

Intelligence in War – Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda by John Keegan. Hutchinson 2003.

The latest book by our foremost military historian is another tour de force that sheds light on an area of human activity that is usually shrouded in mystery and legend.

John Keegan cannot have realised that *Intelligence in War* would be published around the time that controversy was raging in Britain and America about the precise nature of intelligence briefings that, supposedly, justified the launch of a war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq: but read against this background the importance and inherent pitfalls in 'intelligence' become even more striking than might otherwise be the case.

Keegan analyses the importance of intelligence as illustrated by a number of battles at different times in modern history, taking in, among others, the naval war against Napoleon, the American Civil war, the two World wars and the Falklands War. These chapters demonstrate the importance of intelligence and also its imperfections, no where more so than where the outcome of certain battles was far more finely poised than might have otherwise been expected. Keegan demonstrates the value of intelligence, but also makes clear that ultimately wars are won not by knowledge alone but by superior physical force.

In his final chapter Keegan turns his attention to the 'war against terrorism' and the role that intelligence can play against the implacable fanatics that pose such a threat to the way of life and liberty that we all enjoy. His prognosis is not exactly optimistic, but not totally without hope; it is a sober end to a highly readable and fascinating book.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh