With respect to the latter, *the germ of Studies in Intelligence*, Sherm wrote:

I would establish a journal--probably a quarterly--which would be devoted to intelligence theory and doctrine, and the techniques of the discipline. I would have an editor who fully understood the limits of his mandate. The journal could be Top Secret; its component articles could be of any classification or unclassified.[\(17\)](#)

Once *Studies in Intelligence* was launched--with the active and good assistance of Matt Baird--Sherm contributed an article to the very first issue (Vol. I, No. 1, September 1955), which repeated his earlier themes about the necessity for a literature of intelligence.

A couple of attributes he attributed to the intelligence profession at that time bear noting by later practitioners:

"We have within us a feeling of common purpose, and a good sense of mission."

People work at the intelligence calling "until they are numb, because they love it, because it is their life, and because the rewards are the rewards of professional accomplishment."[\(18\)](#)

Sherman Kent's interest in *Studies* has continued to this day. As of 1968 (his "Valediction" article), he felt that despite some problems concerning security classification and the need to twist author's arms to get articles, "it was beyond argument" that *Studies* had contributed to a "richer understanding of the bones and viscera of the intelligence calling."[\(19\)](#) His present view is that the journal's articles have in general improved even more in sophistication and contribution since that time. [\(20\)](#) Over the years Sherm has himself contributed some nine articles, eleven book reviews, and one other review (of the worst book he said he had ever reviewed), which was so steaming it was not published--though a copy remains in the *Studies* files and in the Historical Intelligence Collection.

The themes Sherm had championed so forcefully in his prior writings and in his arguments for a learned journal all carried over into his sixteen-year stewardship of O/NE. Keynotes there were intellectual rigor, conscious effort to avoid unconscious analytical bias, willingness to hear other judgments, collective responsibility of judgment, precision of statement, systematic use of some of the country's best experts as consultants and checks against in-house blinders, and candid admission of shortcomings.[\(21\)](#) This was purposely accomplished by a modest-sized operation: generally a Board of about twelve very senior members, and a substantive Staff of a couple dozen or so. The philosophy of Langer and Kent, alike, was that the people of such a small office would work themselves numb, to use Sherm's figure, but would be too small to carry all the accoutrements of bureaucratic overkill. [\(22\)](#) Shielding Board and Staff in this way, as well as from the passions of

Washington policy advocacy, would be a necessity in view of the extremely difficult task the office faced: the venturing out beyond evidence to estimate the unknown.

O/NE was not Camelot, but Sherm did run a fine show. It was a great place to work. Enthusiasm and sense of purpose were high. Everyone was overworked. There were lots of laughs, amid countless unprintable Kentian anecdotes and aphorisms. Under Sherm, there was never any party line, other than the dogged pursuit of truth. There was M.B.O.--management-by-osmosis--and it worked. The office was miraculously shielded from non-substantive drag. The table gamesmanship was tough, sophisticated, productive, and delightful.

Sherm presided over it all firmly, but without seeming effort. He gave Board and Staff members their head(s), and asked in return only for a quality and integrity of product and conduct. He was not Olympian. He was not a purveyor of *Weltanschauung*. He was the direction-setter; the catalyst; the cold reader-critic--beware his broad penciled questions; the weaver of product-to-policy relevance; the source of enthusiasm; the setter of standards; the rewarder of the productive and the chastiser of the unproductive; the one who demanded clear, concise exposition; and, throughout, the exemplar of purpose, good humor, a proper degree of irreverence, civility, and a supreme degree of decency.

Not too familiar to post-O/NE intelligence officers is the remarkable quality of people and product Sherm's office maintained for some years. In those years the Board included historians Langer, Kent, Raymond J. Sontag, Abbot E. Smith, and Joseph Strayer; Ambassadors Llewellyn (Tommy) Thompson, Livingston Merchant, Freeman (Doc) Matthews, and Harold Linder; Generals Harold (Pinky) Bull and Earl (Diz) Barnes; plus prominent lawyers and government executives.

Sherm has been especially proud of the substantive Staff he recruited and maintained in O/NE: "For 20 years they were the best staff in town and so proclaimed by a good number of very knowledgeable outsiders." [\(23\)](#) Even allowing for Sherm's understandable enthusiasm concerning his people, the caliber of these O/NE Staff officers over the years is illustrated by the responsibilities many of them subsequently gained. Three later became ambassadors. Three became the DD/I (or D/NFAC). Three later headed O/NE. Seven became DDI (or NFAC) Office Chiefs. Five became National Intelligence Officers. Seven became Chiefs of Station abroad. Three held senior White House positions. Two became Director of State's INR. One an Undersecretary of Defense. Two, Assistant Secretaries of Defense. One an Undersecretary of State. Several became distinguished academicians and authors. One heads the Woodrow Wilson Center at the Smithsonian. One heads Washington's Institute for Energy Analysis. One heads the Staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. One is a senior member of State's Policy Planning Staff. One is the Editor of *Foreign Affairs*. Not least, one is President of the Washington Audubon Society. Sherm truly had his men everywhere.

To repeat, O/NE was no Camelot. All Board members were not Langer's or Sontag's; some were later wished on Kent by his DCIs; some board members tended to ramble on at great length about irrelevancies; some nit-picked the Staff up the wall; and a few must have been embarrassments to Sherm. Nor were the Staff members all clear-eyed Jack Armstrongs; some couldn't draft; some weren't good at coordination gamesmanship; some Staff alumni later gave Sherman Kent bureaucratic fits. O/NE was not a fount of ERA. In the view of some observers, O/NE later became somewhat cut off from the policymaking world, somewhat self-satisfied and resistant to change, and overly in-grown. Other elite offices developed as intelligence became more technical in many respects. In its later years bureaucratic constraints inhibited O/NE from continuing to recruit the best available Staff members from CIA's ranks. Not O/NE's fault, and indeed to its credit, was a certain fall from grace in its later years occasioned in part by the fact that certain of its estimates were not congenial to senior policymakers. Throughout his tenure, however, Sherm Kent maintained tough, demanding standards of his officers. He maintained the integrity of the estimative process against corruption.[\(24\)](#) He was a tough warrior who protected his scholars from the bureaucratic world, while imbuing them with enthusiasm about the purpose of their common understanding. And, he had a great curiosity about the whole of CIA and its business, and he knew how the total effort all fit together.

No tribute to Sherman Kent could overlook his bright red galluses and his plug of chewing tobacco, or ignore the contributions to the profession his colorful personality has made. His versatility and style have enriched the intelligence profession and helped protect it from becoming flat and featureless. Sherm has been called a rough diamond aristocrat, a mix of Connecticut roots-schooling and California upbringing--a mix which was captured years ago by Yale undergraduate pals who dubbed him "Buffalo Bill, the Cultured Cowboy." The whole term applies, even though it's only the "Buffalo" which has survived as a favorite term among his friends. Sherm's skills include that of accomplished woodworker, whether making furniture or "Buffalo Blocks" (hand-made multi-wood blocks Sherm later had produced for commercial sale.) He is also a chef supreme. His publications concern not only intelligence and how to write history, but a book on French politics (of the 1820s),[\(25\)](#) and one for younger readers called *A Boy and a Pig, But Mostly Horses*.[\(26\)](#) Sherm's versatility helped the cause of his O/NE products because everyone in town knew him; the impact of his NIEs was facilitated by the respect in which he was held. Truly, Sherm Kent is no run-of-the-mill model of graduate student turned analyst or case officer. Personalities such as his are a good remedy against the development of homogenous CIA men or what author Stewart Alsop has termed the generation of prudent CIA professionals. Our calling needs character. It also needs characters. In the best sense, Sherm Kent has been both.

If Sherm were joining the CIA's analytic world this November rather than the one he did of 30 years ago, what patterns of consistency and change would he encounter? The major hazards of the business remain: the ambiguity of evidence; the loneliness of venturing out

beyond available evidence in trying to call future trends; the problems of recognizing and diminishing analytic bias, whether conscious or unconscious; the joy of solving some of the analytic puzzles; the freedom to go wherever the evidence takes you, whatever the consequent logic for U.S. policy or policymakers; the competition for the time and attention of senior policymaking consumers; the rewards when one's judgments prove congenial to the customers; the growls--or worse, the silence--when they do not. Other problems of 1980 differ substantially from those of 1950. There is of course now more red tape, more form and triplicate. But more importantly there are now many more world actors creating more crises than a generation ago, there is more passion and unreason in the world--and not all that is abroad--and there are more challenges to Sherm's expressed faith that reason and the scientific method will see the intelligence process through. There is also a greater need for close intelligence ties to the policy world: there have been some years which show that this can occur without necessarily corrupting the independence of intelligence judgments, and hence there is a certain questioning which can be made of Sherman Kent's certainty that intelligence analysts and estimators who go downtown will become policy advocates and begin to serve power rather than truth.

Whatever the case with respect to policy, however, the contribution of Sherman Kent to the 1980s, as to the 1950s, and 1960s, is truly considerable. Together with celebrating Sherm's key role in creating *Studies* 25 years ago, we pay tribute to the 30 years of Sherm's professional and personal contributions since he was pitched by DCI Beedle Smith that Sunday in 1950, and to the even longer period Sherman Kent has been championing those qualities the intelligence calling must possess if it is to have integrity and effectiveness.

Honor is perhaps due to Sherman Kent, most of all, for someone who has embodied and helped form the purpose of the intelligence profession, and who has set standards for enthusiastically working oneself numb because of the intellectual challenge and the sense of service at hand. And, tribute, too, to someone who has pointed out the folly of allowing situations to develop where these qualities do not obtain, situations for example where, in Sherm's word,

From the very beginning, there was administrative trouble of a high order, much of it avoidable; personnel actions--new appointments, replacements, and overdue promotions--moved with the ponderous slowness of the glacier or not at all. Life outside the government, or at best outside [that department], began to be more and more attractive to irreplaceable professionals. They began to leave in the order of their importance to the organization; and as replacements did not appear, morale declined. [\(27\)](#)

Sherm was speaking here of the state of U.S. intelligence as it existed at the time--in 1946.

Footnotes

[\(*\)](#) The author wishes to thank the many friends who have helped him prepare this article, but who bear no responsibility for its shortcomings or particular judgments. These friends are Paul Borel, Keith Clark, Mary Cook, James Cooley, Chester Cooper, James Graham, Klaus Knorr, Karen Platte, Edward Sayle, Abbot Smith, Don Smith, Mary Shaw, and Joseph Strayer.

[\(1\)](#) *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, revised ed. (Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. xxiv, 174.

[\(2\)](#) Remarks introducing Sherman Kent's article, "Valediction," Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1968). [See p. 21 in this volume.]

[\(3\)](#) The idea of an institute refused to die, but was born again in various suggested versions over the years. In 1975 an institute at length came into being in the form of the CIA Office of Training's Center for the Study of Intelligence, similar in certain respects at least to Sherman Kent's original proposal. The Center's Senior Officers Development Course, now in preparation, may come even closer to the goal.

[\(4\)](#) Revised edition (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 5. Sherm recounts that he wrote this whole book, cover to cover, during a week's vacation in 1937 in Florida. "Then, five years and five drafts later, Appleton-Century-Crofts published it." Still later, following World War II and the establishing of the occupation of Japan, General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters had this book translated into Japanese. Kent to author, May 1980.

[\(5\)](#) Kent to author.

[\(6\)](#) "Prospects for the National Intelligence Service," Vol. 36, No. 1, Autumn 1946, p. 116.

[\(7\)](#) *New York Times Book Review*, 1 May 1949.

[\(8\)](#) The remarkable success of this book contrasts with its humble beginnings. Various editors had told Sherm to forget about such a project because it didn't include any blood, guts, or beautiful spies, and because it wouldn't sell the 5,000 copies needed for a publisher to break even. Sherm's favorite edition is the pirated one (English-language) General Chiang Ching-kuo presented him in 1959, "with a big smile," on the occasion of a trip by Sherm to Taiwan. Kent to author.

[\(9\)](#) *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

[\(10\)](#) *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[\(11\)](#) *Ibid.*, p. 205.

[\(12\)](#) *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[\(13\)](#) Kent to author, May 1980.

[\(14\)](#) IAC-M-1, of 20 October 1950, paras, 6-7.

[\(15\)](#) Kent to author.

[\(16\)](#) "Valediction" *op. cit.*, p. 3. [See p. 23 in this volume.]

[\(17\)](#) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[\(18\)](#) "The Need for an Intelligence Literature." [See p. 14 in this volume.]

[\(19\)](#) *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

[\(20\)](#) Kent to author.

[\(21\)](#) Typical of Sherm Kent's candor are (1) his frank admission that O/NE had mis-called the Cuban missile crisis ("A Crucial Estimate Relieved," *Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring 1964, pp. 1-18 [See pp. 173-187 in this volume]); and (2) a letter of thanks to a former O/NE staffer for some comments he had given Sherm on the overall NIE record, because those comments had highlighted "bads as well as goods; (highlighting one's own *bad's* is always the most uncongenial of exercises). What you wrote is right on the nose." Letter, Kent to staffer, of 4 December 1974.

[\(22\)](#) According to Ray Cline, first Chief of O/NE's Estimates Staff, Dr. Langer told him at the outset that DCI Smith thought that O/NE would require about 1,000 people, but that Langer had assured Beedle Smith that he could do the job well with about 60, total. Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars: The Essential CIA* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1978), p. 120. Although CIA and the intelligence community burgeoned in size over the years, Kent kept O/NE at about the 60-70 figure, total.

[\(23\)](#) Kent, classified study, 1976 [Law and Custom, see p. 58 in this volume]; and, "The Staff was always the works." Kent to author, May 1980.

[\(24\)](#) A DCI once intervened strongly against one of the NIE's Kent had brought to the USIB (NFIB), criticized Sherm before that body for not having sought the views of the (policy) people who "really knew the x situation best," and ordered O/NE to see those people and recast the NIE. That DCI later told Sherm that the original NIE had had the situation right, and that he (the DCI) had made a mistake in so intervening. Kent and other participants to author.

[\(25\)](#) *The Election of Eighteen Twenty Seven in France* (Harvard University Press, 1975).

[\(26\)](#) Dodd, 1974.

[\(27\)](#) *Yale Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

The Need for an Intelligence Literature

Published in the first issue of Studies in Intelligence in September 1955, this essay reveals why Sherman Kent believes that intelligence has become a profession and explains the kind of literature that this learned profession needs and deserves.

In most respects the intelligence calling has come of age. What has happened to it in the last fourteen years is extraordinary. Maybe our present high is not so extraordinary as our low of 1941. In that day the totality of government's intelligence resources was trifling. We knew almost nothing about the tens of thousands of things we were going to have to learn about in a hurry. As emergencies developed we found ourselves all too reliant upon British intelligence. Many of us recall important studies issued by US intelligence organizations which were little more than verbatim transcripts of the British ISIS reports.

In 1941, the number of people who had had prior intelligence experience and who at the same time were available for new government assignments in intelligence was very small. There were few in Washington who could give any guidance as to how to go about the business at hand. What intelligence techniques there were, ready and available, were in their infancy. Intelligence was to us at that period really nothing in itself; it was, at best, the sum of what we, from our outside experience, could contribute to a job to be done. It did not have the attributes of a profession or a discipline or a calling. Today things are quite different.

Let me briefly note the principal assets of today's intelligence community. To begin with, we are at strength. Perhaps we are not as strong as the present volume of work requires, but by and large we have the staff to do the man-sized job before us.

Again, we are not novices at our business; we have a lot of experience behind us. We are officered and manned by a large number of people with more than a decade of continuous experience in intelligence, and who regard it as a career to be followed to retirement. By now we have orderly file rooms of our findings going back to the war, and we have methods of improving the usefulness of such files. We have orderly and standardized ways of doing things. We do most things the right way almost automatically. We have developed a host of new and powerful overt and covert techniques which have increased the number of things we can and do find out about. Most important of all, we have within us a feeling of common enterprise and a good sense of mission.

With these assets, material and experiential, intelligence is more than an occupation, more than a livelihood, more than just another phase of government work. Intelligence has become, in our own recent memory, an exacting, highly skilled profession, and an honorable one. Before you can enter this profession you must prove yourself possessed of native talent and you must bring to it some fairly rigorous pretraining. Our profession like older ones has its own rigid entrance requirements and, like others, offers areas of general competence and areas of very intense specialization. People work at it until they are numb, because they love it, because it is their life, and because the rewards are the rewards of professional accomplishment.

Intelligence today is not merely a profession, but like most professions it has taken on the aspects of a discipline: it has developed a recognized methodology; it has developed a vocabulary; it has developed a body of theory and doctrine; it has elaborate and refined techniques. It now has a large professional following. What it lacks is a literature. From my point of view this is a matter of greatest importance.

As long as this discipline lacks a literature, its method, its vocabulary, its body of doctrine, and even its fundamental theory run the risk of never reaching full maturity. I will not say that you cannot have a discipline without a literature, but I will assert that you are unlikely to have a robust and growing discipline without one.

Let me be clear about this literature that we lack. First, let me say what I do *not* mean that we are lacking. I do not mean the substantive findings of intelligence. Manifestly, I do not mean those thousands of words we disseminate each day about past, present, and probable future goings on all over the world. I do not refer to the end product of all of our labors. We produce a great deal of this sort of literature and possibly we produce too much of it. It is not that literature that I am talking about. What I am talking about is a literature dedicated to the analysis of our many-sided calling and produced by its most knowledgeable devotees. The sort of literature I am talking about is of the nature of house organ literature, but much more. You might call it the institutional mind and memory of our discipline. When such a literature is produced, it does many things to advance the task.

The most important service that such a literature performs is the permanent recording of our new ideas and experiences. When we record we not only make possible easier and wider communication of thought, but we also take a rudimentary step towards making our findings cumulative. We create a stock of relatively imperishable thinking that one man can absorb without coming into personal contact with its originator and against which he can weigh and measure his own original ideas. His large or small addition to the stock enriches it. The point is reached where an individual mind, capable of using the stock, can in a day encompass the accumulated wisdom of man-decades of reflection and action.

Consider such disciplines as chemistry or medicine or economics and ask yourself where they would be today if their master practitioners had committed no more to paper than ours. Where would we be if each new conscript to medicine had to start from scratch with no more to guide him than the advice of fellow doctors and his own experience? Where would we be in medicine if there was nothing to read and nothing to study, no textbooks, no monographs, no specialized journals, no photographs, no charts, no illustrations, no association meetings with papers read and discussed and circulated in written form? Where would we be if no one aspired to the honor of publishing an original thought or concept or discovery in the trade journals of his profession? It is not impossible that bloodletting would still be considered a valuable panacea and exposure to night swamp air the specific for syphilis.

The point is that in the last few centuries we have accumulated an enormous amount of knowledge. And the fact that this accumulation has taken place since the discovery of printing from movable type is by no means merely coincidental. The translation of new thought into words, and the commission of words to the permanence of print, more than anything else has made possible a progressive and orderly advance in all disciplines and all areas of learning.

In our calling, I am saying, we do not do enough of it. To be sure we do do some writing. We have produced a good many training manuals of one sort or another. We have done a good bit of chronicling of interesting case studies with an educational end in view. We have made transcripts of oral presentations at training centers. If you ransacked the "libraries" of intelligence schools you would find quite an amount of written material. Even so there is a very considerable difference between this volume of written material and the systematic professional literature I am talking about.

It is hard to define such a literature, and I will not try to do it in a sentence or two. As a starter I will note what I think to be three important aspects of it. To begin with, *the literature I have in mind will deal with first principles*. A portion of it will certainly have to deal with the fundamental problem of what we are trying to do. What is our mission? And as soon as that question is submitted to careful analysis, there is no telling what will emerge. One thing I think is certain: that is, that we have many more than a single mission and that

many of us have been confused not only about the number and character of the many missions, but also how each relates to the others.

Another first principle that will have to be elaborated on is how we are going about our mission--what is our method? Here again we will find out, when the question is systematically answered, that there is not a single method, but that there are dozens of methods; and from further examination or discussion we will confront a good many new concepts which will speed our task and enrich our product.

Let no one feel either that we are necessarily sure of the nature of our first principles or that dispassionate examination of them would be a waste of time. In recent months the intelligence community has had to wrestle with such fundamental concepts as "national intelligence objectives" and the criteria for the selection of such objectives, the nature of "warning," the role of "indications," and so on. The results of these discussions have been generally praiseworthy, but the amount of time consumed and the consequent delay of important decisions quite otherwise. An analogous situation might be a consultation of surgeons deadlocked on a discussion of the nature of blood, preliminary to handling the emergency case presently on the operating table.

This takes me to a second thing which I would expect from a systematic literature of intelligence: *a definition of terms*. Hastily let me add that I am not proposing that we write a dictionary. Words like "liberalism" and "democracy" require the equivalent of scores of dictionaries, or scores of shelves of dictionaries. You cannot define those as you define "paper" and "ink." So it is with our own words that stand for complicated concepts--such as "evaluation," "indicator," "capability," "estimates," and so on. As of today we use these words easily and often--yet one wonders if they are always understood in exactly the way intended. For example, we would be almost tongue-tied without the word "capability"; we use it perhaps more often than any other of our semi-technical words. Yet a little reflection on the matter shows that we use it indiscriminately to mean one of three quite different things: a feasible course of action, a raw strength, and a talent or ability. Can we be sure that we are always conveying an intended sense?(1)

If we do not rigorously define our terms we are likely to find ourselves talking at cross purposes; and such discussion, we all realize, risks being more of a fruitless dispute than an elevated debate. This takes me to a third point.

The literature I have in mind will, among other things, be an *elevated* debate. For example, I see a Major X write an essay on the theory of indicators and print it and have it circulated. I see a Mr. B brood over this essay and write a review of it. I see a Commander C reading both the preceding documents and reviewing them both. I then see a revitalized discussion among the people of the indicator business. I hope that they now, more than ever before, discuss indicators within the terms of a common conceptual frame and in a common vocabulary.

From the debate in the literature and from the oral discussion, I see another man coming forward to produce an original synthesis of all that has gone before. His summary findings will be a kind of intellectual platform upon which the new debate can start. His platform will be a thing of orderly and functional construction and it will stand above the bushes and trees that once obscured the view. It will be solid enough to have much more built upon it and durable enough so that no one need get back in the bushes and earth to examine its foundations.

Now if all this sounds ponderous and a drain on time, I can only suggest that, so far, we of the Western tradition have found no faster or more economical way of advancing our understanding. This is the way by which the Western world has achieved the knowledge of nature and humanity that we now possess.

These are only three things that I would expect from this literature. There are many others. It could and should record such things as new techniques and methods, the history of significant intelligence problems and accomplishments, the nature of intelligence services of other countries, and so on. But the three items that I have singled out remain the most important.

There are perils of going forward in our profession without laying down such a literature. First, there are the obvious perils of denying our calling the advantages I have discussed above. There is, however, another peril and one we should heed for strictly utilitarian reasons. As things now stand, we of the intelligence profession possess practically no permanent institutional memory. Our principal fund of knowledge rests pretty largely in our heads; other funds of knowledge are scattered in bits through cubic miles of files. What happens to our profession if we are demobilized as we were after the two world wars? What happens to it if our heads and files find themselves in the middle of a nuclear explosion? The answer, I fear, is that a new beginning will have to be made virtually from scratch. Most of what we know will go when we go; only a very small part will be left behind. A literature of intelligence is a reasonable insurance policy against repetition of two demobilizations of intelligence that have occurred within our memory.

In highlighting the desirability of producing a literature of intelligence and stressing the perils of not producing one, I do not wish to seem to close my eyes to problems and difficulties.

The first of these is probably the matter of security. One can expect the question: "Do you want to put all the secrets of the profession in writing and bind them up in one great book so that your enemy's success with a single target will at once put him abreast of you?" The answer comes in two parts. In the first place, many of the most important contributions to this literature need not be classified at all. They could be run in the daily press and our enemies would get no more good from them than from the usual run of articles published in

our professional journals. Surely the enemy would benefit in some degree; he would benefit as he presently does from his reading of *The Infantry Journal* or *Foreign Affairs*. On the other hand, another type of contribution would deal with delicate trade secrets and would have to be classified. But is this reason not to write or circulate it? Every day we have to decide on the correct security procedure with respect to sensitive materials. Why should the literature at instance be necessarily more delicate or sensitive than the last cable from Paris, and why should its proper handling be more difficult or dangerous? In this case, as in the more familiar one of the sensitive report, we must again equate the value of exposing many minds to a problem with the increasing danger of disclosure. The plain fact is that "security" and the advance of knowledge are in fundamental conflict. The only reason we get anywhere is because we do not demand either perfect security or unlimited debate about secrets of state. We do get somewhere because the necessity for compromise at both ends is well and fully understood.

There is another difficulty and a very practical one. How is such a literature to be written if most or all of the potential authors are practicing members of the profession, already burdened with seemingly higher priority tasks? I know of no magic formula by which a man can do two things at once. The question that we face is the familiar one of priorities. Surely one of the guiding principles to a solution is the desirability of investing for the future. Taking Mr. X off the current task and giving him the time to sort out his thoughts and commit them to paper will more than repay the sacrifice if what Mr. X puts down turns out to be an original and permanent contribution. If it buttons up a controversial matter and precludes thousands of hours of subsequent discussion, the cause has been well served. It has been well served even though one of Mr. X's would-be consumers had to get along without his advice on another matter. What we are faced with in this case is nothing more complicated than the value and pain of capital formation.

A third problem. How may the Mr. X's be paid for work time spent in the creation of this literature? If what has gone before is the fact and the Mr. X's of the calling are really creating intelligence capital, then it seems to me that they are entitled to their wage exactly as if engaged upon their regular assignments. Indeed, in logic, if what Mr. X produces contributes to the solution of the next hundred problems, he should be paid more than if he spent his time merely solving the single assigned problem before him.

Beyond these rather fundamental matters, there are hundreds of other problems. If a large proportion of the Mr. X's are sure to come from intelligence staffs, where do they work? Are they to have secretarial help? Will they keep regular hours? Must they be in residence? How will their findings be reproduced? How will they be circulated? What editorial controls will be exercised over their output? These are really easy questions. The hard ones are to find the Mr. X's in the first place, and to induce them to undertake the most difficult job of all: original creative writing.

Footnotes

[\(1\)](#) [Studies] Editor's Note: In our next monograph, one of Mr. Kent's colleagues, Abbot Smith, takes up precisely this problem in his article "Capabilities in National Estimates" [*Studies in Intelligence* (January 1956>)].

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Valediction

On the occasion of his retirement from the Central Intelligence Agency, Sherman Kent wrote this valedictory description of the origins of Studies in Intelligence for its Winter 1968 number. In it he ruminates on the journal's successes and failures and on the intellectual and theoretical bases demanded by the intelligence as a profession. Kent's valediction was preceded by the following farewell from the Editors of Studies in Intelligence.

With this issue the Studies bids an official farewell to Sherman Kent, who somewhat quixotically founded the journal in 1955 and has been its prime sustainer for a dozen years. The infusions of his vigor and polymath good judgment have been so much the wellspring of its life that it has reason to tremble a little at this severance. Yet he has borne himself the wise father, encouraging spontaneity and initiative, nudging here and checking there but fostering the independent child; and he has thus brought it to a stature that can stand the shock. It can take comfort, too, that he will not be altogether out of its reach for fatherly advice. This is the end of an era, but the era's works go on.

Succeeding Chairman Kent on the Studies editorial board, as on his more history-making Board of National Estimates, is Abbot E. Smith, long his deputy on the latter.

My colleagues on the Board of Editors have asked that I mark my retirement from the Board with a backward glance at the beginnings of the *Studies in Intelligence* and a drawing of

some sort of balance sheet. What follows, is, I trust, a minimally autobiographical, but nevertheless wholly personal appraisal of the journal's accomplishments and disappointments.

First--about its establishment:

When the National War College convened in January 1947 after its Christmas recess, Bernard Brodie gave the morning lecture. His topic was the Grand Strategy. To the surprise of everyone, and the disquiet of some, his presentation was not about strategy but about how few Americans had interested themselves in the study of it. Citing the case of economics, he noted that a hundred and fifty years of study had produced from scratch a large library of highly enlightening literature. What had our military produced in the way of a literature regarding strategy, the heart of their profession? He answered this question by referring to Alfred Mahan, whose contributions to this literature was unique in both senses of the word: outstanding and lonesome. The speech came to a climax when Mr. Brodie identified a couple of strategic decisions of World War II which he held in low esteem and indicated that they might not have been made if Americans had devoted more time to thinking and writing about strategy. The moral was pointed and purposefully so: strategy is your business, why don't you systematize your thinking about it and perpetuate your reflections in a professional literature?

Sunday Before Christmas

One of the reasons I so vividly remember Mr. Brodie's remarks was that I realized at the time that everything he was saying about strategy could be said with equal force about intelligence. I had just completed almost five years in the business and was poised to begin work on my book *Strategic Intelligence*. In the next few months all that I had suspected regarding the absence of a literature of intelligence I was pretty well able to prove. Calling upon the library resources of the National War College and its able reference librarians, I believe that I read practically every printed document which our military had issued on the subject of intelligence and a number of typed student articles from the services' war colleges. There was nothing from the pen of a civilian intelligence practitioner. The collection was no better than I had anticipated, and going through it was a pretty shattering experience for an intelligence buff. Clearly, the profession ought to put the talent of a lot of its devotees to the creation of literature of the trade.

I did nothing much about the matter except for occasional broodings until one Sunday in December 1953. I had the morning duty in Mr. Dulles's office and after reading the cables I still had time on my hands. It was then that I wrote the memorandum that follows. The cover sheet of transmittal looked like this:

21 December 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BAIRD(1)

The attached arises from:

1. My general interest in the "Life."
2. A sense of disquiet at the realization that Intelligence is a non-cumulative discipline.
3. A sense of outrage at the infantile imprecision of the language of intelligence--I give you the NSCIDs for a starter.
4. A desire to give Uncle Matt a Christmas gift.

At the bottom of the copy I have is written, in Matt Baird's hand:

To OTR Staff and Division Chiefs
re parag. 4--I like to share my Christmas cheer; comments will be acceptable in return!

MB

Here is the memorandum itself:

SUBJECT: How a major flaw in the intelligence business (its lack of a serious systematic literature) might be corrected.

1. Intelligence work in the US has become an important professional discipline.
2. It has developed theory, doctrine, a vocabulary, and a multitude of techniques.
3. Unlike most other important professional disciplines, it has *not* developed a literature worthy of the name.
4. Without a literature intelligence has little or no formal institutional memory. What institutional memory it does possess exists in (a) fragments of thousands of memoranda primarily devoted to discrete intelligence operations, not to the theory and practice of the calling, and in (b) the living memories of people engaged in intelligence work.

What kind of a way is this to run a railroad? Where would the sciences and social sciences be, if their students had not systematically contributed to their literatures?

A literature is the best guarantee that the findings of a discipline will be cumulative.

A disaster to our unlettered intelligence service such as occurred with the budgetary cut-backs of 1946-7, or as might occur with an A-bomb on Washington, could put US intelligence back to the stone age where it so long dwelled.

5. How do you produce a literature?

Some answers.

- a. You pay for it. That is, you offer a livelihood to the man who wants to write a book or an article during the time he requires to do the job.
- b. You make sure that the man who wants to write a book or article has something to say and a reasonable command of the art of verbal expression.
- c. You subsidize his publications. That is, you print at your own expense what your critics and editors think will advance the discipline.
- d. You circulate his publications and encourage comment thereon. You may wish to publish the best written comment.

6. How would I go about the above?

Some answers.

- a. I would establish on a modest scale an "Institute for Advanced Study of Intelligence."
 - b. I would have a Board of Admissions who would both (1) pass on the suitability of applicants and (2) actually invite likely candidates who did not apply.
 - c. I would have no one eligible for admission who had not had a substantial and varied experience in intelligence work and who was not capable of systematic thoughtful research, analysis, and writing. Further I would accept no one who did not have a well-thought-out project.
 - d. The project would have to be in the field of intelligence work, overt and clandestine; not in the substantive findings of intelligence.
- Appropriate sample projects might be:

- (1) Strengths and weaknesses of intelligence dissemination

techniques.

- (2) An examination of the "third agency" rule.
- (3) The theory of indicators.
- (4) The intelligence service of country X.

Inadmissible projects would be:

- (1) The Red Army.
- (2) The Trieste situation.
- (3) The Outlook in Liberia, etc.

e. I would have no faculty as such. I would have a director who would arrange for occasional meetings with outsiders and who would see to it that the students spent a few hours per week together in seminars at which the students would present papers and discuss them.

f. The greatest part of the student's time would be his own to pursue his project through any means whatever with a view to publishing something at the end of his fellowship.

g. I would establish a journal--probably a quarterly--which would be devoted to intelligence theory and doctrine, and the techniques of the discipline. I would have an editor who fully understood the limits of his mandate. The journal could be Top Secret; its component articles could be of any classification or unclassified. The editor would provide for the separate publication of "reprints" for separate circulation where appropriate.

h. Along with the journal I would establish an "Intelligence Series" for longer works.

7. Some dimensions.

a. As a starter I would have no more than 10 or 12 students.

b. They would receive their regular in-grade pay if they came from the government; they would receive appropriate compensation if drawn in from the outside. All would, of course, be fully cleared.

c. They would be expected to be "in residence" at least 50 percent of the time; that is, at work in study or seminar rooms on the school premises.

d. Although my major interest is in positive intelligence, I would always aim to have a few security intelligence students around.

e. The duration of the fellowships would normally be one year. If I found a Mahan of intelligence I would keep him as long as he would stay.

There are hundreds of details beyond this rough outline. If the idea were accepted, they could be easily worked out.

What my school *must never be is an intelligence equivalent of the higher service schools*. If you feel the need of a model, study *Institute for Advanced Study* at Princeton--the Einstein school.

The Start

True to his penciled promise, Mr. Baird did discuss the memorandum with his principal lieutenants in the Office of Training. I can only surmise, for I was not present, that the founding of an Einstein school for research in intelligence method, doctrine, and history was put on a back burner and that my suggestion for the establishment of a journal was fetched up front over moderate heat. There followed, for example, a weekend conference at a country retreat sometime during 1954 and a good bit of general conversation about a journal--who should finance it, edit it, supervise it, and so on.

Some time later I was asked to set forth orally my thoughts about the journal before an Agency gathering with the understanding that the speech would be recorded and transcribed. This procedure was Mr. Baird's artful way of inducing me to produce, in writing, the first article of the new journal. When it appeared in print in September 1955 it bore the title "The Need for an Intelligence Literature: Articles by Sherman Kent and the Editors." My contribution was no more than an Englished version of the oral presentation, which in turn was an elaboration of the thoughts touched upon in the first five paragraphs of my Christmas memo to Matt Baird.

Before the appearance of the first number of the quarterly proper, there were two other unperiodic issues with a couple of articles each, the first including Abbot Smith's disquisition on the matter of capabilities in intelligence publications.⁽²⁾ This gave rise in the second, oddly enough, to a comment by the British intelligence officer then representing the British Joint Intelligence Committee in Washington, Alan Crick. I say *oddly*, because soon after the journal began to appear in its present form, the Editors ruled that there should be no dissemination to friendly foreign services. The main articles in the last issue in slender format dealt with economic intelligence.

At the initiative of one of Matt Baird's able officers, James Lowe, the journal became a quarterly with the Fall issue of 1957, and starting in 1958 under the editorship of Philip Edwards it has come out four times a year ever since.

Now for the balance sheet: what is there about the journal that we can regard with pride and happiness, and what with regret?

Pluses

Let me begin with the good ones: our second five years of quarterly existence has produced a larger number of contributions and a larger number of good ones than did our first five. In recent times there have often been many more pages of highly commendable manuscript than the editors wished to commit to a single number. It is not exactly that we are being lost in a blizzard of contributions, but compared to the bleak years of the fifties, we feel that we are doing very well indeed.

As to the quality, we should have to do no more than to call the reader's attention to the list of winners of the annual \$500 prize⁽³⁾ and advise him to reflect again on what whacking good articles they were and what a very substantial contribution to the lore of our profession they made. That the Board has on two occasions been unable to distinguish between the two or even three best essays and has accordingly split the award is explicit testimony, at least, of the Board's awareness that it has just passed through a bumper crop year.

That the *Studies* has in fact contributed to a richer understanding of the bones and viscera of the intelligence calling is beyond argument. We have run dozens of articles on intelligence *history*, the range of which can be sampled in those of Arthur Darling⁽⁴⁾ on the early years of CIA, the half dozen on the early struggle between the Russian revolutionaries and the Tsar's Okhrana,⁽⁵⁾ and William Harris's two on the March 1948 Berlin crisis, in which intelligence played a pivotal role.⁽⁶⁾ None of these articles required a high security classification and all of them could have been disseminated widely as long memos. But who would have sponsored them, reproduced, and circulated them if there had been no *Studies* to serve as a vehicle?

The contribution of the journal to an appreciation of some of the aspects of intelligence *theory and doctrine* has been highly significant. I cite as outstanding examples the succession of articles by W. E. Seidel,⁽⁷⁾ George Ecklund,⁽⁸⁾ Clyde C. Wooten⁽⁹⁾ and Julie D. Kerlin⁽¹⁰⁾ clarifying the proper role of economic intelligence in defense planning, the many articles that discuss problems of estimative intelligence,⁽¹¹⁾ and the view from the summit in Richard Helms's "Intelligence in American Society," [Summer 1967].

Perhaps we have been at our best on intelligence method. Where else could a wide audience of professionals gain insight into such techniques as those illustrated in Thaxter L. Goodell's piece on cratology,[\(12\)](#) Paul R. Storm's on Soviet gold,[\(13\)](#) and C. N. Geschwind's comments on interrogation?[\(14\)](#) Increasingly, as intelligence itself turns more and more to science, we have featured new scientific methods, from David Brandwein's "Telemetry Analysis" three years ago [Fall 1964][\(15\)](#) to the new infrared reconnaissance techniques recently explained by R. E. Lawrence and Harry Woo.[\(16\)](#)

The point is that as one looks back through a cumulative index (which one should do[\(17\)](#)) he cannot escape the belief that the intelligence profession is indeed more professional and more durable now that it has the beginnings, at least, of this tangible institutional memory.

Another cheering aspect is inherent in the widening spectrum of contributors. There is not a major component of CIA that has not by now produced at least one author and an interesting article. Furthermore we have had a good number of contributions from intelligence officers not associated with the Agency in any way. One of our prize winners, Colonel Hartness, four years back, was such a man.[\(18\)](#)

Lastly, we have had a heart-warming reaction from our consumers. The members of the Board are pretty well convinced that our fan mail represents a genuine appreciation on the part of scores, perhaps even hundreds, of readers scattered all over Washington, indeed all over the world. As old intelligence officers, we are naturally suspicious of a warm consumer reaction, for well we know how rare it is that a consumer receiving a piece of substantive intelligence will ever give anything except a "thank you." To be sure, some of the thanks are a good bit less fervent than others. But what we have found particularly pleasant have been the requests from men running small intelligence units in large and small domestic and overseas commands asking permission to incorporate this or that article into one of their publications destined to circulate among their own people.

Probably our nicest fan letter was one which Adm. B. E. Moore, then of the CINCLANT headquarters, wrote to Adm. D. L. McDonald, the CNO, saying how he had come across our publication and suggesting that the CNO ask that it be sent to a good number of flag officers serving with major components of the Fleet. As a result, we put some 40 or 50 additional addressees on our distribution list.

A principal cause behind these good things has been our editor, Philip Edwards, whom we know to be the best in the business. When you read these words you must realize that he has been overcome by the Board's exercise of force majeure, and that the paragraph is appearing in print despite his efforts to kill it. Mr. Edwards combines his great skill as a critic with a rare talent for writing, a world of patience, and a great ability to help authors help themselves. The journal's successes owe more to him than any other single person.

Minuses

And now for my regrets. The first has to do with the classification of the quarterly. The *Secret* stamp on the outside and what it means is obvious to all. The most melancholy implication is that it must be given what we call Class A storage, something none of us has in his home. Accordingly, one has had to read the journal on business premises and perhaps in business hours. This means that it has been competing for attention with urgent professional matters.

When I bespoke my hope for lots of unclassified articles in my first essay, I was clearly whistling Dixie. What the Board swiftly came to realize was that unclassified articles by people outside the government or the intelligence community were by definition going to be a great rarity--principally because we were not going to advertise that we had a vehicle to publish such writings. Even if we had successfully solicited, we would probably have had to reject most offerings on the grounds of quality or lack of sophistication. There are after all very few outsiders who have been able to keep abreast of the extraordinary developments of the profession from the vantage point of private life. And not many have chosen to do purely historical pieces or notes of reminiscence.

On the other hand, the very fact that an insider wrote such and such and that the Board thought it important enough to publish was oftentimes the prima facie reason to put some sort of classification stamp to it. In actual fact, the Board has on many occasions felt impelled to question sensitive topics discussed by an author and even to do a bit of sanitizing to get the contribution by as *Secret*.

All this is the long way of saying that, regrettable as is the *Secret* classification, it is the very best that can be done. We are convinced that there is no way by which our publication can be made into something which our

readers can take home to read in the evening and which, at the same time, will have a content worthy of their attention. One reader wrote us a communication suggesting a commonsense method by which copies of the *Studies* could be kept out of the safe for an hour or so after close of business for people who wanted to stay after work to read them. We thought he had something and passed the idea along, but nothing came of it.

A second and last regret. No matter that, as noted above, the quantity of contributions has increased and the quality improved, there are by no means enough people in our vast community writing articles and submitting them. The Board of Editors, at each of its weekend meetings, spends several hours on Saturday night discussing subjects which would make interesting articles and trying to figure out who would be the best author to undertake them. Between meetings of the Board, members put in a good amount of time dunning their colleagues and acquaintances for an article of this or that specification. I should imagine that we receive in finished form one article for about every ten we ask for. Some of the articles which have finally appeared have required almost as much suasion or browbeating on the part of a Board member as they did effort on the part of the composer. On the other hand, the number of high-quality walk-ins has been low.

There are several reasons why this is so. To start with, the ideal author or authors for such and such a piece are as a rule overextended with the primary tasks of their job descriptions and cannot take on an additional duty. Nor do their supervisors by and large feel able to lighten their professional burdens for the two or three weeks which they would have to do the article in question.

Not infrequently the right author could be given time, but just does not want to take it. Maybe he has a quite understandable desire--to this writer, at least--to avoid the pain of literary composition at all costs. Maybe also the man or woman whose job keeps driving them down into the present and forcing them to look into the murk of the future can be pardoned for an indifferent concern about that which is over and done with. And many of the articles which we feel should be written are essentially historical in nature. Some of these have an added built-in repulsiveness. For example, who is naturally inclined to go back over the history of an intelligence blooper? The fact that such a backward glance could be of immense professional importance does little to alleviate its essential unattractiveness.

Though the so-called missile gap debate owed but little to the shortcomings of intelligence, getting an article going on the subject has so far been impossible. One reason--not the ruling one--has been a reluctance on the part of

knowledgeable analysts to return to the agonies of our early estimating on the Soviet ICBM force and relive those days of groping around in the uncertainties of Soviet ability to build the missiles and the magnitude of the force which the Soviets would probably wish to deploy.

No such Freudian explanation is applicable to our experience in getting the article which we published in the autumn of 1966 on "The Detection of Joe I," the first Soviet nuclear test. This piece, which recounted one of our country's truly great intelligence successes, required more effort in terms of false starts and carryover from year to year than any other we have printed. Here perhaps the issues of security and delicacy were important inhibitors. Telling the story orally in a safe place to an inside group possessed of every clearance in the book would have been one thing, telling it in writing at the *Secret* level for publication to the community at large quite another. The stupid little mechanical difficulties of the latter course could and probably did very rapidly build up into a mountainous barrier.

Whatever the difficulties and however overcome, the *Studies in Intelligence* venture has been eminently worthwhile. The Board's celebration of its tenth anniversary a year ago presaged, I trust, not so much a ceremony of self-congratulation for a decade of past performance as an earnest of still other decades of good and useful work to come.

Footnotes

[\(1\)](#) Matthew Baird, then CIA Director of Training.

[\(2\)](#) [Studies in Intelligence (May 1956). The Editor of these Collected Essays has provided Studies citations for the articles mentioned in this essay.]

[\(3\)](#) 1960--Clyde R. Heffter ["A Fresh Look at Collection Requirements" (Fall)]; 1961--Albert D. Wheelon and Sidney N. Graybeal (co-authors) ["Intelligence for the Space Race" (Fall)]; 1962--F. M. Begoum ["Observations on the Double Agent" (Winter)]; 1963--(1) Paul R. Storm ["Estimating the Soviet Gold Position" (Fall)] and (2) Lt. Col. William Hartness ["Aspects of Counterinsurgency Intelligence" (Fall)]; 1964--(1) Andrew J. Twiddy ["The Recruitment of Soviet Officials" (Winter)], (2) Theodore H. Tenniswood ["The Coordination of Collection" (Spring)], and (3) Thaxter L. Goodell ["Cratology Pays Off" (Fall)]; 1965--John Whitman ["On

Estimating Reactions" (Summer)]; 1966--James Burke ["Seven Years to Luna 9" (Summer)]; 1967--Henry S. Lowenhaupt ["The Decryption of a Picture" (Summer) and "On the Soviet Nuclear Scent" (Summer)].

[\(4\)](#) ["Origins of Central Intelligence,"(Summer 1964), "The Birth of Central Intelligence" (Spring 1966), "Central Intelligence Under Souers," (Winter 1968), "With Vandenberg as DCI" (Summer and Fall 1968), and "DCI Hillenkoetter: Soft Sell and Stick" (Winter 1969)].

[\(5\)](#) [All by Rita T. Kronenbitter. "The Okhrana's Female Agents" (Spring and Summer 1965), "Okhrana Agent Dolin" (Spring 1966), "Paris Okhrana 1885-1905" (Summer 1966), "The Illustrious Career of Arkadiy Harting" (Spring 1967), "The Sherlock Holmes of the Revolution" (Fall 1967), and "Paris Okhrana: Final Phase" (Summer 1968)].

[\(6\)](#) ["March Crisis 1948 Act I," and "March Crisis 1948 Act II" (Fall 1966 and Spring 1967)].

[\(7\)](#) ["Intelligence for Defense Planning" (Summer 1964).]

[\(8\)](#) ["Guns or Butter Problems in the Cold War" (Fall 1965).]

[\(9\)](#) Clyde C. Wooten, ["Economic Intelligence in Defense Planning" (Winter 1966).]

[\(10\)](#) ["Military-Economic Estimating: A Positive View" (Fall 1966).]

[\(11\)](#) These are compiled conveniently under one cover in the new publication cited on p. 74 of this issue. But already this is outdated by Jack Zlotnick's "A Theorem for Prediction" in the last issue of the *Studies* [Fall 1967], Willard Matthias's "How Three Estimates Went Wrong" in this [Winter 1968], and Keith Clark's "Notes on Estimating," Summer 1967.

[\(12\)](#) ["Cratology Pays Off" (Fall 1964).]

[\(13\)](#) ["Estimating the Soviet Gold Position" (Fall 1963).]

[\(14\)](#) ["Counterintelligence Interrogation" (Winter 1965).]

[\(15\)](#) See also his article in the current issue ["Interaction in Weapons R&D" (Winter 1968)].

[\(16\)](#) ["Infrared Imagery in Overhead Reconnaissance" (Summer 1967).]

[\(17\)](#) See the compilation at the end of this issue [Winter 1968].

[\(18\)](#) ["Aspects of Counterinsurgency Intelligence" (Fall 1963).]

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Estimates and Influence(1)

This classic exposition of estimative intelligence, which treats both its epistemology and its importance to the policymaker, was classified Confidential and published in the Summer 1968 number of Studies of Intelligence.

There are a number of things about policymaking which the professional intelligence officer will not want to hear. For example, not all policymakers can be guaranteed to be free of policy predilections prior to the time they begin to be exposed to the product of the intelligence calling. Indeed, there will be some policymakers who could not pass a rudimentary test on the "facts of the matter" but who have the strongest views on what the policy should be and how to put it into effect. We do not need to inquire as to how these men got that way or why they stay that way, we need only realize that this kind of person is a fact of life.

Nor should we be surprised to realize that in any policy decision there are a number of issues which we who devote ourselves solely to foreign positive intelligence may almost by definition be innocent of. The bulk of them, are, of course, purely domestic ones: domestic political issues, domestic economic issues, popular attitudes, public opinion, the orientation of the congressional leadership, and so on. Even if we know in our bones of the great weight which such issues have carried in many a foreign policy decision, we do not readily and consciously acknowledge it. Our wish, is, of course, to have our knowledge and wisdom about the foreign trouble spot show itself so deep and so complete that it will perforce determine the decision. The nature of our calling requires that we pretend as hard as we are able that the wish is indeed the fact and that the policymaker will invariably defer to our findings as opposed to the cries of some domestic lobby.

But consider for a moment how people other than ourselves and our consumers view these

phenomena which I have just dismissed with a mild pejorative. Look, for example, at the table of contents of any of the recent books devoted to "How Foreign Policy Is Made." Or look at the lineup of lectures and discussions in the syllabus of any of our senior service schools; look particularly at the section devoted to national security policy formulation. You will find that intelligence and what it contributes to the task, far from enjoying the overpowering importance with which we--quite understandably--like to endow it, is casually ticked off as one of a score of forces at work.

The Credibility of Intelligence

Thus a certain amount of all this worrying we do about our influence upon policy is off the mark. For in many cases, no matter what we tell the policymaker, and no matter how right we are and how convincing, he will upon occasion disregard the thrust of our findings for reasons beyond our ken. If influence cannot be our goal, what should it be? Two things. It should be relevant within the area of our competence, and above all it should be to be credible. Let things be such that if our policymaking master is to disregard our knowledge and wisdom, he will never do so because our work was inaccurate, incomplete, or patently biased. Let him disregard us only when he must pay greater heed to someone else. And let him be uncomfortable--thoroughly uncomfortable--about his decision to heed this other.

Being uncomfortable is surely his second choice. Before he becomes uncomfortable he is going to ask himself if it is strictly necessary. This is of course the equivalent of asking himself if he really thinks that the information he has received from his intelligence colleagues is relevant to his problem and if he has to believe it. When we in intelligence look at the matter in this light we might consider ourselves fortunate that our policymaking consumers find so much of our product relevant, credible, and hence useful. Is there any way of categorizing that which is most happily, gratefully, and attentively read and that which is least? Perhaps a start can be made by having a quick critical look at three classical families of intelligence utterances.

First, basic intelligence. No question but that credibility is highest in this area of intelligence. Time and time again our consumer has need of something comparable to the perfect World Almanac or the perfect reference service. We come close to giving him just that, and nine times out of ten he is warmly appreciative of the breadth and depth of our knowledge and the speed with which we can handle his requests.

Second, how about current intelligence? There is probably less enthusiasm among consumers for this than for basic. They have a tendency to compare it--and unfavorably--to the daily press or the weekly news magazines; or they gripe because they often find it a gloss upon something they have just read in a cable.

Lastly, in the formal estimate credibility is lowest. It was more than a decade ago that Roger Hilsman, after interrogating scores of policymaking consumers of intelligence, concluded thus.⁽²⁾ He discovered that the people with whom he talked were extremely grateful to intelligence when it came up with the facts that they felt they had to know before they went further with their policymaking and operating tasks. They seem to have gone out of their way to praise intelligence in its fact-finding role, but to be anything but grateful for intelligence utterances in the estimate category.

Why was this so? Although Hilsman does not make the point, one may safely infer from his findings: The policymaker distinguished in his own mind between things which he thought of as factual and those which he thought of as speculative. For the first he was grateful, for the second not at all.

This puts a number of questions before the house. Why should Hilsman's respondents (implicitly, at least) have questioned the credibility of intelligence estimates? Was it because the respondents had caught intelligence out in self-serving errors? Was it because they were fearful of being misled by intelligence? Had intelligence on its part ever done anything to merit this want of confidence on the part of its customers? If not, how did it come about that the very officer who besought the help of intelligence in one area eschewed intelligence in another?

The Nature of the Estimate

Let me begin with a look at estimates and the business of making them.

Let me first be quite clear as to the general and the particular meaning of the word "estimate" in the present context. In intelligence, as in other callings, estimating is what you do when you do not know. This is the general meaning. In this broad sense, scarcely an intelligence document of any sort goes out to its consuming public that does not carry some sort of estimate. Field reports are circulated only when someone has estimated that the source is sufficiently reliable and content sufficiently credible to be worthy of attention. Current intelligence items as often as not carry one of those words of likelihood--"probable," "doubtful," "highly unlikely," etc. and so forth--that indicate that someone has pondered and decided that the report should be read with something less than perfect assurance as to its accuracy. An endless number of important sentences in even the basic intelligence category carry the same evidence of this kind of speculative evaluation, i.e, estimating.

But what I have in mind in particular when I use the word "estimates" here are the formal intelligence documents which begin to examine a subject from the point of view of what is known about it, and then move on beyond the world of knowing and well into the world of

speculating. When you reflect upon a whole large subject matter--the future of Greece or the armed strength of Communist China, for example--and realize that you cannot begin to know about either with the degree of certainty you know your own name, you reach for the next best thing to "knowing." You strive for some sort of useful approximation. In pursuit of this you evoke a group of techniques and ways of thinking, and with their help you endeavor logically and rationally (you hope) to unravel the unknown or at least roughly define some area of possibility by excluding a vast amount of the impossible. You know that the resultant, while still a lot better than nothing at all, will be in essence a mix of fact and judgment. Upon occasion it turns out to be almost exactly correct, but at the time you wrote it you expressed yourself with appropriate reservation.

To the extent that your judgment and the many quite subjective things which influence it are now involved, the man who reads this estimate will by no means accept it in the attitude of relaxed belief with which he reads, for example, that "not counting West Berlin, there are ten *Länder* in the FRG." It is this form of intelligence document that Hilsman's respondents were cool about. What follows is an attempt to explain the chill.

Let me ask you to think of one of these estimates in terms of the geometrical form called a pyramid. Think of the perfect estimate as a complete pyramid. At its base is a coagulation of all-but-indisputable fact. With an absolute minimum of manipulation on our part, the facts have arranged themselves to form what is quite clearly the base of a pyramid. They have spread out in the horizontal dimensions to the degree that we pretty well perceive its base area, and piled up in the vertical dimension generally to indicate the slope of its sides.

Knowing the nature of the base of the pyramid, to take an illustrative case, is like saying that we now have enough solid information to know that a photo image we have been wondering about is of an aircraft--not, say, a dairy ranch; more importantly, it is a bomber aircraft, not a transport. As to the other things we want to know about it--its performance characteristics--we are not at all certain. We are, however, in a good position to speculate about them.

Raising the Pyramid

Now back to the pyramid. Let us assume that when we know the general locus in space where the sides will converge to form the apex, we will have most of what we want. Let us assume that the exact point of the apex is exactly what we want, that if we know this with certainty we will have what we are after. For the bomber, constructing the apex would be reasoned speculations about how it will perform: How far it can fly, how high, how fast, and with what bomb load. Just as classical induction revealed the base of the pyramid, so now we call upon the other classical methodologies of deduction, and with their help we reason our way up the pyramid toward the top.

The factual stuff of the base of the pyramid is likely to be largely the fruit of our own intelligence-gathering efforts and so constitute a body of material about which we are better informed than our consumers. But we enjoy no such primacy with respect to the matter above. In fact, the talent to deduce rigorously is one which we share with any other educated and intellectually disciplined human. Furthermore, the advantage we enjoy with respect to base material can be and usually is dissipated by our habit of making it available to quite an array of non-intelligence types. The point is that the studious consumer can approach our mastery at the base and match us higher up. He can be his own estimator whenever he wishes to invest the time.

Let me not even seem to pretend that all conceptual pyramids in our area of work are constructed as described. The procedure which moves from the known to the unknown with a certain amount of tentative foraying as new hypotheses are advanced, tested, and rejected is merely the most respectable way. Its very opposite is sometimes employed, though usually with a certain amount of clandestinity.

The follower of this reverse method first decides what answer he desires to get. Once he has made this decision, he knows the exact locus of the apex of his pyramid but nothing else. There it floats, a simple assertion screaming for a rationale. This, then, is worked out from the top down. The difficulty of the maneuver comes to a climax when the last stage in the perverse downward deduction must be joined up smoothly and naturally with the reality of the base. This operation requires a very considerable skill, particularly where there is a rich supply of factual base-material. Without an artfully contrived joint, the whole structure can be made to proclaim its bastardy, to the chagrin of its progenitor.

The Peak

But even under the respectable method the intelligence estimator at some moment in the construction process reaches the place where he has used his last legitimate deductive crutch and must choose one of three possible courses.

The first is to let himself be propelled by the momentum of his reasoning into a final and fairly direct extrapolation. The effect of this is to put a sharpish top on the pyramid--a measure which, in turn, has the effect of telling his audience that he is pretty sure that he has discerned the outlines of what must be the truth. For the bomber it would be like saying: "Thus we conclude that the bomber in question is almost certainly a supersonic aircraft of medium range. See Table II for our estimate of its performance characteristics."

The second is not to make this final extrapolation but to leave the pyramid truncated near its apex. This has the effect of telling the reader that you have narrowed the range of

possibilities down to only a few. The further down you truncate, the wider their range. Thus the most unsatisfactory kind of intelligence construction is often that which perforce has to stop where the factual stuff of the base runs out. Often it is the equivalent of issuing the most general kind of news and asking the reader to suspend judgment pending the appearance of new evidence. For example: "Thus, we are unable at this time to be more precise regarding the performance characteristics of this bomber. It is possible that it is a new supersonic medium."

The third is what I will call "the look before the leap" or the "clandestine peep ahead." It is, one may hope, less often used by the intelligence professional than by the policy officer doing his own estimating. What you do is look hard at the final extrapolation and take full stock of where you will be if you go for it. Then, having taken stock, you ask yourself if you really wish to subscribe to this conclusion.

In the case I have in mind, you recoil. It may be that by making it yours you will be depicting yourself a non-patriot, or someone soft on Communism. It may be that by implication you can be made to seem a harsh critic of a higher authority or a scoffer at one of his policies. It may be that you will be doing the budget claims of your department or agency a grave disfavor. Or most important of all you realize that your findings may be advanced to support a policy which you oppose or that they do not support with sufficient vigor a policy which you favor.

If you have taken the peep ahead and find the prospect not to your taste, you can settle for the second course and simply not complete the estimate. Or you can back down on your argument, tearing it up as you go. Then when you have found a salubrious ground for another start, you can reargue your case upwards--perhaps using a few facts which you had dismissed as irrelevant the first time through, perhaps giving more weight to this analogy and forgetting about that, etc., etc. Thus, with a small amount of tinkering you can create a somewhat different conceptual pyramid whose base is still the same, but whose apex will lie in a zone much less dangerous to your job security or much more appropriate to the requirements of your policy preconceptions.

The Policy Welcome

Irrespective of which of the three ways of handling the problem you choose and irrespective of the substantive conclusion--or lack of it--the completed estimate will be bad news to one if not more of its important readers: it may undercut a long-held position or destroy a line of painfully developed argument; it may indicate the unwisdom of a plan or the malallocation of large sums of money. Another thing you may be sure of is that he will react as any recipient of bad news reacts--the reflex is one of "I don't believe you." Need I emphasize again that estimates are far more vulnerable to the criticism which is bound to accompany

incredulity than are propositions which are stated, at least, as if they were fact.

The disappointed consumer may begin with a hard look at our pyramid's factual base. He may find some loose masonry which can be jimmed apart, and then jimmy. He may find some quite substantial building stones left off to one side, stones, which, although of the same material and cut to fit some sort of geometrical form, were not incorporated into the base structure. He will speedily perceive that if these are chiseled a bit here and there they can be made to fit into this structure, with the result that they change some important aspects of its configuration. You may be sure he will soon focus on the upper zones of our pyramid.

One thing he will be most alert to is any evidence that intelligence, having taken the "peep ahead" and found the pyramid about to peak at an unwanted place, went on to take the corrective action I have indicated. If he can find evidence of this sort of disingenuous case-making, he will attack with very weighty weaponry. Before he is done he may be able to prove to himself and a number of others that the so-called intelligence contribution is a fraud--nothing more nor less than a policy brief brazenly masquerading as an intelligence estimate.

In these terms we may readily understand why a good many of Hilsman's respondents felt as they did about the value of intelligence estimates. For purposes of fuller explanation, let us suppose that an intelligence estimate on the Banana Republics had been prepared; let us suppose that our policymaking reader Mr. "A" is his department's authority on these Republics. A tour of his psyche as he reads the paper may be illuminating.

First, let us assume that the estimate accords in very high degree with his own estimate of the present and probable future situation in Banania. His psyche will begin to purr in contentment; "What a remarkably perceptive document," it will whisper. But this may be as far as the word of praise gets. When the moment comes to articulate his comment on the estimate, he is less likely to praise it than to proclaim, "This is exactly what I have been saying all along. Why in the world do we have to have someone who knows less of the matter than I say so before anyone pays attention?" In short, as far as he is concerned, the intelligence effort that went into the study was unnecessary. "A" may not always feel this way, particularly if during the policy debate he realizes that he can make points against his opponents by citing the estimate as a dispassionate outside opinion.

Alternatively, let us assume that the estimate accords not at all with the views of Mr. "B." He will be unhappy, for he will realize that if the conclusions of the estimate are believed by his peers and superiors, the policy which he has been championing will have to be modified--perhaps drastically. If he wishes to stay in the fight, then, he must be prepared to attack the intelligence estimate as *misleading* and erect one of his own to replace it.

Lastly, let us assume that the policy issue is one of those which is going to be settled almost

entirely on the basis of some purely domestic matter: The cotton lobby, the gold flow, the budget, and so on. Our policymaking consumer does not have to attack the substance of the *irrelevant* estimate. He will chuckle patronizingly to himself while his psyche warms in the feeling of superiority to those poor boobs in intelligence who have thought that what they called the "Situation and Prospects in X" could have any bearing on the way US policy towards X is being shaped today. Out loud he wonders how such naivetè can persist; he has no comment on the substance of the estimate.

These views of an estimate as unnecessary, misleading, or irrelevant may coincide with those of some of the people whom Hilsman polled and explain why they were less grateful for estimates than for what they considered factual intelligence issuances.

The Defense

How seriously should we in intelligence take the indictment which damns our estimating work as unnecessary, or misleading, or irrelevant? Take the misleading charge first. If it is made, and if it is true because the document was designed that way, then it must be taken very, very seriously indeed. For this accusation implied that the peep ahead had been taken and the necessary retracing of steps and reconstruction had followed so that the conclusion of the estimate suited the policy predispositions of the estimators. They have been caught out in their stupidity, and their credibility, at least for this estimate, is dead. It is dead not merely for the reader who found the conclusions abhorrent, but for all the others who found out by themselves or were told.

If the same group of estimators are caught out a second or third time, their credibility will probably be dead for good. Thereafter almost any intelligence pronouncement they or their associates make will be slightly referred to as propaganda, and perhaps not even read. They have not only lost all hope of directly influencing policy, they have lost what is even more important because more attainable than direct influence. This is the indirect influence which they might have exercised through an honest contribution to the debate which ought to precede every substantial policy decision.

Suppose the charge of misleading is made simply as a function of a committed reader's general disbelief or annoyance, and suppose that, try as he may, he cannot show a trace of bad faith on the part of the estimators. The estimators are confronted with nothing more sinister than a human disagreement, perhaps from a reader whose nose is out of joint. This is just life.

What of the charge, unnecessary? The question here is--unnecessary to whom? To everyone involved in the policy decision? Already I have dealt with Mr. "A" to whom it was

unnecessary because it accorded exactly with his views, and Mr. "B" to whom it was unnecessary and many times worse because he found it misleading. But are these the only two officers or two kinds of officers involved? Is there perhaps not a Mr. "C" or Messrs. "C" who have no more than a layman's knowledge of the subject but who must participate in the policy debate and decision? Of course there are the Messrs. "C," and important men they are. The President, upon many an occasion, is a Mr. "C," and so are members of his staff and his Security Council. They have found the estimate anything but unnecessary.

It does not follow, however, that the impact which the estimate may make upon the Mr. "C"s will in itself cause the defeat of the dissenting Mr. "B"s. What it will do is to force the Mr. "B"s to put forth a better effort. This will stimulate the Mr. "A"s themselves to better effort. At a minimum, the intelligence estimate will have made its contribution in the way it promoted a more thorough and enlightened debate and a higher level of discourse within the high policymaking echelon. At a maximum it may have denied a wrong-headed Mr. "B" an easy triumph.

Lastly, the charge of irrelevant. This rested upon the fact that the foreign policy decision was going to have to be made on the basis of a domestic consideration, something about which the estimate is wholly--and properly--mute. But it is just possible that the domestic consideration is not all that important and that the national interest is not really being served by this sort of deference to it. It may be that the estimate helped the policy people to reach this new appreciation of the national interest. Hence, even if the decision I am talking about gets made in conformity with the wish of the domestic pressure group, maybe the next such decision will not.

Truth Before Power

I suppose that if we in intelligence were one day given three wishes, they would be to know everything, to be believed when we spoke, and in such a way to exercise an influence to the good in the matter of policy. But absent the Good Fairy, we sometimes get the order of our unarticulated wishes mixed. Often we feel the desire to influence policy and perhaps just stop wishing here. This is too bad, because to wish simply for influence can, and upon occasion does, get intelligence to the place where it can have no influence whatever. By striving too hard in this direction, intelligence may come to seem just another policy voice, and an unwanted one at that.

On the other hand, if intelligence strives for omniscience and strives to be believed, giving a third place to influence, serendipity may take over. Unselfconscious intelligence work, even in the speculative and highly competitive area of estimates, may prove (in fact, has proved many times) a key determinant in policy decision.

Footnotes

[\(1\)](#) Adapted by the author from his presentation before the September 1966 Intelligence Methods Conference in London.

[\(2\)](#) [Editor's Note: Hilsman was then Chief of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).]

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

The Law and Custom of the National Intelligence Estimate

An Examination of the Theory and Some Recollections Concerning the Practice of the Art

As Sherman Kent's introductory note explains, this memoir-history of the National Intelligence Estimate and the Board of National Estimates had its origins in a memorandum he wrote in 1965. Completed and classified Secret as DCI Miscellaneous Study No. 12" in 1976, this important work remained in the History Staff files until its publication in this volume.

An Introductory Note

This essay's present form owes much to the accidents of its life.

It was begun in the summer of 1965 to serve the purposes of a momentary crisis. As I started to dictate a hasty first draft I had in mind a paper of a dozen pages. The very act of composition revealed a much more complicated subject matter than I had originally contemplated and even in dictating, the short draft grew to more than twenty pages. Clearly the crisis would have to be served by some less cumbersome method. It was. But with the crisis now met, what to do about the now fairly substantial but still far from complete memo. I hesitated to junk the whole enterprise, so I took a familiar tack--I passed copies to two

revered colleagues, Abbot Smith and Ludwell Montague, who were well-established aficionados of the constitutional law and custom of the NIEs, and asked for their comments.

In due course from them and others I received enough comment to indicate that I had taken on a much bigger job than I could accomplish while carrying my regular duties. So I put the manuscript, my notes, my critics' suggestions into the deep-freeze for the duration of my active duty in the Agency and for several years of my retirement.

Last year (1974) I resuscitated the project. One of the things which moved me, beyond the natural desire to wind up a piece of unfinished business, was the realization that the Agency's very considerable history program was drawing to a close with comparatively little written about either the Office of National Estimates or the NIEs, which had absorbed its attention. Perhaps by slightly changing the tight legalistic frame of reference of my original plan I could give my essay a bit more of the juice of discursive and analytical history. This is what I have tried to do.*
—

In terms of chronology the essay deals most fully with the years which coincide with my association with the Office of National Estimates (November 1950 to 31 December 1967). I have made no systematic effort to cover developments that occurred between the time of my departure and the end of the office six years later (1 November 1973).

In all enterprises of this sort one collects a very large burden of indebtedness to old friends and associates. To Philip Anderson, Paul Borel, Keith Clark, James Cooley, Charles Cremeans, Harold Ford, John Huizenga, Lawrence Houston, Wayne Jackson, Ludwell Montague, Abbot Smith and Karl Weber my heartfelt thanks for reading, criticizing, and amending some or all of the manuscript, or making written contributions to it sight unseen.

To Bernard Drell and Walter Elder, successive chiefs of the History Staff and Clinton Conger, their editor-in-chief, all thanks for their careful reading of earlier drafts. The present text owes much to their editorial talent and their own ability to recall the past.

Working here (in the Key Building) as a consultant to the Agency's history project, I have had access to the magnificently filed and indexed collection put together by the genius of John Scott and his successor, John Mayo. With this sort of research tool at hand, difficult jobs have been easy and even impossible ones, manageable. To them and to Leon Sullivan, the now-retired Agency archivist, my admiration and thanks.

Thanks to Betty Naley who transformed my longhand into the first typescript and to Virginia Gibbons who typed this, the final, from what had become a tortured script. To her my special gratitude for undertaking the chore of putting the footnotes and reference notes at the bottom of the page where they belong; not at the end of the manuscript where few readers would

bother to look.

Sherman Kent
25 April 1975

Footnotes

* [Footnote of four lines deleted]

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

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[A. The Director of Central Intelligence and the NIE](#)

The National Intelligence Estimate--spelled thus with capital initial letters--was one of the major innovations of General Walter Bedell Smith, the fourth Director of Central Intelligence [DCI], whose incumbency bridged the period 7 October 1950-24 January 1953.[\(2\)](#)

The title itself proclaims at least two important messages. First, the use of the word "estimate"--as distinct from "report" or "study"--shows the Director's concern to emphasize this particular form of intelligence utterance and its importance in his thinking. In this General Smith reflected a similar bent of his deputy, William Harding Jackson, who as an intelligence officer during World War II had had a first-hand experience with estimates, had made a deep study of the institution as practiced at high levels of British intelligence, and had himself written a section on national estimating in the Dulles-Jackson-Correa report.[\(3\)](#)

The second, the use of the word "national" was employed with equal purpose. It not only designated a type of subject matter suitable for purposes of national security policy formulation, and a hoped-for quality appropriate for use at highest levels of government, but

more especially an intelligence production effort which would engage the knowledge and talent of the national intelligence community over which the DCI was the presiding officer. Indeed that thing often referred to as "national intelligence" had been declared to be one of the three principal charges on the DCI.⁽⁴⁾ He and he alone was under obligation to produce it. Terming the estimates-to-be *national* would put them clearly within the larger canopy of "national intelligence" and as such within the personal jurisdiction of the DCI.⁽⁵⁾

Thus the first, and by all odds most important, legal and constitutional aspect of the National Intelligence Estimate is that it was and is the Director's estimate, and its findings are his. Although many experts from perhaps all intelligence components of the community participated in the production of the papers in the NIE series, and although the intelligence chiefs themselves formally passed on the final text, they could not bend its findings to suit their own judgments contrary to the will of the DCI. They could try to win him to their sides by full and free discussions, but they could not outvote him and force him to join them, nor could they make him dissent from them, even though they constituted a clear majority of the Intelligence Advisory Board, Intelligence Advisory Committee, or the United States Intelligence Board as it was successively known. By the same token, the DCI could not oblige them to join him in a matter at dispute. They could of their own accord concur with his findings, or, not being able to, they could dissent and make their alternative views known in footnotes to *his* text.

In his very first full dress meeting with his IAC on 20 October 1950 General Smith tactfully but forcefully made the matter clear.

The minutes for that historic meeting are gratifyingly full; they contain a verbatim rendering of a memorandum which General Smith read to his colleagues.⁽⁶⁾ He began with the title: *The Responsibility of the Central Intelligence Agency for National Intelligence Estimates* and went on to read: "One of the principal duties assigned to the CIA--is to "correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security and provide for its proper dissemination." The memo elaborates the intended significance of this phrase from the National Security Act of 1947, and continues: "The CIA is thus given the responsibility of seeing to it that the United States has adequate central machinery for the examination and interpretation of intelligence, so that the national security will not be jeopardized by failure to coordinate the best intelligence opinion in the country, based on all available information."

The logical construction goes on abuilding: Although the National Security Act provided that the departments and agencies of the government shall continue to collect, evaluate, correlate, and disseminate departmental intelligence, it does not limit the duties of the CIA vis--vis its intelligence mission except by the standard of national security. In fact, "the Act apparently gives the CIA the independent right of producing national intelligence. As a practical matter [such national intelligence emanating in the form of] estimates can be written only with the

collaboration of experts in many fields of intelligence and with the cooperation of several departments and agencies of the Government. A national intelligence . . . estimate as assembled and produced by the CIA should reflect the coordination of the best intelligence opinion based on all available information."

The memo went on: The concept of national intelligence estimates underlying the statute is that of an authoritative interpretation and appraisal that will serve as a firm guide to policy makers and planners. A national intelligence estimate . . . should be compiled and assembled centrally by an agency whose objectivity and disinterestedness are not open to question. "Its ultimate approval should rest upon the collective *judgment*(7) of the highest officials in the various intelligence agencies." Finally, it should command recognition and respect throughout the Government as the best available and presumably the most authoritative estimate. Although the task is made more difficult by a lack of general acceptance of the concept of national intelligence estimates in the Government, it is, nevertheless, the clear *duty and responsibility* (8) *of the Central Intelligence Agency under the statute to assemble and produce such coordinated and authoritative estimates.*

The "statute" to which General Smith had referred was, of course, The National Security Act of 1947,(9) notably its section 102, subsection (d)3, which reads:

(d) For the purpose of coordinating the intelligence activities of the several Government departments and agencies in the interest of national security, it shall be the duty of the Agency,(10) under the direction of the National Security Council--

(3) to correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security, and provide for the appropriate dissemination of such intelligence within the Government using where appropriate agencies and facilities. . . .

Had General Smith desired, he could have given the background to those cryptic and not wholly satisfactory words of section 102 (d), (3). The fact is that President Truman used almost these exact phrases in his letter of 22 January 1946 addressed to the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy and in which he designated them the so-called National Intelligence Authority and directed them (and a fourth officer to be named by him) to plan, develop, and coordinate "all Federal foreign intelligence activities so as to assure the most effective accomplishment of the intelligence mission related to the national security." His letter went on to say that the addressees would assign persons and facilities from their departments, "which persons shall collectively form a Central Intelligence Group" under a Director of Central Intelligence, "who shall be designated by me."

The text immediately following says that the new DCI shall:

Accomplish the correlation and evaluation⁽¹¹⁾ of intelligence relating to the national security, and the appropriate dissemination within the Government of the resulting strategic and national policy intelligence. In so doing, full use shall be made of the staff and facilities of the intelligence agencies of your [i.e. State, War, and Navy] Departments.

A few paragraphs later on, the President ordained an Intelligence Advisory Board⁽¹²⁾--the first name given to the body which in General Smith's time was known as the Intelligence Advisory Committee. The letter did not describe the right of Board members to register dissents to decisions of the DCI, but that came soon in the very first directive which the National Intelligence Authority issued.⁽¹³⁾

The President's letter and the NIA directive were given additional strength (perhaps) and precision (certainly) in the first intelligence directive issued by the National Security Council a few months after the passage of the Act that called it into being. Paragraphs 4 and 5 of NSCID #1 (12 December 1947) read thus:

4. The Director of Central Intelligence shall produce⁽¹⁴⁾ intelligence relating to the national security, hereafter referred to as national intelligence. In so far as practicable, he shall not duplicate the intelligence activities and research of the various departments and agencies but shall make use of existing intelligence facilities and shall utilize departmental intelligence for such production purposes. For definitions see NSCID #3.

5. The Director of Central Intelligence shall disseminate National Intelligence to the President, to members of the National Security Council, to the intelligence chiefs of the IAC agencies,⁽¹⁵⁾ and to such governmental departments and agencies as the National Security Council from time to time may designate. *Intelligence so disseminated shall be officially concurred in by the intelligence agencies or shall carry an agreed statement of substantial dissent.* (Emphasis added)

Fast on the heels of this document came NSCID #3 (13 January 1948) which reiterated the DCI's duty to produce and disseminate national intelligence,⁽¹⁶⁾ and two of the early DCIDs [Director of Central Intelligence Directives] which set forth the *Standard Operating Procedures for Departmental Participation in the Production and Coordination of National Intelligence*⁽¹⁷⁾ and *Policy Governing Departmental Concurrences [and Dissents] in National Intelligence Reports and Estimates.* ⁽¹⁸⁾

In other words, when General Smith told his colleagues of the IAC how he construed his

powers under the National Security Act, he could have invoked a number of other forceful and explicit texts (which antedated the Act and followed it) to bolster his position. Of course, he did not need them, nor did he need them to support three other decisions which were essential parts of his new deal for estimates.

First was his announcement of his formation of a new office, the Office of National Estimates [ONE], whose only concern would be the production of national estimates and closely related matters. General Smith set great store by this office and indicated that "in his opinion it would be the heart of the CIA and of the national intelligence machinery." [\(19\)](#)

Not revealed in the official minutes, but in a memo for the record drafted by Col. Hamilton Howze, USA, an aide to the G-2 who was present at the meeting, was General Smith's mention of the future Board of National Estimates [BNE]. [\(20\)](#) Colonel Howze's memo reads:

9. Within the new Estimates Division of ORE [sic] there will be a panel of five or six individuals constituting the top brains. General Smith is looking hard for a retired General or Admiral to head. He tried to get Admiral [Leslie] Stevens (recent Naval Attach, Moscow) and asked Admiral Johnson [Felix Johnson, the DNI (Director of Naval Intelligence)] to talk once more to Stevens in an effort to persuade him. General Smith also said he was anxious to get General [Clarence Ralph] Huebner to be a member of the panel, and possibly to head the Division.

(Be it said that General Smith did not get the services of Leslie Stevens, nor did he put General Huebner in charge of the new office. Huebner did accept a place on the Board, and the distinguished Harvard historian, William L. Langer, became its first chairman.) With this sort of official announcement, the ONE with its own administrative machinery was off to an auspicious start.

Second, the National Intelligence Estimate would be known as just that, not an "ORE" with a number, nor yet an "ONE," nor a "CIA" for that matter. It "would be published under a cover showing plainly that the estimate was a collective effort, the result of which would be labeled as a national intelligence estimate." [\(21\)](#)

Third, General Smith indicated his intention of holding IAC meetings "more often and for longer periods, although as chairman he would make every effort to keep the meetings as brief as possible. He stated that the IAC must be geared for rapid cooperative work." [\(22\)](#) In this he was true to his promise; the IAC began meeting regularly (and once a week) with the DCI seldom absent from the chair. As the NIEs moved into production, NIE business-- whether the laying on, the clearing of scope notes, or pronouncing upon a finished product-- became a staple of IAC fare. This was of course in marked contrast to the Hillenkoetter

regime, where IAC meetings were rarely called and when called, never to participate in any phase of the pre-Smith brand of national estimates.

At this first IAC meeting, there was another piece of NIE business which was not exactly an innovation. It was in large measure a reminder of the production procedures which had first appeared two years earlier in DCID 3/1 and DCID 3/2. General Smith's restatement of these procedures was official notice of his desire to have things done according to the book.[\(23\)](#)

Perhaps to maintain the momentum which he had already given to the NIE, General Smith ended by calling for another meeting in five days to discuss "national estimates priorities and the frame of references and assumptions to form the basis of an intelligence estimate of the situation in Indo-China."[\(24\)](#)

In his rendering of the established procedures for doing NIEs General Smith added something new and important to the law as it was then understood. It was the content of his first sentence (paragraph "8a" in the Minutes): "The Intelligence Advisory Committee will adopt an intelligence plan, or more specifically, a list of required national estimates in an order of priority."

With this came into being two significant developments. The first had to do with the initiation of the NIEs.

Henceforward NIEs would be formally *initiated by IAC action*. Requests could come in from many quarters and did: a few times the President himself, often from the members of the NSC (especially from the Secretary of Defense in Mr. McNamara's time) or from the NSC Staff's chairman,[\(25\)](#) often from the second echelon in the Departments of State and Defense, from the DCI, IAC members, from the Board of National Estimates [BNE], and others. Such requests were usually referred to the BNE in the first instance, which would put the item on the agenda of the next IAC meeting or get an IAC authorization by telephone if time pressed. Upon occasion, when a request came in which was clearly not a suitable topic for the NIE treatment (something more akin to a National Intelligence Survey or a research study) the chairman of the BNE would try to deflect it to another component of the CIA. Failing this, the chairman of the BNE was bound to take the request to the IAC and try to make his case there for declining the honor. The point is, of course, the actual initiation of an NIE which would engage the talents of scores of people throughout the community was the decision of the community's highest body.

The second institution General Smith set in motion was that of planning the program of NIEs to come.[\(26\)](#) At the next meeting of the IAC, that of 26 October 1950, a program of 11 estimates was adopted in the following order of priority: the Philippines, Indochina, Soviet Capabilities and Intentions, Germany, Chinese Communist Capabilities and Intentions,

Yugoslavia, Iran, Greece, Turkey, India, and Austria. At this moment there was not yet an ONE nor a BNE. General Smith turned to Ludwell Montague, who had handled the burden of the estimating in ORE, and announced that pending the establishment of an ONE, Montague would be in charge.[\(27\)](#)

In the next four weeks, while the ONE was in its formative stage, Montague placed six coordinated estimates before the IAC for final clearance. Three of them were from the original program, and three others were crash estimates related to the Chinese Communist intervention into Korea. By the end of November, the ONE was well established and Montague handed over the charge to Mr. Langer, who had the twin titles of Assistant Director for National Estimates (and as such was in charge of the new ONE) and Chairman of the Board of National Estimates.

My own appearance dated from about this time, and I well remember Montague turning to his new colleagues on the Board and suggesting pointedly that they begin to share the burden.

B. The Office of National Estimates (28)

From this time forward until 1 November 1973, the Office of National Estimates acted as the Director's executive agent for the acquittal of his responsibility for the production and dissemination of national intelligence estimates. One may date the Office's formal legal beginnings from the appointment of its chief, William L. Langer (13 November 1950). In these days before the creation of the Office of the Deputy Director/Intelligence [DDI], the AD/NE [Assistant Director/National Estimates] (along with five AD's of the so-called overt offices) reported to the Director through his deputy (the DDCI). Mr. Langer's mission and functions were spelled out in "CIA Regulation No. 70" of 1 December 1950. With the exception of one of its paragraphs, this document described the duties which he, his successors, and the office they presided over followed in guiding the procreation of more than 1,500 National Intelligence Estimates over 23 years. The paragraph which became inapplicable was #6, which had assigned to the AD/NE the current intelligence task and the issuance of the *Daily Summary*. In a matter of a few weeks, Mr. Langer had disengaged from this responsibility to concentrate his resources on the main task of the estimates.

The Office of National Estimates[\(29\)](#) took shape speedily. It should be viewed as consisting of three components: The Board of National Estimates, the professional staff, and the support staff.

The Board was the principal departure from what had gone before. In the thinking of General Smith and Mr. Jackson, the Board was to consist of an indeterminate number of senior

officers (say, more than five and less than twelve), who came from a variety of professional backgrounds, and who, paid handsomely in the supergrade categories, had, (contrary to normal civil service practice) no administrative duties whatever. Their task was wholly substantive. Their days were spent in individual and more often collective efforts on every aspect of the estimates. They met first thing in the morning to hear the day's news and perhaps discuss it in terms of NIEs in the works or to come; they met again often with the ONE staff, often with representatives of the IAC agencies to talk about the schedule, to produce terms of reference, to review drafts, and to arrive at duly coordinated texts suitable to present to the Director and the IAC. They invited and listened to ambassadors, officers of the foreign aid program, attachès, members of the numerous military assistance groups (MAG, later MAAG), CIA officers in from the field, and many others. Above all they studied the new intelligence. Each day their reading room received a wide spectrum of the daily take which ranged from routine items like the FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] reports, CIA, attach, and State Department cables to the most sensitive materials that lay in the arcane codeword areas on the far side of Top Secret. This was the daily grist for thought and discussion. Indeed, almost as much as the labor on the draft estimates, the reading of the highly privileged news made its contribution to the collegial nature of the Board. And it was this very group effort that so often resulted in the posing of the right questions and the struggling for the best answers. As one Board member has pointed out, the collegial spirit also made its contribution to a finished product of high quality. There were always, he remarks, one or two colleagues who had not been so immersed in a paper as to be bored with it and willing to let it go forward irrespective of flaws. Seemingly there was almost always one of these fresh brethren who stepped in as a potent "no" man.

At the start, the Board consisted of Mr. Langer, myself, who was named his deputy early in 1951, General Clarence Ralph Huebner and Admiral Bernard Bieri (General Smith here deferred to his own background and the important role of the military in the intelligence community), Maxwell Foster (a Boston lawyer nominated by Mr. Jackson), Raymond J. Sontag and Calvin B. Hoover (Mr. Langer's choices: two outstanding professors of modern history and economics respectively), and DeForest Van Slyck and Ludwell Montague (senior officers of CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates [ORE]). The latter two, who had had many years of intelligence experience including three or four as estimators in ORE, brought with them a high competence for the task, and a rich first hand knowledge of the grandeurs and miseries of coordinating speculative intelligence at the national level. [\(30\)](#)

Along with Van Slyck and Montague, ONE inherited a much broader legacy from ORE. Most obviously, we recruited our full staff, both the professional and support components, from ORE. Let me speak of the professionals first.

In the beginning there were about 25 of them, two decades later, a few more than 30. Most if not all of them had had graduate school work in history or the social sciences, and most if not all had served in wartime intelligence work (with one of the military intelligence

organizations or OSS). They had improved their regional or functional competence in their duties with CIA. They also, like Van Slyck and Montague, knew a lot about the post-war intelligence community, its strengths and weaknesses, and how to do business with it. They set a pace for a quality of workmanship that we were able to maintain during the lifetime of the Office. For 20 years they were the best staff in town and so proclaimed by a good number of very knowledgeable outsiders. [\(31\)](#)

The support staff, also recruited from ORE, was made up of about the same number of skillful women (growing eventually to about 35) who controlled the distributing in ONE of the daily flood of incoming intelligence materials, ran the ONE library, did the general secretarial work for the Board and the professional staffs, and attended to the reproduction in multiple copies of the endless stream of NIEs in every stage of their creation, first, second, third, and nth draft right up to the final manuscript for dispatch to the printer. The capabilities of our little reproduction staff were a nine-days' wonder throughout the community's band of estimators.

Thus the ONE at the beginning owed much to what had gone before. If all of us in the office had been newcomers like the members of the Board, and if all of us had had to learn the complicated trade from scratch, our fast start and speedy accomplishment would not have been.

With time there were great changes in the manning of both Board and Staff. We were careful about replacements and maintained the standards of excellence. One thing greatly in our favor was a refusal to try to build an empire and stretch our table of organization [T/O] to imperial dimensions. In the beginning our T/O was set at 85, a figure we never reached. For 1951 we had fewer than 60 people aboard. Ten years later, with a considerably larger work load, we reached a total of something under 70, perhaps a dozen of whom were on the Board. Some of the latter were new recruits from outside and some were former members of our staff or other CIA staffs whom the Director raised to Board status.

The original concept was that Board members should be "generalists" without specialized expertise in, or estimative responsibility for, particular geographic or functional areas. Over the years, certain specialization began to emerge informally. A Board member by virtue of being assigned to chair a succession of papers on a particular area, or by reason of his own growing interest and study, would become more knowledgeable than his colleagues about a particular problem or part of the world.

Furthermore, as members of the staff, which *was* organized on a regional basis, began to become members of the Board, they of course brought with them the more profound knowledge of the areas to which they had been assigned. Papers on "their" areas were more often than not given to them to shepherd through the trials of examination by the Board and coordination with the Reps. Thus, without any very conscious plan, a sort of specialization

developed within the Board. This had the notable advantage of enabling the Board member so qualified to be more useful in the various stages of drafting and coordination.

Some anomalies developed, for example, Middle East specialists from the staff were appointed to the Board in numbers out of proportion to the other area experts so that, to the extent Board members were admitted to have specialties, we were overendowed with Middle Easterners. But the unsystematic system worked pretty well. The chairman of a paper would see to it that a couple of his colleagues would follow its development closely enough to be able to lend a hand if trouble developed in a Reps' meeting, and most of the other Board members would have had their say before then.

Later, when Abbot Smith took over as head of the ONE with John Huizenga as his deputy, a more formal effort at specialization was launched. Board panels were established, each responsible for a particular area, and each with a Board member in charge, with two of his colleagues also assigned. This was well enough, but there was a corollary: Board members were at least tacitly discouraged from concerning themselves with the doings of a panel to which they were not assigned. Doubtless this saved time in the Board consideration of an estimate, but it also narrowed the range of inspection to which an estimate was subjected. In this situation, the views of a panel chairman sometimes came to have inordinate weight.

C. The Representatives of the Other Intelligence Agencies

With the beginning of the ONE came a marked change in the manner of coordinating estimates with the other members of the intelligence community. In the days of ONE's predecessor (CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates) man-to-man contact between ORE analysts and their opposite numbers in the community had been irregular. A good deal of the coordination of estimates had been achieved via a challenge and response ballet conducted in writing. ORE would initiate an estimate and request contributions. Not receiving adequate help, ORE would draft the paper on whatever resources available and send it out for comment. When the comment came in, it was often given in written form. ORE would attempt to conform its text to well-founded exceptions and forget the rest. It would circulate the paper once more--this time for concurrence or dissent. Throughout, the bulk of the transaction was conducted by memo.

When General Smith asked Ludwell Montague to serve as the CIA officer to coordinate a number of NIEs, and in a great hurry, he insisted upon a man-to-man contact with his opposite numbers in the IAC agencies. Thus Montague was able to get a far higher degree of helpful compliance than heretofore. The six papers which he shepherded were thrashed out around a table with living representatives of the four principal intelligence services (State

and the three military services).

By the time I had entered on duty in late November, the meeting of representatives (the Reps) to coordinate a text was a going institution. Throughout the history of the NIE, between 1950 and 1973, the Reps were one of the elements which made the whole enterprise a success.

A word about the Reps: IAC members, perceiving that the NIE was a deadly serious undertaking by General Smith, and cheerful at the way the account was being handled, gave ready support. Of their officers, they continued to designate one who would be their principal staff operative for the NIE account. We, as ORE before us, recognized these officers as the IAC Senior Representatives. They were the ONE's first point of contact within the IAC agencies for all business affecting the NIE.

Below each of these Senior Reps was a pool of intelligence officers most of whose duties included the area of the NIE. They were usually experienced men and women with a regional or functional specialty and an ability to discuss the substance and the rhetoric of draft estimates. They attended the meetings where text was coordinated and where agreement was achieved when possible. They were the people who when agreement was not possible, were the articulators of tentative dissent.

The institution of the Reps, which had had its informal beginnings in the ORE days, flourished with the coming of the ONE and its heavy schedule of NIEs. Its existence rested solidly upon the stuff of the customary law. I can so assert because there is no reference to "Representative" in DCID 3/2 (8 July 1946), devoted to the standard procedures of national intelligence production nor, of course, in DCID 3/2 of 13 September 1948 devoted to concurrences in national intelligence. In General Smith's rough outline of procedures, there are references to "discussion" between "ORE, or . . . the ONE when it is established . . . and the several intelligence agencies," but no word of "Representatives." However all NIEs produced from that point on involved the Reps in one way or another. It was not until the issuance of DCID 3/5 of 1 Sept. 1953 (which superseded DCID 3/1 cited above) that the word "Representatives" (and the institution) passed from the customary to the statute law. Paragraph 3 (c) reads:

*Consideration by Representatives of the IAC Agencies--*Representatives of the IAC Agencies will meet with the Board to review, comment on and revise the draft as necessary.[\(32\)](#)

Of the scores or even hundreds of Reps that we encountered, two things may be said: (1) They were indispensable to the production of NIEs, and (2) there was no other uniformity. Some were skilled intelligence professionals; others were unhappy time-servers; most fell

between these poles. I will have more to say about them in a later section.

Footnotes

(1) The following general histories contain the essential background and a wealth of elaborating detail of the subject of this essay:

Arthur B. Darling, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Instrument of Government, to 1950* (12 vols.) 1953. (HS-1) [A declassified version of this history has now been published under the same name by Pennsylvania State University Press (1990).]

George S. Jackson and Martin P. Claussen, *Organizational History of the Central Intelligence Agency, 1950-53* (10 vols.) 1957. (HS-2) [A declassified version of this history is held by the National Archives.]

Ludwell L. Montague, *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence, October 1950-February 1953* (5 vols.) 1971. (DCI-1) [A declassified version of this history has now been published under the same name by Pennsylvania State University Press (1992).]

Wayne G. Jackson, *Allen Welsh Dulles as Director of Central Intelligence, 26 February 1953-29 November 1961* (5 vols.) 1973. (DCI-2) [A declassified version of this history is held by the National Archives.]

George S. Jackson, *Office of Reports and Estimates, 1946-51* (5 vols.) 1954. (MS-3) [Classified.] Hereafter I will cite the first four of these works as Darling, *The CIA*; Jackson and Claussen, *History*; Montague, *Smith*; Wayne Jackson, *Dulles*.

(2) There can be no question that the NIE, spelled with capital initials, was a Smith innovation. This is not to say that the CIA, and the CIG before it, had not produced finished intelligence utterances which contained estimates and which met most or all of the criteria of the word national as used in the context. The unit of the Agency which produced such papers was the Office of Reports and Estimates [ORE]. It was a large office which engaged in a number of intelligence research and analysis tasks. It published, *inter alia*, a current intelligence daily and current intelligence briefs, straightaway intelligence research studies on a wide range of subjects--world wide--situation reports, and an otherwise undesignated series known as "OREs." As a general rule, "OREs" were designed for consumption by policy makers at the national level and hence narrowly focused on problems of prime import to the national security. Further, they represented not only the best effort of the originating office, but also were coordinated within the community. They constituted the nearest thing to the pre-Smith national intelligence estimate.

They did, however, differ considerably with the successor institution (the NIE): 1) they contained much more narrative and descriptive data and probably less estimative material; 2) the coordinating process which attended their completion was quite different from and

almost certainly less effective than the one which became possible under General Smith's leadership. That the DCI did not personally "submit" them to the NSC and that the IAC members did not personally, and in solemn conclave, approve them (with or without dissent) robbed them of a certain cachet enjoyed by the NIEs. Furthermore and perhaps more importantly, the absence of this high level review permitted a certain amount of captious (analyst's) dissent and an undue (analyst's) discursiveness.

(3) The full title of this report, usually cited as *The Dulles Report* is: Allen W. Dulles, William H. Jackson, and Mathias Correa, *Report to the National Security Council on the Central Intelligence Agency and National Organization for Intelligence* (1 January 1949). Upon receipt of *The Dulles Report*, two principal officers of the NSC (the Secretaries of State and Defense) solicited comment from all parts of the intelligence community and in the light of the *Report* and comment wrote and submitted to the NSC *A Report to the National Security Council by the Secretaries of State and Defense on the Central Intelligence Agency and National Organization of Intelligence*, 1 July 1949. The President accepted this report and issued it as NSC #50. One of its principal recipients was General Smith who always referred to its group of recommendations as his marching orders from the President. The importance of what I am calling the NIE in this essay received its due (though not in these exact words) in both *The Dulles Report* and NSC #50. The latter clearly ascribed to the DCI the personal responsibility for the issuance of national intelligence.

(4) The other two (in shorthand) were the coordination of the intelligence community and the undertaking of certain services of common concern.

(5) Readers of this essay will not miss the distinction between *national* intelligence on the one hand and *departmental* intelligence on the other. The early texts are signally emphatic in identifying departmental intelligence as something gathered, evaluated, and issued in support of departmental missions and functions and not to be trifled with by a supra departmental intelligence authority such as the DCI and his Agency.

(6) IAC-M-1, 20 October 1950. The memo in question had been composed a few weeks earlier by the DDCI, William H. Jackson, who had had Walter Lippman in mind as a chief recipient. At some time before 20 October, Mr. Jackson had shown a copy to Lawrence Houston, General Counsel of the CIA. Mr. Houston pointed out to Mr. Jackson that the memo erred in its attribution to the community of the "responsibility" for the NIEs. Mr. Houston emphasized the all-important point that this was a "responsibility" of the DCI alone. One document shows where exactly this correction was made in Mr. Jackson's typescript. Note: passages in single quotation marks are from the National Security Act of 1947.

(7) In Mr. Jackson's text, this word "judgment" had been "responsibility."

(8) General Smith (or Mr. Houston) added this "and responsibility" to the Jackson text.

(9) The effective date of the Act was 18 September 1947. Though the Act was signed into law on 26 July 1947, section 310 states that it would not be fully in effect until the day after the day upon which the Secretary of Defense, first appointed, takes office or the sixtieth day after the date of the enactment, whichever is the earlier. Mr. Forrestal was sworn in on 17 September 1947.

(10) Back in 1965 when I began putting down my thoughts on this subject, I sent a memo to the General Counsel asking him *inter alia* how was it the Congress had used the word "Agency" in this context rather than the "DCI" as had appeared in all prior texts. Mr. Houston answered me at length:

The most important thing about the Act itself is the congressional intent behind it, and no matter how ambiguous the wording of the Act, it is crystal clear that what the Congress wanted to do was place the responsibility at one single point for the coordination of intelligence and intelligence support to the policymakers. Also, it became clear that by one point the Congress meant one person. They were strongly influenced by the lessons brought out by the congressional investigation of Pearl Harbor, and while they were not too interested in organization or techniques, they had seen that the information by and large which would have warned of the Japanese attack was available and in the hands of various components of the executive branch and no one brought the pieces together and made an adequate evaluation to warn the President. They had received some testimony that such evaluation should be arrived at through board or committee action, but it is quite clear that they discounted any such dispersing of responsibility and were thinking of responsibility placed in one man. This led, among other things, to their designation of this man as Director of the [Central Intelligence] Agency, to connote his over-all responsibility. Thus, when you look at the Act you have behind it a pretty clear expression of the intent of the Congress, which has for the most part been consistent with the organizational concepts of the various Presidents. I have studiously avoided getting into a legal hassle on the question you raise that in the Act the duties are given to the Agency, yet responsibilities in the NSCIDs are put on the Director. Since the Director is the head of the Agency and the Agency responds to his direction and control, I could see nothing inconsistent with the Act giving the responsibility to the Agency, particularly when you knew the legislative history.

(11) These unfortunate words, "correlation and evaluation," themselves have an interesting history. The word "synthesize" would have done the trick and indeed was used in an early draft which Admiral Sidney Souers (the principal draftsman of the President's letter) had submitted to Mr. Truman. Souers had relied heavily upon the thought and language of a document relating to a future central intelligence service which the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS 1181/5, 19 September 1945) had forwarded to the President. From their text, Souers had borrowed the phrase that the director of the service "shall accomplish the *synthesis* of

departmental intelligence relating to the national security. . . ." Mr. Truman didn't like "synthesis" or "synthesize." Souers told Ludwell Montague that he thought Mr. Truman did not know the intended meaning of the word. Souers guessed that he thought it sounded derogatory (cf. synthetic). (Memo to SK from Ludwell Montague, 26 November 1965.)

(12) "The Director of Central Intelligence shall be advised by an Intelligence Advisory Board consisting of the heads (or their representatives) of the principal military and civilian intelligence agencies of the Government having functions related to national security, as determined by the National Intelligence Authority."

(13) National Intelligence Authority, Directive #1 (8 February 1946), paragraph 6.

The Central Intelligence Group will utilize all available intelligence in producing strategic and national policy intelligence. *All intelligence reports prepared by the Central Intelligence Group will note any substantial dissent by a participating intelligence agency.* (emphasis added)

(14) Some hero finally bit the bullet and substituted the word "produce" for "correlate and evaluate." By this time the CIA was very much of a going concern with a significant capability to collect a good deal of raw information through its own efforts. Hence it did not need to confine itself to simply synthesizing what it learned from other intelligence organizations of the community.

(15) The Act failed to mention an Intelligence Advisory Board or Committee, although it had had an important place in the President's letter and in the history of national intelligence from January 1946 on. The first paragraph of NSCID #1 rectifies matters with a note on the composition and advisory functions of the (now) IAC:

1. To maintain the relationship essential to coordination between the Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations, an Intelligence Advisory Committee consisting of the respective intelligence chiefs from the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force, and from the Joint Staff (JCS), and the Atomic Energy Commission, or their representatives, shall be established to advise the Director of Central Intelligence. The Director of Central Intelligence will invite the chief, or his representative, of any other intelligence agency having functions related to the national security to sit with the Intelligence Advisory Committee whenever matters within the purview of his agency are to be discussed.

A revised edition of this NSCID (7 July 1949) directs that the DCI shall be the IAC chairman and that the Director of the FBI will be on the Committee. (He was always represented by one of his officers, a matter officially recognized some nine years later - NSCID # 1 of 25 April 1958).

(16) See esp. paragraph 1 (e) National Intelligence.

(17) DCID 3/1, 8 July 1948.

(18) DCID 3/2, 13 September 1948.

(19) IAC-M-1, 20 October 1950, para. 7. In the context of the chairman's remarks, Mr. Jackson indicated that the fact that the [former] Office of Reports and Estimates has in the past produced both national estimates and miscellaneous reports in various fields, which could not possibly be construed as national estimates, had blurred and confused both the product and function of the Office of Reports and Estimates. There has been insufficient differentiation between the form and the coordination procedure in connection with the two products and in their methods of production.

(20) A copy of the Howze memo is on file in HS/HC 266.

(21) Quoted from para. 8 of IAC-M-1 above, note 9. In actual fact the cover of NIE 1 (3 November 1950) did not plainly show that it was the result of a collective effort. The lay-out of the cover was National Intelligence Estimate/The title/The CIA Seal/NIE-1/Published 3 November 1950/Central Intelligence Agency. The first page immediately after the cover contained the dissemination and distribution notices. The next page was the proper title page: NIE-1/National Intelligence Estimate/The title/followed by "The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force participated in the preparation of this estimate and concur in it."

Perhaps a year passed before this latter bit of text appeared on the front cover.

(22) Quoted from para. 5 of IAC-M-1.

(23) As reported in IAC-M-1:

9. After discussion the following procedural steps were agreed upon in the production of national estimates:

- a. The Intelligence Advisory Committee will adopt an intelligence plan, or more specifically, a list of required national estimates in an order of priority.
- b. In the case of a particular estimate, a frame of reference and the assumptions on which the estimate is based will be discussed and approved by the Intelligence Advisory Committee.
- c. Work on the estimate will be referred in the first instance to the Office of

Reports and Estimates, or to the Office of National Estimates when it is established in the Central Intelligence Agency, and the several intelligence agencies will be consulted and a timetable fixed for contributions to the national estimate within the fields of their respective interests.

d. On the basis of these contributions, the Central Intelligence Agency will produce a first draft of the proposed national estimate.

e. This draft will be sent back to the agencies for comment and modification and for further discussion if required. On the basis of such comments and discussion, the Central Intelligence Agency will produce a second draft of the estimate.

f. This second, or later drafts if required, will be submitted to the Intelligence Advisory Committee for final discussion, resolution of differences and approval.

g. If differences cannot be resolved and approval obtained, the estimate will be published with notation of substantial dissent and reasons therefore.

It was made clear by General Smith that this procedure would not and could not be followed in the case of so-called "crisis estimates." In the event of need arising for a quick or crisis estimate, a procedure similar to that used in the recent instance when the President called for a series of estimates prior to his departure for the meeting with General MacArthur would be followed. That is, a special meeting of the Intelligence Advisory Committee will be called and representatives of the various intelligence agencies assigned at once to the production of a draft of the required estimate for immediate submission to the Intelligence Advisory Committee for discussion, revision and approval.

(24) IAC-M-1, para. 10.

(25) In the Eisenhower years, the staff work for the NSC was conducted along military lines and with military precision. Mr. Cutler, who was the President's man in charge of NSC business, took the chairmanship of what was called the NSC Senior Staff. One of his activities was a continuing tour of the horizon of US foreign relations and security policy and the identification of situations that called for policy adjustment. Another was seeing to the preparation of coordinated policy papers (with recommendations) relating to all of the likely trouble spots. Mr. Cutler planned his papers for months in advance and relied upon the intelligence community to produce an NIE on each upcoming subject. Deadlines for the NIE were set so that it would be ready when the Senior Staff began its policy deliberations. The Staff's finished paper often quoted liberally from the NIE. During Mr. Cutler's time and that of Mr. Dillon Anderson who succeeded him, upward of perhaps 80 percent of NIEs were produced for this particular account.

This is not to say, however, that Mr. Cutler and the NSC, or the NIEs for that matter, had an important role in *all* major foreign policy decisions of the Eisenhower administration. There were those situations of particular concern to Secretary of State Dulles. These he watched

over personally and made his recommendations to the President without reference to Mr. Cutler's complicated staff machinery and its equally complicated intelligence support. The Kennedy administration changed matters very considerably. Nevertheless with McGeorge Bundy as the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, many NIEs were produced at his request for the consideration of the President and members of the Council, and as well for Mr. Bundy's own NSC staff.

The sort of relationship between Mr. Bundy and the ONE continued with Mr. Rostow who served in the Johnson years. Mr. Kissinger, President Nixon's man in the same job, seemed to have had considerably less interest in the NIE.

[\(26\)](#) See pp. [62-64] about the scheduling of the estimates.

[\(27\)](#) See Montague, *Smith History* [p. 69 ff. in the Penn State Press edition].

[\(28\)](#) For a discussion of the formative period of the ONE, see Jackson and Claussen, *History*, IX, 32-51. I succeeded Mr. Langer on 3 January 1952 as the AD/NE and held the position until 31 December 1967. Abbot E. Smith was my successor (1 January 1968-17 April 1971). John Huizenga followed him (17 April-June 1973). For the last months of ONE's existence (June-November 1973) Ramsey Forbush was the acting chairman of the Board of National Estimates.

[\(29\)](#) See Appendix B for the official description of the organization and mission and functions of the ONE.

[\(30\)](#) See Appendix C for two charts relating to the Board of National Estimates. The first shows the changing membership of the Board between 1950 and 1963 with a graphic indication of each member's professional background. [Editor's Note: The second chart, Board of National Estimates Members' History, is missing from the original copy of this study.]

There were a number of members of the Board who do not show up on either of these documents. Among them were Admiral Jerauld Wright whose last active service in the Navy had been as CINCLANT, Livingston Merchant, who had held many important positions in the Department of State including Undersecretary for Political Affairs and Ambassador to Canada, and Llewellyn Thompson, one of the nation's leading Sovietologists and twice our Ambassador to the USSR.

[\(31\)](#) Almost from the beginning, the organization of the staff followed regional lines: Western Europe, Middle East, East Europe (which included the USSR), and Far East. As the demand grew for NIEs concerning Latin America and Africa small staffs were formed to handle these accounts. Later still, when the number of NIEs devoted to Soviet military and technical matters (e.g., atomic energy, space exploration) grew, we formed a special Soviet

Military/Technical Staff.

[\(32\)](#) This identical language is repeated in para. 3c of DCID 1/1 of 21 April 1958, which superseded DCID 3/5, and in para. 3c of DCID 1/1 (5 August 1959) which superseded the version of 21 April 1958.

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II. The Making of an NIE

Now for the rules that governed the process of producing an NIE: The first dealt with the advance planning and scheduling of the estimate.

A. Scheduling

The minutes of General Smith's first full-dress meeting with the IAC show that there was general agreement to a proposal to adopt "an intelligence plan, or, more specifically, a list of required national estimates in an order of priority."[\(33\)](#) When the committee met six days later, it considered and approved a list of 11 estimates which had been prepared in the ORE, almost certainly by Ludwell Montague and his colleagues. During the first half of November the list was twice expanded to embrace a total of 20 NIEs.[\(34\)](#)

By this time the Office of National Estimates had come to life and took as an early chore working out a program for calendar year 1951. For basic guidance the Office relied heavily upon a range of policy papers that the so-called Senior Staff of the NSC had blocked out for consideration by the Council. This guidance continued during the Truman and Eisenhower years when the President used the Council as a principal source for policy formulation. The orderly procedures developed under Admiral Souers (whom Mr. Truman had recalled to Government service to be executive secretary of the new NSC), and under Robert Cutler (to whom Mr. Eisenhower had entrusted the same task with the title: Special Assistant for National Security Affairs) greatly facilitated the programming of estimates. As a general rule we prepared an NIE as the intelligence backup for each NSC policy paper.

During 1951 our program was of course disrupted time and again by emergencies, and their calls for estimates to be done on unforeseen topics and often to be done in a rush. But we did service the NSC's requirements as a matter of high priority.

For 1952 we followed the same method, that is, the Board of National Estimates took what guidance it could from Admiral Souers and the Senior Staff. The liaison was of course closer than this suggests, for General Smith was present at meetings of the Council. Loftus E. Becker, the first DDI, was a member of the NSC Senior Staff, and one or more officers of the ONE served with the junior NSC group known as the Staff Assistants. The Board also received requests from the State and Defense Departments and from the military services. It also had some good ideas of its own. In meetings with representatives of the IAC agencies, the Board put together another year's schedule of undertakings which it presented to the IAC.[\(35\)](#)

So frequently were these long-range plans upset that the IAC ruled early in 1953 that we should plan firmly for the proximate quarter and only tentatively for the next three quarters-- a process which was to be repeated as each new quarter came around.[\(36\)](#) Before the year's end the IAC changed its mind and went back to attempting a firm schedule for the entire next year with a list of tentative estimates tagging along at the end.[\(37\)](#) Over the next few years, there was more changing of signals; in 1956 the IAC ruled that we should plan for the next two quarters, but skip on ahead to perhaps the last quarter in the exceptional case of the annual estimates on Soviet military matters, which we all knew would have to be completed

in November or December to conform to the budget cycle.⁽³⁸⁾ After 1956 there were other changes, none of them of sufficient moment to alter the basic principle that one should always try to plan the NIEs as far ahead as was feasible.

To do so in the Eisenhower years had been easier than in the years that followed. This was because of the routine of the NSC with its own elaborate staff planning. When President Kennedy dismantled the old apparatus (one might even include the formal NSC itself) the Board and the USIB had to look elsewhere for the same sort of high-level guidance. They found it, of course, very close by. They found it in McGeorge Bundy, the new Special Assistant, and in his own NSC Staff that picked up where the interdepartmental Senior Staff of the Eisenhower days left off. NSC business was conducted quite differently, but conducted nevertheless. There was, for example, a considerable decline in the number of NIEs specifically requested for NSC use, but no falling off in a willingness on the part of Mr. Bundy and his successors and their staffs to give close attention and essential guidance to the program of NIEs.

From the Kennedy years on there were no dramatic changes in the scheduling procedures. As each new quarter rolled around the Board of National Estimates would meet with the ONE Staff and later with the Reps to program ahead for the next half year. The Chairman of the Board always presided over these meetings. Often the agencies would be represented by their own Senior Reps.

One overriding problem beset the matter of scheduling and that was how to keep the quantity of worthwhile undertakings within the limits of feasibility. Years of experience indicated that the estimating machinery could handle about one full-dress NIE a week or about 50 a year. In some years of crisis we produced upwards of 70, a number of which were short papers which had been rushed through via crash procedures. Prudence clearly indicated that to program deliberately for this sort of load was sheer madness. Even if we working stiffs could grind out the papers, the USIB members could not find the time to clear them. So the Chairman's principal problem at these meetings was to say "No" to a good many suggestions and say it convincingly. If he could not prevail, he could only make his negative a tentative one and urge the Rep in question to get his principal to reopen the matter at the USIB meeting. A decision there, of course, was final. If the resultant load was clearly beyond our capacity, we would evoke some of the emergency procedures for certain of the papers and hope to satisfy the customer with short estimates in which the argumentation and factual backup was reduced to a bare minimum.

Scheduling was an important first step; now for the succeeding ones in NIE production.

B. Terms of Reference

After an estimate had been requested and after its production had been authorized by the USIB, the Office of National Estimates took charge. Its first duty was the preparation of a document which soon came to be called "The Terms of Reference" (TR).[\(39\)](#)

The object of this paper was at least two-fold: it aimed to define the subject matter of the estimate, its scope, and time frame; it aimed to focus the forthcoming estimate on the few major points that were discerned as the principal concern of the requester; it aimed to ask those questions (irrespective of anyone's ability to supply factual answers) which would direct research and cogitation to the general area of these major points. In a word it was a statement of precisely what was wanted and a polite message to the community's expert research analysts, telling what was wanted of them.

Oftentimes the overriding concern of the requester was unclear; sometimes he did not really know what it was he wanted from the NIE. In these cases, some senior officer--usually a Board member or the Chairman of the Board--was free to go back to the requester with a draft TR to see whether or not the project was on course.

In the early 1950s when the NIEs were new, and when--in spite of General Smith's amiable concord with the IAC members--IAC Reps down the line still harbored suspicion and disapproval of the CIA and its ONE, the clearing of the TRs had its problems. Many of the Reps of this era came from the research components of their agencies and bore the researchman's contempt for estimating, which they regarded as no more than feckless speculation about unknowns and unknowables. To these individuals the establishment of a whole new office in CIA to engage in such wool-gathering was something to be met without approval, let alone joy.

Akin to these Reps were those who refused to perceive any real difference between the NIE and the NIS [National Intelligence Survey]. To them the NIE in hand would be a sort of baby NIS. They fought the TRs of, say, the NIE on *Prospects [for France] in Indochina* on the ground that it did not call for studies of the Indochina ports, or railroads, or telecommunications. This particular problem did not go away. It persisted for months in meeting after meeting on a sequence of TRs, until finally Mr. Langer conveyed the message to General Smith, who brought the matter up at an IAC meeting. From then on things got straightened out, but not all at once.[\(40\)](#)

The TRs, especially in the beginning, did more than highlight the principal questions that the NIE should seek to answer. They came also to be looked on in many cases as an injunction to intelligence collectors to spur their efforts. Often times the ONE would indicate to appropriate components of the DD/P (DD/O), the Contacts Branch of O/O (later the Domestic Collection Division), and/or to the FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] the desirability of certain specific collection chores. Reps from INR [Bureau of Intelligence

and Research] in the State Department might see that the right embassies were alerted; Reps from the military might go to the field and lay some new requisitions on their attachés. The short of this is that, when an NIE was scheduled for an important subject with an adequate lead time to completion, the TRs served as special guides for collectors at home and abroad.

Furthermore, as each of the agencies had its own area of primary concern, the TRs would bundle together all requisitions on, say, political matters with the aim of making clear what was expected from INR in State, all requisitions on ground force matters for the benefit of G-2, etc.

No matter how we tried to compartmentalize, we seldom prevented, say, Air Force Intelligence from including in its contribution sections relating to matters far removed from its primary concern. Early in the game we even stopped trying, and at a meeting on a given TR, after getting agreement from the Reps as to which part of the document was devoted to the special interests of each component and would be covered by that component, we would end up with a willingness to accept any agency's contribution to any part of the TRs upon which it wished to volunteer its views--expert or not.

The frictions associated with coordinating these early TRs gradually--almost imperceptibly--eased. By the end of the 1950s clearance of the TRs became for the most part a perfunctory business, sometimes accomplished in a few minutes.

Upon many an occasion a highly placed policy officer or group would call upon the community and its estimating brotherhood for their best judgment as to the probable consequences of certain possible courses of action being contemplated by the US Government.⁽⁴¹⁾ The unwritten law from the date of the first of such papers established that the "courses of action" at issue must be stipulated by the policy echelons; they must not be possible courses of action dreamed up by intelligence.⁽⁴²⁾ The obvious reason for intelligence to deny itself a role was its reluctance to enter the policy arena--at least in this particular phase of intelligence work.

The TRs of a contingency estimate offer a number of special problems. More, perhaps than any other species of NIE, would these TRs have to be taken back to the requester for further elaboration. Had he indeed meant to include such and such within this or that possible course of action? Had he deliberately neglected to mention another course of action (or two or three) which suggested itself? What time frame had he had in mind, when would he propose to initiate his first course?--soon? Had he clearly in mind the situation in the country at issue against which the courses would be brought to play? If so, what was it?

Once these and other questions had been treated by the requester there would be others when the TRs came before the Reps. In these cases difficulties with the TRs persisted, and

legitimately so.

C. Contributions

As already indicated, one function of the TRs was to instruct the research specialists within each of the IAC agencies to begin the preparation of their written contributions to the forthcoming NIE. The formal texts dealing with this matter probably begin (somewhat murkily) with the first Directive of the NIA (8 February 1946) whose paragraph 9 reads:

You [the DCI] are authorized to request of other Federal departments and agencies any information or assistance required by you in the performance of your authorized mission. [i.e., the production of national intelligence]

DCIC 3/1 of 8 July 1948 give a deal more precision to the matter. Paragraph 3(a) (4) states:

3. National Intelligence Reports and Estimates:

a. Upon initiation of a report or estimate, other than under exceptional circumstances as described in paragraph (e) below, the Central Intelligence Agency will notify each departmental intelligence organization of. . .

(4) *The requirements for departmental contributions* in each case, in accordance with departmental responsibilities and capabilities, taking into consideration departmental material already in the hands of the Central Intelligence Agency. (emphasis added)

And 3(c) (1) goes on to give a bit of confirmation:

c. Under Normal Procedures:

(1) The Central Intelligence Agency will prepare an initial draft of the report or estimate, *utilizing available departmental contributions*. During this period departmental personnel will be available for consultation with CIA analysts with due regard to internal Agency demands and commitments under existing liaison arrangements. (emphasis added)

This wording reflected two significant concepts. First, the contribution to an estimate might take the form of departmental intelligence already published as part of an IAC agency's own production program, or of a written piece specially prepared in response to the Terms of Reference, or of an informal oral communication. Second, failure on the part of an agency to contribute would not prevent CIA from going ahead with the production of an estimate. Thus these old texts sufficed to validate the new demand for contributions for all NIEs, SEs, and SIEs⁽⁴³⁾ except a few produced under circumstances of varying degrees of *urgency*.

The DCID (3/5 of 1 September 1953) which superseded the old 3/1 did add some precision and bite to the former text. Its relevant passage is:

Normal Preparation

Estimates will normally be prepared in four stages:

- a. Terms of Reference and *Contributions*--[The Board of National Estimates], after consultation with the IAC agencies, will circulate Terms of Reference indicating the scope of the estimate and the intelligence material needed. *The agencies will then prepare contributions and submit them to the Board.* (emphasis added)

But in actual fact the new language changed nothing in either attitudes or institutions. The written contribution had been so well established in the customary law under the Smith rule that the new DCID was not really necessary except as a precaution against future backsliding.

For the first decade of the National Intelligence Estimates (1950-1960) the written contributions which the IAC agencies made to the institution were a highly important ingredient. They were the product of intelligence research organizations which had experienced staffs and rich files. Often they were solid, scholarly pieces of work well beyond what could have been produced in the CIA. This was particularly the case with respect to the contributions of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence Research. The contributions not only lent a solid factual underpinning to the estimates, but were as well a tangible sign of a collaborator's participation in a community enterprise. Analysts in every IAC agency began to talk about "*our* estimate on Taiwan . . ." and "what *we* said in the last NIE on Egypt."

With the passage of time some changes occurred. Two resulted from bureaucratic shake-ups in the first years of the Kennedy administration. The first of these was the establishment of the DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], which brought a withering away of the research staffs in the service intelligence organizations, and this well before the DIA could compensate for the loss. The other was a drastic reduction in the strength of the Bureau of Intelligence Research in the State Department which had been the principal contributor to the non-military sections of all the estimates. During the fifties, it had enjoyed something close to an exclusive in political and social intelligence matters worldwide and in all economic intelligence matters outside the Sino-Soviet Bloc. With its decline its main effort had to go to the fulfillment of its strictly departmental obligations. Contributions to the NIEs received a much lower order of priority.

Both INR and the service intelligence organizations, which had already become a bit weary of composing long contributions only to have small fragments of the work show up in the finished NIE, were happy as we began to put greater stress upon the use of oral

contributions. This device substituted an afternoon's discussion (with the Board and the ONE Staff) for days or weeks of research writing.

There was another factor in the decline of outside contributions. As intelligence research and analysis capabilities of the State and military departments declined (and DIA was slow to fill the void), analytical components of the CIA gathered strength principally to service the needs of the Agency in general and the DCI in particular. We in ONE became a beneficiary. We were well pleased when ORR expanded its economic expertise to embrace the non-Communist world and got more heavily involved than heretofore in Soviet military matters. With these changes the importance of written contributions to the NIEs as made by sister agencies waned considerably in the last half of our second decade--and that irrespective of what the DCIDs had ordained.

The written contribution did not of course disappear. It still remained the essential ingredient in a few categories of the NIEs: the military estimates (especially those centering on Soviet and Chinese military hardware), the estimates dealing principally with scientific and technical matters (the series on space exploration, nuclear energy, etc.), the estimates with important economic aspects.

As the DIA gained strength its written contributions to the military estimates grew in importance. But meanwhile in CIA, early successes by ORR in costing the Soviet military establishment had led ORR to broaden its interest. With a growing expertise it branched out into a number of aspects of the Soviet military including military manpower, order of battle, and the production and deployment of advanced weapons. In the mid-60s, ORR's team of military analysts became the nucleus of a new office, the Office of Strategic Research. The OSR's support of the NIE program and its excellent written contributions to the military estimates were of continuing importance.

The purely economic functions of ORR which in the beginning had been largely confined to matters relating to the economics of Bloc (Communist China included)⁽⁴⁴⁾ countries expanded in time to cover the non-Communist world as well. As the State Department's capability for economic research and analysis in this area declined, ORR and its successor, the OER, moved in. It made an increasingly authoritative contribution to virtually every NIE which had an economic dimension.⁽⁴⁵⁾⁴⁵

Contributions on scientific and technical subjects continued an essential ingredient in a number of the NIEs. These were furnished by the analytical offices of CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology and by some of the USIB committees.

Less formally, the CIA Clandestine Services were also contributors. In Mr. Dulles's day and at his order, the then DD/P was often requested to cable its appropriate foreign stations for a

substantive input to a given NIE.

Conducted with even less formality was ONE's relationship with the CIA Office of Current Intelligence. I recall no formal written contributions from OCI, but the fruitful man-to-man relationship between staffers in the two offices, the active role played by OCI experts in many coordination meetings, plus the full range of OCI's publications was in more than one sense an important contribution to the NIEs.

Contributions to NIEs by USIB Subcommittees [\(46\)](#)

Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee. The role of the most senior of the IAC subcommittees, the JAEIC, in the production of NIEs was for long a special one.[\(47\)](#) In a very important yearly estimate relating to all phases of the Soviet nuclear energy program, the JAEIC was far more than a contributor. It was the drafter, both before and after General Smith's arrival. Before 1953, JAEIC supervised interdepartmental research on Soviet atomic energy matters, drafted the estimate, and presented the finished document directly to the DCI and through him to the IAC without reference to the Board of National Estimates.

In 1953 Mr. Dulles as DCI nominally altered these procedures. He ruled that henceforth the Chairman of the JAEIC would complete action on the Soviet atomic energy estimate and pass it to the Board of National Estimates for presentation to the IAC. There were several reasons for this decision, the most important of which was essentially editorial. For the JAEIC, with all of its expertise in the mysterious reaches of atomic energy and in its talent for wringing sense out of the difficult and fragmentary evidence relating to the Soviet program, was in the habit of writing highly technical papers comprehensible mainly to a sophisticated audience of scientists. Since the NIE audience was anything but that, the Board of National Estimates felt that the JAEIC should write the body of the paper in any way it pleased and permit the Board to preside over the drafting (with JAEIC's approval) of the summary and conclusions which would probably be the only part of the estimate that its important lay audience would have time to read.

Needless to say, such a decision was poison to the Chairman of JAEIC, and in cavalier insubordination he refused to take it. The JAEIC estimate of 1953 went to the IAC in time for its deadline, but without benefit of the ONE's editorial skills. The next year evasion was more skillfully arranged--the JAEIC draft was, to be sure, sent to the Board of National Estimates, but without enough time for the Board to do more than read it before it was due at the IAC. The next year, under a new Chairman of JAEIC, the Board was able to fulfill the DCI's intent of two years back. And in 1956, the whole procedure was given legal standing in a new Annex ("C," 24 January 1956) to a longstanding DCID (3/4, 14 August 1952).[\(48\)](#) Henceforth, the JAEIC went on producing its draft paper on nuclear energy matters in the USSR, which stayed in *draft* status until the Board and the Reps cleared it for transmission to

the DCI and the IAC/USIB.

As to other NIEs in which only parts dealt with nuclear energy matters, e.g., an NIE on Japan which *inter alia* had a few paragraphs on latent Japanese capability to produce nuclear weapons and Japanese attitudes towards exercising such a capability, the DCID ordained that the JAEIC would make the apposite contribution.

The Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee. An interdepartmental committee comparable to JAEIC was set up in 1956 to deal with intelligence related to guided missiles. Its creation had not been easy. The DCI's motion to establish such an entity led to a long controversy between the military intelligence organizations and the rest of the community and was finally settled in the Director's favor by the Secretary of Defense. The functions assigned to GMIC (which later added the study of astronautics to its charter and changed its acronym to GMAIC) appear in an annex to that long-standing DCID 3/4 (14 August 1952). This is Annex D and dates from 31 January 1956.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Unlike the charter of JAEIC, that of GMIC/GMAIC directs that the organization, *inter alia*, make "coordinated contributions to [NIEs]." It has done so.

The Economic Intelligence Committee. During the first years of ONE's existence (1950-1952) the Economic Intelligence Committee [EIC] of the IAC made coordinated contributions to five NIEs.⁽⁵⁰⁾ This work presented formidable problems of coordination: that relating to NIE 40, for example, involved tasking more than 20 departments and agencies of the government and required a year to complete. The ONI refused to make its contribution to NIE 56 through the EIC channel and submitted it directly to the ONE instead. There were other defections in the case of NIE 59. With this the EIC pretty well withdrew as a collective contributor to the NIEs.⁽⁵¹⁾51

The Scientific Intelligence Committee. The Scientific Intelligence Committee, on the other hand, was an important contributor to the NIEs almost from the beginning. What follows is from a memo from Karl Weber, the director of CIA's OSI and for many years chairman of the SIC which was established by DCID 3/3 on 28 October 1949. The charter at this time called only for the "preparation of coordinated reports, showing IAC concurrence or non-concurrence, which present the best available intelligence." Few, if any, national-level reports appeared under this provision. On 14 August 1952 DCID 3/3 was superseded by DCID 3/4 which renamed the Committee the Scientific Estimates Committee (SEC) and gave it the function of integrating "scientific and technical intelligence, as and when required for the production of national intelligence. . . ." This directive also handed over responsibility for atomic energy intelligence to the JAEIC which was established by the same directive. Again, except for support to the NIS, little national-level intelligence resulted from this charter responsibility.

In February 1959 DCID 3/4 was replaced by DCID 3/5 (and the name "SEC" changed back to "SIC") which removed from the SIC the responsibility for guided missiles and astronautical intelligence and directed the SIC "to produce: (1) drafts of National Intelligence Estimates, (2) contributions to National Intelligence Estimates, and (3) other interdepartmental intelligence as circumstances required." This is the first direct reference to a role for the SIC in the NIE process.

The principal fields in which SIC contributions to National Intelligence Estimates are made are in the characteristics and performance of aircraft and naval systems, radars and other electronic devices, and in biological and chemical warfare, biomedicine, R&D decision-making, and scientific resources. Contributions in these areas were made to NIEs 11-3, 11-8, 11-14, 11-1, 13-3, and 13-8 routinely. (These were the NIEs devoted to highly important aspects of the Soviet and Chinese military establishments. Most of them were issued annually.) Contributions covering other technical and geographical areas were made when requested, (including Soviet military research and development).

The Scientific Intelligence Committee (then being called the Scientific Estimates Committee) undertook its first national-level study on Soviet science and technology in 1956. The Terms of Reference were prepared in cooperation with ONE; no separate SEC issuance was planned. JAEIC and others shared in the product which was published as NIE 11-6-56, *Capabilities and Trends in Soviet Science and Technology*. Updates of this NIE were prepared in 1959 and 1962.

D. Drafting in the ONE

In the pre-Smith days the CIA's responsibility for doing a first draft of the National Intelligence (Report or) Estimate was clearly established in DCID 3/1 of 8 July 1948.⁽⁵²⁾ So it continued in the Smith regime.

Although the formal directive was not altered for three years, there were changes with the early NIEs of General Smith's time. Most obviously, since CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates which had done the drafting in the Hillenkoetter days no longer existed, the new Office of National Estimates took up the function. Less obviously, the tentativeness in the DCID about the drafters "utilizing *available* departmental contributions" disappeared. With General Smith making clear his desire for full community cooperation, he got it. There was no question of contributions not being available. The language of the new DCID (3/5 of 1 September 1953)⁽⁵³⁾ reflected what had become the invariable rule for all estimates except those composed under conditions of great urgency.

As to the drafting itself, there were no rules except the unwritten rules to keep the paper as

short as possible, focus on the principal concerns of the policy maker, and forgo excursions into any factual data except those necessary to sustain an important argument. Perhaps the most important unwritten rule was that which ordained that any paper longer than just a few paragraphs be led off by a set of very short conclusions. [\(54\)](#)

Within the ONE, there were other conventions which attended the writing of this draft. After some experimentation with the Office's organization, we adopted a regional breakdown of the staff. One of these staffs would undertake the drafting of papers appropriate to its area. A member of the Board of National Estimates was designated as the officer in charge. He discussed the TRs with the staff, presided over a meeting of his colleagues on the Board and later over a meeting with the Reps for their clearance. He now stayed in touch with the staff as it wrote the draft and presided once again over a session with the Board to perfect the draft prior to its dispatch to the USIB agencies. In sessions devoted to estimates of special interest to the DD/P (DD/O) and to which it had made important contributions, officers of the Clandestine Services were present. As a general rule, they felt freer to discuss the paper within the family than at subsequent sessions with the Reps in attendance. Often, such family gatherings would be attended by the knowledgeable specialists from the overt analytical offices who might themselves have composed a written contribution.

Drafting--the Estimative Vocabulary. There was a convention for which I personally struggled: this was in behalf of a consistent usage of words of estimative probability. What for example did we mean by "possible," what by "probable," "doubtful," "almost certain," "almost impossible," and so on? Any piece of writing devoted to something imperfectly known, not known, or even unknowable--which after all is the very *matrix materna* of an intelligence estimate (whether spelled with a small "e" or capital "E" as in National Intelligence Estimate)--is certain to draw upon the lexicon of probability. Early in the game (in March 1951 to be exact, and in the context of the twenty-ninth NIE in the series--NIE 29), a colleague on the Board (Maxwell Foster) and I began to worry as to whether or not the language of the NIEs was actually conveying to our readership the kind of odds (or chances) for and against that we intended. Our concern had been galvanized when we realized that an expression we had used in NIE 29: "that an attack on Yugoslavia . . . should be considered a serious *possibility*," had meant many different things to the ONE staff and the Board and perhaps as well to the IAC Reps and their Principals. A poll of the Board of National Estimates revealed that one member thought that the odds were about 80-20 for an attack, another member 20-80, and the rest put the odds scattered between these extremes.

Foster and I set about trying to compose a table of numerical odds such as would be permissible within the inexact intelligence data we used and a list of words which would correspond to five gradations or bands of odds. [\(55\)](#) Our most important determination was to define the "possible" as the large area between "certainty" and "impossibility;" that is, the area of the whole spectrum of odds between 99-1 and 1-99. We decided that our greatest disfavor was to slip into common usage and make "possible" do duty for some statements of

odds by giving it a modifier and writing such expressions as "a serious possibility," "barely or remotely possible," "a good possibility." "Possible" should never be so used; it should stand naked of modifiers and convey that the thing we had in mind could happen (it was neither certain nor impossible) but that we were unable to cite odds on its likelihood of happening.

Varying degrees of likelihood or probability should be conveyed by a use of the words in the table or by one of the synonyms in everyday usage.[\(56\)](#)

Needless to say my endeavors to standardize the vocabulary of estimative words did not meet with universal approval. My principal adversaries were those to whom I have referred as poets: "Their attitude toward the problem of communication seems to be fundamentally defeatist. They appear to believe the most a writer can achieve when working in a speculative area of human affairs is communication in only the broadest general sense. If he gets the wrong message across or no message at all--well, that is life."[\(57\)](#) In opposition, I have ranged my supporters whom I have called the mathematicians. These are people who realize the difficulties of conveying intended meaning and are determined to overcome these difficulties by rigorously holding to a limited vocabulary of odds even at some sacrifice of artistic elegance. As one of the leaders of the mathematicians I did gain some adherents, however, and gradually, during years of guerrilla war both within the ONE and in our dealings with the Reps, the NIEs showed that whereas no ironclad rules had been established, convention had taken root.[\(58\)](#)

Throughout the coordinating proceedings, the Board was acting in behalf of the Director. It was mindful of its responsibility to formulate judgments and estimates, which it not only felt duty-bound to recommend to the Director but which it could also sustain in evidence--as far as it went. Usually the Board would cheerfully carry the burden of making such judgments in the Director's name up to the eve of the USIB meeting or until the DCI could study the finished coordinated text. If at such a moment the DCI was not convinced and desired to alter things, it was the Board's job to make the necessary amendments to the text.

On some occasions, however, the Board hesitated to commit itself--let alone the Director--without alerting him to the issue at hand and getting his guidance. Needless to say, this sort of issue had to be a blockbuster: e.g., was the USSR *probably* or *probably not* competing with the US for the first manned lunar landing? Was the USSR's so-called Tallin system probably being designed primarily as a *defense against ballistic missiles* or against *air breathing vehicles*? Clearly on such matters the boss should be briefed into the problem from the beginning, and just as clearly the Board ought to have preliminary thoughts before it began its meetings with the Reps.

Our endeavors in this twin objective were often frustrated by circumstances beyond normal

human control. From the point of view of the Board, a Director ought to see the importance of a decision he would have to make in, say, two months. He ought accordingly to find the time to be briefed on the substance of the subject, the evidence, the favored conclusion, plus the most obvious alternative conclusions. For Directors--always short on time--to spend two hours with a team of briefers, and many more than that with hundreds of pages of recommended reading--from the text book all the way to the highly classified intelligence studies--was silly, if not downright impossible. All the more so when such Directors knew: a) that the final decision was a long way off, and b) that in the interim new evidence, new hypotheses, and even new conclusions were highly probable. Why invest this amount of time so early in the game? The Board's reply (had it ever been given) would have denied none of these distressing probabilities, but would have tried to make a point more acceptable to scholars than to busy executives: namely, that topics as complicated as this one are not usually mastered in a single sitting and that time supposedly wasted in preliminary briefings and open discussion was time invested in the best sense of the word. What we on the Board really wanted was for the Director to drop everything else and sit with us during the critical phases of the preparation of the paper. What the Director for his part really wanted was a Board which could master the subject and just before the deadline fill him with instant wisdom. It is not surprising that neither party got its druthers.

In matters of less importance we put our draft before the Reps pretty much as if it had the Director's blessing. We played it that way to the end, and if the Director, at the climactic session of the USIB, decided it was not to his taste--that was life. In actual fact, matters were not quite so brutal as this. I will deal with the softener, that is, our pre-USIB briefing of the DCI a little later in the essay.

E. Coordination of the Draft with the Reps

The important moments in the life of all NIEs came sometime after the Board draft had been perfected and sent to the agencies. Upon receipt of the draft, their experts went over it and readied their comments. These the Reps would bring with them to the first coordinating session.

Up to this point the draft was a CIA Board of National Estimates draft, though resting in some way or another upon contributions from the agencies. From now on, it started to become a community draft. The object of both the Board and the Reps was the same: to produce a new draft to which, without hedges or fudges or ambiguities, all parties could subscribe as containing the best agreed judgments on the substantive imponderables to which the paper was addressed. [\(59\)](#) Should success crown this objective, the paper could go on to the USIB Principals and win their concurrence. But in the event that any of the Reps found bits of the estimate in which he could not concur, he was free to plead his case before the Board of National Estimates and his colleagues and, if he failed to sway them, to take a

dissent or a reservation.

Dissenting views of the Reps can be put into three classes. First, there were minor differences between what the Rep believed and the text of the paper under consideration. These differences were argued out at length and in many cases were amicably resolved by textual changes which were not too fuzzy and yet satisfied all parties.

Second, there were differences which came from the opinions of some important component of the Rep's organization, for example, from one of the political desks in State. The Rep might or might not share the view he put forward, but he felt bound to make a good try. In such a case, when the Board member in charge of the paper felt that the subject had been discussed long enough, he would terminate it, offering to the Rep the right to register a dissent. In such cases, the Rep might be offered a Tiger Medal or the Order of the Lion, a symbol of his having put up a good fight for a colleague's viewpoint with which he himself may have had little personal sympathy.

Third, there were differences which came up in our meetings with the Reps which were not minor at all. The Rep might content himself with a so-called reservation, but the nature of the subject and the forcefulness of his defense indicated that here was an irreconcilable conflict of view that was destined to mature into a full-blown dissent at the level of the USIB.

Anyone wanting to discuss such conflicts without being preachy must insist that his reader understand a few fairly self-evident truths:

1. The cause of the disagreement was rarely, if ever, a matter of one part knowing more than the other, or being privy to convincing evidence denied to the other. There is no case in my remembrance when all parties to the dispute did not have full access to all of the relevant available information.
2. The disagreements, in short, arose not in the area of the knowable and known, but invariably in the zone of the knowable and still unknown, and in that ultimate zone of the literally unknowable. In other words, they were disagreements in judgment; judgment as to the relevance and reliability of the evidence; judgment as to what conclusions the evidence seemed to support; judgment as to which of several possible conclusions seem soundest and best.
3. The matter of judgment was not necessarily a function of the relative IQs of the disputants. Both sides were frequently represented by people of high ability.
4. To claim that one side had a corner on Jovian objectivity while the other was consumed by an ignoble subjectivism is downright silly in its unprovability. At best it can only lead to another intractable difference of opinion and at worst, a fist fight.

Having said all this, some of what follows will nevertheless sound preachy, nay offensive to the one-time dissenters. Bear in mind that *they* were speaking for their USIB Principals, and

that the *we*, in this case, were the members of the DCI's Board of National Estimates. They were dissenting from us, which is not the same thing as saying that they were dissenting from some awesome universal truth comparable to the speed of light or the force of gravity. We ourselves would acknowledge fallibility, while always holding that we had the better case.

Of several kinds of irreconcilable differences, one might begin with those which a man from Mars would have settled with a flip of a coin.

In these cases, neither party could sustain his position with anything more substantial than an attenuated argument from analogy or a feeling in his own personal viscera. For example, one of the NIEs endeavored to answer a silly hypothetical question provided by the requester: How would country X (an important member of the Third World) behave in the event of an armed conflict between the US and the USSR? The Board of National Estimates first tried to duck the question; failing that, the Board and later the DCI gave a carefully hedged judgment that country X almost certainly would *not* voluntarily align itself with the Soviet side. One USIB member, surely with no more to go on than we had had, took the contrary view: "Yes, country X would probably support the Soviets," he felt. There was no readily identifiable ulterior purpose behind the dissenter's position. He just didn't believe the estimate in the text and, in conscience, had to say as much.

There was, however, a much more serious range of dissents, which to us seemed to spring full-blown from that year's budget of the dissenting service. If it was a time in which the USAF hoped for an appropriation for, say, R&D funds for a nuclear-powered aircraft, any comment on Soviet coolness towards such a Soviet project would draw an Air Force dissent. The obvious, though perhaps unfair, inference was that the USAF felt it was likely to get funds for its own project if it were estimated that the Soviets were on a comparable track.

Similarly, in the late 1950s the NIEs carry some important dissents relating to probable Soviet intentions with respect to the future strength of their jet heavy bomber force (the Bison force). There were those, led by the Board and staff of the ONE, who thought the Soviets would probably augment the force in future years but augment it very modestly. To this view the USAF dissented, holding that the Soviets would continue to give a high priority to the Bison force and enlarge it very considerably. It was difficult at the time to dissociate this estimate completely from our Air Force's own policy which favored a large inventory of B-52s.

Still another range of dissents seemed to derive from an understandable desire to defend the mission of the dissenter's service. Consider the attitude of Naval Intelligence in cases when the absence of a Navy dissent might be considered as the Navy's admission of a failure in one of its missions. This had to do with the DRV's (North Vietnam's) capability to resupply its own and associated forces in South Vietnam. A statement in an NIE intimating that the DRV was capable of running supplies south via shore-hugging junks would bring a dissent from

the USN. One of our Navy's very important missions in the Vietnam war was the interdiction of exactly this sort of traffic. Naval observers in the theatre kept a scrupulous account of their service's inshore operations (Market Time). According to their own figures, nothing, repeat nothing, got through their blockade. Yet the very large quantities of material turning up in the south and in areas near the sea did invite a presumption that the blockade was not perhaps absolutely watertight. No such intimation--however lightly and tentatively worded--could be made without provoking a dissent from the ONI.

Often dissents arose not so much in defense of a service's good name but in defense of some piece of firmly held service doctrine. For example, the USAF would for a period of time have dissented to an estimate that the Soviets might be considering a mobile ICBM system. Our airmen would have taken this stand because the highest policy echelons of their own Air Force had decided that a rail-mobile system was impractical for the SAC missile force.

Along a somewhat similar line, an estimate that the Soviets probably would not fight an indecisive conventional war without invoking the use of nuclear weapons in the early 1960s brought a dissent from Army Intelligence. For some time, it was the view in certain high quarters of the Army that all-out conventional war between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces need not escalate to a nuclear war. Indeed, the consequences of being the first to use nuclear weapons would be so horrendous that Army Intelligence, knowing that the US would not do it, was willing to estimate that the Soviets would likewise refrain. Hence, an estimate allowing for the contrary invited an Army objection. To draw a permissible inference is to point out the obvious. If postulated armed conflict, say, in Europe could lead to the sort of large-scale fighting of World War II and with conventional weapons, the Army had a very good reason (budgetary, doctrinal, pride of service) to keep pressing for a full strength ground force. *Per contra*, an estimate that held that small, conventional wars between the nuclear powers would inevitably and perhaps speedily escalate to all-out nuclear conflict (largely the mission of the USAF) would be virtually to estimate the US Army out of business.

But pause here and reflect. Is this sort of defense of Army doctrine to be handled with pejoratives? In this case, as in others, the Army Rep and his colleagues and his chief and his chief's chief had for years equated the capabilities of the US Army with nothing less than the national security. This was a tradition all of them had grown up in; it was the air they breathed from infancy. In their scale of values, first came the country, and second, the force necessary to protect and preserve it. They could not question the necessity of the latter, given their high-minded patriotism. Hence, to speak of all of their dissents as born of a narrow parochialism is not to tell the full story. But unfortunately from where I sat not every one of their dissents seemed to grow out of a selfless love of country. Some, as I have indicated, were pretty hard to swallow in this coating.

There was still another range of dissents--and nonmilitary ones--which were seemingly

straight policy-oriented in the usual sense of the world. In the State Department, INR was under instruction to "coordinate" draft NIEs with the relevant policy desks and take the desks' views into consideration. Since the latter commanded the department's heavy artillery--far heavier than that of the intelligence arm--INR Reps upon occasion came to interagency meetings as apologists for a policy that the department was championing. If the NIE swerved in a direction which seemed to disfavor the policy, the Rep would take a reservation and his Principal a dissent.

In the first year or two of the Smith incumbency, the matter of reservations and tentative dissent was an institution not light-heartedly accepted by the Reps. Many of them were long in understanding that the paper being coordinated was the DCI's, and that the Board of National Estimates was his collective spokesman. Upon occasion when the Reps from, say, three IAC agencies would agree upon a position at variance from that held by the BNE, they would engage the chairman, claiming that since theirs was the majority view it should take its place in the text and that of the Board drop to the role of a footnote of dissent. However reasonable such a procedure might sound, the board would not, indeed legally could not, yield to the pressure of majority rule.

Those of us who engaged in the coordination of the NIEs throughout the years recognized the dissent as the indispensable corollary to the DCI's primacy. If controversial NIEs had had to be coordinated by negotiating out a generally acceptable compromise, they would have emerged as meaningless platitudes. If they had had to be forced bodily down the throats of the disapproving Reps and their Principals, they would have led to open rebellion soon followed by a disintegration of the idea of national intelligence and its organizational apparatus. It was the dissent which made possible the safe navigation of these twin perils. It was the dissent which permitted the issuance of a paper whose main thrust was reasonably clear (though unfortunately not invariably correct) and which could be studied in the light of conflicting views expressed in the dissenting footnotes.

No Rep who held a position at variance with the Board draft would want to acknowledge defeat without a fight. None would peacefully subside into a footnote of dissent. In fact, that footnote was the very last place he wanted to be. Finding the chairman too strong for frontal attack, he would try various flanking maneuvers. On his part, the chairman, well aware that he was in the presence of a true difference of opinion, had the duty to try to identify the difference, isolate it, and oblige its champion to state it as a dissent. As already indicated, this took some doing. In the process it was all but inevitable that some of the crisp formulations of the draft would have been rounded to accommodate still other potential dissenters whose views were different, well-founded, and not too far from the text of the draft.

I will return to the matter of the dissent in the section of this essay devoted to the final action on a given NIE: its day before the USIB.

As for any rules for the conduct of interagency sessions devoted to the coordination of a draft NIE, there were none in the formal sense. There were, however, many conventions which the Board chairmen tried to enforce.

Meetings usually began with a solicitation of general comments; was the draft a viable document? Anyone feeling that it was not was asked to explain his objection. However laudable the attempt to get general reactions, it was not often fruitful. Almost instantly the objector-in-general was citing specific sentences in specific paragraphs to make his point. When other Reps followed this general procedure, the chairman would cease his quest for general comments and move to consider the paper paragraph by paragraph, starting at the beginning. Reps could bring up their specific differences at the appropriate moment.

What went on from there depended largely on the chairman and his ONE staffers, Board members concerned with the paper, and the men and women around the table. Consider first the Rep.

Over the years we met with hundreds, and not surprisingly they were of many kinds. The best were old intelligence pros, who knew their subject matter, the case they wished to make, and could draft text that was spare and clear. They would know when to compromise and when to dig in and fight. They would come armed with mimeographed sheets, one sheet to a paragraph or two. The text which they bore showed the unsatisfactory Board language reproduced but crossed out, and then the substitute formulations, underscored or otherwise identified. With such preparations there was no doubt about what the Rep wanted changed and how the change could be effected. They were always able to state their case orally and defend it. If they came to the point where they saw that they would have to take a dissent, they would take it and permit the paper to move on.

There were Reps from the other end of the spectrum. Often they were unhappy time-servers in intelligence with little substantive competence and no real feeling for what the NIE was all about. The most trying of them would object to a paragraph on such grounds as "it made him uncomfortable." Why? Well he couldn't exactly say. In addition they would be long-winded, short-tempered, and not being willing to dissent, would cheerfully settle for simple obstructionism.

Somewhere between was the Rep who was the city's greatest expert on the subject at hand and who wanted to write into the NIE everything that he knew. The bobtailing of descriptive and expository material characteristic of the NIE was anathema to him. He never understood why a policy maker could make up his mind about some phase of Middle East oil without knowing a great deal about the tribal customs of a small clan of Saudi Bedouins. An exasperated chairman once told such an expert, "See here, Harold, we aren't going to write into this paper everything that you know; we're not even going to include everything that I

know."

In such terms the chairman could stop time-consuming discussion. There were, however, two considerations which moderated the chairman's use of his power. One was the force of good sense. The essence of the chairman's task and that of the whole of the ONE was to produce coordinated intelligence papers. You cannot make good on such an undertaking if you are being high-handed with your collaborators. In fact, if the alternative is multi-front war, you must suffer a lot of fools. No one should be permitted to leave a meeting without having had his opportunity to plead his case. A Board of National Estimates which took too abrupt an attitude with the Reps could have wrecked the NIE on the shoals of simple bad public relations.

The other moderating force was the Rep's right to appeal his case to his boss, and the boss's right to bring it up at the USIB. Small matters which had a certain validity and which could be settled at the coordination session ought to be settled. One of the chairman's duties was to reduce to a minimum, if not to zero, matters which would be a waste of the top echelon's time. Hence in the chairman's mind a rapid calculation took place: how important was the point at issue? if merely of marginal importance, how tenaciously was the Rep holding to it? if he lost the case, marginal or not, would he take the matter to his boss to bring it before the USIB and losing, make it the subject of a formal footnote of dissent? Obviously the chairman would prefer to settle minor matters at the meeting, and just as obviously he would not budge toward compromise on a matter of real import to the sense of the paper. This would be the point at which he would urge the Rep to table his dissent and let the task move forward.[\(60\)](#)

In writing of the procedures of coordinating the NIEs, the matter of disagreement must perforce be emphasized. It was, after all, something of greatest importance. Yet at the same time, in giving it its due, one is led to neglect that other aspect of coordination--the useful amendment, the helpful amplification of something skimmed, the correction of a flat-footed error, etc., all made possible by a wise and knowledgeable Rep. Simple acceptance with thanks is not so much of a procedural point to warrant a separate paragraph. But just this is a point that must be made. Many, many more NIEs were improved from having passed through the process than were not improved or were damaged.

This is, of course, not a fashionable view. There has been at least one from the ONE itself who behaved as if anything done to alter *his* draft damaged it. His work was a perfection, he thought, and he resented changes by his fellow staffers, members of the Board, and above all by the Reps. Needless to say, the man was as wrong as he was vain.

But suppose it resulted in a paper which was not that much better; suppose that the draft had actually lost something as a result of passing the critical obstacle race of coordination. In my view any losses suffered were many times compensated for from the fact that the finished paper was an agreed community document. Obviously this sort of essay is not the place to

extol the virtues of the NIE, but in rehearsing the laborious process which attended its production, I should say that in my opinion it was manifestly worth while.[\(61\)](#)

So much for the details of how a coordination session was conducted. It is far more important to emphasize the underlying value of the process taken as a whole. A good coordination meeting was not simply a comparison of rival texts; it (and the study and preparation that preceded it) constituted a serious examination by informed people of issues agreed to be significant.

It was of basic importance for the ONE, as moderator of the coordination process, to have a reputation of nonpartisanship and fair-mindedness. This reputation had not only to be earned in the early years; it had to continue to be deserved by succeeding members of the Board and ONE Staff, and recognized by a succession of Agency Reps. By and large, I think we managed to establish and maintain this reputation over the years, so that the basis for a cooperative venture within the intelligence community was a solid one.

Given this foundation, the process of coordinating a paper could be rewarding. The atmosphere became uncongenial to special pleading and to the urging of a parochial point of view by a particular agency. On many occasions, we saw a Rep come to a meeting prepared to advance some far-out line of argument, and watched his proposition wither and die in the cold blast of interagency debate and joint examination of the evidence. Thus, a major contribution of the NIE was its usefulness in elimination of absurdities.

But in addition to knocking down parochial prejudices, the process had a more positive aspect. It was a forum where people from all over town could exchange views, add to the store of community knowledge, and refine and sharpen their assessments of the course of events.

F. Production of NIEs Under Conditions of Urgency

The process I have discussed above would have required six to eight weeks for the average NIE. With this sort of time allowance, no one engaged felt that he was coasting. For what we called the big papers--those devoted to various aspects of the Soviet military establishment--the time often ran to six or eight months. Was it possible to shorten things when necessary?

Starting with the earliest DCID dealing with the production of national intelligence, there was a full realization of the need for special procedures of haste. DCID 3/1 of 8 July 1948 prescribes for two degrees of urgency: what would be a normal rush job, and what we later

called "crash."[\(62\)](#)⁶²

Later DCIDs carried a very considerably shortened version.[\(63\)](#)

As General Cabell (DDCI, 1953-1962) once put it: There are only two essentials to the production of an NIE: "it has to be written, and it has to be acted upon by the USIB." There was one case when matters were actually shortened to just these two steps. The occasion was the Middle East crisis of 1956, and the paper in question was SNIE 11-9-56, *Sino-Soviet Intentions in the Suez Crisis* (6 November 1956). British, French, and Israeli forces had begun a military attack upon Egypt. This was not to the taste of the Kremlin. Late in the day of 5 November, we received word that Premier Bulganin had sent a stiff, indeed a threatening, note to the Prime Ministers of Britain and France. Mr. Allen Dulles was out of town, and General Cabell, as Acting DCI, summoned an IAC meeting for 9:30 p.m. The objective was a community appraisal of just how tough the Soviets were ready to get. Not until about 9 p.m. did we in ONE receive from the State Department the official translated version of the Bulganin message. Abbot Smith drafted the estimate in about 30 minutes with some minor kibitzing by knowledgeable analysts of the Agency and by his colleagues of the Staff and Board of the ONE. The paper went speedily from the typewriter to the IAC which discussed it until almost midnight and cleared it.[\(64\)](#) This was our speediest paper.

In actual fact there was a whole spectrum of urgencies and a whole spectrum of procedures to fit them. The customary law governing such matters was very elastic.

If the rush was only slightly less than that of November 1956, the Board and Staff of ONE would draft the paper without benefit of TRs or contributions and coordinate with the Reps. If a little more time was available, the Board and Staff would speedily issue TRs and summon a meeting of the Reps to discuss the general thrust of the paper it had begun to think out; if possible, the Board Chairman and ONE Staff involved would devote an afternoon to the hearing of "oral contributions." Useful relevant information which turned up in such sessions would, of course, play its role in the Board draft. In almost every sort of crash job we would do our best to coordinate the draft with the Reps before it went to the USIB.

The penalties of rush procedures were obvious. No one ever spoke truer than he who said, "If they want it bad enough they'll get it bad enough." Without time to identify well-formulated views which clashed with others, without the time to try for the best consensus and force dissenters into clearly-stated dissents, hastily composed papers were often marred by any or all of the characteristics of sloppy writing.

[G. Final Clearance of the NIEs at the USIB](#)

Meetings of the IAC/USIB took place on a midweek morning. By well-established right the DCI, or Acting DCI was in the chair.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Probably from the very beginning the chief of intelligence in the State Department sat on his left. Then, after the merger with the old US Communications Intelligence Board (USCIB) (15 Sept. 1958), came the director of NSA. Then for the first few years in the new headquarters building, came the chiefs of intelligence in the three services (Army, Navy, Air Force in that order) and the Director of Intelligence of the Joint Staff.⁽⁶⁶⁾ When the DIA was formed late in 1961 its director sat at the foot of the table facing the chairman. Down the other side of the table came the representative of the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] for intelligence,⁽⁶⁷⁾ an officer representing the director of the FBI, and the chief of the AEC's [Atomic Energy Commission's] intelligence unit. Then came the seat or seats reserved for officers of CIA who had a role in one of the items on the Committee's agenda. When an NIE was up, the chairman of the Board of National Estimates sat in one and the Board member who had presided over the NIE in the other. Last and on the chairman's (the DCI's) immediate right--starting in December 1961 and en during till this day--sat the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

As with Mr. Dulles before him, Mr. McCone had been belabored by higher authority (notably the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board--the PFIAB) to lift himself above the day-to-day administration of his Agency and to concentrate his attention upon the proper "coordination of the intelligence community." I have been reliably informed that a spokesman for the PFIAB suggested to Mr. McCone at the very start of his incumbency that he should do just that. Apparently he went on to indicate that Mr. McCone should not only divorce himself from Agency activities but also physically move himself to a downtown office, say, in the Executive Office Building. According to this line of reasoning, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence would act as the principal executive officer of the Agency, and the DCI as the effective chief of the community. Quite obviously Mr. McCone could not see his way to a literal observance of this suggestion, but by way of an earnest of his good intention, he elevated his deputy to full membership in the USIB with the duty of representing the CIA in such community matters as came before that body. He made a formal statement to this effect to his USIB colleagues at his very first meeting with them (30 November 1961). A memorandum from President Kennedy (16 January 1962) not only approved this action, but also confirmed and strengthened the DCI's authority to coordinate community activities. It is beyond the scope of this essay to comment upon any aspect of this action save one--the presumptive role of the DDCI as the Agency's spokesman for the NIEs.

As I saw things there were two sorts of business which came before the USIB: they were national intelligence, notably the NIEs on the one hand and on the other, just about *everything else*. To me it was possible for the DCI to depute his responsibility to his deputy in the area of the *everything else*. But the law, the NSCIDs, the early texts of constitutional standing, Presidential directives and executive orders made it impossible for the DCI to waive his responsibility for the national intelligence whose highest exemplar was the NIE. The NIEs were, by definition, *his* papers; their issuance *his* responsibility. Hence to speak as

if his deputy were free to dissent from the Director's own utterance in the name of the Agency seemed to me as something out of the land of Oz. The Agency in whose name the DDCI would speak had in almost every case been thoroughly canvassed by the Board of National Estimates before it put the draft NIE before the Director. To be sure not every knowledgeable office of the Agency was wholly satisfied with every phase of the paper, but that was not because he hadn't been consulted through one medium or another.

Happily, neither of the DDCIs I served under after Mr. McCone's innovation ever saw fit to quarrel with an NIE once it had reached the USIB. The DDCI was an important officer of the Agency, and his views on the NIEs in progress (when he had such views) received the full attention of the BNE. I do not know how I would have handled an unexpected dissent should the DDCI have raised one at the USIB. [\(68\)](#)

There is another matter relating to the composition of the USIB that had its significant effect on the NIEs. This was the establishment of the Defense Intelligence Agency. It had had its conceptual beginnings in the work of the Joint Study Group and took positive legal form when President Eisenhower, as one of his last acts in office, signed the NSC document that put into effect this (and other) recommendations of the Group. The day was 18 January 1961. In theory at least, there would be a single intelligence component for the Department of Defense and a disappearance of a group assigned to the intelligence work in the Joint Staff, another much smaller group serving the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for intelligence matters, and most important the intelligence organizations of the three military services. But first the new DIA had to get itself a duly authorized charter. This did not happen until 1 October 1961.

During the next two years and more, the DIA steadily expanded its functions and its table of organization. As it did so, the service intelligence organizations shrank, [\(69\)](#) but these latter did not give up their participation in the national estimating process, nor did their chiefs give up their membership on the USIB. The untidiness of this situation concerned a number of high officials of the government. There were conversations between Mr. McCone, Mr. McNamara, Mr. Gilpatric (the Deputy Secretary of Defense), General Carroll (the first director of the DIA), and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. From the record, one gathers that Mr. McCone favored a prompt purging of the service intelligence chiefs from the ranks of the USIB, but realized that General Carroll was having his administrative difficulties in readying the DIA to carry the full load of military intelligence. Mr. McCone was also well aware that the Joint Chiefs were not the DIA's first champions and were, moreover, firmly opposed to having the director of DIA the only military man on the USIB. What to do about the service intelligence chiefs was something that Mr. McNamara was going to have to settle within his official family.

By the end of 1963, Mr. McNamara seems to have had things sufficiently in order to take the matter to President Johnson, who issued a directive (5 January 1964) to proceed forthwith

with the reorganization of intelligence work within the Defense Department. One may guess that with this the secretary could cope with the Joint Chiefs. In all events this troubled situation soon ended in an artful compromise which surfaced in an exchange of correspondence between General Carroll and Mr. McCone and takes its formal reflection in a revision of NSCID #1. [\(70\)](#) The settlement resulted in the service intelligence chiefs losing their formal membership of the USIB, but retaining almost everything else. As "observers," they not only attended USIB meetings, but received the right to send Reps to the usual working level meetings attendant upon the production of the NIEs. Furthermore they retained "the right to express divergent or alternative views on USIB documents such as the National Intelligence Estimates, Special National Intelligence Estimates"

From the point of view of the ONE, this solution was a good one. With the establishment of the DIA, we feared that we would have access to the Pentagon through a single pipeline and a single source of know-ledge and analytical skill. Countless times in the past the NIEs had benefited greatly from slightly differing information and greatly differing interpretations thereof from the three services. To be sure this added to our troubles and often produced footnotes of dissent. But obviously, self-serving footnotes apart, we all learned something we would not have thought of, and more important for the institution of the NIE as a whole, there was no intelligence chief who could say he had not had his full day in court. To me this latter aspect was of crucial importance. For if the chief had his footnote to demonstrate that he had been heard, he had the less reason to complain of unfair treatment and less reason to embark upon bootleg measures to get his views before his masters higher up the line. [\(71\)](#)

H. The Dissent--Final and Formal--USIB

Dissent to a given NIE that had been discussed and tabled at the coordination sessions came up for a final review at the relevant meeting of the USIB.

Presumably each principal met with his staff on the eve of the meeting and made his decision to dissent flatout, alter his position slightly to align himself with some other principal whose views were close but not identical to his own, or make a last try to sway the chairman (the DCI) into softening his position sufficiently to allow for a compromise.

I say "presumably" this happened because, of course, none of us in the ONE was ever present at such a conference. However, we had our own pre-USIB meetings with the Director to brief him on the NIE at issue, its major points of difficulty, and the conflict of views.

The pre-IAC briefing began in early 1952 and gathered strength in succeeding years. At least as far as the NIEs are concerned, it came about as a result of a youthful foible on my part and a roguish prank played on me by General Smith.

Our Director had not always been able to give draft NIEs a thorough reading before the IAC meeting, and on some occasions had not found time for us to brief him about impending trouble. It happened that one day, just before the IAC was to convene, I heard from a friend in the Pentagon that the Deputy G-2, who would be substituting for his chief at the day's IAC meeting, was switching from an agreed position and coming in with an unexpected dissent. Despairing of reaching General Smith, I wrote an indecorous note of warning in longhand and laid it, folded, at his place at the table. In came the General, picked up the paper and without a pause to examine its content began reading it aloud to the gathering. Out came my uncomplimentary phrases about so and so welching on the position I thought had been firm with his service. I will not try to reconstruct what I had written, but I know that it was not intended to be read to the Deputy G-2, John Wecherling.

From then on, we prepared proper briefing memos and saw to it that they were in General Smith's possession well in advance of the IAC meeting. Their principal message was to inform the boss of specific difficulties we had encountered in coordinating the paper and exactly which ones we had not been able to resolve. These we would signal as likely candidates for a dissent when the USIB members met to clear the paper. In the days of Mr. Dulles and his successors, such memos invariably accompanied the final coordinated text of an NIE to the DCI. Mr. Dulles and those who came after always had it in the USIB book which the secretary had readied for the pre-USIB briefings. The form and substance of these memos became in time one of the important little codicils to the customary law governing the production of the NIE.

It was not custom which governed the right of USIB members to dissent, but the law itself as written large in the formal texts. It first appeared a year or more before CIG [Central Intelligence Group] produced its first national intelligence report or estimate.⁽⁷²⁾ With some verbal additions and changes, this sentiment was incorporated into NSCID #1 of 12 December 1947,⁽⁷³⁾ and with some changes (to be noted later) into succeeding revisions of that document and various DCIDs.⁽⁷⁴⁾

As a general rule, a reservation of tentative dissent taken by a Rep during the coordination sessions was the tip-off to a possible formal dissent to be taken by his principal at the USIB meeting. One knew upon entering the conference room how many dissents were in fact being tabled by the size of the little sheaf of documents already put at the members' places by dutiful staff officers who had preceded them to the meeting. In almost all cases we had known what to expect and had briefed our director. There were occasions when we were wholly taken by surprise. The two I remember most vividly were when one of the members chose to dissent from the paper as a whole. One took place during General Smith's time and he took it with good grace.

The other occurred some ten years later. The subject was Laos and the dissenter Roger

Hilsman, the State Department's Chief of Intelligence. During the preparation of the estimate, Hilsman had been present at a meeting at the White House and had heard President Kennedy say something about US policy towards Laos which Hilsman construed as making the NIE not only irrelevant, but perhaps offensive to the President. A talkative fellow always and sometimes a blusterer, he suggested rather abruptly that the paper be withdrawn. When the Chairman, General Carter (in Mr. McCone's absence) would not accede, Hilsman was brash enough to say that he would return to the White House to get a presidential order to withdraw the paper. General Carter said, "Roger, why don't you put that sword back in the scabbard?" Then he indicated that Hilsman could dissent from the whole paper if that was his choice, but the USIB business would continue. It ended with Hilsman taking the dissent and sheathing the sword. [\(75\)](#)

In addition to the formal law of the right to dissent, there was a considerable customary law governing the form and substance of the actual footnotes as published in the NIEs. In very large measure a dissenter's footnote was his own. The 1947 version of NSCID #1 had required that a statement of dissent be *agreed*, but subsequent issuances omitted this word. Some of us believed that the purpose of a dissent was not merely to identify a difference of opinion, but to define that difference with as much precision as possible. Hence, both the main opinion and the dissent should be as lucid as they could be made, and both parties had an equal interest in the clarity of both texts. Accordingly, there was some regret at the latitude given to dissenters. Be that as it may, the custom came to be that, as one director said, the dissenter could say anything--even the Lord's Prayer--if that was what he wanted. And he could say it at almost any length. Practice did, however, impose certain curtailments.

For example, there was the case where a dissenter composed a very long footnote (several hundred words) to a passage of the *text* in one of the NIEs of the Soviet military series. It so happened that this very passage appeared in shortened form as one of the *conclusions* at the front of the paper. The dissenter wanted his entire dissent to be reproduced as a footnote to that conclusion. He wanted it where it would be sure to strike the eye of the reader whose reading might not include the body of the text. The chairman objected, saying that to run "up front" a footnote of this length--perhaps as long as the entire set of conclusions--was to give it undue prominence as well as to destroy the rhetorical symmetry. The chairman pressed the dissenter to abbreviate his footnote for purposes of the conclusions and be satisfied to cross-refer the reader to his extended argument where it appeared in the text. The chairman prevailed and set a precedent of sorts.

At least two other limitations on the rights of the dissenter became accepted. One was that he did not have the license to point out in a footnote that he had once been forced to dissent in behalf of a viewpoint which had since gained currency within the community. The "I told you so," and "if you'd only listened to me" motifs were rather strongly discouraged as footnote material.

Just as strongly discouraged were footnote formulations which impugned the sanity and morals of those who held to the text. I recall Mr. Dulles once explaining his objection with: "If you write a footnote such as you propose, I will have to write a footnote to your footnote, indicating that your allegations are wrong. You may then wish to do a footnote to my footnote, then I to yours, and so on. I suggest that we put a stop to such a piece of business before it gets started." Dissenters soon found that they could say a great many unkind things about those who supported the text if they were careful to begin all tendentious sentences with the disarming "It is the opinion of (the title of the dissenter)" or "The (title of dissenter) feels that."

Both the law and custom made it constitutionally impossible for the DCI to find himself in the dissenting role. General Smith once told colleagues on the IAC that "he would be willing to publish an estimate to which every member of the IAC dissented, and some day it might be necessary to do that in order to present a good estimate [but that he had no desire to do so]."[\(76\)](#)

Several years later, Mr. Dulles encountered the sort of problem General Smith had had in mind. The estimate in question, SNIE 30-56, *Critical Aspects of the Arab-Israeli Situation* (28 February 1956) was for the most part a "contingency estimate" relating to the probable response to a US decision to send arms to Israel. The staff of the ONE and the Board drafted a paper which held that any arms assistance would meet a very strong and united Arab opposition. The Reps agreed with the Board's position and so, it turned out, did their principals. But not Mr. Dulles. He agreed that the shipment of a substantial amount of arms would probably cause the reaction described in the draft, but he believed that there was an even chance that the most serious consequences could be avoided if the arms were sent in a moderate amount and if they were in fact largely defensive in nature. His attempts for an intermediate position found no takers among his IAC colleagues. Then rather than forcing them all into a footnote of dissent, he invited them in great good humor to put their views in paragraph 5 of the text. He himself suggested that they begin it: "The majority of the members of the IAC believe that . . ." He then followed this with his own paragraph 6, which began: "The Director of Central Intelligence believes that . . ."[\(77\)](#) In this fashion Mr. Dulles extricated himself gracefully from a dilemma, one horn of which would have involved an insensitive use of the DCI's constitutional powers, the other the legal enormity of dissenting from his own paper.

I. Post-Mortems: The Identification of Intelligence Deficiencies

In the early 1950s we initiated an exercise--collateral to the main task of the ONE--which, however laudable, became a major pain in the neck. This was the ex post facto examination

of important estimates with an idea of identifying the most significant gaps in our knowledge. Almost from the start it was called a "post-mortem." The exercise consisted of going both to the researchers who had written the contributions and to the ONE Staff which had composed the estimate and requiring that they plumb the depths of their ignorance. Having done so they were asked to make a list of the important things about which they knew little or nothing. The idea was, of course, to highlight deficiencies which could be rectified either by some systematic research among intelligence materials already at hand, or by a more pointed and urgent intelligence collection effort.

I cannot say how much of this sort of thing we had done before June of 1952, but from that time on the record is official and fairly clear. It starts with a document of 3 June 1952 entitled *Procedure for Reducing Intelligence Deficiencies in the NIEs*. The ONE was the initiator, and the DCI and his IAC were the ultimate recipients. The document emerged from the community's not too happy struggle to complete Special Estimate (SE) 27, *Probable Effects of Various Possible Courses of Action with Respect to Communist China (5 June 1952)*. The posited courses of action were a series of measures aimed at cutting Communist China's access to foreign imports: embargo, blockade, and perhaps even interdiction by air power. Obviously before you estimated the effects of such measures on China itself, you had to know a great deal about what was to be affected, that is, the Chinese economy, the society, and the polity--but first and foremost the economy. Everyone who labored on the paper speedily recognized our relative innocence of this vast subject matter and the great importance of improving our store of knowledge. To this end we took stock of what we didn't know and sent up to our Director and the IAC a document entitled, *Statement of Intelligence Deficiencies Revealed in SE-27 (25 July 1952)*. Our masters took the paper seriously, and since the bulk of the deficiencies it listed were in the area of economics, General Smith assigned the greater part of the action to Robert Amory, who was in charge of the Office of Research and Reports and chairman of the Economic Intelligence Committee.⁽⁷⁸⁾ He also turned to James Reber, his Assistant Director for Intelligence Coordination, for overseeing other collection, research, and translation work within the community.

No question but that our post-mortem and what followed in its wake greatly advanced the community's understanding of Communist China. The post-mortem was off to a fast start.

In mid-May of 1954, the IAC ruled that there should be a semiannual post-mortem on the NIEs of the six-month period.⁽⁷⁹⁾ In a year's time (26 April 1955) the IAC ruled that a formal post-mortem be undertaken on every NIE and presented to the Committee coincidentally with the finished estimate. In 1957 and 1958 we did 78 of them. As with many an institution, this began to lose its initial glamour. In the first place, the post-mortems began to repeat themselves and to highlight the existence of gaps that everyone knew about and that everyone recognized as all but unfillable. The collection brotherhood had had more alerts than it needed, and besides the IAC had moved to vigorous pursuit of another institution

which was in large measure a duplicator of the post-mortem--the *Priority National Intelligence Objectives* [PNIOs].

When SE-27 revealed the full scope of the community's lack of knowledge of Communist China, someone went back to NSCID #4(80) and the succession of DCIDs that had descended from it.(81) These latter were documents which encompassed the list of subjects which the DCI and the intelligence community should be bending every effort to find out about. Their title, as already indicated, was *Priority National Intelligence Objectives*. At the time of SE-27, the community was operating under DCID 4/2 of September 1950, which contained no mention of subjects beyond those relating strictly to the USSR. The SE-27 exercise indicated *inter alia* that this DCID should be changed, at least to include Communist China as a priority intelligence target. DCID 4/2 (Revised) did just that. It was followed by an annual revision whose preparation was entrusted to the Board of National Estimates, which coordinated the document with the Repts--much as it had coordinated the post-mortems. To our great relief we were able to disengage from the latter, which had become a perfunctory weekly nuisance, and concentrate upon the *annual* revision of the PNIOs.(82) ONE was committed to this exercise until well into the McCone days, when we were relieved of the PNIOs but not resaddled with the post-mortems.

J. Validity Studies

Few things are asked the estimator more often than "How good is your batting average?" No question could be more legitimate--and none could be harder to answer.(83) In the spring of 1956, IAC members, perhaps needled once too often by outsiders, decided to put the question to themselves. At the meeting in which they decided to require a post-mortem for each completed estimate they also "adopted a procedure . . . [which would endeavor] to determine how good an estimate was in the light of subsequent developments."(84) The resultant document would be known as a validity study.

What the IAC wanted was reasonable and sounded simple. Suppose that there had been an NIE relating to *Probable Developments in North Africa*;(85) suppose that a year or so later another similar estimate was undertaken. Completion of that second estimate would be the occasion both to review the findings of the first and to weigh these findings in the light of things that had actually come to pass. And this is what the IAC thought could be done and should be done.

We tried to obey orders for almost three years and with respect to upwards of a hundred NIEs (often more than one would be subject to review in a single validity study). We did find ourselves in a number of significant good and bad estimates, especially in those matters which involved quantifiable things like estimated growth in GNP, probable dates of initial

operational capability of a new weapons system, etc. We were a lot less successful in our evaluations of our estimates of less tangible things. For example, we not only found it hard to give a crisp meaning to what we had written but also even harder to evaluate our performance. This was because all too often we realized that we were lacking in the single most important facet of a criticism: i.e., a clear conceptual notion of where we stood *now*. All too often the only objective reality we had with which to gauge our past performance was just another estimate.

We in ONE were dismayed at our failure to do a more convincing job of the validity studies and much relieved when the IAC let the enterprise peter out. [\(86\)](#)

K. The Numbering of Estimates

The first of the national estimates issued under the new order was National Intelligence Estimate 1 [NIE 1], *Prospects for Communist Armed Action in the Philippines During November* (30 November 1950). From then on until the end of 1953 we numbered the NIEs consecutively according to the date they were laid on and irrespective of their subject matter. In the three and a fraction years we published 102 papers in this series. Certain numbers are blank, e.g., NIE 13 which was canceled after it was well under way; certain other numbers, e.g., NIE 63, are used a second time with a slant, (NIE 63/1) which indicated an updating of the earlier paper.

In these years we issued two other series; the Special Estimate (SE) and the Special Intelligence Estimate (SIE). There were 54 SEs and 4 SIEs.

Exactly why we devised these series is a story full of complexities and, I fear, illogic. After we had been in business a couple of months and after the issuance of a dozen or more consecutively numbered NIEs (each of which had had a fairly substantial circulation) we undertook a paper on a seemingly extra sensitive subject. Its title was: *International Implications of Maintaining a Beachhead in South Korea*. Although the title is discreetly blank as to who was maintaining the beachhead, the text made no bones about the US involvement in South Korea and the role of its armed forces there. This had gone down badly with a number of our military colleagues who had been reared on the doctrine that intelligence did not deal with "own" forces, "own" capabilities, and so forth, which were operational matters and none of our business. We were, however, under instructions to write the paper and the only compromise we could make with the objectors was to assure that the paper be identified for special handling and given a limited distribution. Were it to appear in the regular NIE series, this would be difficult. We feared, for example, that those on the regular NIE distribution list who did not receive this paper would notice a gap in their file, and would be on the phone to request the missing document. To avoid this sort of situation we invented the new series and christened the "Beachhead" estimate SE-1 (11 January 1951).

Some of the later SEs were so termed because of their intimate relationship to US policy; these were the contingency estimates I have already discussed: *Probable Consequences of Certain Possible US Courses of Action in . . .* One such SE which I will come back to deal with Albania.

So far so clear. Then came the inevitable inconsistencies. Some estimates became SEs because they dealt with very sensitive subjects not necessarily US-policy-related; others because the papers were of a short half-life or because they were highly technical and of limited appeal or because they dealt with a specialized fragment of some large and important subject. [13 lines deleted]

The Special Intelligence Estimate (SIE) series has a less involved explanation. These were papers in which unsanitized COMINT [communications intelligence] played an important role. By no means all the normal Repts were cleared; we ourselves were closely restricted to a single room for the storage of the materials and to an adjoining conference room for their perusal. In short, security regulations ordained that these papers be rigorously compartmented from beginning to end and the SIE was our code signal. The usual inventories of the national estimates contain no reference to the four we completed. Only two do I remember: one, SIE-3 was never finished in this form. When it came out it was SE-27 of which I have already spoken. The other was SIE-5 relating to Soviet air-defense capabilities. I am quite sure this was our last in this series.

By the end of 1953, some of the ONE Staff and Paul Borel, my deputy, perhaps moved by a change in the numbering of NSC papers being advocated by Mr. Cutler (chairman of the NSC senior staff) put forward their own new philosophy of the numbering of estimates. Their labors ended in the binomial scheme (cognate, at least, with Mr. Cutler's plan) which survives to this day. The front half--a two-digit number--stood for a geographical area; the last part of the number, another two-digit expression, stood, of course, for the year of issuance. In between came a digit indicating *how many* estimates on that particular geographical area had been written during the calendar year. [\(87\)](#)

The SEs disappeared as a separate series. Hereafter NIEs which had to be set apart for one reason or another were called SNIEs (the "S," of course, standing for "Special") and numbered consecutively within the fabric of the NIEs. Thus, if in 1954 we had done a third estimate on some aspect of the Bloc and if it were, say, a contingency paper, it would have borne the number SNIE 10-3-54. In other words, we stopped trying to conceal from our regular NIE customers the existence of limited-distribution estimates that they did not receive. We also stopped the SIE series and published COMINT and other codeword estimates as merely highly-classified NIEs and SNIEs.

For some reason or other, a good number of our customers got the notion that the SNIE was

a designator reserved for contingency estimates. In this case the customer was only about half right. I cannot recall a true contingency estimate which was not an SNIE of very limited distribution. But many an SNIE was not of this class. There is, for example, a considerable group of SNIEs devoted to security conditions in this, that, or the other foreign country to which the President would be visiting; another group concerned with small matters of high but passing concern to a single high-level customer; still another, which were short versions of what had been planned and set in motion as full-dress NIEs, but whose importance to the policy people had faded.

L. Dissemination Within the US Government

The dissemination of the NIEs--the determination of who should receive them and in what quantity--was clearly within the power of the DCI. I well remember an early IAC meeting when General Smith learned that a sensitive NIE (on the USSR) was due to be disseminated in something over a hundred copies. The number shocked him and he ruled peremptorily that the distribution should be substantially reduced. The IAC members were then polled as to how many copies each desired. Even then the total far exceeded General Smith's top figure, a matter which he met by a merciless pro-rated reduction in each member's demand. Throughout the procedure there was a certain amount of good-natured griping, but that was all.

It was not often that Directors took the firm stand that General Smith took in the case just noted. In fact I recall no other similar case. But there are at least two instances in which the Director received direct orders from the President to limit dissemination. The first came about as a result of Mr. McCone's briefing of President Kennedy from the all-source version of one of the most important and highly classified NIEs relating to a phase of Soviet military strength. Mr. Kennedy at once perceived that the paper in Mr. McCone's hand contained the crown jewels of the national intelligence treasury (sources, methods, and substance) and told Mr. McCone that the dissemination should be held to an even hundred. For the next few years, the circulation of successive NIEs on the same subject, based upon the same sensitive intelligence, was held to a hundred. Then as pressure mounted the dissemination grew, and toward the end of the Johnson administration it had almost doubled. At about this time some grievous leaks of highly sensitive intelligence prompted President Johnson to tell Director Helms to make a drastic reduction in the circulation of these papers. Needless to say, the USIB agreed to a dissemination of fewer than a hundred copies outside the CIA Headquarters building. [\(88\)](#)

It was not often that such limitations seemed necessary, and when they were, the matter was amiably settled at the USIB, where the chairman's relationship with the members was of critical importance.

Often, the Board of National Estimates itself made recommendations with respect to limiting the distribution of other sensitive estimates such as those dealing with probable consequences of certain possible US courses of action (the contingency estimates, of which a good number were done on Vietnam). These would, for example, be circulated in very limited numbers in the city of Washington and no copies would be sent to the field.

An early estimate, SE 34, *Consequences of an Attempt to Overthrow the Present Regime in Albania* (30 December 1952) had an initial "dissemination" in a single copy. A few weeks later when the need for security had slackened other copies were distributed, but probably no more than a score or so.

In ONE's first decade NIEs of the "Secret" classification were distributed in the 200s. They rose to the 300s and higher. A "Secret" NIE of 1969 relating to Communist China was printed in 728 copies, the bulk of which were distributed. Fewer NIEs of the "Top Secret" classification were disseminated, and many fewer of the codeword classification.

In the case of papers like that 1969 China paper which dealt with a subject of great importance, was broadly based, and not so highly classified to be a risk to the distributor and major nuisance to the recipients, simple demand was likely to set the upper limits of reproduction and dissemination. Claimants would call in for copies--usually to the ONE (or would be referred to the ONE) and the Director of ONE or his lieutenants would authorize distribution within certain broad guidelines set by custom or the DCI or USIB. If demands seemed excessive, the ONE might informally negotiate the matter or go back to the Director or USIB for guidance.

The administrative channel of action in the dissemination of the NIEs below the USIB and the ONE led to three distribution points within the CIA:[\(89\)](#) one unit of the Central Reference Services packaged and dispatched the normal "Secret" and "Top Secret" NIEs; another unit within the same CRS handled the NIEs of codeword classification. The control and distribution of NIEs containing "Restricted Data" lay with the Nuclear Energy Division of OSI.

These three distributors which represented the DCI would themselves send single copies to a handful of high-level recipients such as the President and the NSC members, as already noted, and upon special occasions to the Director of the USIA, when sanctioned by the USIB, even to the secretaries of Commerce, Agriculture, or Treasury. They would also release copies to addressees within the CIA itself. They forwarded the bulk of the edition to the USIB members who operated their own collateral dissemination services for the benefit of their departmental customers at home and abroad.[\(90\)](#)

[M. \[seven pages deleted\]](#)

[\(91\)](#) [\(92\)](#) [\(93\)](#) [\(94\)](#) [\(95\)](#) [\(96\)](#)

[N. Consultants: The Princeton Panel](#)

The institution of the so-called Princeton Consultants began in the early Smith days (November 1950). It developed its own customary law which exercised its influence on the ONE and the business of national estimating.

The founding father was William H. Jackson, General Smith's first deputy. Mr. Jackson, a New York lawyer and businessman, who had had a valuable intelligence experience in World War II, nurtured an ambivalent attitude towards college professors. Like a lot of men of affairs, he had a respect for the academic's store of knowledge, his facility in the techniques of research, and perhaps in his ability to write, but at the same time he had his reservations about the ivory tower and the stereotype of its unworldliness. When he looked at the Board of National Estimates, as it was shaping up, he saw Professor Langer and Langer's two first recruits, Professor Raymond Sontag and Professor Calvin Hoover; he saw Professor Kent and the Messrs. Van Slyck and Montague, a pair of ex-academics. He may have wondered about imbalance on the Board, even with General Smith's selection of a general (Huebner) and an admiral (Bieri). One of the things that Jackson did was successfully to urge the Director to appoint his friend Maxwell Foster (a lawyer from Boston and a gifted amateur semanticist). Another was to begin enlisting a panel of consultants, some of whom would be hard-bitten men of the world, "who would be able to give you professors a run for your money." At the time, he said something very similar to this to me. He didn't say "to keep you guys' feet on the ground," but I'm sure that was what he had in mind. He named himself and a man from the New York business community, Barklie Henry, as charter members of the panel. He also lined up George Kennan, Vannevar Bush, and Hamilton Fish Armstrong. At what I believe to have been Mr. Langer's suggestion he also recruited C. Burton Fahs, director for humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation and an outstanding specialist in the Far East.[\(97\)](#)

The panel first met in November 1950 in Mr. Jackson's house in Princeton (hence its name) principally to discuss its functions and agenda. It had its first meeting on matters of substance in May 1951, again in Mr. Jackson's house. Dr. Bush had by this time withdrawn.

One may safely assume that Mr. Jackson's aim was pretty much what he had said: to assemble six or eight wise and hard-to-please outsiders of differing backgrounds and exhort them to give the closest sort of critical examination to a selection of the NIEs. What he wanted from this panel is what every executive wants from his "board of visitors"--an enlightened outside view of work of a tight little inner circle.

As I recall the first meeting of the panel, it does not seem as if Mr. Jackson was getting what he hoped. As I remember it, Mr. Langer--who presided--ran it pretty much as he must have run his seminar in the Harvard Graduate School. With all due respect, it seemed to me that he pretty much told them how it was and didn't do much in the way of soliciting comment. I do not recall much action on the part of the pure non-academics; in fact I don't think Mr. Henry opened his mouth. We did hear from George Kennan and Ham Armstrong who after all were both academics at heart.

The tone of the proceedings which Mr. Langer set in that meeting continued in the one or two subsequent ones before his departure in January 1952. Raymond Sontag, who moved into the deputy slot when I succeeded Mr. Langer, was the obvious candidate to take on the Princeton group. All of us were very happy when he agreed to do so. Under him the panel was considerably enlarged to include some more academics: Philip Mosely of Columbia, Samuel Bemis of Yale, Joseph Strayer and Cuyler Young of Princeton, Max Millikan of MIT, and some distinguished non-academics: former Ambassadors Norman Armour and Joseph Grew, plus Gordon Gray, Richard Bissell, and Mr. Jackson himself who had left his position of deputy director.

Mr. Sontag's approach was quite different from Mr. Langer's. He greatly enjoyed a battle of wits, especially when he held the trump cards of the insider. Even so, he was a good listener. He worked hard on preparing the agendas, always trying to get the consultants to focus on the principal questions of a few NIEs that we were in the process of drafting. He saw to it that he personally was well prepared to lead the discussion.

Under Sontag's leadership the meetings with the consultants became quite a production. He arranged to have the relevant papers delivered by courier prior to the meetings--to the consultants' home addresses so as to give them time to read in advance. He held four meetings a year, no longer at Mr. Jackson's house, but in one of the hotels of Princeton. The logistics problem itself was a formidable operation, admirably handled by Frances Douglas, the ONE administrative officer. Sontag used the consultants very deftly. There were those who thought he was at his most deft when he elicited from them almost exactly what he most wanted to hear and not much else. When successful in such cases he could come back to his colleagues and the Director with his own natural penchants reinforced by the views of these outside experts.

Sontag would take with him a fair-sized Washington delegation; some ONE staffers, always a Board member or two, and perhaps also one or more men from the staff of a CIA sister office (ORR, OCI, OSI). Upon occasion he would invite a Rep from one of the IAC agencies. As a matter of course, these men would be the ones most heavily engaged in the NIEs to be brought under discussion.

With Sontag's departure in mid-1953, Abbott Smith succeeded him, not only as second-in-command of ONE, but also as leader of the Princeton conferences. For a number of years these sessions continued to be stimulating and productive, and of real value to ONE and to members of its Board and Staff who attended the meetings. Mr. Smith showed both skill and tact at focusing the discussions and keeping under reasonable control the consultants' irrepressible urge to discuss policy, which was not our business nor theirs. But as the topics for consideration came to extend beyond the USSR and Europe, we suffered from the fact that only one or two of the consultants had any specialized knowledge of the Middle East or Latin America, and none, for example, of black Africa. So despite Mr. Smith's best efforts, discussions tended to revert to subjects about which he had already received the consultants' views. Furthermore, since the consultants were not cleared for certain codeword material, they were severely handicapped in discussions of Soviet military capabilities and the closely related military policy and grand strategy.

So the Princeton sessions came to be more and more a series of meetings at which ONE staffers gave extensive briefings to the Panel members. We began to feel that from the point of view of the bread and butter work of the ONE, we were making a mighty outlay for something less than a commensurate return. We never doubted the great practical value to a DCI of having so distinguished a panel assisting in the estimates, for which he personally would assume responsibility. Any one of us in his position would have supported the institution. However, from our vantage point we saw ourselves often doing a splendid job of briefing the consultants on a host of important world questions and not getting back much more than we had pumped in. This is not said in derogation of the consultants' qualities. There was scarcely a one who with a few months in residence could not have held one of our positions with great distinction. The trouble was that they were not only not in residence, but also that they had only a few hours of preparation to ready themselves for the consulting stint. In the beginning, this was not as severe a handicap as it became. But we ourselves, after years on the job and in daily contact with the best--and highly privileged--intelligence, found that we were not getting the sort of criticism Mr. Jackson had in mind.

We began approaching our Director, first Mr. Dulles and later Mr. McCone, with the idea of closing out the institution. One after the other they heard us sympathetically and went along to the extent of reducing the number of meetings per year from four to three, and finally to two. But neither they nor their successors were willing to abandon the show. In fact, Mr. Helms thought to use the consultants as a means of bolstering the Agency's contact with the academic world, and urged the recruitment of still more knowledgeable professors, who might serve to mitigate the bad press CIA was getting in the universities.

It was about this time that Mr. Smith moved on to be head of the ONE, and the leadership of the consultants was assigned to Willard Matthias, a senior member of the Board and oldest inhabitant of the ONE. Subsequent activities of the consultants fall outside the time frame of this paper. Suffice it to say that Matthias undertook a vigorous recruitment of younger

consultants, versed in the variety of new fields that had emerged in the academic community over the past 15 years, and that the meetings assumed a renewed vigor that lasted until the ONE came to an end in November 1973.

O. Epilogue

One might conclude this essay briefly, and withal, subjectively. The "law" upon which the National Intelligence Estimate was founded and its accretions in custom resulted in a product which was probably close to that envisioned by the founding fathers when they thought about, talked about, and planned for a "coordinated national intelligence" to serve the requirements of the national security. Of the few thousand NIEs there was probably not one which had not drawn upon the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the intelligence community. Just as the founding fathers had planned, all of them emanated from a single authority--the Director of Central Intelligence--who accepted the responsibility for their factual and conjectural findings. And just as the founders had insisted they did not go forth until the Director's peers--the heads of the departmental intelligence organization--having been active participants throughout the process had had their opportunity to concur in the papers' findings or to dissent from them in whole or in part. Furthermore, the final documents went out to their American readers bearing formal statement of such concurrences and dissents.

In other words, if the founding fathers had aimed at the creation of a more authoritative and more generally useful national intelligence estimate than had existed before, it can be said that they succeeded. There are several good reasons for this:

First the Director who brought the NIE to life, General Smith, had some very precise ideas about the form, the substance, and overall character of intelligence estimates designed for consumption at highest levels of government. Secondly, as chief of staff for the Supreme Allied Commander in World War II he knew exactly what kind of papers were required. That they conform to his highly critical standards was one of his musts. The achievement of this goal was not easy, but General Smith's great talent for persuasive diplomacy and his power and prestige succeeded in bringing previously warring or uncommunicative factions within the intelligence community into a working alliance. To be sure, he had his troubles with his colleagues, but his leadership was seldom if ever in doubt.

Thirdly, his innovative establishment of a small office--the Office of National Estimates--whose sole function was to be the production of speculative intelligence at the national level, proved an indispensable aid. He personally gave the office top priority in its recruitment of staff and he himself appointed the members of the Board of National Estimates.

Fourth, when the Board encountered difficulties in coordinating the NIEs, General Smith

would come to the rescue, taking what steps were necessary to assure community-wide cooperation.

Finally, the General's insistence that the NIEs be formally cleared in weekly meetings of the IAC, over which he usually presided in person, gave the whole enterprise a new cachet. In these circumstances those who concurred meant something more than "the interposition of no objection" and those who dissented had had the satisfaction of a day in court and the opportunity to plead their case before their peers.

General Smith's successors continued to recognize the importance of the NIE. Like him, they insisted that it meet high standards of quality, and they backed it among their colleagues of the community and with the principal policy echelons.

To say that the NIEs were better and more useful documents than what went before--the so-called "OREs" of CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates--is to underline the relatively more favorable environment in which they were produced. Under General Smith and subsequent DCIs, the NIE and cognate high-level estimative papers were produced by specialists in the art form of the national estimate--men and women who did nothing else. The original cadre, most of which the ONE had drafted from the old ORE, was of exceptional ability. Over the years the office grew only slightly in size but increased in talent and experience.[\(98\)](#)

Its good performance and the support it received from the top of the Agency produced sympathetic vibrations in the community. Most of the difficulties which had beset the old ORE began to disappear. As I have remarked earlier, it was not long before both the chiefs of intelligence and the indians who represented them in the arduous NIE account began referring casually to *our* estimate on such and such or what *we* had previously estimated with respect to thus and such.

As to the superiority of the NIEs to their World War II counterparts--the estimates of the Joint Intelligence Committee of the JCS--I can offer nothing from firsthand knowledge. Although many of us in the Research and Analysis Branch of OSS made written contributions of these estimates, few if any of us saw the final product. However, it was the shortcomings of these papers--ascribable in large measure to the absence of a commanding chairman such as the future DCI, and the refusal of the JCS to permit "split papers" (i.e., footnotes of dissent, alternative text in parallel columns, etc.)--which prompted military and civilian leaders alike to change the system by which national intelligence would be produced.

It is one thing to say that the NIE was better than its predecessors and something quite different to say how much better. I would like to be able to say far better, if for no other reason than that the institution was not strangled by the old JCS insistence upon "fully agreed" papers. I personally put great store by the fact that those who supervised the

composition of the NIEs strove for agreed papers which were also useful and respectable. And failing in this endeavor pressed those participants who could not accept a given judgment boldly to dissent and give up trying to jigger the language so as to encompass and hence conceal their disapprobation. Our most vocal detractors however have taken the position that the NIEs suffer from this very malady--that the papers were coordinated to least common denominators. I will do no more than offer my own dissent to this view. Be it said on our side that the NIEs received more than their share of encomia from men at the peak of the national government. Mr. Robert Cutler--one of our most faithful readers while special assistant to President Eisenhower for national security affairs--often spoke in highest praise of the NIEs. Secretary McNamara, unimpressed at the start of his long tour in the Defense Department, later said (and on many occasions) that the NIEs were the best official documents that came before him.

Still and all, how good is good, not to say how good is best? What did the passage of time prove with respect to the accuracy of the NIEs? What was the NIEs' box score? Highly legitimate as the question is, it cannot be answered in a way to satisfy an outside quester. Abbot Smith has written eloquently on this subject.⁽⁹⁹⁾ He points out that at the time he wrote (1969) some 1,500 NIEs had been completed and each of the NIEs contained "a multitude of `estimates,' that is, statements setting forth an explicit or clearly implied judgment." There must be not less than 25,000 such, probably far more. Assuming that all of these could be checked for accuracy, and that 95 percent of them proved correct, we would still not be "justified in swelling with pride." For "most of them were simply too easy" and an objective statistical tally of good and bad guesses would in these terms not be worth doing.

Mr. Smith goes on to point out that a meaningful box score of estimates must accordingly be selective, "it must take account only of the important judgments." But "in saying this, however, we have left behind the wholly objective approach." And with this gone, who is to determine the "important estimates" worthy of admission to the tally? Mr. Smith points out that the high-level consumers of the NIEs would have a hard time agreeing among themselves as to which of the thousands of judgments were the important ones. Even if they could agree in this matter, they and others would find that they now had a selection of judgments, a portion of which could not in any circumstances be checked for validity.

I will go no further with Mr. Smith's exegesis, but urge the reader to read it himself. Having myself been in Mr. Smith's spot any number of times, I find this essay extremely helpful. I join Mr. Smith in his regrets that we can do no better for the outsider in search of a box score.

I can, however, and quite subjectively cite a few NIEs which were melancholy affairs, like, for example, one or two of 1955 which did not foresee that dramatic shift in Soviet foreign policy represented by the USSR's extension of military and economic aid to Egypt. Or perhaps another couple which might have more sharply identified the beginnings of the Sino-

Soviet split but didn't. Or more painful still our estimate of 19 September 1962 which carefully considered *inter alia* the likelihood of the Soviets emplacing strategic offensive weapons in Cuba and concluded that they would be unlikely to do so.[\(100\)](#) The misjudgment here was doubly painful because Director McCone had made his own estimate in the matter, which was the opposite of that made in the NIE and was, as is well-known, correct.

Unquestionably the most important of the NIEs were those devoted to various aspects of the Soviet military establishment. To the normal difficulties of piercing Soviet secrecy in even the most mundane of matters we confronted two exceptional ones. The Soviets redoubled their efforts to conceal the nature of their forces in being and made far greater endeavors to obscure their plans for future changes in the scale and nature of the strategic attack and strategic defense forces. Basically our task was not only to identify and enumerate the operational forces of the principal strategic weapons systems but also to project the probable size and deployment of such forces, three, five and sometimes ten or more years in the future. These flights of fancy into the outer reaches of the unknowable were forced upon us by the exigencies of our planners. Let me underscore that these undertakings were not of a sort to be volunteered for the fun of the thing.

Needless to say a number of these highly important estimates have been proven wrong. Albert Wohlstetter in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs* [\(101\)](#) has indicated that our estimates during the mid-1960s, contrary to some popular myths did not err in *overestimating* Soviet strength in strategic forces, but did in fact show a tendency to *underestimate*. Colonel Jack H. Taylor, who from a close personal experience with the NIEs in question, has written an illuminating article which gives substance to Mr. Wohlstetter's thesis.[\(102\)](#)

One should not try to minimize errors of this sort and yet one should point out how much worse the errors would have been if the Estimates had been merely pulled out of a hat which had been previously stuffed with everyone's worst-case judgments. It must also be said and with some force that the estimated numbers--under-strength as they were--did not lull our planners into fatuous complacency nor reinforce their equally disquieting belief that the Russians stood thirty feet high in stocking feet.

The great proportion of the NIEs were sound, useful, and generally unspectacular. We can point with great pride to the series on Communist China whose findings occasioned comparatively little splash because of the limited military threat which the Chinese offered to our home security interests.

Another series we hope are held in respect was that devoted to Vietnam--many individual estimates of which were contingency papers dealing with probable consequences of certain posited US courses of action. Their general thrust was pessimistic--as revealed in the Pentagon Papers. Their most dismal judgments, unhappily proved correct, related to the

resolve and staying power of our Communist adversaries--the Vietcong and the DRV and its military.

Other groups of NIEs which cast credit upon the institution are those dealing with the Middle East which reiterated the proposition that the revolutionary ferment of the area sprang from the growing course of Arab nationalism. One might cite in parallel the estimates on Latin America which emphasized the overriding importance of nationalism as a basic cause for political instability and anti-Americanism. Needless to say this was unpalatable news to those who saw all our misfortunes ascribable to the powers of international Communism.

Whatever the range of sound judgments on difficult subjects, and whatever their salutary effects upon individual policy decisions, the lasting contribution of the NIEs probably rested elsewhere. It rested, for example, as a demonstration of cautious workmanlike presentation of difficult speculative intelligence information. For many a consumer--whether or not he agreed with the substantive findings--the NIE was a model of government writing. The papers were as short as the subject permitted. Their prose style was clear, orderly, spare, and commendably untarnished with the many going jargons: e.g., the economic, the scientific, and technical. Short conclusions up front gave the busy reader the main points in a few paragraphs.

Another of its contributions and perhaps its most important one derived from the nature of the collaborative effort itself. Free and reasoned discussion around a table resulted in the identification and rejection of bald policy advocacy, unfounded belief in scare headlines, the urge to go for worst case estimating. In fact it is a set of invisibles--a set of things which might have appeared in the NIEs and did not--[that] is a tantalizing but nonetheless laudable aspect of the institution.

As to the question of how great a contribution the NIEs made to the formulation of a successful national security policy, who can say? To begin with, those of us with a familiarity of the processes of policy formulation fully realize that the intelligence input--far from being the single most important--is frequently of little importance irrespective of its quality. Even in those cases where the intelligence was studied, the matters estimated as among the "almost certain" were not invariably believed, let alone those judged as "probable." Nevertheless, even though some policy people found NIEs irrelevant to their needs and others found them unconvincing or wrong, there were always those who regarded a given NIE as neither of these, and often important men they were. Armed with the findings of these papers they could at a minimum deny to their adversaries at the policy table an easy walk-over victory. Thus in the last analysis, if the NIEs did nothing else, they contributed to a higher level of discourse in matters affecting the security of the country. [\(103\)](#) In actual fact they almost certainly accomplished far more.

Footnotes

[\(33\)](#) IAC-M-1 (20 October 1950), para. 9a.

[\(34\)](#) IAC-M-2 and 3. See also IAC-D-1 (1 November 1950), and 1/1 (15 November 1950).

[\(35\)](#) Jackson and Claussen, *History*, Chap. IX, pp. 68-93 contains some important insights into the relationship between the NSC apparatus and the NIEs.

[\(36\)](#) IAC-M-94 and IAC-D-1/2.

[\(37\)](#) IAC-M-134 and IAC-D-1/6.

[\(38\)](#) IAC-D-1/17.

[\(39\)](#) See IAC-M-1, para. 9b. In setting forth the production procedures, General Smith phrased it "a frame of reference and the assumptions on which the estimate is based will be discussed."

DCID 3/1 (8 July 1948) in para. 3(a)2, says the CIA will notify each departmental intelligence organization of: "(2) The nature and scope of the report or estimate involved."

The formal adoption of the phrase "Terms of Reference" occurs first in DCID 3/5 (1 September 1953), para. 3(a).

[\(40\)](#) Ironically, it was the BNE which a year or so later itself asked to have the agencies prepare arrays of certain factual materials appropriate to be included in appendixes or "Tabs" to the NIEs. Although such were reminiscent of parts of an NIS, this time the Reps wanted no part of such appendixes. Once again the matter was settled at the IAC and in the Board's favor.

[\(41\)](#) See the excellent article by John T. Whitman, "On Estimating Reactions," *Studies in Intelligence*, (Vol. 9, No. 3, Summer 1965) pp. 1-4.

[\(42\)](#) Upon one occasion (July 1965) the DCI (Admiral Raborn) undertook to initiate one of these contingency estimates, himself furnishing the contemplated US courses of action. The TRs tabled at a USIB meeting raised two sorts of objections: one having to do with substantive issues and the other, by far the more important, to the impropriety of self-

originated courses of action in such estimates. More than one USIB member expressed serious misgivings. As a result the Director agreed to submit the courses of action to McGeorge Bundy (the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs) for approval. When seized of the problem, Mr. Bundy indicated that the Secretary of State was the proper official for such clearance. So the TR went to Mr. Rusk who reviewed the courses of action and changed them in several important respects. In the end the subject itself was overtaken by events and the estimate was killed. In the ONE development file it is known as SNIE 10-8-65. (See footnote 43 following.)

Parenthetically it was this particular incident which stirred me to drafting a first version of this essay. I had in mind an audience which I hoped would include our Director.

(43) SEs (Special Estimates) and SIEs (Special Intelligence Estimates) had the standing of the NIEs. As subsequently explained in Chapter K (*Numbering of Estimates*), ultimately the designation Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) replaced the SEs and SIEs, embracing everything which for one reason or another varied from the normal dissemination of the NIEs.

(44) With ORR's founding in the early days of General Smith, it assumed a primary responsibility for this function and fulfilled it for four years without benefit of a formal directive. This finally came with DCID 15/1 (15 September 1964) whose relevant parts are:

Pursuant to the provisions of NSCID Nos. 1, 3, and 15, and for the purpose of strengthening the over-all governmental intelligence structure for the production and coordination of foreign economic intelligence relating to the national security, the following policies and operating procedures are hereby established. . .

2. Allocation of Primary Production Responsibilities.

c. Production of all economic intelligence of the Soviet Bloc is the responsibility of the Central Intelligence Agency except as indicated herein. In addition, it will supplement the intelligence produced by other agencies by conducting such independent analyses and studies as may be necessary to produce integrated economic intelligence on the Bloc.

A footnote added: "As used herein, Soviet Bloc includes the USSR, Communist China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Soviet-occupied portions of Germany and Austria, and Communist-dominated portions of Korea and Indo-China."

(45) NSCID #3 of 17 February 1972 stated flatly, "The [CIA] shall produce economic, scientific and technical intelligence." Period. No qualifying phrase, no geographical or ideological limitation. Earlier versions of NSCID #3, however, all the way back to 13

January 1948, came equipped with loopholes providing the necessary authority, e.g., that any of the IAC agencies could produce economic intelligence "in accordance with its respective needs," or that the CIA could produce as wide a range of intelligence "as may be necessary to discharge the statutory responsibilities of the [DCI]."

[\(46\)](#) See Wayne Jackson, *History*, II part I (esp. pp. 64-69, re JAEIC; and pp. 34-58, re GMIC/GMAIC [Guided Missile Intelligence Committee/Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee]) for an excellent treatment of coordinated national intelligence in the areas being discussed in the next pages of this essay.

[\(47\)](#) The germ of the JAEIC was the "Intelligence Unit" of the wartime Manhattan Engineer District. It moved to the CIG in the early days and led a community-wide intelligence effort on foreign atomic energy matters. By the end of 1947 there was a Joint Nuclear Energy Intelligence Committee which two years later (21 November 1949) became the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee under the canopy of the community's Scientific Intelligence Committee (see DCID 3/3--28 October 1949). In 1952 it emerged from the SIC canopy. Paragraph 2,c,1 of DCID 3/4 (14 August 1952), reads: "The Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee is hereby reconstituted as a permanent interdepartmental committee with the same structure and functions as before."

[\(48\)](#) Relevant paragraphs of the DCID read:

1. The mission of the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee (JAEIC) is to maintain the community approach to problems in the field of atomic energy intelligence and to give added impetus to individual efforts. To this end, the responsibilities of the JAEIC include the following. . .
 - f. Preparing coordinated *drafts* of national estimates on atomic energy intelligence and producing appropriate scientific *contributions* in this field of intelligence for other national intelligence estimates as requested. (emphasis added)

[\(49\)](#) The relevant text is:

1. The mission of the Guided Missile Intelligence Committee (GMIC) is to strengthen the community approach to problems in the field of guided missile intelligence and to give added impetus to individual efforts. To this end, the responsibilities of the GMIC include the following:
 - c. *Preparing coordinated contributions in the field of guided missile intelligence for national intelligence estimates.* (emphasis added)

[\(50\)](#) These were: SE 27, *Probable Effects of Various Courses of Action with Respect to*

Communist China; SE 37, Probable Effects on the Soviet Bloc of Certain Courses of Action Directed at the Internal and External Commerce of Communist China; NIE #40, Relative Strategic Importance of East-West Trade to the Soviet Orbit and to the Rest of the World; NIE 56, Potential Insecurity of Foreign Areas of Strategic Importance to the US; NIE 59, Relative Effects of a Complete Severance of East-West Trade on the Economic Capabilities of the Sino-Soviet Bloc and the West.

(51) The EIC made three more appearances in the NIE effort in 1956 and 1957. It made contributions to two NIEs: 11-6-56, *Capabilities and Trends of Soviet Science and Technology*, and 30-2-57, *Near East Developments Affecting US Interests*. The EIC also coordinated a footnote to SNIE 11-10-56, *Soviet Actions in the Middle East*, and coordinated ORR's contribution to NIE 11-1-57, *Sino-Soviet Bloc Air Defense Capabilities through Mid-1962*.

(52) Relevant paragraphs of the 1948 DCID read:

3. National Intelligence Reports and Estimates: . . .

c. Under Normal Procedures:

(1) *The Central Intelligence Agency will prepare an initial draft of the report or estimate, utilizing available departmental contributions. During this period departmental personnel will be available for consultation with CIA analysts with due regard to internal agency demands and commitments under existing liaison arrangements. (emphasis added)*

(53) The relevant paragraph of the 1953 DCID, entitled *Production of National Intelligence Estimates*, reads:

b. Drafting and Board Consideration--After considering the contributions, and such consultation with any contributing agency which may be appropriate, *the Board [of National Estimates] will prepare a draft. (emphasis added)*

(54) In the early years of the NIE we almost always did draft conclusions as a part of the draft estimate. In time we found that this was often a complete waste of time, for as the paper was altered in the coordination session, a new set of conclusions was necessary. Accordingly, we would frequently omit doing the conclusions until the paper was in final form, and then do them as a last piece of business with the Repts.

(55) See my article "Words of Estimative Probability," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Fall 1964 [Editor's Note: See pp. 127-141 in this volume]. It contains the following table:

100% Certainty			
The General Area of Possibility	93%	give or take about 6%	Almost certain
	75%	give or take about 6%	Probable
	50%	give or take about 6%	Chances about even
	30%	give or take about 6%	Probably not
	7%	give or take about 6%	Almost certainly not
0% Impossibility			

(56) *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. For example "conceivable" can do duty for possible, as can "perhaps" and such verb forms as "could," "may," "might." "Virtually certain," "highly likely," or "overwhelming odds (or) chances" can legitimately serve for "almost certain." I will go no further with these synonyms. Interested readers should see pp. 58-59 of my article. [See pp. 135-137 in this volume.]

(57) *Ibid.*, p. 57. [See p. 134 in this volume.]

(58) The most willing followers of my recommended vocabulary were our military colleagues. Years later when the DIA reorganized its estimates work under General Daniel Graham, my table of values was printed on the inside cover of DIA estimates and the vocabulary rigorously used in the substance of the document.

(59) Keith Clark, who served on the Staff and Board of ONE for 20 years, read an early draft of this manuscript and offered the following as a useful commentary on my use of the word "agreed" in this sentence.

--There was another trend in the 1960s which I have always considered a very healthy and important one which is not mentioned here. I refer to the idea of stating various sides of a question rather than coming out with a single most probable judgment. I always thought that Allen Dulles, for all his great qualities, did a certain amount of lasting damage with his dictum that national estimates had necessarily to give a single best answer to every question addressed on the grounds that we were paid to estimate, and if we did not do it, someone else would. I well remember a feeling that we had made a breakthrough when estimates began, some time in the mid-60s, to use the device of offering a judgment, giving the reasons for it, and then proceeding to acknowledge that it might prove wrong and going ahead to explore what appeared to be the short end of the odds. I feel it was often more useful to treat the variable factors in discussing the future than to offer a prophecy about the outcome. This trend came to a head in the Helms philosophy that he was responsible for producing and

circulating these estimates but that he need not take a position on every substantive question addressed in them. This approach, whatever its bureaucratic merits, was realistic and intellectually honest. It showed a decent awareness of the uncertainties and "unanswerabilities" of many of the problems we wrestled with. After all, it is hard to square the fiction that the DCI personally believed every judgment written in the text of an NIE with the fact (alluded to later in this manuscript) that General Smith had often not read the text prior to the USIB meeting.

[\(60\)](#) Charles D. Cremeans, who served for many years in the ONE as staffer and member of the Board of National Estimates, has written an excellent article on the lore of coordinating the NIEs. See his "Basic Psychology for Intelligence Analysts," *Studies in Intelligence* (Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 1971) pp. 109-114.

[\(61\)](#) See Ray S. Cline, "Is Intelligence Over-Coordinated?", *Studies in Intelligence* (Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall 1957) pp. 11-18, and the reply in the same issue by R. J. Smith, "Coordination and Responsibility," pp. 19-26.

[\(62\)](#) Relevant paragraphs of the DCID read:

(3) d. *Under Urgent Procedures:*

- (1) The Central Intelligence Agency will, at the earliest opportunity, notify the departments that it is undertaking an urgent project.
- (2) Upon notification by the Central Intelligence Agency that an initial draft paper has been prepared, appropriate departmental or agency specialists and consultants will meet to consider the paper.
- (3) The Central Intelligence Agency will prepare a final paper for concurrence or substantial dissent by the departmental agencies.
- (4) After receipt of all replies, the Central Intelligence Agency will publish the statements of concurrence or substantial dissent with the final paper.

e. *Under Exceptional Circumstances:*

- (1) The Central Intelligence Agency will prepare and disseminate most urgent reports and estimates immediately upon completion and without formal coordination within the departmental intelligence organizations.
- (2) Reports and estimates so disseminated will include a statement to the effect that normal departmental coordination has not been accomplished in each case.
- (3) Such reports and estimates will subsequently be subject to normal coordination procedures cited in paragraph 3c [the section on "Normal Procedures"] above, and if necessary, redisseminated upon completion of this process.

[\(63\)](#) The language of DCID 3/5 (1 September 1953) and of DCID 1/1 (21 April 1958) and

DCID 1/1 (5 August 1959) is:

4. *Preparation under Exceptional Circumstances:*

Any of the steps listed in 3a, b, and c, above may be omitted under exceptional or unusually urgent circumstances. [3a relates to the "TRs and Contributions," 3b relates to the "drafting and Board consideration," and 3c to "consideration by IAC/USIB agencies."]

(64) Just as the IAC members had arrived at an agreed text, Mr. Dulles arrived (he had been in New York with the intention of voting the next day). He read the draft, and taking the time into account, decided to hold up issuance until all had slept on it.

(65) Not until after the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 was there any formal notation of the existence of the IAC (the Act itself makes no mention of it). The first paragraph of NSCID #1 (12 December 1947) is devoted to the membership and functions of the IAC:

1. To maintain the relationship essential to coordination between the Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations, an Intelligence Advisory Committee consisting of the respective intelligence chiefs from the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force, and from the Joint Staff (JCS), and the Atomic Energy Commission, or their representatives, shall be established to advise the Director of Central Intelligence. The Director of Central Intelligence will invite the chief, or his representative, of any other intelligence agency having functions related to the national security to sit with the Intelligence Advisory Committee whenever matters within the purview of his agency are to be discussed.

There were those who felt that this text neglected to state that the DCI himself should be noted as a participating member and chairman of the IAC. A revised version of NSCID #1 (7 July 1949) rectifies matters in its first paragraph:

1. To maintain the relationship essential to coordination between the Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations, an Intelligence Advisory Committee consisting of *the Director of Central Intelligence, who shall be chairman thereof*, the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the respective intelligence chiefs from the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force, and from the Joint Staff (JCS), and the Atomic Energy Commission, or their representative, shall be established to advise the Director of Central Intelligence. The Director of Central Intelligence will invite the chief, or his representative, of any other intelligence agency having functions related to the national security to sit with the Intelligence Advisory Committee whenever matters within the purview of his agency are to be

discussed. (emphasis added)

All subsequent versions of NSCID #1 designate the DCI in one formulation or another as chairman of the IAC/USIB.

(66) In the years when the director of intelligence of the Joint Staff was a member of the IAC, he sat with the other service chiefs. His job disappeared with the establishment of the DIA.

(67) He, like the J-2, disappeared with the establishment of the DIA.

(68) Early in 1974--and well beyond the terminal date I've set for this essay--the DDCI actually tabled such a dissent. The DCI accepted it, and there in the cold print of NIE 91-74 is an "Agency" footnote to a finding of the DCI himself.

(69) The JIC and its staff disappeared early; so did the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for intelligence matters. The J-2 and the Special Assistant no longer attended USIB meetings.

(70) See Carroll to McCone 26 Feb. 1964 (ER 64-1444); McCone to Carroll, 3 March 1964 (ER 64-1444a); and Carroll to McCone, 16 March 1964 (ER 64-1949).

The fruits of this arrangement appear obliquely in the revised NSCID #1 of 4 March 1964.

In the first sentence of its para. 2a there is reference to a "fully coordinated intelligence community." A footnote describes the "intelligence community" as including: "The Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence components of the Departments of State, Defense (Defense Intelligence Agency, *Army, Navy, and Air Force*), National Security Agency," the FBI, and the AEC. (emphasis added)

Paragraph 2.b. gives the *membership* of the US Intelligence Board. The directors of intelligence of the three services are *not* included. They enter the legal domain by a side door, however. Para. 4.a., devoted to national intelligence, ends with the sentence, "Intelligence so produced shall have the concurrence . . . of the members of the US Intelligence Board or shall carry a statement of any substantive differing opinion of such a member *or of the Intelligence Chief of a Military Department.*" (emphasis added)

Apparently Mr. McNamara continued to be displeased. His annoyance broke through a year and a half later and in the presence of Director Raborn. He had before him a recently issued NIE (one of the Soviet military papers) and he had noted some dissents from the service

intelligence chiefs. As usual, their footnotes began with the formula, "The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, [e.g.], USAF . . . disagrees with . . . this paragraph." "Who is this nameless dissenter?" he asked of Admiral Raborn. From the tart way in which the question was put, Admiral Raborn decided that henceforward, titles would not be enough. He decided that he personally would sign the cover of each new NIE, and that the USIB secretary, Mr. Lay, would authenticate his signature. He did more. He directed that the names of all USIB members concurring in the issuance of the estimate would appear on the verso of the cover along with their titles, and that the names of members and observers alike would appear wherever they took a footnote of dissent.

The first estimate in the new format is NIE 1-65, *The Future of the United Nations*, 26 November 1965.

[\(71\)](#) An incident in the Eisenhower administration offers the school solution to the problem of bootleg intelligence and a President's perfect handling of a dispute which centered in an NIE.

The President was being briefed on one of the important NIEs on Soviet military capability. A high officer of the USAF interrupted at one point to tell the President that he disagreed with this particular finding of the estimate. The President asked if his dissenting view appeared in a footnote to the estimate. When the general said, "No," the President turned to the DCI (Mr. Dulles) who was doing the briefing and asked, "Why not?" Mr. Dulles had to reply that he had been unaware of the view until that moment. The President then asked that Mr. Dulles withdraw the paper, recoordinate it taking the general's view into account, and resubmit it. This was, of course, done. The general's view was discussed in ONE at working-level sessions with the Reps and at the next IAC meeting. Since it had no takers other than the Air Force intelligence chief, it found its proper place in a footnote. The cup of intelligence would indeed be full if all Presidents knew as much about intelligence as General Eisenhower and knew as well as he how to handle uncoordinated scare information.

[\(72\)](#) It will be recalled that the President's letter of 22 January 1946 creating the NIA and addressed to its charter members, the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, stipulated the establishment of an Intelligence Board:

7. The Director of Central Intelligence shall be advised by an Intelligence Advisory Board consisting of the heads (or their representatives) of the principal military and civilian intelligence agencies of the Government having functions related to national security, as determined by the National Intelligence Authority. (emphasis added)

Within a few days, the NIA issued its Directive No. 1 (8 February 1946) whose paragraph 6 touches upon the matter of dissent. It reads:

The Central Intelligence Group will utilize all available intelligence in producing strategic and national policy intelligence. *All intelligence reports prepared by the Central Intelligence Group will note any substantial dissent by a participating intelligence agency.* (emphasis added)

(73) See paragraph 5:

The Director of Central Intelligence shall disseminate National Intelligence to the President, to members of the National Security Council, to the Intelligence Chiefs of the IAC Agencies, and to such Governmental Departments and Agencies as the National Security Council from time to time may designate. *Intelligence so disseminated shall be officially concurred on by the Intelligence Agencies or shall carry an agreed statement of substantial dissent.*(emphasis added)

These words are repeated in para. 5 of NSCID #1 (7 July 1949), para. 5 of NSCID #1 (10 January 1950), para. 5a of NSCID #1 (28 March 1952), para. 6 of NSCID #1 (21 April 1958)), and para. 4a of NSCID #1 (15 September 1958).

(74) Para. 3c of DCID 3/1 (8 July 1948) which deals with the formal procedures of producing national intelligence (TRs, contributions, etc.) ends with (3,c,4) ". . . *the Central Intelligence Agency will publish the Statements of Concurrence or substantial dissent with the final paper.*" (emphasis added)

A second DCID (3/2 of 12 September 1948) is devoted in its entirety to a spelling out of the "Policy Governing Departmental Concurrences [and Dissents] in National Intelligence Reports and Estimates." The first two paragraphs quoted below are considerably elaborated in the balance of the paper.

The lead-in paragraph which cites the NSCIDs etc., ends ". . . the following policies are established:

1. *Purpose.* Departmental participation in the preparation of national intelligence reports and estimates is undertaken to insure that authorized recipients:
 - a. are presented with national intelligence which comprises all the best available expert knowledge and opinion;
 - b. are aware, in the case of disputed points, of the views of the departments on substantive matters within their special fields of responsibility and interest.
2. *Basis of Comments.* In consideration of any individual national intelligence report or estimate departmental agencies should take action, as promptly as possible, in one of the following ways:
 - a. concur;

- b. concur with comment;
- c. dissent.

The text goes on with what sounds like a mild exhortation:

These actions should be based upon consideration of the following factors:

- (1) factual errors;
- (2) validity of conclusions reached;
- (3) omission of relevant considerations;
- (4) matters of emphasis which produce misleading implications.

See also paragraph 5 of DCID 3/5 (1 September 1953):

Dissents:

Any agency may dissent to any feature of an estimate. Such dissents identify the dissenter and will state the dissenter's position on the matter.

This identical language appears in the superseding DCIDs (1/1 of 21 April 1958, para. 5, and 1/1 of 5 August 1959, para. 5).

[\(75\)](#) The paper in question is SNIE 58-2-62, *Consequences of Certain US Courses in Laos* (11 April 1962). Its cover bears this rare departure from the usual inscription: "Submitted by the [DCI]/Concurred in by the/[USIB]/with the exception of the/ Director of Intelligence and Research/ Department of State/As indicated overleaf."

At overleaf, the problem itself is footnoted indicating that Hilsman "dissents from this entire estimate." The reasons for his dissent are set forth at the end of the estimate," (in almost 1,000 words).

[\(76\)](#) Quoted from Montague, *Smith* [p. 72 in the Penn State Press edition].

[\(77\)](#) No one can blame the reader for a deep curiosity as to which of the two sides in this debate was proven correct. The answer here and in many another such matter is that there is no answer. For some reason--perhaps the portentous estimate of the majority--no arms were sent--at least in that particular constellation of circumstances.

[\(78\)](#) See IAC-D-57 which includes Amory's and Reber's report to the IAC on the measures which they had instituted to improve our knowledge of Communist China.

This is the first set of documents of the D-57 series. The next is D-57/1 and so on to

D/57/107 of 10 Sept. 1958, where the series ends with the demise of the institution.

(79) IAC-M-151

(80) Issued 12 Dec. 1947. The first of its two paragraphs told the DCI to draft and maintain a comprehensive list of intelligence objectives, and the second to maintain a similar list for intelligence matters of current concern. This NSCID has remained unchanged.

(81) See DCIDs as follows: 4/1 5 Feb. 1948; 4/2, 28 Sept. 1950; 4/2 (Revised) 12 June 1952; 4/2 (Second Revision) 4 Aug. 1953; 4/4 12 Dec. 1954; 4/5 18 Oct. 1955; and so on.

(82) NSCID #4 of 12 December 1947 directed that the DCI "in collaboration with the other agencies concerned [a] shall prepare a comprehensive outline of national intelligence objectives . . . ," and [b] "under the guidance of the NSC Staff shall select from time to time and on a current basis sections and items of such outline which have a priority interest."

The phrasing was repeated in NSCID #4 (15 September 1958, 18 January 1961, 4 March 1964). The last revision of this directive (15 February 1972) contains a very short version in para. 3g.

The DCI habitually acquitted his obligation for [b] above with a DCID (many issuances in the 1/3 Series) entitled Priority National Intelligence Objectives (the PNIOs). During the Smith and Dulles incumbencies the identification of the PNIOs was an exercise performed about once a year. Starting during Mr. McCone's time and continuing through the time of Admiral Raborn and Mr. Helms, the full-dress findings were reviewed and up-dated each quarter.

(83) See the admirable essay by a master estimator: Abbot E. Smith, "On the Accuracy of National Intelligence Estimates," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Fall 1969) pp. 25-35. Mr. Smith shows why the question should be asked and why it is almost impossible to answer.

(84) See IAC-D-100, 8 December 1955. The decision in favor of the validity studies dated from the IAC meeting of 26 April 1955.

The next document of the D-100 series is D-100/1, the next 100/2 and so on to D-68 of 10 September 1958, when the institution lapsed.

(85) NIE 71-54 (31 Aug. 1954).

(86) Anyone interested in reviving the institution should go to the IAC-D-100 series and read through the folder. It will tell him a great deal more than I thought proper to introduce in this essay.

(87) In this system the first pair of digits (10) stood for the Soviet Bloc; 11 to 19 for subareas of the Bloc (e.g., 11 for the USSR itself, 12 for the European Satellites--12.1 Albania, 12.2 Bulgaria, etc.--13 for Communist China--which was not strange in 1954). The 20 series stood for the states of Western Europe, the 30s for the states of the Middle East, and so on. The last pair of digits (e.g., 54 or 59) indicated the year of issuance. For the official documents see: *Notice to Holders of National Intelligence Estimates--New System for Numbering NIEs*, issued 1 February 1954 by the CIA. The numbers assigned to the principal geographical areas held firm, but the subareas proliferated. By 1960 the system had to be looked at afresh and given a considerable overhaul. A document issued 15 November 1960 by the ONE entitled *NIE Code Designations* contains the revised system.

(88) NIE 11-8-66 contained a note from Mr. Helms which called special attention to the great sensitivity of the paper.

(89) A few very sensitive contingency estimates which were issued in great haste were reproduced not by the normal printers but by the Special Center Reproduction Unit in OCI and distributed from OCI.

(90) Consider a "Top Secret" SNIE of about 1960: 332 copies were disseminated. Of these about 25 went to the NSC members, White House Staff, and the NSC Planning Board and about 60 to various components of the CIA. The balance were sent to USIB members as follows: 35 to the Department of State, 65 to Army, 32 to Navy, 50 to Air Force, 25 to the JCS, four to the AEC, two to the FBI. A few copies went to addressees elsewhere in the Government who would not normally be on the mailing list of any USIB member.

(91) [Three lines deleted]

(92) [Three lines deleted]

(93) [One line deleted]

(94) [One line deleted]

(95) [13 lines deleted]

(96) [Three lines deleted]

[\(97\)](#) See Jackson and Claussen, *History*, IX, 51-55.

[\(98\)](#) In this matter it paid the well-known penalty. All too often its ranks were raided of high performers whose services were deemed essential elsewhere in intelligence work or in high policy-making echelons of the government.

[\(99\)](#) See his article in *Studies in Intelligence*, already cited in note 83 [page 100 in this volume].

[\(100\)](#) See my article "A Crucial Estimate Relived," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 8, No. 2. [See pp. 173-187 in this volume.] See also Willard C. Matthias, "How Three Estimates Went Wrong," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 12, No. 1 [Winter 1968], pp. 27-38. See esp. pp. 29-31, for a discussion of three other mis-estimates.

[\(101\)](#) Summer 1974.

[\(102\)](#) See his "Wohlstetter, Soviet Strategic Forces, and the National Intelligence Estimates," in *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Summer 1975.

[\(103\)](#) See my article "Estimates and Influence," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 12, No. 3. [See pp. 33-42 in this volume.]

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

[Appendix A](#)

Glossary of Abbreviations

[Editor's Note: Sherman Kent included here a glossary that was designed for intelligence insiders reading this work. To be a more useful and convenient reference for the general reader, the glossary has been considerably expanded to cover all of this volume's essays and placed at the end of the book.]

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CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Appendix B

CIA Organization and Functions

The Office of National Estimates

Central Intelligence Agency Organization and Functions

1. The attached organization chart or the Central Intelligence Agency is effective 1 December 1950.
2. The attached organization charts of the component units and statements of their functions are also effective 1 December 1950. However these are subject to study by and comments of Assistant Directors and become finally effective 1 January 1951, unless you are notified of any changes.
3. All previous organization charts and statements of functions in conflict with this directive are rescinded.
4. No portion of this document may be reproduced, or distributed outside of CIA, without prior approval of the Deputy Director or the Director.
5. The Deputy Director for Administration is designated as the Agency Executive for the purpose of exercising those Agency powers specifically delegated by law to the Executive.

/s/Walter B. Smith

Walter B. Smith
Director of Central Intelligence

Office of National Estimates

I. Mission

The Assistant Director for National Estimates is charged with (1) initiating, directing the production of, and producing national estimates, (2) evaluating current intelligence circulated by CIA outside the Agency and (3) assisting the Director of Central Intelligence in the coordination of intelligence relating to the national security and in providing for its appropriate dissemination.

II. Functions

The General functions of the Assistant Director for National Estimates are two: (A) Estimative; (B) Coordinative.

A. Estimative Functions

1. Suggest to the Director of Central Intelligence amendments and additions to the schedule of priorities set by IAC and carry out any schedule of priorities as cleared by IAC to the extent of (a) alerting the IAC agencies to the accepted schedule of priorities and sudden changes which may be made therein, (b) assigning responsibilities within IAC agencies, (c) programming in consideration of the workload of the IAC agencies, and (d) setting and maintaining

deadlines.

2. Initiate estimates: (a) by direction of the IAC or (b) by direction of the Director of Central Intelligence or his deputy, or (c) by his own decision pending clearance in CIA and/or IAC, or (d) at the suggestion of representatives of the IAC agencies pending clearance in CIA and IAC.
3. Direct the production of estimates through the establishment of appropriate interdepartmental arrangements. This will involve:
 1. Drafting the terms of reference for any given estimate.
 - a. Calling a meeting of representatives of the IAC agencies concerned in the production of the estimate at hand.
 - b. Discussing and fixing at such meetings the final terms of reference.
 - c. Assigning responsibility for substantive contributions from the IAC agencies.
 - d. Assuming or assigning responsibility for the initial drafting of the estimate.
 - e. Clearing the final draft with the contributing IAC agencies.
4. Produce national estimates. (This will involve taking responsibility for a final draft of any estimate to go forward to the Director of Central Intelligence and IAC even though disagreements among contributing agencies cannot be resolved.)
5. Be responsible for all evaluative comment on items of current intelligence which are circulated by CIA outside the Agency. (It is assumed that responsibility for evaluations on Office of Special Operations raw intelligence will rest with the Office of Special Operations so long as the evaluations are confined to the probable reliability of the source.)
6. Direct the operation of a current intelligence staff which will support the above functions and which will continue the issuance of the Daily Summary.
7. Provide for oral briefings and presentation service for the Agency.

B. Coordinative Functions

1. Recommend to the Assistant Director for Intelligence Coordination on coordination matters relating to the production of national estimates.

[Chart Office of National Estimates/Central Intelligence Agency](#)

CIA Regulation No.70

1950

1 December

The IAC was the Intelligence Advisory Committee, which from 1947 to 1950 was referred to as the Intelligence Advisory Board (IAB). For the composition and function of this body see note 15 on page 51.]

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Sherman Kent, 1903-1986.