

Intelligence Services and the Significance of Espionage in World War I

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Digest of Papers and Discussions

by

Gundula Bavendamm , edited and translated by Michael Wala

The 4th Annual Meeting of the International Intelligence History Study Group was organized by Wolfgang Krieger (Universität Marburg) with the help of Jürgen Weber (Akademie für Politische Bildung, Tutzing). In his introduction, Wolfgang Krieger maintained that Intelligence History is still a field that has to work hard to be accepted by the historical profession in Germany. Unfortunately, very few dissertations are being written in that field but the declassification of MfS and possibly BND documents might help to increase interest among our colleagues and students. One sign for the beginning recognition by the scholarly community of Intelligence History is the panel organized by Jürgen Rohwer and the IIHSG on „Die Geschichte von Nachrichtendiensten in den deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen in Frieden und Krieg--Intentionen und Wirklichkeiten" at the 42. Historikertag in Frankfurt/Main, 10 September (see announcement and program on page 39).

The organizers had divided the conference into regional/national sections. Most papers dealt with activities of military intelligence organizations during the war. There seems to have been a consensus that the impact of intelligence was significant during World War I only in a very few cases. However, the methods of intelligence gathering and analysis, and the use of intelligence are important for a better understanding of political and military structures and also because they were the foundation for the establishment of extensive intelligence organizations during and after World War II.

Michael van der Meulen (Krefeld) delineated the development of German code and cipher systems during World War I. John Ferris (Calgary), speaking on British codebreaking in 1914, and Matitiahu Mayzel (Tel-Aviv) addressing the issue of Russian intelligence and strategy, both maintained that the increasing use of wireless communication led to a recognition of the importance of information technology. During the war, however, British and Russians realized that it was not possible to get the advantage in cryptography over their enemies and, thus, to break the strategic blockade. According to Ferris, the British even regarded wireless communication as a „killer to surprise." Mayzel reported that Russian military leaders also believed modern means of communication to be an impediment to operations.

Pierre Jardin (Paris), analyzing French military intelligence during the war, argued that the intelligence organization of the French army was riddled with severe structural problems. With great difficulty, French officers developed refined methods of analysis to cope with an increasing volume of intelligence. Peter Jung (Vienna), Albert Pethö (Vienna), and Josef Borus (Budapest), reported on military intelligence organizations in Austria-Hungary, intelligence officers, case studies, and scandals, and provided a picture of the daily routine. They maintained that the Austrian multilingualism was an impediment to intelligence work, as was the increasing

replacement of experienced staff by reservists during the course of the war. Concentrating on the Middle East, Yigal Sheffy (Tel Aviv) analyzed British counter-intelligence in Palestine and traced the myth of Fritz Franks, a mysterious „officer spy" in British uniform, generated by a spy-craze in the Summer of 1917. Tilman Lüdke (Oxford) examined German and British intelligence in the Middle East during World War I, and Mark Jacobsen (Quantico) looked at the Malleson Mission to Meshed, Persia, from 1918 to 1920.

A number of contributors presented papers that provided a biographical approach to intelligence history. David Stafford (Edinburgh) gave an account of Winston Churchill's World War I experience with intelligence and studied the premier's handling of intelligence matters after the war. He maintained that Churchill realized the potential political value of intelligence during the war, and during World War II was anxious to keep himself informed--by reading „raw" reports as opposed to digests--to be able to control the British intelligence organizations. Paul B. Brown (Edwardsville) is currently working on a biography of Wilhelm Krichbaum and delineated his career from World War I volunteer and member of the SD to his position as head of the Geheime Feldpolizei.

Jan G. Heitmann (Hamburg) talked about German agents in the United States during World War I and the repercussions their activities had in the political arena, leading to the expulsion of several members of the German embassy in Washington, D.C.. Burkhardt Jähncke (Hamburg) spoke about the work of the Mixed Claims Commission, an international commission set up in the 1920s, that had to deal with claims by American citizens against the German government. The Commission's dealing with the sabotage claims (resulting from an explosion at the Black Tom Terminal, New York City, and a fire at a Kingsland, NJ, factory during World War I) led to frictions between the the United States and Germany.

In his keynote address, Olaf Riste (Oslo) contributed his experience in writing an official intelligence history of Norway and talked about Norway's part in the intelligence activities of NATO during the first half of the Cold War. In writing his book, Riste and a Norwegian colleague for the first time in NATO history had free access to the files of a NATO intelligence organization. Nonetheless, he pointed out restrictions to access to archives and called for intensified dialog between scholars and archivists.

Part of the conference was devoted to archival material, new resources, and methods. Paul Marsden (Ottawa) introduced the audience to military intelligence records in the National Archive of Canada and provided detailed information on documents related to the „Great War". Dieter K. Buse (Laurentian University) compared sources of domestic intelligence and delineated the flow of information between government and military agencies that constructed a particular image of German domestic attitudes and the labor movement during the war.

The Annual Meeting provided an opportunity to discuss a wide range of approaches to intelligence history encompassing daily chores of intelligence officers, the impact of enemy images, the creation of spy myths, political utilization of intelligence and myths, and organizational and communication processes associate with intelligence in various contexts.

The Akademie für Politische Bildung in Tutzing once again provided an environment highly conducive to a scholarly gathering and we are very grateful for the hospitality extended to us by the Akademie's staff.