THE "FUTURE IS BRIGHT" TURNED TO TWILIGHT. AMERICAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN THE 20s

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Abstract. The US military intelligence underwent major changes in World War I, manifested by the start of a growing process - carried out under fire, and based, especially, on cooperation with its European allies. Traditionally, the American establishment did not pay much attention to military intelligence, which was activated, punctually, during the wars, only to be ignored afterwards. The situation continued for over a century and a half, and the old story would, of course, repeat itself at the end of World War I. Despite the general optimism, which became, in fact, a feature of the new era, expressed also at the level of the military intelligence command, which foresaw "a bright future" for the field, things did not evolve at all in that direction. Unleashed by the war, America sought, first of all, to return as soon as possible to "the good old days". For the military intelligence, this would not mean anything good.

Keywords: army, counter-intelligence, interwar, millitary intelligence, society

1. The relevance of the topic and the role of this approach

The major evolutions registered in the social plan in the modern epoch have substantiated, at the same time, structural reconceptualizations at the level of various state institutions, consisting in the stratification of their activities and, by this, conducting to the acquisition of new functional attributions. These manifestations were also registered within the army, through the crystallization of new organisms, among which, of interest, in this case, for our presentation, are those of secret intelligence.

Such entities have manifested themselves many times actively in the transformation of history, but the revelation of these realities has long been an aspect ignored by historians (although an important topic of discussion should also aim to clarify to what extent we can talk in some cases about the concealment of the role played by the intelligence structures).

This situation was first highlighted by two English historians, Christopher Andrew and David Dilks, who drew attention in the preface to the book *The Missing Dimension. Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century*, on the fact that

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this area, the secret intelligence, was practically absent from the "*most political and much military history*"[1], which was also true in terms of diplomatic history, as had been pointed out earlier[2]. Next, in the same work that became a reference, the two historians explain: "*The great danger of any missing historical dimension is that its absence may distort our understanding of other, accessible dimensions*"[3]. Here are two significant examples put forward by them: "*The Franks Committee clearly felt it impossible to produce a balanced assessment of the 1982 Falklands conflicts without access to intelligence files […] Since 1973, the revelations of the Ultra secret has changed our understanding of the Second World War*"[4].

Proof of an adequate knowledge of this "missing dimension", as it was described, circumscribed to the notion of secret intelligence, is also considered to be a necessary and mandatory condition for the understanding of the various historical events that took place especially in modern times, when the role of these structures began to substantially grow. At the same time, an important aspect is the knowledge of the functioning framework of these institutions, including from an evolutionary perspective.

For the accomplishment of such an approach, this paper aims to expose the situation in the US military intelligence after the World War I.

We will notice that American society was eager to return to the isolationism of the past, while for the governmental establishment there was an opposite opportunity: the entry of the United States on the international stage and its transformation into a great power. However, it was traditionalism that prevailed, and the United States did not take decisive steps in this new direction, choosing instead of the opening to the world to return to itself. This attitude also had some large and hard consequences for American military intelligence, which had begun to truly function, in the modern sense, during the World War I.

2. The Menaces to the American Society in the Roaring Twenties

The end of the world conflagration, where almost 115.000 American soldiers died, opened for the American society, probably, the fastest period of change and development it has recorded in history. The most faithful mirror of that era, the Roaring Twenties, characterized by an unprecedented consumerism, widely known by the triumph of the jazz, but also by the expansion of the Mafia / organized crime, and the prohibition of alcohol, remains F. Scott Fitzgerald's literary masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925.

With a population, mostly urban, of more than 106 million inhabitants, according to data from the 1920 census, with remarkable industrial potential, the United States came out of the war without knowing the destructions suffered by European allies. Americans were eager to return to "the good old days," so the majority opinion in society was the future disengagement from Europeans and their possible conflicts: "*The United States is the world's best hope, but… if you tangle her in the intrigues of Europe, you will destroy her power for good and endanger her very existence*"[5], warned, for example, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, one of the many political opponents of the United States government, that intended that time to play an active role on the international stage.

Until the dangers coming from outside, American society would know, very quickly, the internal ones: the explosion of radical movements, especially anarchists and communists, encouraged by the victorious Revolution that had taken place in Russia, in November 1917. American society has since begun to feel a growing threat, expressively called *"Red Scare"*, which shows as clearly as possible the mood of the time[6]. Not in vain: in April 1919, the American authorities discovered a conspiracy aimed at carrying out bombings on no less than 36 prominent people in the political and economic establishment, including US Attorney General Alexander M. Palmer, John D Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan Jr., and many others; then, in June 1919, eight simultaneous bombings took place in several American cities, one of which was again targeted to the US General Attorney. He soon ordered the so-called "Palmer Raids", which took place in November 1919 and in January 1921. These huge raids led to the deportation of a considerable number of Russian immigrants, namely 249 individuals, including the well-known anarchist Emma Goldman. All were boarded on the US ship Buford, nicknamed in the American press "the Soviet Ark", and sent to Russia[7].

This landscape was complemented by far-right groups with vehement anti-communist and anti-immigrant speeches and demonstrations, notably the revitalization of the older racist Ku Kux Klan, which continued to pursue under the old goal of "*100 Percent Americanism*", to target "*blacks, Roman Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and foreigners of any kind*"[8].

The same Roaring Twenties led to an unprecedented expansion of organized crime, which found the best opportunities to make huge profits from alcohol smuggling, under its ban. An epoch that marked the birth of American gangsterism and "crime syndicates", it had in the first category, leading individuals such as George "Baby Face" Nelson, Enoch "Nucky" Jonson, Bonnie and Clyde, and in the second especially Al Capone, the dreaded godfather who dominated the American underworld in the first interwar decade, as the leader of one of the great organized crime networks ("Chicago Outfit" / "South Side Gang")[9].

3. The Short, Stormy Lives of American Military Intelligence

A retrospective look at the American military intelligence shows, first of all, its discontinuous character, which manifested itself for over a century and a half, more precisely since the Revolution and beyond the World War I. Throughout this time, the army's top commanders, as well as the War Department, continued to view intelligence matters as a kind of an accessory, a garment of bad weather, which can be worn fairly quickly when needed, then thrown away altogether, or, at best, forgotten in a closet.

The American primacy of individual freedom over the state, which is one of the fundamental principles on which the New World was built, has manifested itself strongly every time, thus pushing for decades the establishment of a permanent secret institution that could have acted against its own citizens.

The main moments of activity performed by the American military intelligence units,   until the beginnings of the United States assertion as a world power, after the World War I, link their maximum functioning to the armed conflicts carried out on the American soil, starting with the War of Independence. Therefore,

within them, the emphasis was primarily placed on the combat intelligence function, rather than the anticipatory one, and by this limited to obtaining a thorough knowledge of the opponent's abilities.

The first American military intelligence structures had operated in the armies led by General G. Washington, a person with a special appreciation for such activities. At its level, in 1776, an intelligence and reconnaissance unit was established, known as the Knowtlon Rangers, and in which the young professor Nathan Hale would stand out, in particular. Its capture and hanging by the British unfortunately did not set the beginning of the American military intelligence under the best auspices. Instead, it substantiated a new attempt by the same Washington, which led to the creation of the Continental Secret Service, with a notable success this time, as the historians observed[10].

After the end of the war, the army was considerably reduced, playing a decorative role, and the intelligence unit even ceased to function. This particular situation was perpetuated for a long time, so that at the beginning of the American-Mexican War of 1845, the War Department could not say "*if wagon transportation would be usable in Mexico*"[11]. Even in the Civil War, which took place between 1861-1865, no major changes were recorded, which led to the following finding regarding the role played by military intelligence: "*No great battles were won or lost or evaded because of superior intelligence. Intelligence operations were limited for the most part [...]*"[12]

It was not until 1885 that the foundations were laid for what would later become known as the Military Information Division (MID) of the Miscellaneous Branch of the Adjutant General's Office, which initially operated with two people - an officer and a clerk[13]. According to the new tasks entrusted to them, they had to obtain information about the foreign armies, from the American embassies and, probably, from various newspaper articles.

The start had been given two years earlier by the Navy, which had set up an intelligence structure in its Bureau of Navigation. According to the founding act, signed by William H. Hunt, Secretary of the Navy, the purpose of the new intelligence structure was as follows: "*collecting and recording such naval information as may be useful to the department in time of war, as well as in peace*"[14].

In 1889, Congress approved the first permanent system of military attachés, which would significantly strengthen the intelligence activity of the US Army. According to a representative work of history, which was published under the auspices of the US Army, military attachés became "*the backbone of the national peacetime foreign intelligence effort until about 1940*"[15].

Returning to the MID, the new intelligence unit managed to achieve a series of significant results during the Spanish-American War of 1898. These took place both operationally, for example, through information on the movements of Spanish army troops, and analytically, through the preparation of studies, such as the situation on the ground and the weather in Cuba, which substantiated appropriate decisions at the command level[16].

In 1903, the Congress authorization of the first general staff in the Army brought new changes to the MID, which was now separated from Adjutant General's Department and became the "Second Division" of the General Staff, known as "G2".

The developments in the following years were not the best for this structure, which was relocated in 1908 to the War College Division and considered a "commitee" of it. The result was summarized as follows: "in practice no intelligence work was done from 1908 to 1915"[17].

The United States' entry into World War I found the field of military intelligence totally unprepared, with lack of personal, and expertise - which was, of course, not a surprise. In order to remedy this situation, the respective attributions were quickly assigned to each battalion by setting up an Intelligence Service group. At the same time, within the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), a formation created in June 1917, consisting of the American armed forces that were sent to fight in Europe with allies, the Corps of Intelligence Police (CIP) was established, with counterintelligence powers. To these was added the Radio Intelligence Section, known as G2A6, as well as air reconnaissance units[18].

4. Some Perceptions of the American Intelligence Staff after the Great War

The operational successes that the American military intelligence managed to register (despite an almost total lack of expertise, as it has been shown before), as well as their substantial role in the victories obtained on the battlefield, outlined them immediately after the end of the terrible world conflagration, a future that seemed, rightly, not only solid, but, above all, undoubted and necessary.

The mistakes of the past, manifested more than once, by perpetuating for decades in a row the disinterest of decisionmakers to maintain in the best shape the intelligence structures of the armed forces, as well as the need to expand awareness of new threats represented, in particular, by the outbreak of the Bolshevik ideological revolution, with world ambitions, amply justified the expectations of the young US intelligence field, if not to consolidate it, then at least in terms of maintaining these structures, as well as their professionalism, in order to be able to respond to new situations and challenges.

Among the first to speak in this direction, highlighting the special utility, necessity and role of the respective entities, was the head of military intelligence, RalphVan Deman. Immediately after the signing of the armistice by the Central Powers, he wanted to imagine what he called a "*bright future*"[19] for the CIP, based on the successes of this unit in the war. At the same time, however, General Van Deman sounded the alarm about demobilization, seen as a negative factor in maintaining capabilities at an optimal level.

A relevant example that illustrates the forecasts of intelligence activity at the command level, is provided by General Marlborough Churchill, Van Deman's successor as director of military intelligence, who stated the following in a statement that he made in 1920: "*At present, the Military Intelligence Division is one of four coordinated divisions of the General Staff. This staff organization is essential to success. It is especially vital in intelligence administration, [since] it is obvious that national policy must depend on correct predictions concerning the international future [or, in short] there must be a G2 in the War Department [just as in a combat unit] performing a similar function, not only with the War Plans Division in the initiation and perfection of plans, but concurrently with the State Department in the work of prediction upon which national policy is based*"[20].   The prospects claimed by General

Marlborough Churchill hinted at a significant increase in the role of military intelligence in the American security ensemble. Moreover, this statement of the high military chief would constitute "*one of the first statements recognizing the role of military intelligence in national, strategic planning*"[21].

At the same time, other high-ranking representatives of the American military intelligence were beginning to show some caution or even fear about the immediate future of this field. For example, General Dennis E. Nolan, chief intelligence officer for the AEF, under General John J. Pershing, expressed feelings in this range, during a series of training sessions that were organized at the level of War Department G2, in the winter of 1920.

Anticipating exactly the immediate future of military intelligence, Nolan put it this way: *"My fear is that in the pressure of many things, claiming time for training, our Army may lapse into the pre-war days in its attitude toward the whole question of combat intelligence and that information regarding the enemy for our tactical problems and in our maneuvers will be based on the old and easy assumption that all information needed of the enemy is obtained from an enemy inhabitant"*[22].

5. American Military Intelligence in the First Interwar Decade

In the following, it will be presented the reference elements that were registered at the level of American military intelligence structures, in the first decade of the interwar period. The initial predictions about them, expressed immediately after the end of the World War I, when everybody was overflowing with enthusiasm, soon became less and less optimistic, only to later see a completely different evolution.

The Corps of Intelligence Police (CIP), which was established, as we have shown, in the AEF, experienced after the demobilization a drastic decrease in personnel. This way, from over 600 individuals, as it had at the end of the World War I, reached to only 18, existing in January 1920[23].

The attributions of CIP in the new environment setteled after the war were, primarily, defined in the spring of 1921, as follows: "*All individuals who might be suspected of operating against the Military Establishment were to be closely observed*"[24], as mentioned in a monography published under the auspices of the Counter Intelligence Police Corps School. At the same time, according to the same paper[25], the War Department had also entrusted CIP with the responsibility of reporting on radical activities in the political and industrial spheres, which it began to do only a few years later, as the Chief of Staff apparently did not agree with this new task.

In fact, the lack of staff prevented CIP from carrying out its tasks, although it could have done so, probably quite successfully, being able to employ (theoretically, of course) sufficient human resources that had gained expertise during the war. It did not happen.

Despite the hard realities that included an unprecedented rise in organized crime, as well as the FBI's inability to respond adequately to all these threats on American soil, proper organization and action levers for the CIP's intelligence structure continued to be expected. Only in 1926, a series of projects were drawn up that showed the need to increase the number of staff at the CIP level, and the functions of the unit were presented more clearly. Again, it did not happen. The

projections did not materialize, moreover, in the same year, 1926, a new decrease of the CIP staff took place, which came to count only 26 individuals. The trend continued, unfortunately, and in November 1933 the CIP held 15 people[26].

Only the profiling of the new threats posed, in particular, by the growing hostility of Japan, have led to the expansion of this structure.

The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), operationalized in the Navy in 1882, also underwent radical changes in the interwar period, both in terms of size and responsibilities. Of the more than 300 people it had in 1918, ONI was left with about 40, and their activities also decreased significantly. Moreover, they were subscribed to a new functional paradigm at the ONI level, according to which it dealt "*primarily with strategic subjects and to a lesser extent with tactics and logistics*"[27].

At least in theory, the fundamental task of the ONI was to obtain and produce "*evaluated information about all foreign ships*", but organizational instability and lack of staff and funds were major impediments to fulfilling this mission. Thus, during the 1920s, then in the following decade, the Foreign Branch of ONI "*apparently concerned itself more with secondary objectives, such as military, political, economic, and sociological intelligence, which could have been provided by the Military Intelligence Service, the Department of State, the Department of Commerce, and other government agencies*"[28]. With regard to major security threats that came to strongly challenge the American national security settlement, a strong focus of the ONI, especially in the 1930s, was on Japan, which began to assert itself more and more as a hostile naval power, with imperialist pretensions[29].

The cryptological activity, which registered a special use and development during the war, especially in the European part, was carried out on American soil by a new entity[30]. Known as "The American Black Chamber," this new structure, tasked with breaking foreign diplomatic codes, was established in the spring of 1919, and was led by Herbert O. Yardley, Van Deman's former chief of cryptologists. During the Paris Peace Conference from 1919, the young Lieutenant Yardley in the Signal Corps (which had already been in Europe since August 1918, where he was sent to deepen his cryptological knowledge with the Allied), supported the American Delegation.

Back in the United States, the ambitious cryptologist presented the State Department and War Department government decision-makers with the opportunity to engage him "*in a peacetime, strategic cryptological operation - the famous American Black Chamber in New York City*"[31]. What determined American officials to agree to such an unprecedented operation in peacetime? In his book, which has become a bestseller, Yardley offers a direct, unpretentious answer in this regard, stating: "*[...] officials in all departments recognized that in no other way could the United States obtain an intimate knowledge of the true sentiments and intentions of other nations. They recognized that all the Great Powers maintained Ciphers Bureaus, and if the United States was to be placed on an equal footing it would be necessary to finance a group of skilled cryptographers*"[32].

The establishment of the new cryptological institution was a first for the American system, highlighting Washington's determination to abandon the well-known isolationist doctrine and thus claim an active place on the international stage, alongside the great European powers. To achieve this goal, the American establishment has become aware of the need to have a powerful tool that will give it,

in advance, the necessary knowledge. Significant for the new cryptological entity under Yardley's leadership is its placement in a clandestine register, unassumed by state authorities.

Regarding these issues, Yardley writes in his book: "*All the emplyees, including myself, were now civilians on secret pay-roll. The rent, telephone, lights, heat, office supplies - everything war paid for secretly so that no connection could be traced to the government*"[33] . Continuing this unusual presentation, Yardley summarizes the essence of the activity, as well as the possible undesirable consequences: "*We were to read the secret code cipfer diplomatic telegrams of foreign governments - by such means as we could. If we were caught, it would be just too bad!*"[34]

In a short time, the results appeared. The first of these, mentioned by Yardley, was the decoding of a message revealing espionage activities carried out in Europe by Soviet agents. The creation of the team led by Yardley would have produced "*a sensation among the officials in Washington*"[35], according to his statements. But the best-known success remains the settlement of the Japanese diplomatic code, rapidly exploited by the American government during the Naval Armament Conference, which took place in Washington, in November 1921-January 1921, with the aim of "*limiting the tonnage of capital ships by a ratio among the five great powers: the United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy*"[36].

In this context, Yardley's men would have transmitted to American decision-makers "*some five thousand deciphered Japanese messages which contained the secret instructions of the Japanese Delegates*"[37], aspect that, at the end of several months of negotiations, substantiated the achievement of the objectives pursued by the American side.

The entity led by Yardley continued to operate, with other notable successes, until the spring of 1929, when the new Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, found it necessary, "*in an excess of morality,*"[38] as shown in literature, to close this cryptological structure, because, in his opinion, "*Gentlemen do not read each other's mail*"[39].

Beyond the categorical opinion expressed by the political factor, the need for such an entity in the new security environment had already been fully proven, so that its tasks were taken over by the Army: on May 10, 1929, even before the dismissal of Yardley, Army Signal Corps, initially tasked with developing codes for the military and later planning signal intelligence operations in wartime, were transformed into the Signal Intelligence Service (SIS), receiving new responsibilities, under which it was to deal - again - with foreign diplomatic codes[40].

Regarding the organization and functioning of this structure, it is to notice, first of all, its delocalized character, a premiere in the American Army, imposed by the specificity of the activities carried out. Thus, while its analysts were all in Washington, the interception services were provided by the 1st Radio Intercept Company in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and by the interception stations of five other companies located in Texas, California, in the Canal Zone, Hawaii. and in the Philippine Islands[41]. As for the activity entrusted to this new cryptological service, the literature also noted that it was the first in the War Department to experience a development, due to the increase in hostility of both Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany[42].

Aerial Surveillance, which gained significant merits in World War I, has experienced, like other intelligence activities, a drastic reduction. The banner was held by George Goddard, a graduate of the Army Aerial Photography Course, organized at Cornell University in 1918. According to a paper dedicated to the field, "*Goddard, more than any other man, molded the photo-reconnaissance effort in its thirty years from 1920 to 1950*"[43]

As head of aerial photographic research, he has led a number of projects in the US military, such as infrared and long-range photography, special cameras for long-range reconnaissance, plans for aircraft to be used only for photo-reconnaissance work, image interpretation techniques, procedures for night aerial photography, whose usefulness would prove extremely important during the World War II[44].

6. Conclusion

Both the lesson of World War I, in which the American military intelligence were in their period of "infancy" and entered unprepared, as shown in a paper on their short history, as well as the challenges and threats of security plan, especially from the anarchist groups, justified from the command of these services their consolidation and expansion.

However, the American political establishment preferred to put them again to a dead end, continuing the older tradition according to which military intelligence has a decorative role in peacetime, quite far from what the old Roman saying goes: "Si vis pace, para bellum." At the same time, despite the intentions to assert itself on the new international stage, fervently supported by the president W. Wilson, the initiator of the United Nations League, the United States has finally chosen not to get involved in the endless European problems that both society and the overseas political class considered far too difficult, and destructive.

In this complex and complicated register, the American military intelligence continued to operate with limited resources, both humanly and logistically. Last but not least, their functional framework was insufficiently regulated. However, these were the last years for military intelligence structures to experience such a state of affairs, as the second interwar decade would bring major changes.

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