

# Europe or the US? Britain must



By William Pfaff

*The British government and political class assume that their rival American and European relationships can be managed without drama, but this may not remain true*

THE message of the Butler Report and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has been the same. The British and American intelligence services have been compromised and politicised.

Their findings on Iraq were edited to deliver the conclusions Prime Minister and President wanted, justifying an invasion the two had already decided on.

Criticism has in the past focused on the issue of deliberate bias or lies introduced into the evidence by interested ideological or exile groups. But more pernicious in the end was probably the analytical distortion produced by the conventional wisdom.

Lies risk being challenged and discredited. The conventional wisdom carries no risk for the person who invokes it. It has become what 'everybody knows'.

The conventional wisdom of Western intelligence before Iraq's invasion was that

Saddam Hussein possessed chemical and biological weapons, and an active programme for acquiring nuclear weapons.

Chemical weapons were not a great success during the Iran-Iraq war, although used by Saddam against passive civilian populations inside Iraq.

His government tried to develop nuclear weapons before the Gulf war, presumably for deterrent purposes, and for prestige and blackmail (since no non-suicidal scenario was ever offered for their offensive use by Iraq; and while the Ba'ath leadership did stupid things it never gave sign of a self-destructive tendency: quite the contrary).

✓ This history automatically led intelligence agencies after the Gulf war in 1991 to think that despite UN strictures and inspections, Saddam would go on pursuing a deterrent weapon. That he would give it all up seemed unlikely. But 'seemed' is not an intelligence finding.

The consensus that prevailed in Western intelligence agencies contributed to their reciprocal 'intoxication' of one another, as Jacques Chirac remarked. Chirac has been in office long enough to take a disabused if not cynical view of anything he is told.

The institutional damage of this affair for the Secret Intelligence Service and the CIA is great. The relationship between the two is an old one. The SIS launched modern American intelligence. It has remained ever since in a troubling superiority/dependency relationship with its rich transatlantic 'cousins'.

Beginning with the carefully managed visit to Britain in July 1940, as President Roosevelt's special envoy, of the New York lawyer William

J 'Wild Bill' Donovan, British intelligence fostered and educated the US intelligence and political warfare organisation that Donovan, on Roosevelt's orders, established in 1941.

SIS showed its new cousins some of its secrets and trained American recruits to the American OSS. It reached an agreement on dividing the world for secret intelligence

Europeans assume that if Bush is given a new mandate, international affairs will continue to be dominated by an American government with unilateralist, pre-emptive and politically utopian policies. They conclude that events will deepen existing tension and divisions between the US and Europe, and that the argument that puts forward the shared values of Americans and Europeans would no longer be convincing

operations, excluding the Americans from most secret intelligence work in Europe and establishing strict rules of protocol.

The cold war, American money and muscle — and the Cambridge spies plus George Blake — changed this, making the SIS increasingly a subcontractor to the CIA. It nonetheless remained the only friendly global intelligence network, and brains sometimes trumped money and brute force.

At some point, probably recent, probably as a consequence of the shift in American policy after 9/11 and the decision of Tony Blair to back to the hilt George W Bush's ill-defined and open-ended 'war on terror', the intelligence relationship took a disastrous tip.

Each side began to reinforce the other's mistakes, and to feed one another's needs to supply intelligence findings that reinforced the preconceptions and rationalised the actions of a Prime Minister and a President who had already decided to go to war.

The findings that were supplied have since blown up in their faces, to their considerable

political disadvantage. There had been, in fact if not intention, a collaborative intelligence corruption. Had the London-Washington intelligence intimacy been less, the scramble to please would not have enjoyed transatlantic reinforcement; the dissidents in the two agencies would have been less easily dismissed, and the final output closer to the truth. Many now dead might be alive, and much misery avoided.

The Senate Committee report findings have made it possible for Bush to say he went wrong only because he believed what the CIA told him. Now George Tenet is gone, CIA reforms will make it impossible for this to happen again. The November voter can be reassured.

It is not so simple government, and this from the affair. Until has had a high reputation in Western Europe and elsewhere.

Butler's citation of Downing Street (and its qualifications) that says 'open to doubt', 'withdrawn as unreliable', its 'eye-catching' and damaged the SIS reputation and political integrity.

This is important connected to Britain's European Union. Euro is an intelligence service important international British armed services commands in Europe.

The debate anti-British referendum on (and euro membership towards a final decision commitment to the EU).

The British government continue to assume that European relationships drama, but this may not.

The policies of Tony Blair's resolute leadership have undermined many Europeans. The election day in November the Euro-American relationship.

They assume that mandate, international