

5 March 1975

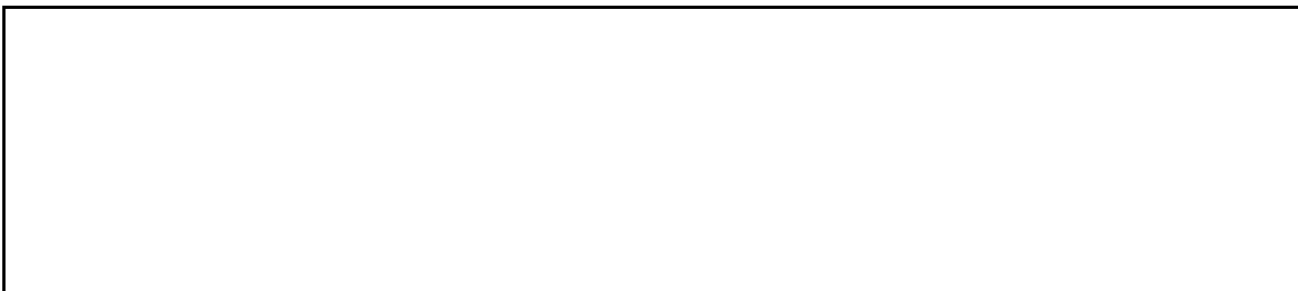
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TO: The Editor  
RONI  
Room 6E04  
Hqs Bldg. CIA

In their very interesting new publication, Review of National Intelligence, some of my friends on the IC Staff present a curious finding. They take intelligence analysts to task for "an old and familiar analytical bias" against expecting irrational moves by "essentially rational men." I say, vive le bias!\*

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Analysts must consider and test all possible alternatives in developing situations -- including the most irrational. Any alternative that would have significant repercussions for US interests or policies should be duly noted, and the analyst's assessment of its degree of likelihood presented. To give a dramatic alternative a higher degree of likelihood because it is irrational, as the IC Staff's "lesson-learned" seems to suggest, would, in my opinion, border on the irresponsible. An analyst who consistently predicts the irrational -- especially the extremely irrational, [redacted] -- is doomed to judge wrongly in by far the greatest number of cases. To allow for the irrational is one thing; to confidently predict it, quite another.

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Those of us who have struggled for years to anticipate the course of world events are well aware of its irrational tendencies. Situations usually develop within the bounds of logic and reason, however, and do not take irrational tacks. Most international conflicts, for example, are settled peacefully and "reasonably"; we should not predict war -- an essentially irrational alternative -- every time a dispute arises between two states.

\* See Principal Findings of the Post-Mortem Report, "An Examination of the Intelligence Community's Performance Before and During the [redacted] and the reprise thereof in the Review of National Intelligence, February 1975.

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I believe the Community did a fairly good job of reporting on the incipient crisis in [redacted] alerting policy makers to the possible consequences. A confident intelligence prediction of the [redacted] attempt would have been a classic example of a bad estimate which happened to turn out right.

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STAT



Assistant Deputy Director  
for Estimates, DIA

Sarn, Dick, Stu : I liked  
your new pub and enjoyed  
its breezy style.

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17 March 1975

General Wilson:

[redacted] furnished a copy of his letter to the editor, RONI, in re

[redacted]

Bob is right, of course. And his letter points up the note of 'glibness' (some might even say smugness) that enters these IC post-mortems (stemming, I believe, from the wonderful advantage of perfect hindsight coupled with the pressure to say something).

In the case of [redacted] (para. 2 of [redacted] letter) the only 'rational' reason he could have undertaken it was if he were himself in danger of ouster. And that was not the case.

[redacted]

Attachment:  
5Mar75 letter  
from [redacted] to  
Editor/RONI

### INFORMATION