
Interview

British intelligence specialist describes London's blackmail against the U.S.

When Oxford University Professor of War History Michael Howard delivered the banquet address April 22 at a symposium at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on national security policy, he was delivering a message from the British crown on the current Malvinas crisis.

Howard, aside from his Oxford post, is a senior executive of both the Royal Institute for International Affairs and the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies. The former institution, otherwise known as Chatham House, was established at the close of World War I as part of the reorganization of British intelligence and is currently the top-most of the formal, above, surface policy-making branches of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). The latter entity, IISS, was launched in the 1950s as a subgroup of the RIIA. The RIIA and IISS are the controlling influence on the New York Council on Foreign Relations in the United States and its off-shoot, David Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission.

While other military figures, analysts, and academics at the conference made only historical allusions to the current period, Howard devoted his entire presentation to current matters. His message was simple: if the United States did not back Britain in the Malvinas crisis, Britain would make things nasty for the United States in Europe.

His bluntness stunned even some of the diehard anglophiles in the audience, and caused the handful of patriotic Americans present to shudder. One retired American general asked Howard the next day whether he realized that what he was asking America to do would cost the United States its allies in the Western Hemisphere. Howard replied curtly: "That is your problem. You have your obligations, moral and otherwise, to Britain. . . . You have no choice but to make the right choice."

In an exclusive interview with this journal, Howard repeated these threats. He further identified the Malvinas crisis as a point of leverage for a broader reorganization of NATO, along the lines proposed by the European Security Study of which he is a member. Its basic thrust (see *EIR*, May 4) is to force a shift of NATO's forces into the developing sector to fight no-win police actions of

the type that made the British colonial army notorious. As a corollary, Howard proposes that the West build up its conventional forces, as recommended by his friends McGeorge Bundy and Robert McNamara in their recent *Foreign Affairs* article.

Reading ever-so-slightly between the lines, one sees Howard's proposals as a renewed demand for the United States to play the dumb, brutal giant, butchering the developing sector on behalf of British policy interests.

Howard is emphatic that the United States as a nation has no sovereignty over its foreign policy, that such policy, including all treaty obligations, are subordinated to supranational arrangements like NATO.

Q: Would you care to reiterate some of your remarks from last night about the Falklands crisis?

A: Obviously I am biased and I don't want to prejudge what the claim of the Argentines is to the Falklands, but I made three points that I want to reiterate. First, the islands have been in British possession for longer than California has been part of the United States and that was also territory seized originally by force. Secondly, the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands have repeatedly reiterated their wish to remain under British sovereignty as British citizens. If that were not so, we would have probably reached an accommodation with the Argentines many years ago. Thirdly, whatever the rights to the islands the Argentines claim, there is no question about their blatant violation of international law, and their obligations as members of the United Nations. . . .

I drew a rather sharp distinction between the attitude taken by President Eisenhower at the time of the Suez affair in 1956, when, although the British and the French were the closest allies of the United States, he left us in no doubt about the outrage that he and the United States felt about our blatant violation of international law, taking the law into our own hands. . . .

He would have condemned the Argentine invasion in as forthright terms as he condemned the British and French invasion of Egypt. And he would have threatened as absolute sanctions against the Argentines as he did against Britain and France. This action, if taken by the United States, would have brought this whole crisis to a

halt in a matter of days. The whole situation would then get cleared up on the basis of the status quo. There would have been very disagreeable repercussions for relations between the Argentines and the United States, but I would think that this is a small price to pay for maintaining the reputation of the United States for upholding international law, whether it be defied by ally or adversary.

Q: You have expressed great dissatisfaction with the conduct of the White House and the American government. What do you want the United States to do now?

A: I think that having gone as far as it has, without taking the steps I said, it is too late to backtrack. Having decided, disastrously wrongly, to adopt an even-handed attitude between the two participants, that is to say, between a robber and his victim; having preserved, as a result of this, good relations with the Argentines, then we are very grateful that Mr. Haig is using his good offices for crisis management. But no settlement is feasible unless the Argentines are prepared to withdraw their forces, re-acknowledge British sovereignty, at least in the short run, and accept that the wishes of the inhabitants of the Falklands are going to be paramount.

Q: Should there be war, at that point, what role should the United States play?

A: Well, all I can say is that if the United States remains totally neutral, the repercussions on the relations between Britain and America are going to be terrible. I am afraid that America will be seen around the world as a sort of whipping boy. You are going to be blamed for anything that goes wrong, and there is very little doubt that a lot is bound to go wrong. It is hard to see how the operation can be launched without casualties and losses of material and life. This will predictably create emotional repercussions within Britain, and there will be a price to pay by the United States for any kind of hostility or bellicosity, there's no denying.

If on the other hand, the United States says, all right now, the situation is now clear, the chips are down, the British are using force in accordance with their rights as members of the United Nations, and we are going to help them, then I should think that this would probably repair any damage that has been done. By help, I doubt that anybody would expect your armed forces to take part, but what we mean is open assistance with your intelligence, open condemnation of the Argentines, and refusal to cooperate with the Argentine forces.

Q: What about the point that we have solemn treaty obligations to our Western Hemispheric allies?

A: You have no treaty obligations with us that cover the Falklands. The only obligation that we would call upon are those that the United States has under the U.N.

charter for collective action to oppose aggression. The trade-off between obligations under the U.N. charter and obligations in any kind of regional agreement is something that has to be assessed by your government. I would think that the overriding obligation to the preservation of international law would mean that you regard the Argentines as the aggressors and as such, not entitled to call upon your help under any kind of hemispheric agreements.

Q: Last night, you said that a failure of the United States to back Britain in this crisis would lead to a breakup of the Atlantic alliance, that Britain would have no choice but to make life difficult for the United States in Europe. Could you spell this out more?

A: In this way. At the moment, the British are still the best friend that the United States has within the alliance. I wouldn't say that it is quite up to our old friend, the "special relationship," but certainly in all alliance consultations, when the chips are down, the British usually line up with the United States, in any conflict or confrontation with our continental allies. The sources of tension are between United States and Germany over the continuation of détente, between the United States and France over U.S. actions in the Third World, and in all this the British on the whole tend to side with the Americans. If you lose the good will of the British, then the result is going to exacerbate strains between the United States and Europe as a whole. The British are going to be more inclined to line up with the adversaries of the United States than with the United States.

Q: Who are these adversaries?

A: Well, when I say adversaries—how should I put it—I mean those who disagree with the United States. Of course that was foolish of me, since the word adversary implies adversaries outside of the alliance. There will be less inclination to make things easy for the United States. I think that this is the best way to put it.

Q: This leads to another question. In this context of crisis, a re-evaluation of NATO is taking place. People are saying that the Falklands crisis points toward the type of eventualities that NATO will have to deal with, problems in the developing sector. People are telling us that there are only three countries within the alliance that have the capabilities to deploy out-of-area [outside Europe and North America—ed.]—Britain, the United States, and France. They talk of the need for informal coordination among these countries. . . .

A: This is what France and de Gaulle called for in 1958, and became very unpopular as a result. I think that it is certainly true that you cannot expect NATO as an organization to take up positions on these out-of-area problems. NATO contains a lot of very unequal partners, all

of whom joined for different reasons. . . . So NATO as a whole is not a good forum for considering these matters. It is therefore necessary to visualize another forum. My own feeling that it is best to do so on a bilateral basis. There are certain areas, for example, where the British ought to be helpful and until recently could be helpful, and certain areas also where the French ought to be helpful. I think that one has to deal with these matters rather piecemeal, more simply. Once you get into the alliance, then the decision-making becomes almost impossible. You can't respond like we are doing in the Falklands.

Q: Is NATO structured force-wise to handle these kind of problems, even as individual nations? The arguments by McNamara and others are that we are too top-heavy on nuclear forces and that these nuclear forces are not much use in future conflict.

A: There are two points here. The first is really associated with what we have just been talking about, "out-of-area problems." The Europeans really have got to take a great deal more responsibility for the defense of our territory than we have been prepared to in the past. It is not a matter of free-loading or not free-loading. We have been doing a reasonable amount. But I think that the time has come, when without the United States exercising Mansfield Amendment-type pressures [the threat to withdraw American troops from Europe—ed.], that the Europeans—and, especially the French and the British and the Germans—will get together and say we cannot go on expecting the kind of guarantees of the type we have had in the past. We must find ways and means of creating a far greater European participation and presence in the defense of our own continent. Apart from anything else, this would be the most immediately hopeful way of enabling the United States to deal with out-of-area problems. This is something that the Germans are indeed willing to do. They say that we Germans are not prepared to send our forces to the Gulf or anywhere, but we will do what we can to make it possible for you to release your forces to go if necessary. Or the alternative possibility is that the British try to take more weight off American maritime forces in the North Atlantic area.

Q: Is that possible, given current British defense cut-backs?

A: Given the existing financial strictures within the existing defense deployment, it cannot be done. And when I say that the Europeans have got to be prepared to do this, it does mean a radical re-think of our defense commitments.

Q: What would this re-think mean for the British deterrent and the recent Trident decision?

A: I think that we should cut back [on Trident].

Q: Do you think that such a cutback and redeployment of funds to conventional technology as you have specified could be an outcome of the present crisis?

A: It could well be. I have never held out very high hopes of the Trident decision sticking. I think that there are rather heavier odds against it as a result of the events of the last three weeks. The naval lobby is going to have some very strong material now, saying that it was a disastrous decision to cut back on our naval forces.

Secondly, more has got to be in the field of conventional defense [the European defense increase]. And that is where the European Security Study [ESECS] comes in. Although it is an American-sponsored study, it is directed towards seeing how far the conventional defenses of Europe can be improved. It is beginning with an examination from the point of view of weapons technology. What can be done with existing anti-tank technology or anti-aircraft or mines or whatever, that could be further developed? Is it something that can be handled not by regular forces, but by militia forces, and if so how could this be built into the structure of Western defenses?

Q: Does the U.S. place too much emphasis on strategic weapons and nuclear technology as McNamara, Bundy, and now even Henry Kissinger are saying?

A: I entirely feel that the U.S. is doing that. It seems to me that emphasis placed on the level of high strategic weapons-systems is entirely wrong. That is not where the real problem lies. The real problem lies in the ability to present a credible deterrent against Soviet-inspired conventional aggression. If we cannot be that, then it is no good improving technology at the level of strategic deterrent, because we are never going to use it, however good it is.

Q: Bundy and the others say that these nuclear forces will be of little use in the wars of the future, that they can't really be brought to bear on Argentina, for example. . . .

A: Nor are they going to be of any use in Europe, if the Soviet Union can reach the Rhine within 36 hours. It is seldom asked what the Russian objective would be if they were to invade Western Europe at all. I don't see their objectives as likely to extend very much beyond the Rhine. Once they reach the Rhine, Western Europe as a whole is virtually gone, and if they reach the Rhine without our even being able to hold them for long enough to reach a decision to launch a nuclear first strike, then we are not going to launch a nuclear first strike, either theatre or tactical or strategic.

Q: What is your reaction to the McNamara article?

A: I have read it. I feel that it is inspirational rather than operational, that it would be very good if we could move into a position where we can say that there would be no

first use. He does say that we shouldn't do it right now. That I cannot fault. But it is going to take a bit of time to get there. That is the direction in which we have got to move, however. We cannot go on believing that the first-use strategy is either credible or operational or a serious option for us.

Q: Should we and could we revive the special arrangement between the United States and Britain?

A: These things will come naturally. I forget who said this, but America should have a special relationship with all its allies. I think you need a very special relationship with West Germany and I would hate to see a relationship between Britain and the United States excluding our continental allies or making it more difficult for Britain to be a full partner in Europe.

One cannot expect too much from the alliance. The danger is that one should try to make it do things that it can't. . . . There is no doubt that creating a serious functioning political unit in Europe is fundamentally affected by the economic policy of the member countries, and we have failed so far to transcend individual economic policy to create policy which is in the interest of all of us.

Q: Do you see Britain in the aftermath of this crisis taking more of an open role in determining policy for West? Someone referred to it as waking out of a slumber.

A: It is not a slumber. It is an agonizing turmoil about her own affairs, about our trying to get our economy in order, and solve our social difficulties, which do tend to absorb you, to the exclusion of foreign policy. It is not that we are indifferent to foreign-policy questions, it is a question of the amount of priority that is being allotted to them by the elites. I think that Falkland Islands will give Britain a jolt. If we go back to the same old problems about inflation and labor relations and the inability to make the economy work, which beset us [they] will make it impossible for us to play the full part in foreign policy we should.

Q: Did you have the opportunity to meet other policy-makers while you were here?

A: Not really. I gave a talk at the Council on Foreign Relations and passed the time of day with Mac Bundy and other people.

Q: When the chips are down, must the U.S. back Britain?

A: All I can say is, that in the limited time that I have been here, I have yet to meet anybody who does not believe that the U.S. would not back Britain. Given the kind of pressures that are building up on your President, he will have great trouble remaining as even-handed as has been his tune.

From Howard's speech

The following are excerpts from the banquet address delivered by Prof. Michael Howard on April 22 to the symposium on the "Theory and Practice of American National Security, 1945-60" at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, entitled "The Perils of Deterrence."

I am somewhat shocked at being in the middle of such a convivial atmosphere—usually I have to speak before more sober audiences. You people are actually having fun. I'll see if I can stop that. . . .

Every nation has had the desire to defend as far as they can. You must make sure that the territory next to you won't be used by the enemy. . . . you must safeguard your security by expanding it. The British Isles were at one end of the world, and all of the tribes were at the other. . . . We found ourselves in Madras and Calcutta. Soon we found that we had to take over India. . . . We had to control the route to India. That found us at the Cape of Good Hope. . . . To defend the Cape of Good Hope we had to conquer the interior of Africa. To conquer the interior, we had to move into northern parts of Africa. . . .

No one in Europe is happy about U.S. mega-defense in nuclear weapons buildup. . . . The endless escalation of mega-violence has caused concern among us, not about the threat of the Soviet Union, but from U.S. plans to counter that threat. . . .

We are worried about the apparent abandonment by the U.S. of détente. The purpose of détente was not to bring the Soviets closer to the West. It was not to bring Western ideals or liberalism to the Soviet Union. The purpose of détente has been to open up Eastern Europe to the U.S., and that has been achieved.

The third issue that divides us in Europe from the United States is the question of the Third World. The Third World will have to suffer for years. Marxist rhetoric doesn't worry us too much. In Central America, the U.S. shouldn't oppose revolutionary movements.

Britain has always supported you. We have U.S. support for granted. Now we will have to see if we still will support you. . . .

In the Falklands crisis, there can be no even-handedness by the American administration. We are grateful to Secretary Haig, but remember Neville Chamberlain and his shuttling to the Sudetenland. The Sudetens wanted to join Germany, but the Falklanders don't want to go with the Argentine.

There will be lasting repercussions with the U.S. if the American position is not reconciled. There is a latent anti-Americanism that could be stirred up in Europe and England if the U.S. doesn't come around. . . .