

Kashmeri, Zuhair, and Brian McAndrew. *Soft Target: How the Indian Intelligence Service Penetrated Canada*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1989.

What to make of the revelations of discontented security intelligence officers? This is a central question for all students of security intelligence matters. On the one hand, we must be grateful because insiders can provide much-needed information on the operations of such agencies and their occasional abuses of power; on the other, we must be very careful that we are not unwittingly incorporated into a campaign for one particular line on some issue. Being based in the UK one is struck that the events of the last ten years culminating in 1989 in the passage of the Security Service Act and a new Official Secrets Act could not have been the same had not Peter Wright chosen to pursue his campaign regarding the loyalty of Roger Hollis, first via Chapman Pincher and then via *Spycatcher*.

In *Soft Target*, Kashmeri and McAndrew are faced with this central question since, as they make clear at the outset, their primary sources for the book were several members of CSIS, the RCMP, and the Metropolitan Toronto Police who had either "complained of" or were "angry" (p. v) about the events they discuss. Nor do the authors seek to present a dispassionate analysis of the problems faced by police and security intelligence agencies in dealing with serious political violence. Rather they are seeking to make people aware of the injustices suffered by Sikhs; in particular the injustice suffered by the Canadian Sikh community as a result of a remarkably successful campaign of misinformation and manipulation carried out by the Indian intelligence agency - the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

First alerted to the possibility that violence at a Sikh demonstration in Toronto in November 1982 had been caused by Indian *agents provocateur*, the RCMP Security Service took no action because of, it is said, a lack of resources, specifically any Asian agents, the fact that the violence was a criminal matter and the possible political repercussions given India's status as an ally. By later 1984, after the Indian attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the subsequent massacre of Sikhs, CSIS was examining both the potential for Sikh violence and for Indian provocation. By 1986 CSIS had backtracked through the early 80s and gathered further evidence for its hypothesis that the Indian government was behind much of the violence and instability within the Sikh community. When it passed these conclusions to the Department of External Affairs, however, the Department took no action, specifically because a Canadian corporation was bidding for a massive pipeline contract in India. Once the bid had failed, a number of Indian diplomats, who had been identified by CSIS as CBI agents, were quietly removed from Canada and by 1987 efforts were being made to secure an information-sharing agreement between CSIS and the CBI's Research and Analysis Wing.

This is a brief summary of the authors' entirely plausible and well-researched argument, but how is it to be evaluated? Part of the strength of the

argument lies in the fact that most of it is entirely consistent with what is known more generally about the operations of foreign and domestic intelligence agencies. First, intelligence agencies do not observe the diplomatic niceties and may indeed be operating covertly within the territory of allied states. Therefore, to the extent that the Canadian government did not perceive India as a threat, there was no need for the Indian intelligence service to “penetrate” Canada (as the subtitle of the book suggests) if one takes the term as implying a need to overcome resistance. Second, states will seek to discredit their internal opponents whether they are acting at home or abroad; the British misinformation campaigns in Northern Ireland in the 1970s are an example of this. Given the ferocity of India’s military and police actions against Sikhs in the Punjab it is hardly surprising that the CBI was also employing various countering methods against the Canadian Sikhs — disinformation, informers, *agents provocateur*, etc. Whether the authors present conclusive evidence that the Indian government was responsible for the bombing of Air India flight 182 which killed 329, and for the bomb at Narita airport which killed two baggage handlers in June 1985 is more doubtful.

The weakness of their methodology is the same as the weakness of some intelligence methodologies themselves. They are frequently dominated by the accumulation of *confirmatory* evidence once a hypothesis is formed, while evidence which contradicts the original hypothesis may be ignored or downgraded. There is a difference, of course, between the position of intelligence officers and these authors, or indeed, other writers on intelligence. The former may, as in this case (pp. 60-61), have so much information that they are overwhelmed; then the importance of forming an initial hypothesis is that without it there is no way to work logically through the mass of raw information. The latter are more often faced with a shortage of information and that which they have might have been provided to them highly selectively, so that they do not even have that information which might disconfirm the hypothesis. But in either case the result might be the same: the construction of a coherent but false argument. Therefore any conclusion as to who was responsible for the bombing of flight 182 must await a much more thorough inquiry which could examine both of the dominant hypotheses — that pursued most clearly by the RCMP, that is, that Sikhs were responsible (p. 109), and that developed by some in CSIS, that is, that the Indian government was.

Nevertheless, there remains much of interest here for the student of the interface between policing and intelligence. First is the problem of “turf wars” between the agencies and the conflicting demands of the police/prosecution process with those of the intelligence process. For example, when the RCMP arrested Parmar and Reyat (the suspects in the Narita airport bombing) in November 1985, CSIS would have preferred to continue accumulating information for its own hypothesis. Second is the relation between security intelligence agencies and executive departments of the government. Kashmeri and McAndrew’s sources cannot be the first intelligence officers to have been frustrated by the late or lack of action taken on the basis of their intelligence. Third, to judge from the authors’ reconstruction of the situation at Vancouver

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and Toronto airports on 22 June 1985 (pp. 66-69), the physical security in place to prevent bombs from being placed on aircraft is of much greater significance than information gathering, however sophisticated.

Finally, to conclude that either police or security intelligence working methods are necessarily superior would be wrong. For however well these authors argue the superiority of CSIS's more sophisticated hypothesis, they note also that CSIS became "bogged down in a sea of overwhelming contradictions" (p. 108) and got lost "deeper and deeper in its maze of information." (p. 109) The simplest solution to a problem is often correct. Therefore, the significance of this book is in its effective presentation of an alternative hypothesis to that which was dominant in the immediate aftermath of the Air India bombings — the only way to resolve the debate will be the kind of inquiry which is, fortunately, much more likely to occur in Canada than in the UK!

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Beaumont, Roger. *Special Operations and Elite Units, 1939-1988: A Research Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1988.

Dear, Ian. *Ten Commando: 1942-1945*. New York: St. Martin's, 1987.

Not since World War II have special operations and elite units been accorded the status or resources they enjoy today in the US defense establishment. On 1 October 1990 the unified 35,000-man (active and reserve) US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), established by Congress in 1987, assumed direct control of the \$3 billion special operations budget currently divided among the army, air force, and navy. Thereafter, USSOCOM will be in a position to set budgetary priorities affecting all special operations forces and programs (including procurement) for fiscal years 1992 to 1998 under a Congressionally-mandated annual growth rate of approximately six to eight percent.

This revitalization of American special operations capabilities — at a time of defense cutback and retrenchment — was not easily achieved. USSOCOM was first conceived after the debacle at "Desert One" (the failed mission to rescue the 53 Americans held hostage in Teheran) in 1980; but the unified command was not created for another seven years. In between, a series of deadly terrorist attacks on American targets overseas between 1983 and 1985 provided needed additional impetus, while underscoring that, despite its supremacy as a global nuclear and conventional military power, the US was incapable of effectively responding to international terrorist attacks and provocation.