

LURID IMAGINATIONS OF SHOW TRIAL PROSECUTORS

The acquittal (this week) of all seven of the defendants in the Cyprus spy trial has left the government and the prosecution with egg all over its face. The spy base has been a continual embarrassment to the government, reports DUNCAN CAMPBELL — who, eight years ago, with Crispin Aubrey conducted an unpublished interview with a former Corporal John Berry from the base. In the consequent ABC (Aubrey, Berry and Campbell) Official Secrets Act trial, he became the first person to be taken to the Old Bailey accused (and acquitted) of spying on the Army's 9 Signal Regiment. *Research by Patrick Forbes*

EXCEPTIONAL SECRECY always surrounds 'sigint' activities. All staff have to be specially vetted and 'indoctrinated' before being allowed to handle 'special intelligence'.

This 'indoctrination' stresses that the need for total secrecy about sigint 'never ceases'. But the information involved in sigint in fact ranges from inconsequential records of radio signals which anyone can receive to the fruits of codebreaking, say, the diplomatic cyphers of a country like France or Italy. The prosecution in the case that collapsed this week failed to point out that, even if the alleged losses of documents in Cyprus had been proved, they would have been low level, unanalysed 'intercepts' of little or no security significance.

Sigint 'tasks' are always conducted in isolated compartments. Those involved are forbidden to discuss their work even with 'cleared' colleagues not engaged on the same task. Junior operatives, such as the seven defendants, with no access to analysis or to top-level codebreaking information have little capacity to damage national security, even if they wish to. Nothing like the havoc wreaked by Geoffrey Prime, the proven Soviet spy recently uncovered inside GCHQ itself, was remotely possible.

Yet the opposite impression was deliberately created by the prosecution, who at the start of the case referred to 'incalculable' damage, and by the fact that most of the trial was conducted *in camera*.

The prosecution also skated over the fact that 9 Signal Regiment's main intelligence targets are not the supposedly hostile Soviet Union and its allies, but neutral countries and even NATO allies. The 'targetting' of NATO allies, like Turkey, was explained during the ABC trial by a former 9 Signal Regiment commanding officer, Colonel Hugh Johnstone: 'Friends don't always stay the same... There's a perfectly legitimate reason for the British to be extremely concerned in what is happening. [We] try to stay one jump ahead of the game'. But, he said, if the Russians found out that we were intercepting Turkish national military communications and could understand what was said it would be 'disruptive... the Turks are our allies in NATO and one of the main bastions of the southern flank' he said. It would cause a 'variety of altercations' for Britain to be

caught spying on them.

It was claimed by the prosecution in the ABC case that the disclosures by former 9 Signal Regiment intelligence analyst John Berry, if true, revealed 'the fact that [intercepting the Turkish Navy] was one of our tasks and that we were able to read traffic on Turkish naval nets'. In fact, the information Berry disclosed about Turkish naval moves to invade Cyprus had come from the *Daily Telegraph* — a striking reminder that what the Sigint community believes to be secret may not be secret at all.

FROM THE START of the case that ended this week, it was admitted that the prosecution could not corroborate their claim that documents had actually been leaked. Hundreds of Secret and Top Secret documents are created and destroyed every week in Sigint units. Keeping track of them all is so difficult that disappearances of Top Secret documents are more common at GCHQ stations than in any other government department. If the defendants 'confessed' that they had removed documents from the classified waste 'burn

bags', there is no way that this claim could be physically proved — or disproved.

The prosecution claimed that over 2,000 Secret and Top Secret sigint documents had been taken from the Ayios Nikolaos base — implying that, by February 1983, the defendants were making off with an astonishing 20 secret documents every week. But, apart from three sheets of carbon paper, the Crown case was entirely based on alleged confessions.

Nor was the prosecution able to show that any leaked information had actually reached the Soviet Union or other potential enemy. The prosecution's claim was in fact based on a logical fallacy: the correct test for classifying a document as Top Secret is that, if it leaks, 'grave damage' to the national interest is likely. It does not follow, however, that grave damage *does* occur, if there is a leak, for many documents are grossly 'overclassified'.

A gigantic amount of information and paper is produced daily in sigint operations rooms — and every bit of it is highly classified, whatever its intrinsic importance. Everything — even pasted-up newspaper cuttings — is classified at

9 SIGNALS OFFICERS' MURKY PAST

THE CYPRUS trial hung entirely on accusations about the relationship on one defendant, Geoffrey Jones, with a Filipino singer and on whether he ever talked with her about his work.

Less than three years before, both the commanding officer and the senior NCO in 9 Signals Regiment — Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony Seward (below, going into his court-martial) and



Regimental Sergeant Major Charles Gledhill — were caught in smuggling and theft rackets. Seward

operated a profitable private hire and retail service dealing in British Army equipment and supplies, trading amongst others with the Turkish occupation forces in Cyprus — one of his intelligence targets.

Despite a GCHQ security rule, of which the prosecution frequently reminded the RAF trial jury, that any corruption or sexual 'unorthodoxy' is automatically a major security risk, the army went to considerable lengths to avoid court-martialling Colonel Seward and only did so after Chris Price MP protested about the injustice of court-martialling only the RSM who did his dirty work for him. Seward was subsequently convicted and jailed.

Seward's predecessor but one as Commanding Officer of 9 Signals Regiment, Colonel Hugh Johnstone, achieved notoriety in 1978 as the 'anonymous' witness — 'Colonel B' — in the ABC Official Secrets Act trial. In 1983, Seward's successor at Ayios Nikolaos, Lieutenant-Colonel Tony Boyle, was selected as the Army's nominee for Britain's first man in space. But his hopes of being an astronaut left orbit in June 1984, when sigint operators were sent to face trial at the Old Bailey. ●

EAVESDROPPERS ON A DUSTY PLAIN

ACTT General Secretary Alan Sapper and former journalists' president Denis MacShane visit the Ayios Nikolaos base of 9 Signal Regiment during the ABC trial in 1978



THE ARMY'S 9th Signal Regiment is based at Ayios Nikolaos ('St Nicholas' in Greek), near Famagusta in Cyprus. 9 Signal Regiment is the Mediterranean Field Intercept Station for Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in Cheltenham, Britain's largest intelligence agency.

Ayios Nikolaos is station number UKM257 in the Anglo-American network of monitoring stations, and is targeted against the communications of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern states, including the secret diplomatic and military communications of Libya, Egypt, and Iraq, as well as NATO allies Italy, Greece and Turkey. Other top targets are Saudi Arabia, the Lebanon, Syria, and naval and aircraft movements in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly by the Soviet Union. The results of these eavesdropping activities are not normally shared with NATO allies.

Some signals are also intercepted from Israel and Iran. Information is routinely exchanged with a network of nearby US Air Force and National Security Agency monitoring bases, principally Heraklion in Crete, San Vito dei Normanni near Brindisi in Italy, and Karamursel in Turkey. Only at the US network of monitoring bases in Turkey — including one secretly run jointly with the UK — is the main target the Soviet Union.

Electronic eavesdropping in the Middle East started during the First World War, for the business of monitoring radio signals began as soon as radio was invented. 9 Signals' predecessors in 1916 were equipped with crystal sets to intercept Turkish signals at Gallipoli and in the Dardanelles. The unit's

first permanent base was in Sarafand, Palestine, in 1923, where it remained as the 2nd Special Wireless Regiment ('Special' meaning spying as opposed to communicating) for the next 24 years. After the end of the British mandate in Palestine in 1947, it moved to Ayios Nikolaos, a dusty plain four miles west of the eastern Cyprus port of Famagusta. It was soon joined by the RAF's ear on the Middle East, 33 Signals Unit from Habbiniyah in Iraq, which set up next door at Pergamos. The RAF and Army units were finally merged in the late 1970s.

The regiment is unique in the British Army. It is made up of Intelligence Corps personnel, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force analysts and radio operators, and civilian monitoring staff from GCHQ's 'Composite Signal Organisation'. The far better pay, conditions, and laxer discipline of the civilian staff of the Regiment are a constant source of friction between them and military personnel.

The unit is subdivided into three numbered squadrons. 1 Squadron provides the administration and maintenance of the base; 2 Squadron are the radio operators, who receive, and tape or transcribe radio signals. Theirs is a relatively unskilled craft compared to the personnel of 3 Squadron, who are intelligence analysts for sigint. Only in 3 squadron does the raw material intercepted begin to be transformed into something 'useful' — analysed and cross-referenced to other sources including CIA and secret service reports. Very little codebreaking can be done at the Cyprus base itself. Signals which require more than a few hours' deciphering work are sent directly to GCHQ

at Cheltenham, where the specialised resources of cryptographers and huge computers can be brought to bear.

The defendants in this case were all identified as Special Operator Telegraphists — in Sigint terms the lowest of the low, lacking even language skills to listen to and interpret spoken radio signals, let alone morse messages. They would not have knowledge of codebreaking or intelligence analysis. Nor would they know about British codes and cyphers, which would be handled separately in the Regiment's communications centre.

There has never been any secret in Cyprus about the activities of 9 Signal Regiment. The UK-Cyprus treaty which grants Britain the right to occupy its two Sovereign Base Areas in perpetuity even has a special clause requiring all Cypriot electrical equipment operated near Ayios Nikolaos or Pergamos to be specially 'suppressed' to avoid interference with sensitive listening equipment.

Spread across the road north and south of Ayios Nikolaos are a small forest of army high frequency direction finding and receiving aerials. Recently, satellite terminals, microwave dishes and a circular 'Pusher' direction finding aerial have been added to the monitoring equipment, making the station's function even more obvious. But the array of domes pictured in most reports about the spy case are a wholly unconnected installation — the RAF's air defence radar station on Mount Olympus. However, a 9 Signals regiment substation near Kakopetria in the Troodos mountains, does operate electronic intelligence ('elint') receivers. ●

least as SECRET — simply because of where it is being handled. A jotting sheet by a radio operator will often be classified not merely TOP SECRET, but a special codeword, UMBRA, is added to denote that the paper contains specially sensitive sigint data. This is the case even if radio amateurs in the region are receiving and monitoring the same signals.

Inside a sigint base, according to GCHQ security regulations (themselves graded CONFIDENTIAL, meaning that any disclosure is supposed to be 'prejudicial to the

national interest'), 'all waste paper is to be treated as classified waste'. So much paper is produced that the necessary security protection cannot be afforded. Tons of paper are marked to be burned every month in the incinerator at the back of the operations block of 9 Signals Regiment. This incinerator's reliability over the years has been poor and more than one former sigint employee can recall occasions on which it failed — belching aloft a stream of top secret paper, most of it later retrieved as it blew against the perimeter fences of the Cyprus base.

Since 1978, former GCHQ signals intelligence supervisor Jock Kane has been urging the government to look into numerous — and real — losses of documents by GCHQ spy bases from Hong Kong to Scotland. Not only has his campaign been ignored, but the government recently obtained a court injunction to prevent him publishing a book detailing the security lapses.

When in 1980, following Kane's information, the *New Statesman* assembled a dossier showing corruption by GCHQ and

Defence Ministry employees in Hong Kong, government law officers contrived to send the evidence to Hong Kong where they knew it would not be used for a prosecution.

THE CYPRUS case confirms beyond doubt the prurient interest of RAF inquisitors in the sexual activities of the junior ranks. This case mirrors another charge against an airman in Cyprus, which also ended in an acquittal at the Old Bailey last year.

The *New Statesman* has obtained separate evidence about the apparent priorities of RAF investigators. Some members of the RAF Provost and Security Service have themselves broken the Official Secrets Act, by removing and planning to leak information about prominent civilians gleaned during witchhunts against homosexual activities, such as those alleged in this week's case.

One RAF investigator planned to sell the lengthy results of his work to the press. An investigation conducted by the RAF Security Services at a base near Oxford began when it was discovered that a gay serviceman had placed a contact advertisement in *Gay News*. An RAF sergeant stole the man's private correspondence in order to 'discover' it at a suitable later date as 'evidence'. A 900 page dossier, which we have seen, was then compiled about a network of civilian gay men, whose affairs were none of their business. Although the serviceman concerned was later discharged, no offences were alleged or prosecuted.

When the leading RAF investigator in this case left the air force, he took with him a copy of the dossier, with the intention of selling its contents to either British or German newspapers. The report included love letters from a senior figure in the arts world, recently honoured, and also referred, incidentally, to a (non-gay) senior minister in the last Labour government.

Hypocrisy was evident throughout the Crown's case. It was, the prosecutor said, 'utterly frowned on... to form close liaisons with foreign nationals'. He then went on to give a lurid account of the young men's service life in Cyprus, as 'uncovered' by the RAF interrogators — including allegations of homosexual orgies, semen-drenched bisexual 'splash parties', energetic mutual buggery, all warmed in the happy haze of cannabis smoke and lubricated by the proceeds of the haemorrhage of those thousands of Secret and Top Secret documents.

The prosecution's account of 'splash parties' was evidently as far out as its allegations of spying. The defendants — and one of their wives and two Filipino women also named in the 'confessions' — all completely denied that the sexual encounters ever took place.

In any case it is simply not true to represent liaisons with foreign women and single-sex sexual horseplay as being anything other than the norm for young servicemen abroad. The official regimental magazine of the Royal Signals, *Wire*, has for decades published monthly accounts of such events in the life at 9 Signals Regiment and other units. Such reports have detailed encounters with Swedish women on Famagusta beach; another signals unit reported its 'Roman Orgy' pyjama party, featuring the 'B Troop Belly Dancers' and the 'MT Drag Queen' (all men) — and all under the headline 'Moments grave and gay'. □

SHAKE-UP FOR THE LEFT KALEIDOSCOPE

Neil Kinnock soared in the polls after denouncing Militant's role in Liverpool — and suddenly 'realignment of the Left' has moved from the drawing board to the assembly line. JOHN RENTOUL charts what's going on

UNTIL NEIL KINNOCK reached the word 'taxi' in his speech at the Labour Party's Bournemouth conference, the Realignment of the Left had been a comfortable process existing mainly in the minds of theoreticians of the 'soft Left' Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

Since 3.27 pm on 1 October 1985, when Kinnock launched his frontal attack on Liverpool's Militant leadership, there has been a desperate effort among commentators to convince us that the leader is winning his fight to isolate the 'hard Left'. The sting in the tail of Neil Kinnock's speech, they say, made leftwingers re-examine their position and so forced the pace of the Realignment.

This Realignment, so the theory goes, involves leading figures on the left of the party — and a new intake of activists at the grassroots — rallying round Neil Kinnock. They know he's not supported the miners much and seems unimaginatively law-abiding when it comes to ratecapping, but he's still 'the most left-wing leader we've ever had' (Ken Livingstone), and, what's more, he's the only one the party's got.

But 'realignment by defection' is not of course how the realigners themselves see the process. For people like Sheffield council leader David Blunkett, it isn't a process of people leaving 'hard Left' groups and joining 'soft Left' ones. It's a question of finding common ground on the Left — or across the party as a whole; being less hung up on having the 'right' policies, more concerned about spreading 'socialist values'.

But is a Realignment *really* taking place? There are five power bases where it could be happening: the National Executive Committee (NEC), the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the constituency parties, Labour local councils and the trade unions. So what is the evidence?

National executive There are now 11 members of the NEC who would vote with Neil Kinnock against either the nine rightwingers or the eight 'hard' leftwingers. The new NEC elected at Bournemouth was described at the time as 'unchanged', with a Kinnock (i.e. rightwing) gain in the trade union section offset by a 'hard left' gain in the women's division. What actually happened was more complex: the Right lost two places (Conference chair Alan Hadden of the boilermakers' union, who resigned, and Anne Davis, the only non-MP in the women's division), while the 'soft Left' gained one in the trade union section — and Margaret Beckett MP got in. She was on the left slate, but if you look at what's happening

among MPs, she turns out to be distancing herself from some of the 'hard Left's' initiatives.

PLP October's two desertions from the 'hard left' Campaign Group of MPs brought into the open the group's internal tensions. Derek Fatchett and Kevin Barron (MPs for Leeds Central and Rother Valley respectively), in a resignation statement in *Tribune*, say: 'The group too often displays an unpleasant degree of authoritarianism.' And Barron added: 'It appears to be more of an anti-leadership group than ever before.' This week he was rewarded by being made Kinnock's parliamentary secretary.

SOME OF THE GROUP'S remaining 34 MPs are also unhappy with its political direction. In September, six of them didn't put their names to a discussion document on economic policy called *A Million Jobs a Year*. The pamphlet, by Marxist Oxford economist



Currently bridge-building between *Tribune* and Campaign — Chris Smith MP