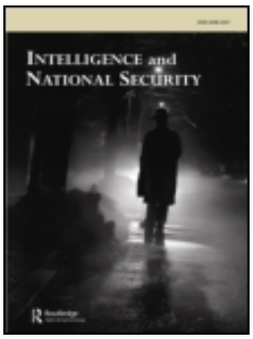

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The Ultra Secret and Churchill's War Memoirs

DAVID REYNOLDS

Ultra was one of the best-kept secrets of World War Two, concealed for nearly 30 years. A major reason, this article argues, was the precedent set by Churchill's war memoirs, published in 1948–54. The intelligence authorities feared that, if Churchill disclosed anything about Ultra, this would be a green light to those who had worked at Bletchley Park. Using documentation from the Churchill Archives and the Cabinet Office files, the article examines the pressure they successfully put on Churchill and the way Ultra was edited out of his memoirs, looking particularly at big stories such as the battle for Crete, operation Barbarossa, Pearl Harbor and the D-Day deception campaign.

Ultra was one of the best-kept secrets of the Second World War. From 1940 British codebreakers started to crack the supposedly impenetrable German machine ciphers (Enigma); in the second half of the war they used the ensuing intelligence (Top Secret Ultra) with decisive effect in military and naval operations. But although the story was common gossip in the corridors of power and in Oxbridge combination rooms, it did not enter the public domain. Ultra stayed secret; indeed, as Sir Alexander Cadogan of the Foreign Office observed to Professor David Dilks, intelligence remained 'the missing dimension' of most diplomatic and military histories.[1] It was not until the 1970s that the story was finally revealed in books such as F.W. Winterbotham's *The Ultra Secret* (1974) and Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (1975), on the use of Ultra in the D-Day deception campaign. To offset such private revelations, the government sponsored a series of official histories on British intelligence during the war under the principal authorship of F.H. Hinsley, the first volume of which appeared in 1977. Since then, Bletchley Park has become part of the national story of the war – celebrated in memoirs, analyzed by scholars, and dramatized in fiction and film. The Ultra story also proved one of the most important stimuli to the development of intelligence studies as whole since the 1980s.[2]

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Why did the secret hold for nearly 30 years? Mainly, as Churchill said, because of 'the geese who laid the golden eggs and never cackled'.[3] Thousands of men and women who had worked at Bletchley Park kept quiet about their achievements but in 1945 the intelligence authorities could not take this silence for granted. Only a few were regular officers or civil servants with their own collegiate culture of duty and secrecy, who were still beholden to the state for their jobs and pensions. The majority were outsiders, especially academics, who had been co-opted for wartime service, including many from the political left who were distinctly anti-establishment in outlook and even dress. When Churchill visited Bletchley in September 1941 he surveyed the assembled company and then turned to Sir Stewart Menzies, the head of the Secret Intelligence Service: 'I know I told you to leave no stone unturned to get staff, but I didn't expect you to take me literally.'[4]

This essay argues that an important reason why the veterans of Bletchley Park kept the Ultra secret is that Churchill himself did so. Between 1948 and 1954 the former Prime Minister published six volumes of war memoirs, nearly two million words, entitled *The Second World War*, but in them he said nothing about Ultra, its impact on the war and his central contribution to its development. Churchill's silence was deliberate, though somewhat reluctant, and it proved of enormous importance as a precedent for others. Why and how his memoirs were censored to keep Ultra secret is the theme of this article.[5]

* * *

By way of a preface, we need to understand how Churchill's memoirs were written. The essential ingredients were what I call in shorthand the three Ds – documents, dictation and drafts. Most chapters started life as a string of relevant documents, arranged in chronological order. These had been selected from Churchill's wartime monthly prints of his minutes, directives and telegrams. To flesh out this skeleton, he added snippets of personal reminiscence that he dictated to his secretaries, often late at night, fortified and lubricated by a good dinner. Among these were some of the most dramatic moments in the memoirs, such as the highpoint of the Battle of Britain in September 1940 or his percentages agreement with Stalin in October 1944. And as connective tissue he used narratives of diplomatic, military and political events drafted by his team of research assistants, known as the Syndicate. This included Lord Ismay (his wartime military secretary), General Sir Henry Pownall (a former Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff) and Bill Deakin (the historian and founder of St Antony's College, Oxford). Much of Churchill's account of the battle of France, for instance was written by Pownall, using privileged material in the Cabinet Office's Historical Section.[6]

Churchill's *Second World War* was therefore much more than a standard memoir: the documents and drafts gave his books an almost unique authority. But they were only available to him because of a remarkable deal he crafted with the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Edward Bridges, in 1945–46. In the last months of his premiership, Churchill browbeat Bridges into rewriting the rules on government papers. He was therefore able to leave Downing Street in July 1945 with what he was careful to call his 'personal' minutes, directives and telegrams and he also established the principle that a researcher could examine other relevant documents in the government archives on behalf of a former Prime Minister. When Churchill embarked on his memoirs in earnest in 1946, he also secured official agreement that he could quote 'his' papers extensively in his book. The quid pro quo, which he proposed, was that he would submit his work in draft to the Cabinet Office to ensure it contained nothing deemed inimical to the national interest. Bridges was delighted with this deal, being anxious to prevent repetition of the flood of unauthorized, indiscreet and damaging memoirs that had followed the Great War, and he steered it through Cabinet.[7]

His successor as Cabinet Secretary, Norman Brook, was responsible for making the deal work in practice. Churchill's amalgam of documents, dictation and draft was quickly printed as galley proofs – he disliked working from typescript – and most chapters went through at least half a dozen revisions. Brook and his staff vetted each volume in galleys, usually twice or three times, referring sensitive passages to the relevant government department, and then negotiating with Churchill about proposed amendments. Some of the changes concerned matters of current diplomatic sensitivity, for instance excising from the wartime documents some of Churchill's ruder remarks about men such as Eisenhower, Tito and de Gaulle who had become significant postwar leaders. Another area of concern was the confidentiality of government – concealing the leakage of information to Churchill in the 1930s by civil servants who were opposed to appeasement, for instance, or sanitizing his account of the bitter rows with Stafford Cripps over war policy in the dark days of 1942. But the most delicate and important area for censorship was Ultra.

At the end of the war, strict guidelines had been laid down concerning what could be said in print about Ultra. On 31 July 1945 the Joint Intelligence Committee approved a general directive to heads of the Official History programmes that the existence of such intelligence 'should NEVER be disclosed'. Historians on their staff who were not privy to the Ultra Secret should be instructed 'not to probe too deeply into the reasons for apparently unaccountable orders being issued'. The justifications (or rationalizations) for such secrecy were twofold. First, and more obvious, not to arouse the

suspicions of future enemies about British skill in signals decryption, which would encourage them to take counter-measures. Second, and more interesting, was the fear that if the Germans and Japanese became aware of the part played by special intelligence, they might claim they had not been fairly defeated – an echo of the 'stab in the back' myth about 1918, which Hitler had exploited so successfully. Despite protests from the official historians, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) insisted that 'a frank statement' of this sort would have 'the right deterrent effect' and the directive was approved by the Chiefs of Staff in September 1945.[8] As a meeting of senior civil servants privately acknowledged in 1969, the omission of intelligence made all the existing official war histories 'misleading', but it was essential bulwark for the Ultra secret. Historian Richard Aldrich has called this 'the last deception operation of the Second World War'.[9]

Churchill, however, was not an official historian; moreover, he had always been something of a loose cannon in intelligence matters. The first volume of his memoirs of the Great War, *The World Crisis*, made extensive use of naval telegrams. Its publication in 1923 prompted several parliamentary questions about whether he had permission to quote this material and whether its reproduction jeopardized British codes. There was talk of setting up a special Cabinet committee to establish guidelines for the use of official documents in memoirs and other publications. The committee never met and the row blew over, but Churchill became more careful in subsequent volumes and indeed began the practice of sending his draft chapters to the Cabinet Secretary for official scrutiny. Yet Churchill's sense of security was still not highly developed. He was a member of the Baldwin Cabinet that, in May 1927, decided to publish a selection of Soviet intercepts in order to show the malevolence of the Bolsheviks and justify Britains breaking diplomatic relations. Moscow responded by introducing the one-time pad and British intelligence decrypted no more high-grade Soviet signals until the end of World War Two.[10]

Churchill's track record on intelligence secrecy could not fail, therefore, to arouse anxieties in 1946, when Whitehall learned that he was embarking on his memoirs of World War Two. Moreover, the cache of papers that he removed from Number Ten after the election of July 1945 included his daily selections of the most interesting intercepts, provided in a special box by Sir Stewart Menzies, 'C', the head of the Secret Intelligence Service. Although these were duly recovered from Chartwell, it was not an encouraging sign. In any case, the wartime prints of Churchill's telegrams, which he did retain, included many references to 'Boniface' – his favourite euphemism for Ultra. And, given the time and energy he devoted to this matter during the war and its value for eventual Allied victory, it seemed unlikely that he would avoid the topic in his memoirs.

Indeed, early drafts betrayed a frankly cavalier attitude to security.[11] Commenting in February 1947 on a galley about Churchill's return to the Admiralty in September 1939, Ismay asked: 'Is it right to refer to the Secret Service and to give the name and also the Pseudonym of the head of that Service?' Churchill scrawled in reply: 'I think it is harmless: but we must consult H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment]. Everyone knows there is a Secret Service. Cumming, ''C,'' has been dead for 20 years.'[12] And when Churchill had a long talk about the memoirs with Norman Brook in January 1948, he made clear that he did not regard Ultra as off limits. Although assuring the Cabinet Secretary he would not disclose the extent and method of British penetration of enemy signals – 'this was our real secret which must be protected at all costs' – he said he must be at liberty to tell a story implying that it was 'not beyond our power to find out what was contained in enemy telegrams'. This, he said, had already been disclosed by the US Congressional inquiry into Pearl Harbor.[13]

Brook's account of this talk appalled E.G. Hastings, Director of the London Signals Intelligence Committee, the country's principal sigint authority, and he expressed a series of anxieties directly to Menzies. Churchill, Hastings stressed, had 'unrivalled authority and popularity' around the world. His history would be regarded as 'an authentic statement of the facts of the war' and was likely to be 'more widely read than any other book of modern times'. Even oblique disclosures from Churchill would be noted; once he had hinted at the secret, this would set a precedent for thousands of others who had been enjoined to secrecy: '[t]he effect would be snowball-like'. Although, Hastings admitted, there had been unfortunate revelations about sigint in Australia and America, these concerned the Pacific War. Anglo-American success in breaking the German codes remained a secret, but his 'considered view' was that 'disclosures by Mr. Churchill, even in general terms, would be followed in America by detailed disclosures of the extent of our success, and possibly even of our methods'. Among the other arguments Hastings deployed were the potential damage to Anglo-Soviet relations, since Moscow had not been officially informed about Ultra, and the oft-used claim that revelations about Ultra might encourage another 'stab in the back' myth in Germany and Japan. He also recalled the disastrous effect of the 1927 revelations on British codebreaking. Hastings deployed this battery of arguments, some more powerful than others, to call for a total ban on any disclosure about Ultra in Churchill's memoirs, even a hint that the British had been able to break Axis codes and ciphers.[14]

Norman Brook tried to calm such alarmism. He assured Menzies that Churchill was 'well aware of the importance of secrecy about the source' and merely wished to be assured that there was no 'blanket' prohibition on any mention of it. 'The enquiry he made was merely a precautionary one and was

not related to any specific story which he intended to tell in his book.' The Cabinet Office promised that if examination of the text suggested any disclosure of sigint as a source, the London Signals Intelligence Committee would be consulted.[15] In the event, there were no Ultra problems with volume one, *The Gathering Storm*, which dealt with Churchill's 'Wilderness Years' in the 1930s and his time at the Admiralty during the Phoney War. In volume two, *Their Finest Hour*, the main sigint issue was the security of British codes rather than penetration of the enemy's. Churchill's galleys included verbatim quotation from nearly 100 wartime telegrams and there seemed a slight danger that other governments might use these to try to crack current British ciphers. Eventually Churchill agreed to allow the Cabinet Office to paraphrase some 20 telegrams and to announce this fact in the acknowledgements. This, it was felt, would deter would-be foreign codebreakers. The same procedure was adopted for each subsequent volume.[16]

But Ultra did raise its head in volume two. Brigadier Arthur Cornwall-Jones, the Cabinet Office liaison with SIS, went through the galleys with care and in April 1948 queried two passages showing knowledge of enemy intentions. He asked General Pownall, one of Churchill's Syndicate, to confirm that they could be 'supported by evidence obtained from captured German documents' or other material. In the first case, a sentence about the Luftwaffe that began 'Although London was still referred to in their orders as the principal target …' was amended to read 'Although London was still regarded as the principal target …' The other passage, concerning information about Hitler's meeting with the Vichy French leader, Marshal Pétain, in October 1940, was retained. But only after what Bill Deakin called 'a nightmare weekend' ransacking the archives at Chartwell, including the 1,000-page transcript of Pétain's 1945 trial, to confirm the information from non-Ultra sources.[17]

* * *

So far Churchill's memoirs had not lived up to Hastings' worst fears, but in a later version of volume two the intelligence authorities caught an explicit reference to Ultra. Describing the offensive against the Italians in Egypt in December 1940, Churchill had written 'in Downing Street they brought me from hour to hour intercepted signals from the battlefield'. This prompted Brook to step in. Asking Churchill to delete the word 'intercepted', he laid out clearly the official concern that these volumes would set a decisive precedent:

> A point to which our Signals experts attach great importance is that you should say nothing which would encourage those who worked in this

> organisation during the war to think that they are now at liberty to speak more freely about their work. There are many of them who are no longer subject to any kind of discipline and bound only by their personal undertakings to say nothing about their war-time work. If, when they read your Book, they feel that a person of your great authority has thought it safe to refer to these matters, there is a danger that they may conclude that their obligation to complete secrecy may be relaxed. And they are not in a position to use the same discretion as you will in deciding what can safely be said and what can not.[18]

Churchill promptly deleted the word 'intercepted'. More important, he grasped the underlying point. On 12 August 1948 he told Brook that he would shortly be sending the preliminary version of volume three, book one. 'I have been very careful not to use the word ''intercept'' or indicate the source of our trustworthy information and I think ''C'' will probably be content with it.'[19]

An example of the self-censorship that Churchill and his assistants were now adopting may be found in the account in volume three, *The Grand Alliance*, of the hunt for the *Bismarck*. This stated baldly that on 25 May there was 'a growing feeling' in the Admiralty that the German battleship 'was steering for Brest, but it was not until six o'clock that this hardened. The Admiralty forthwith deflected all our forces towards the more southerly route'. In an early draft Churchill had included, between these two sentences, an explanation for the Admiralty's decision: 'It happened that a high German commander in the Balkans had the curiosity to ask and the influence to be told by the German Naval Staff how the ''Bismarck'' was getting on. He was informed by wireless that she was making for Brest. Here was valuable confirmation.' But Gordon Allen, Churchill's naval assistant, deleted this passage before the chapter was sent to the Cabinet Office.[20]

Despite the increased vigilance of the Syndicate, the intelligence authorities found plenty to query in the galleys of volume three. In a chapter about the Battle of the Atlantic, Churchill described how the German battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* descended on a British convoy on 8 February 1941, only to discover that it was escorted by the battleship *Ramillies*. Churchill's April 1949 draft went on: 'Admiral Lutjens at once signalled ''Break off the engagement. Take avoiding action''.' But after official representations, this became 'Admiral Lutjens at once broke off the engagement'.[21] In this case, Churchill's gaffe was blatant: he had been probably carried away by his sense of the dramatic. But even the hint of indiscretion was stamped upon. Noting how the United States established an air base in Greenland in the spring of 1941, Churchill continued in his draft: 'It was known that the Germans intended similar action, and had already

installed weather reporting stations on the Greenland east coast'. The sigint authorities objected to the words I have underlined above, and they were duly removed.[22]

In such cases, the offending phrase was marked for deletion on the galleys, with the identifier 'C' in the margin. But such was the haste with which the Syndicate worked that mistakes were made, even on a matter of such importance. Writing about the decision to send troops to Greece, Churchill included extracts from a telegram he sent to Anthony Eden, then in Cairo, on 14 March 1941. This included the sentence: 'A source, of which you are aware, shows that preparations are being made to withdraw German personnel from Rhodes in expectation of its British occupation.' On the galleys this was marked as one of C's amendments, with an annotation that the words underlined above should be replaced by 'Our Intelligence'. But this correction was not transferred to the next version of this chapter and the sentence appears unchanged in the book![23]

There are many such examples of small-scale censorship in *The Grand Alliance*. Rather than itemize them in detail, it is more instructive to examine the effect that this editing had on Churchill's interpretation of the war in 1941. The big disaster in spring 1941 was the redeployment of troops from North Africa in April in an effort to reinforce Greece against German invasion. Not only did this fail to save the Greeks – leading to ignominious evacuation within weeks – it also weakened General Sir Archibald Wavell's desert army against a sudden surge by Rommel, newly arrived to take command of the Axis forces. Instead of Wavell driving to Tripoli, as hoped, he was pushed back to Tobruk. Churchill's object in his memoirs was gently to shift the blame for these disasters – hinting that Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir John Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, were primarily responsible for the decision to go into Greece and implying that Wavell should have been more careful about his desert flank. In fact, Churchill had blown hot and cold on Greece, while in North Africa he encouraged Wavell to underestimate the threat from Rommel. For instance, he cabled on 2 April 1941: 'From the most secret messages sent you, you will see that a squadron of J.U. 88s was stopped going to Tripoli because the operational focus has shifted. Therefore I cannot feel that there is at the moment a persistent weight behind the Gm attack in Cyrenaica.' The words I have underlined were deleted as a 'C' amendment by the Syndicate, thereby concealing one of several occasions when Ultra flattered to deceive in 1941.[24]

The sigint revealed clearly that Hitler's strategic priorities lay elsewhere, in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, and that Rommel was supposed to build up his strength rather than mount a substantial offensive. The problem, as noted by Hinsley in the official history, was that these intercepts came mostly from the German and Italian Air Force. Only Army signals, still largely

impenetrable, would have revealed that Rommel, at this stage almost unknown to the British, was an audacious general who rarely allowed logistics or even orders to stand in his way. When his probes on 31 March exposed serious British gaps on the desert flank, he exploited the situation with characteristic energy and dash. As late as 7 April Churchill was using the Air Force Ultra to tell Wavell that there was no German plan to invade Egypt. When commenting on a proof of Churchill's memoirs, in October 1949, Wavell told Pownall, 'I should have been more prudent, but no one knows better than Mr. Churchill that a little prudence is often a dangerous thing'. One might say the same about the dangers of a little intelligence.[25]

The theme of book one of *The Grand Alliance* is 'Germany Turns East' and anticipation of operation Barbarossa colours much of its content. Churchill is, in fact, at pains to show how he foresaw Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union far more quickly than his specialist advisers. A whole page of his chapter 'The Soviet Nemesis' is devoted to the slowness of the Joint Intelligence Committee in reaching the conclusion on 12 June, only ten days before Barbarossa, that Hitler intended to attack the Soviet Union without further negotiation. Here, for the first time in his memoirs, Churchill makes reference to the intelligence revolution in Whitehall. Since the summer of 1940, he says, he had received 'a daily selection of tit-bits' of raw intelligence from which he formed his own opinion, 'sometimes at much earlier dates' than the JIC. And so, Churchill goes on, it was

> with relief and excitement that towards the end of March 1941 I read an Intelligence report from one of our most trusted sources about the movement and counter-movement of German armour on the railway from Bucharest to Cracow . . . To me this illuminated the whole Eastern scene like a lightning-flash. The sudden movement to Cracow of so much armour needed in the Balkan sphere [for the war in Greece and Yugoslavia] could only mean Hitler's intention to invade Russia in May.

He immediately offered his reading of the intelligence to Eden, then in Athens, and cast around for some way of passing it on to Stalin.[26]

'One of our most trusted sources' was, of course, Ultra, and this passage, so central to Churchill's argument, required a good deal of redrafting. The reference was actually to a Luftwaffe intercept dated 27 March, which he read on the 30th, but Pownall warned against giving an exact date since 'no *ordinary* agent could have got the message through in three days'. From Churchill's telegram to Eden on 30 March Pownall removed the reference numbers of the intercepts; a commendation of 'searching and vigilant British intelligence' became a tribute to 'our agents on the spot'.[27] This became a

familiar ploy: disguising sigint as humint. Less justifiably, Churchill also distorts the debate in Whitehall. In his text he claims that the Chiefs of Staff 'were ahead of their advisers' in the JIC, citing a cable they sent on 31 May. But from that message he cut a sentence showing that the Chiefs were by no means sure that the Russians would resist Germany. If Hitler got what he wanted by mere threat, or if the Soviets collapsed as soon as they were attacked, then he could turn back on Britain with impunity in a few weeks. Although Churchill was undoubtedly more confident about the Red Army than many of his military advisers – he makes a point of quoting Sir John Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on 22 June, 'I suppose they will be rounded up in hordes' – he could not be sure. The memoirs do *not* quote his striking message to Roosevelt on 1 July: 'I am asking that everything here shall be at concert pitch for invasion from September 1st'.[28]

The classic Ultra chapter in volume three, arguably in the whole of Churchill's memoirs, is his account of the battle for Crete, which fell within a week at the end of May 1941, though at heavy cost to Hitler's crack paratroop division. Although Crete now seems a lost cause – hastily defended by a rag-bag of troops evacuated from Greece without adequate air cover – Churchill argued that the island could have been saved and that he had made huge efforts to do so, not least providing its commander, General Bernard Freyberg, with the finest fruits of Ultra. In July 1948 Churchill constructed a damning draft chapter: 'The resources were available but the mental strength and efficiency of Middle Eastern Command was not adequate for the gripping of these matters.' On Ultra his draft was particularly candid:

> At the end of April our Intelligence Reports gave us full and exact information of the German plan. We knew the general scale and the actual day of the impending attacks, both by land, air and sea. I took extraordinary measures not only to convey our information to General Wavell, but also to convince him of its truth. To General Freyberg, who commanded in Crete, I sent by air a special officer to show him the authentic evidence of the kind of attack he would have to meet.[29]

Crete was a sensitive story because Freyberg and Wavell, both of whom commented on Churchill's draft chapters, naturally wanted to defend themselves, and he made a number of revisions at their request. The intelligence aspect was especially delicate. Churchill told Norman Brook in February 1949: 'I have taken particular pains to guard ''C's'' affairs and I think he will be pleased with the way I have explained our obvious fore-knowledge of the invasion of Crete.'[30] But more cuts were requested. In the published volume Churchill still claims that 'at no moment in the war was our Intelligence so truly and precisely informed' and that 'in no operation' did he

take such trouble to weigh the evidence and impart it to local commanders. But the reader is given the impression that the information came from 'active and daring' agents in Athens where 'German staffs preserved less than their usual secrecy'.[31]

During May 1941 Freyberg was furnished with intelligence showing the Germans intended a major paratroop drop inland. Churchill believed he had been told that the source was humint but, according to Freyberg's son, he was briefed by Wavell about Ultra itself.[32] But Freyberg was also warned by Wavell that he must not change any dispositions on Ultra evidence alone, lest German suspicions be aroused, and this tied his hands. By mid-May, when detailed intelligence had accumulated about the intended German airborne attack, Freyberg wanted to redeploy his troops from the coast to protect the main airfield at Malerme. But Wavell, under instructions from London, adamantly refused. This is not to deny that Freyberg made tactical errors in his conduct of the battle, but some of these, too, may be attributed to Ultra. From the few decrypts he saw, Freyberg (unlike Churchill) did not know the Führer's determination to clean up the Mediterranean quickly in preparation for Barbarossa. This may explain why, as he put it to Churchill in March 1949, 'it never entered my head' that Hitler would commit the cream of his airborne forces to take what was 'not really a vital position'. Protecting the source of Ultra was absolutely fundamental for C – according to his biographer, he threatened to resign over it during the Crete crisis. But only by letting Freyberg fully into the Ultra secret (including Barbarossa) could Churchill have really changed his thinking. Once again a little intelligence could be dangerous.[33]

Most of volume three concentrates on the war in the Middle East. It is only in chapter 31 that Churchill devotes himself properly to the threat from Japan. Writing of Washington's final negotiations with Tokyo, Churchill admits that London was sometimes surprised and disconcerted by shifts in the American posture. But, in a passage of some importance, he implies that this was mostly because of delays in transmitting vital intelligence:

> From the end of 1940 the Americans had pierced the vital Japanese ciphers, and were decoding large numbers of their military and diplomatic telegrams. In the secret American circles these were referred to as '*Magics*'. The 'Magics' were repeated to us, but there was an inevitable delay – sometimes of two or three days – before we got them. We did not know therefore at any given moment all that the President or Mr. Hull knew. I make no complaint of this.[34]

These sentences were some of the last of the volume to be finalized, on 22 December 1949. This was because, amazingly, Churchill seems to have only

just discovered Magic. His 8 November proof included the first two sentences of the passage quoted above but then continued: 'This deadly fact was not imparted to us. We did not know what the President knew.' But C asked him to say that information was delayed rather than concealed and so Churchill revised the passage into the form printed above. C explained that in 1941 Churchill was not formally told about Magic as a separate source but added that decrypts from the Americans were included in the daily sigint selections passed to him. 'I am not accepting this', Churchill exploded on 5 December 1949. 'I should have been informed by them or you.' He asked 'what information about the ''magics'' was actually in my possession during the ten days before Pearl Harbor'. When C checked his files against the messages printed in the Congressional inquiry into Pearl Harbor, he concluded that both he and Churchill had not been sent some of the final intercepts. 'I believe it was purely by mistake, and not intentional, that the Americans did not pass us the ''deadline'' messages which appear in the Congressional Report' – a copy of which he enclosed for Churchill's perusal.[35]

But then, sadly for us, the correspondence peters out because Churchill lost interest in the problem. 'I am returning the book and the telegrams which you so kindly looked out for me', he wrote to Menzies on 27 December 1949. 'I think the chapter is ''watertight'' now.'[36] But if it is true that Churchill was not indoctrinated into Magic in 1941 and that some eleventh-hour intercepts were not shared with the British, this renders even more dubious the claims that Churchill withheld information about an attack on Pearl Harbor from Roosevelt. The existing evidence strongly suggests that by December 1941 both leaders were expecting Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia but not an audacious strike on the US Pacific Fleet at Hawaii. They believed this to be beyond the capability of the Japanese, whom Churchill privately dubbed the 'Wops of the Pacific'. His letter of 5 December 1949 seems to fit with this interpretation: in tone it sounds more like the protests of a victim rather than a perpetrator of a cover-up.[37]

* * *

Reviewing the proofs of *The Grand Alliance* in July 1949, Norman Brook noted that Churchill had 'skated pretty near the wind in this Volume (albeit quite cleverly) but there is worse ahead'. In fact, this was probably the most significant volume for concealing the Ultra secret. One reason was that the advent of a truly world war, involving Russia and America, necessitated a change in the scale of Churchill's narrative. 'It will become more general', he told the Syndicate in October 1948, 'operational details must be cut; the broad issues must dominate'.[38] The mass of detail he had included on 1940–41 had enlarged the whole work from five volumes to six – greatly upsetting

Life magazine, his principal paymaster – and, as Leader of the Opposition, he was keenly aware that another general election had to be held before July 1950. Churchill had always viewed the memoirs as a project to kill time (and make money) until he could return to Downing Street, from which, in his view, he had been unwisely and unreasonably evicted by the electorate in 1945. By 1949 he wanted to get to the finishing line and was ready to cut a good many corners in the process.

With Churchill skating over many of the operational details, the last three volumes of the memoirs therefore caused fewer headaches for the intelligence authorities. Their methods for keeping Ultra secret were now well established – deleting all references to 'intercepts' and the like; suggesting that knowledge of enemy intentions derived from agents, captured documents or other methods. Churchill's chapter on the battle of the Atlantic in *The Hinge of Fate*, for instance, makes no mention of the loss and then recovery of the German naval Enigma during 1942. It ascribes eventual Allied mastery of the U-boat mostly to tracking by airborne radar, though there is cryptic reference to 'other measures'.[39]

In his last large-scale description of a single battle, Alamein in November 1942, Churchill makes no reference to the contribution of Ultra, which was now readily available in London and, even more important, for use by commanders in the field. Although acknowledging the enhanced strength of the Eighth Army, including a two-to-one superiority in tanks, the overall impression conveyed by his account was that superior generalship was the key to victory. He has warm praise for the new team he installed in August 1942: Field-Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, 'cool, gay, comprehending all', and General Bernard Montgomery, 'a great artillerist' concentrating his firepower for a meticulously planned attack. Churchill's Ultra-less account helped bolster the Monty myth, already being sedulously promoted by the victor of Alamein.[40]

In volume five, Churchill devotes a chapter to detailing the changing British attitude to the Yugoslav resistance. During the summer and autumn of 1943, he had shifted from the royalist Cetniks, led by General Draža Mihailović, to the communist-led Partisans under Tito, which he believed were the only elements seriously fighting the Germans. His chapter on 'Marshal Tito and Yugoslavia' explains this change of policy largely in terms of information and advice about the situation on the ground from British emissaries to Tito, notably Fitzroy Maclean and Bill Deakin. He could not admit that the decisive evidence came from signals intercepts. For instance, he had told Alexander on 22 July 1943 about 'a full account which I have had prepared from Boniface and all other sources of the marvellous resistance put up by the so-called Partisan followers of Tito in Bosnia and the powerful cold-blooded manoeuvres of Mihailović in Serbia'. The words I have

underlined were cut from the telegram before it was reproduced in *Closing the Ring*.[41]

Ultra came into its own, of course, in the campaigns in France and Germany in the last year of the war. But Churchill moves through these very briskly, dispatching battles of far greater magnitude than Alamein in a fraction of the space. Having allotted two chapters to the German paratroop assault on Crete in 1941, for instance, the failure of operation Market Garden – the massive Anglo-American airborne landings to get across the Rhine – receives only a few lines, even though Churchill admits this was 'the greatest operation of its kind yet attempted'.[42]

It was only in his account of the build-up to D-Day that there was any temptation to be indiscreet. Although Churchill comments at the start of volume six on the 'remarkable' success of Allied deception operations in persuading the Germans that the main attack would be mounted across the Straits of Dover, he gives the impression that this was mostly due to the destruction or jamming of German radar stations. Nothing is said about Operation 'Fortitude' – the use of dummy divisions, false signals, signals intercepts and Nazi double agents to suggest that the main threats were to Calais or Norway. Pownall and Churchill had been equally discreet about all this at the end of volume five – 'it would not be proper even now to describe all the methods employed to mislead the enemy'[43] – and for good reason. 'Fortitude' lay at the heart of the Ultra secret and it had also spawned an extensive Cold War programme of strategic deception. In the interval between publication of volumes five and six, however, Chester Wilmot published what officials in the Ministry of Defence privately called 'a full and accurate account of Operation Fortitude' in *The Struggle for Europe*. So complete was this that initially the MOD feared an internal leak, until discovering that most of the material came from published sources. The Ministry admitted that 'the fullness of Wilmot's account' made the references to the matter in Churchill's and Eisenhower's memoirs 'look rather jejeune [*sic*]'.[44]

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Much more could be said about the use of signals intelligence in Churchill's war memoirs. But the example of Chester Wilmot serves to underline the central point of this essay. Hints about the Ultra secret were already beginning to seep out and this trickle might easily have become a flood. That it did not was due in large measure to the precedent set by Churchill: Ultra was truly the missing dimension of *The Second World War*. As he said of the denizens of Bletchley Park, it was vital that 'the geese who laid the golden eggs … never cackled'. But it also mattered enormously that the owner of those geese did not boast about their remarkable productivity.

NOTES

The author is grateful to Professor Christopher Andrew and members of the Cambridge University Seminar in Intelligence History for comments on an earlier version of this article.

1 David Dilks (ed.) *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, OM, 1938–1945* (London: Cassell 1971) p.21.
2 F.W. Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1974); Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (London: W.H. Allen 1976); F.H. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations*, 4 vols. (London: HMSO 1977–90). The many other works include David Kahn, *Seizing the Enigma: The Race to Break the German U-Boat Codes, 1939–1943* (London: Souvenir Press 1992); F.H. Hinsley and Alan Stripp (eds.) *Codebreakers: The Inside Story of Bletchley Park* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993); Michael Smith, *Station X: The Codebreakers of Bletchley Park* (London: Macmillan 1998); Ralph Bennett, *Behind the Battle: Intelligence in the War with Germany, 1939–1945*, 2nd edn (London: Pimlico 1999); and Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *Enigma: The Battle for the Code* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2000).
3 Christopher Andrew, 'Churchill and Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security* 3/3 (July 1988) p.181. This article provides a basic introduction on Churchill's use of intelligence, supplemented by David Stafford, *Churchill and Secret Service* (New York: Overlook Press 1997).
4 Smith, *Station X* (note 2) p.78.
5 Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, 6 vols. (London: Cassell 1948–54, and Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1948–53). The British and American editions are separately paginated; for convenience I give page references to both editions, cited respectively as SWW and SWWUS.
6 For fuller discussion see David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin 2004) pp.68–78.
7 Ibid., pp.28–9, 34–5, 54–9.
8 JIC (45) 223 (0), 20 July 1945, and 'AEH' to Hollis, 14/9/45 (JIC/1325/45), in Cabinet Office papers, CAB 103/288 (The National Archives, Kew, Surrey – henceforth TNA).
9 Minutes of meeting in Sir Burke Trend's room, 26 February 1969, DEFE 24/656 (TNA); Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray 2001), p.3. See also Richard J. Aldrich, 'Policing the Past: Official History, Secrecy and British Intelligence since 1945', *English Historical Review* 119/483 (September 2004) pp.922–53.
10 For more detail on this paragraph see Reynolds, *In Command of History* (note 6) pp.24–6, 163.
11 Here I differ from the assertion in Aldrich, 'Policing the Past' (note 9) p.927, that 'Churchill needed no guidance on the need to avoid mentioning *Ultra* and deception'. On the other hand, this article reinforces his central claim that successive British governments 'were able to hide substantial secrets after 1945 and expended considerable resources in offering their carefully packaged versions of the past in order to maintain secrecy' (ibid., p.923).
12 Ismay, notes of 16 February 1947, Ismay papers, 2/3/34C (Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London).
13 Brook to Hubback, 28 January 1948, Cabinet Office papers, CAB 104/282 (TNA).
14 CAB 104/282 (TNA), E.G. Hastings to CSS [Menzies], 3 February 1948.
15 CAB 104/282 (TNA), 'FAD' to Menzies, 10 February 1948.
16 See documents in CAB 21/3749.
17 See Churchill Papers, CHUR 4/196/46-8 (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge – henceforth CAC).
18 Brook, comments of 1 June 1948, p.22, CAB 21/2176. Cf. the original draft in CHUR 4/177/4 with the published version in SWW 2:539.
19 CHUR 4/18/306.
20 CHUR 4/218/112; cf. SWW 3:278 and SWWUS 3:314.
21 CHUR 4/209/22; cf. SWW 3:105 and SWWUS 3:121.

22 CHUR 4/209/73; cf. SWW 3:121 and SWWUS 3:139.
23 CHUR 4/208, fos. 82, 141; cf. SWW 3:96 and SWWUS 3:109.
24 CHUR 4/213, fos. 35, 214; cf. SWW 3:180 and SWWUS 3:204.
25 Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence*, 1:388, 395; Wavell to Churchill, 25 October 1949, CHUR 4/213/10.
26 SWW 3:317–20 and SWWUS 3:354–7.
27 CHUR 4/222, fos. 185, 217, 317. For the raw decrypts see HW 1/3 (TNA).
28 SWW 3:318 and SWWUS 3:355–6; CHUR 4/222/228; cf. Hinsley *et al*. (note 2) 1:429, 476, 482; and Warren F. Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984) 1:216.
29 CHUR 4/217, fos. 302, 321.
30 Churchill to Brook, 7 February 1949, CHUR 4/18/286–7.
31 CHUR 4/217, fos. 94–5, 285a; SWW 3:240 and SWWUS 3:270.
32 Freyberg certainly knew the Ultra secret by 1948. Commenting on a draft Official History of the Crete campaign, he wrote: 'Our intelligence was excellent: without it Crete would have gone much earlier. These accurate estimates came from War Office Intelligence and most secret intercept sources.' Freyberg to Director of Public Relations, War Office, 27 August 1948, CAB 106/761 (TNA); cf. Paul Freyberg, *Bernard Freyberg, VC: Soldier of Two Nations* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1991) esp. pp.268, 284.
33 Freyberg to Churchill, 25 March 1949, CHUR 4/217/18; Anthony Cave Brown, *The Secret Servant: The Life of Sir Stewart Menzies, Churchill's Spymaster* (London: Joseph 1988) pp.338–40; Bennett, *Behind the Battle* (note 2) pp.79–81, 293–6.
34 SWW 3:532 and SWWUS 3:598; CHUR 4/232/486.
35 Correspondence in CHUR 4/20/185–94; also CHUR 4/232/192–3.
36 CHUR 4/20/194.
37 See the judicious analysis in Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000) Ch.5. For 'Wops', used by Churchill to newspaper editors on 22 August 1941, see Cecil H. King, *With Malice toward None: A War Diary*, ed. William Armstrong (London: Sidgwick and Jackson 1970) p.140.
38 Brook, memo, 12 July 1949, CAB 21/2187: WSC, memo, 24 October 1948, Ismay papers (note 12), 2/3/107.
39 For 'other measures' see SWW 4:114 and SWWUS 4:130; the drafts are in CHUR 4/259.
40 SWW 4:469, 541 and SWWUS 4:523, 602; see more generally Reynolds, *In Command of History* (note 6) pp.300–309.
41 CHUR 4/326/153–4. For another example, see the deletions (underlined below) from a minute by the Chiefs of Staff on 6 June 1943 about the rival merits of the Cetniks and the Partisans, which cited 'information available to the War Office from most secret sources' – Chartwell Papers CHAR 20/131/25 (CAC). Final texts of both are in SWW 5:410–11 and SWWUS 5:463–4. See generally John Cripps, 'Mihailovic or Tito? How the Codebreakers Helped Churchill to Choose', in Ralph Erskine and Michael Smith (eds.) *Action This Day* (London: Bantam 2001) pp.237–63.
42 SWW 6:172 and SWWUS 6:197.
43 SWW 5:526 and SWWUS 5:595–6; SWW 6:9–10 and SWWUS 6:10–11.
44 Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London: Collins 1952) pp.199–201; cf. CAB 21/3759, quotations from J.A. Drew to Guy Liddell, 3 November 1952.