

le cnam
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renseignement, criminologie, crises, cybermenaces

Revue De Recherche Sur Le Renseignement

N°.2, 2023, autumn



Revue de recherches sur le enseignement

2023 02, Autumn

The *Revue de recherches sur le renseignement*, founded in 2022 by the Équipe Sécurité & Défense, Renseignement, Criminologie, Cybermenaces, Crises (ESDR3C) of the Conservatoire national des Arts et Métiers (CNAM, founded in 1794), publishes reference articles in all areas of intelligence studies, not only in history or political science, but in all academic disciplines. It covers all aspects of European and global intelligence.

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Revue de recherches sur le renseignement, CNAM ESDR3C.

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Contents

<i>Lukas Grawe, The French army in the reports of the German military attaché in France, Detlof von Winterfeldt, 1909-1914.....</i>	7
Gérald Sawicki, The use of German soldiers' letters and notebooks by French intelligence services (1914-1918)	35
Gérald Arboit, An "intelligence freak": Dr Henri Martin.....	46
Étienne Verhoeven, The hood's arms purchases in Belgium (1936-1937). Chronicle of a failure <i>foretold</i>	59
Christian Rossé, Tracing Lucie's roots. Investigating the Rudolf Roessler network.....	88
<i>Research notebook</i>	
Florian Bunoust-Becques, The assertion of the role of French submarine forces in the military intelligence chain from 1890 to 1970.....	114
<i>The interview</i>	
Vincent Crouzet, Service Action, intelligence, <i>Africa</i>	119
<i>Yesterday's news</i>	
Laurence Rullan, Defence secrecy and public archives: the exemplary conflict of a system in need of better <i>control</i>	124
Reports	
Gérald Arboit, David Omand, <i>How Spies Think: Ten Lessons in Intelligence</i> , London, Viking, 2020, 344 p.	139
Laurence Rullan, Étienne Augris, <i>Philippe Rondot master spy</i> , Paris, Novice/Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2023, 329 p.	140
Résumé/Abstract/Resumen.....	144

The French army in reports by the German military attaché in France, Detlof von Winterfeldt, 1909-1914.

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Historically, the General Staff of the Royal Prussian Army is generally associated with its functions of military deployment and mobilization planning. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, it was also responsible for observing foreign armies in order to optimize German war preparations¹. Immediately prior to the First World War, the General Staff of the Royal Prussian Army was responsible for the observation of foreign armies. During the war, four departments were responsible for military intelligence². The military attachés were by far the most important source of information. Their reports are described as "the most reliable and useful sources" in memorandums from the General Staff³. Attachés have the advantage of being permanently stationed in the area of interest and can therefore take account of longer-term developments. In addition, these long stays greatly facilitate the development of personal contacts. Often drawn from the general staff and military intelligence services, the attachés undoubtedly formed the backbone

¹ On the Prussian General Staff, see Wiegand Schmidt-Richberg, *Die Generalstäbe in Deutschland 1871-1945: Aufgaben in der Armee und Stellung im Staate*, Stuttgart, 1962, pp. 18-19 and Wiegand Schmidt-Richberg, "Die Regierungszeit Wilhelms II", in *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte*, 3, Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Munich, 1979, pp. 9-156.

² The first department of the General Staff was responsible for observing the armies of Russia, Scandinavia, East Asia, Persia and Turkey, while the third department covered the armies of France and the United Kingdom. The ninth department covered the armies of the Benelux countries, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland and the American states, while the tenth department focused on Austro-Hungarian and Balkan forces. Cf. Bundesarchiv (BArch), Freiburg, PH 3/124, fol. 157, "Die Organisation des Großen Generalstabes", undated [1918], and PH 3/290 "Organisation des Generalstabes, april 1914".

³ BArch, RM 5/6669, fol. 36, First Department, "Gesichtspunkte für Erkennen und Bewerten russischer Maßnahmen zur Erhöhung der Kriegsbereitschaft in Zeiten politischer Spannung", undated [1913].

of the assessment of The German enemy prior to the First World War⁴. They acted as bridgeheads for the recruitment of new military personnel, and officially represented German military policy in their host country⁵. In addition to their protocol duties, they were also responsible for advising the German ambassador on military matters⁶.

Appointed by the Emperor, many military attachés also acted as camp aids, and thus had the opportunity to come into personal contact with Wilhelm II. As a rule, the selection criteria for attachés are similar to those for camp aids, i.e., respectable appearance and courteous behavior. Good manners and tact play an important role⁷. They must also have foreign experience and a command of the relevant foreign language⁸. As life in European capitals is associated with costly social obligations, attachés have sufficient private wealth to compensate for a low salary⁹. In addition to social requirements, military expertise is the decisive factor for appointment as a military attaché. Several years' work in the intelligence services of the General Staff, or a previous assignment in an embassy, are the rule. As attachés come mainly from the General Staff, they have also successfully completed the General Staff training program.

The war academy and the appropriation of military scientific knowledge.

However, there is no specific training. Military attachés frequently read their predecessors' reports in preparation for drafting their own declarations¹⁰. To obtain information about their host country's army, officers resort to a variety of means: conversations with local military personnel, studying the press, observing annual troop maneuvers, and although this is forbidden, spying¹¹. The attachés transmit their findings to the German military authorities in the form of reports. Between thirty and a hundred notifications a year are made by the officers. The most important element in their work is to report observations and news in the field of foreign military systems. However, they must confine themselves strictly to military matters with instructions, not

⁴ General staff attachés continued to wear the uniforms of this institution. BArch, RM 5/307, fol. 25, "Bericht des Korvetten- Kapitän Grapow über seine Dienstleistung im grossen Generalstab", October 3, 1899.

⁵ Helmut Roewer, *Skrupellos: Die Machenschaften der Geheimdienste in Russland und Deutschland, 1914-1941*, Leipzig, 2004, p. 27 and BArch, N 195/2, Maximilian von Mutius, "Lebenserinnerungen 1865-1918", 2, p. 107.

⁶ BArch, N887/4, Arthur von Lüttwitz, "Aus einem bewegten Soldatenleben 1875-1918", IV, p. 295.

⁷ Matthew S. Seligmann, *Spies in Uniform. British military and naval intelligence on the eve of the First World War*, Oxford, New York, 2006, pp. 52-54.

⁸ Isabel V. Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 175-207.

⁹ Matthew S. Seligmann, *op. cit.* p. 64.

¹⁰ Lukas Grawe, *Deutsche Feindaufklärung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Informationen und Einschätzungen des deutschen Generalstabs zu den Armeen Frankreichs und Russland 1904 bis 1914*, Paderborn, 2017, p. 58.

¹¹ Matthew S. Seligmann, *op. cit.* p. 75-116.

to mention political issues. Historically, this prohibition on political comment has not prevented many officers from reporting on the latest political developments in their host country. As a result, a new general instruction for military attachés was issued in 1980, underlining the ban on political reports. In order to enforce this prohibition, attachés must submit all reports to their ambassadors, who are authorized to delete political observations¹². It is through the respective ambassadors, the Foreign Office, and the emperor that the reports are finally sent to the Prussian War Ministry, as well as to the General Staff¹³.

Before the outbreak of the First World War, the German Reich had 17 military attachés, responsible for observing the armies of 21 states¹⁴. The German military attaché in Paris played a key role in the Prussian general staff's efforts to study the armies of potential future enemies in a European war. In the eyes of German military leaders, France was an irreconcilable adversary who planned to take revenge for the lost campaign of 1870-71 and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine¹⁵. Before 1870, the great importance of Germany for Prussian and later German military policy in the post-Napoleonic period was clearly recognized, the Prussian government having created a post of military attaché in Paris in 1830 at the request of the military leadership, the first permanent post of a military diplomat in history¹⁶. From the founding of the German Empire to the outbreak of the First World War, ten officers held this important post in the French capital¹⁷. In many cases, German military attachés in Paris

¹² Gerhard Ritter, *Die deutschen Militär-Attachés und das Auswärtige Amt*, Heidelberg, 1959, pp. 33-36.

¹³ Heinrich Otto Meisner, *Militärattachés und Militärbevollmächtigte in Preußen und im Deutschen Reich: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Militärdiplomatie*, Berlin, 1957, p. 56; Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, *Glanz und Elend der Diplomatie. Kontinuität und Wandel im Alltag des deutschen Diplomaten auf seinen Auslandsposten im Spiegel der Memoiren 1871-1914*, Bern, New York, 2001, p. 98.

¹⁴ Military diplomats were attached to German embassies in Belgium, Bulgaria, China, France, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the Nordic states (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, with the attaché's headquarters in Stockholm), the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Serbia, Spain (also responsible for Portugal) and the United States of America (also responsible for Mexico). Until 1914, the Paris embassy even had a second military attaché or deputy military attaché, underscoring the importance of this post. Cf. Heinrich Otto Meisner, *op. cit.* p. 36 and 51.

¹⁵ Raymond Poidevin and Jacques Bariety, *Les relations franco-allemandes 1815-1975*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1977; Michael E. Nolan, *The Inverted Mirror. Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898-1914*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2005.

¹⁶ Maureen O'Connor Witter, "Sanctioned Spying: The Development of the Military Attaché in the Nineteenth Century", Peter Jackson, Jennifer Siegel (eds), *Intelligence and Statecraft. The Use and Limits of Intelligence in International Society*, Westport, Praeger, 2005, pp. 92-99 and Heinrich Otto Meisner, *op. cit.* p. 10.

¹⁷ The following officers have been German military attachés in Paris since 1871: Adolf von Bülow (1871-1882), Karl von Villaume (1882-1886), Ernst von Hoiningen gen. Huene (1886-1891), von Funcke (1891), Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen (1891-1897), Richard von Süßkind-Schwendi (1897-1899), Georg von Hugo (1901-1905), Maximilian von Mutius (1905-1909), Detlof von Winterfeldt (1909-1914) and Robert von Klüber (1914).

were involved in political crises and intrigues, or in spectacular, publicized espionage cases involving the provision of confidential military information.

For example, Ernst von Hoiningen-Huene (attaché from 1886 to 1891) provided Alfred von Waldersee, then appointed Chief of the General Staff, with not only military but also political information from France, although this was strictly forbidden¹⁸. Karl von Villaume (1882 à 1886) and Georg von Hugo (1901 à 1905) give an extensive account of the French army's military preparations for the Boulangiste crisis¹⁹ and the first Moroccan crisis²⁰, while Huene's successor, Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen (1891 to 1897), was involved in the Alfred Dreyfus espionage affair, which brought France to the brink of a constitutional crisis. Schwartzkoppen had to be recalled because of his involvement in the affair. He had bought secret documents on French mobilization from the French staff officer Walsin Esterhazy, without the knowledge of his ambassador, but on behalf of the General Staff²¹. As for Maximilian Von Mutius, who held the post in Paris from 1905 to 1909, he probably provided the Prussian general staff with information on political developments in France and certain elements of the top-secret French mobilization plan²². Precisely because of the politically explosive nature of the Paris office, the position was attractive.

After the turn of the century, tensions in Europe and disputes between the German Empire and France escalated. The future of Morocco, in particular, brought the two countries to the brink of war in 1905²³. Although the crisis was settled peacefully, it increased mutual distrust and laid the foundations for an

¹⁸ For Waldersee's political intrigues, see Heinrich Otto Meisner, *op. cit.* and *Denkwürdigkeiten des General- Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags Instalt, 1922; Gordon A. Craig, "Military Diplomats in the Prussian and German Service: The Attachés, 1816-1914", *Political Science Quarterly* 64, 1949, pp. 69, 76-84. For Hoiningen-Huene, cf. Heinrich Otto Meisner, "Aus den Berichten des Pariser Militärattachés Freiherrn von Hoiningen gt. Huene an den Grafen Waldersee (1888-1891)", *Berliner Monatshefte* 15, 1937, pp. 958-1000.

¹⁹ Conrad Canis, "Bismarck, Waldersee und die Kriegsgefahr Ende 1887", Horst Bartel, Ernst Engelberg (dirs), *Die großpreußisch-militaristische Reichsgründung 1871. Voraussetzungen und Folgen*, 2, Berlin, 1971, pp. 397- 435; Konrad Canis, "Alfred von Waldersee: Außenpolitik und Präventivkriegsplanung in den achtziger Jahren", Gustav Seeber (dir), *Gestalten der Bismarckzeit*, Berlin, 1987, pp. 404-25; Michael Schmid, *Der 'Eiserne Kanzler' und die Generäle: Deutsche Rüstungspolitik in der Ära Bismarck (1871- 1890)*, Paderborn, 2003, pp. 273-334.

²⁰ Cf. Lukas Grawe, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-201.

²¹ Cf. Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen, *Les Carnets de Schwartzkoppen (La vérité sur Dreyfus) Édités par Bernhard Schwertfeger*, Paris, Éditions Rieder, 1930; Ernst-Otto Czempel, *Das deutsche Dreyfus-Geheimnis: Eine Studie über den Einfluß des monarchischen Regierungssystems auf die Frankreichpolitik des Wilhelminischen Reiches*, München, Bern, 1966; Gordon A. Craig, *op. cit.* pp. 88-89 and Adolf Hasenclever, "Militärattaché und Auswärtiges Amt um die Wende von altem und neuem Kurs", *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* 22, 1932, pp. 591-592. On the Dreyfus Affair, cf. Jean-Denis Bredin, *L'Affaire*, Paris, Julliard, 1983.

²² BAArch, RH 61/398, fol. 114, Greiner, "Welche Nachrichten besaß der deutsche Generalstab über Mobilmachung und Aufmarsch des französischen Heeres", undated [after 1918].

²³ Jost Dülffer, Martin Kröger, Rolf-Harald Wippich, *Vermiedene Kriege: Deeskalation von Konflikten der Grossmächte zwischen Krimkrieg und Erstem Weltkrieg (1865-1914)* (München, 1997), pp. 557-78; Heiner Raulff, *Zwischen Machtpolitik und Imperialismus. Die deutsche Frankreichpolitik 1904-1906*, Düsseldorf, 1976.

arms race that accelerated as the First World War approached²⁴. Faced with this tense situation, the Prussian General Staff was more than ever dependent on reliable and lasting reports from its military attachés in Paris. All the more so as the first Moroccan crisis revealed the shortcomings of the French army in many respects, and the latter used it as the starting point for extensive reorganization and reinforcement measures. Measures of which the Prussian General Staff wants to be kept constantly informed²⁵. An officer experienced in military intelligence and institutional matters is therefore needed for the most important position in German military diplomacy.

When Maximilian von Mutius was recalled from France in 1909, Major Detlof von Winterfeldt was appointed military attaché in Paris by Wilhelm II on March 25th, 1909²⁶. Winterfeldt, born on May 28th, 1867, began his military career in 1886 in Kaiser Franz Garde's grenadier regiment No. 2. He attended the Berlin War Academy from 1894 to 1897 and joined the General Staff in 1898 after a year's service at the front. Until 1900, he worked in the third department, responsible for observing the French and British armies. From 1901 to 1905, he was German military attaché in Brussels, already familiar with the tasks and work of a military diplomat and with the French army, before being sent to Paris²⁷. He had served there at the express request of his superiors. On December 1st, 1903, the Chief of the General Staff, Alfred von Schlieffen, declared:

"Good performance as a general staff officer. Firm character, noble disposition, tactful behavior, appropriate manners. As military attaché, very active and enthusiastic, he fulfilled his post in a fully satisfactory manner²⁸"

After his first command abroad and two years' service at the front, Winterfeldt

²⁴ Cf. David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War. Europe, 1904-1914*, Oxford, New York, 1996; David G. Herrmann, *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.

²⁵ Cf. David B. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic. The Place of the Military in the Political Evolution of France, 1871-1914*, Michigan, 1967, pp. 319-371; Douglas Porch, "The French Army and the Spirit of the Offensive, 1900-14", Brian Bond, Ian Roy (eds.), *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History*, London, 1976, pp. 117-143; *Ibid*, *The March to the Marne: The French Army 1871-1914*, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 169-245; Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, Cambridge, 2014, pp. 7- 19.

²⁶ Maximilian von Mutius says nothing about his role in obtaining the plans, cf. 2 BArch, N 195/2, *op. cit.* Before his stay in Paris, Mutius had already been attached to Bucharest. He also knew the work of the Third (French) Department of the General Staff from his own experience. From 1910 to 1915, he was aide-de-camp to the *Kaiser* and commanded the guard company at Berlin's *Stadtschloss*. During the First World War, Mutius commanded the 6^e division. He died in 1942. Cf. his unpublished memoirs, BArch, N 195/1 and 2, and Isabel V. Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm*, pp. 24 and 247. For his reports from France, see Lukas Grawe, *op. cit.* pp. 207-218, 276-298 and Mark Hewitson, "Images of the Enemy: German Depictions of the French Military, 1890-1914", *War in History* 11, 2004, pp. 4-33.

²⁷ Although in charge of observing the Belgian and Dutch armies, Winterfeldt kept an eye on the French army during his stay in Brussels, cf. his report of January 6, 1905 [Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts (PA-AA), Berlin, R 6746, Frankreich 95, 56].

²⁸ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA-PK), Berlin, VIII. HA, Slg. Priesdorff, no. 1298.

returned to the General Staff and Third Department in 1907, where he headed the "French" section from 1908 to 1909. Winterfeldt's expertise in the French language was considerable. He graduated from the Lycée Français in Berlin, passing the interpreter's exam with the distinction "particularly suitable". He speaks French like a native²⁹.

Although historians have often attributed great responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War to the German military leadership³⁰, the role of the German military attaché in Paris has not been studied at all. The remainder of this article provides a brief overview of the reports of the last long-term German military attaché in Paris prior to the outbreak of the First World War. We'll look at how Winterfeldt assessed the French army, its impact, and which assessments were passed on to the general staff in Berlin. We'll also look at how the military authority dealt with the relationships between its officers, and what practical effect the relationships had on German military policy before the Great War. In examining these questions, we will address the hypothesis that the General Staff believed in a future Cold War.

Winterfeldt's early years in Paris

From 1905 to 1911, German assessments of the army were largely characterized by underestimation. The third department of the general staff reports on the extremely tense manpower situation in the French army, which led the Third Republic to enlist over 80% of all young men, whereas the German Reich had enlisted only 54%³¹. The French soldier is, in the words of the General Staff:

"An intelligent, skillful soldier who loves his country and who can easily be persuaded to achieve great things, but who lacks durability, tenacity and above all discipline".

Winterfeldt's predecessor, Mutius, had identified the causes of these weaknesses. According to him, the French lack a sense of order, obedience, rigor and organization, and there is a lack of rigor in life and

²⁹ *Ibid*, [Anonymous], "Artikel Detlof von Winterfeldt", Robert Volz (ed.), *Reichshandbuch der deutschen Gesellschaft: Das Handbuch der Persönlichkeiten in Wort und Bild*, 2, Berlin, 1931, p. 2045; Max von Baden, *Erinnerungen und Dokumente* : Neu hrsg. Von Golo Mann und Andreas Burckhardt, Stuttgart, 1968, p. 680. In addition, unpublished extracts from an unpublished typed family chronicle (private archive of Michael von Winterfeldt, Seevetal, whom I would like to thank for giving me the opportunity to examine them) can be used, cf. Detlof von Winterfeldt, "Zur Familiengeschichte von Winterfeldt", V, 1935, p. 1-6.

³⁰ Cf. Stig Förster, "Der deutsche Generalstab und die Illusion des kurzen Krieges, 1871-1914. Metakritik eines Mythos", *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 54, 1995, pp. 61-95; Holger Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn: Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich*, München, 1994, pp. 147-171; Anscar Jansen, *Der Weg in den Ersten Weltkrieg: Das deutsche Militär in der Julikrise 1914*, Marburg, 2005, *passim*.

³¹ PA- AA, R 995, Deutschland 121, n° 31, 1, , "Mitteilung der Leistungsfähigkeit anderer Staaten 1907", Moltke to Foreign Affairs, February 23, 1908 and "Die militärische Leistungsfähigkeit der wichtigsten Staaten Europa", Moltke to Bülow, January 29, 1909.

conscientiousness³². The army, despite recognized individual aspirations, lacks uniformity and drive. In addition, the political and social conditions in France played a decisive role³³. It was with the Dreyfus affair and the “fiches” affair, during which the systemic political surveillance of the French officer corps was made public, that a dangerous division within the higher ranks of the military service took place³⁴. As early as 1905, Winterfeldt's predecessor Hugo reported that French officers were seeking, in vain, the same sense of camaraderie as Germans³⁵. On the whole, the Prussian general staff felt that there was no reason to look across the Rhine with reverence. Moreover, the international situation was largely characterized by détente, including between the German Reich and France. On February 9th, 1909, the governments of the two countries even signed an agreement settling their differences over Morocco³⁶. Since there was no urgent need to assess France's state of readiness for war, Winterfeldt followed his predecessor's reports without any problems. He focused on the extent to which widespread anti-militarism and the democratic state were hampering the development of the French army. Thanks to his knowledge of the language, Winterfeldt was able to quickly establish a vast network of contacts and was already considered a gentleman in Parisian society, making it easier for him to obtain information³⁷.

³² BArch, RM 5/1234, *Abteilung III*, “Die Taktik der französischen Armee”, undated (circa 1907-1908), fol. 64.

³³ PA-AA Report, R 6750, Frankreich 95, 60, Mutius Military Report No. 82, May 15, 1909. As a representative of the “Latin race”, the Frenchman is seen as intelligent, competent, resourceful and patriotic, but also fickle, disorderly and disobedient. This is why the idea of a French decline is tenacious. At the end of 1914, Chief of General Staff Moltke stressed: “The Romance peoples have already reached the peak of their development, they cannot introduce new fertilizing elements into the overall development” [Helmuth von Moltke, *Erinnerungen - Briefe - Dokumente 1877-1916. Ein Bild vom Kriegeausbruch, erster Kriegsführung und Persönlichkeit des ersten militärischen Führers des Krieges*, hrsg. von Eliza von Moltke, Stuttgart, 1922, p. 14]. For the German image of France, cf. Fritz Fischer, “Das Bild Frankreichs in Deutschland in den Jahren vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg”, *Revue d'Allemagne*, 4, 1972, pp. 505-519; Mark Hewitson, *National Identity and Political Thought in Germany: Wilhelmine Depictions of the French Third Republic, 1890-1914*, Oxford, New York, 2000; Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde: Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792-1918*, Stuttgart, 1992; Hartmut Kaelble, “Wahrnehmung der Industrialisierung: Die französische Gesellschaft im Bild der Deutschen zwischen 1891 und 1914”, Werner Süss (ed.), *Übergänge: Zeitgeschichte zwischen Utopie und Machbarkeit. Beiträge zu Philosophie, Gesellschaft und Politik. Hellmuth G. Bülow zum 65. Geburtstag*, Berlin, 1989, pp. 123-138; Michael E. Nolan, *op. cit.*; Bernard Trouillet, *Das deutsch-französische Verhältnis im Spiegel von Kultur und Sprache*, Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp. 63-76 and 140-152.

³⁴ For the impact of the Dreyfus Affair, see Douglas Porch, *op. cit.* pp. 54-73 and Anthony Clayton, *Paths of Glory: The French Army 1914-18*, London, New York, 2005, pp. 28-30. For the Fiches affair, see Douglas Porch, *op. cit.* p. 92-104.

³⁵ PA-AA, R 6746, Frankreich 95, 56, Hugo's military report no. 4, January 24, 1905.

³⁶ Raymond Poidevin, Jacques Bariety, *op. cit.* p. 244-247.

³⁷ Cf. T. Bentley Mott, *Twenty Years as Military Attaché*, New York, London, Toronto, 1937, p. 149: “Winterfeldt, a Bavarian by birth, was a gentleman. He was more than that. He came closer than any German I have ever known to being what we mean by that fine English phrase ‘an officer and a gentleman’. Mott is wrong, however, when he describes Winterfeldt as a Bavarian: the officer was born in Berlin.

Like Mutius, Winterfeldt blames French politics and government for the lack of discipline in the army, as well as repeated strikes and riots.

"Everywhere the interference of politicians in military affairs, against which all intelligent officers and intelligent patriots fight in vain, appears to be the real cancer of the French army, undermining discipline. For years, the troops have been irresponsibly spoiled [...]. Overwork, for example in maneuvers, is fearfully avoided; for mediocre results, overinflated praise is heaped³⁸."

The new internal service regulations introduced by the French Minister of War, Jean Brun, were also part of this context. Even the abolition of the collective officers' lunch was not enough to overcome the deep divisions that already existed within the French officer corps. Winterfeldt saw this innovation as an exaggerated concession to democracy³⁹. Troop training was affected by numerous internal conflicts, and French officers were unable to adapt to the situation. He therefore considered the German form of government far superior to French quarrels⁴⁰ and the fact that a monarch exercised supreme command over the German army was for him a major advantage over the French situation. This point of view enables us to understand the socialization and attitude of Prussian staff officers before the Great War. Normally drawn from the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie, general staff officers saw themselves as loyal elites with a uniform *esprit de corps*, marked by an aversion to democratic and socialist tendencies⁴¹.

In addition to the negative effects of democracy and anti-militarism, the promotion of aviation in France was at the heart of Winterfeldt's concerns. Unlike the German military leadership, the French War Ministry recognized the importance of aircraft in the conduct of war at an early stage. It was under the Third Republic that the first aviation associations were created, providing financial support for the efforts of the military administration. The French army was also the first to organize aviation into its own branch and promote pilot training. Between 1909 and 1912, France secured a military advantage over the German Reich, which would only diminish with difficulty⁴².

In one of his first reports, the German military attaché spoke of growing interest in the new "flying machine" on the part of the French military administration, and of the intense activity surrounding it⁴³. A few months later, Winterfeldt reported an order for 30 new aircraft and admitted that France was

³⁸ PA-AA, R 6751, Frankreich 95, 61, Winterfeldt military report no. 11, May 27, 1910. Mutius, for example, pointed out in April 1906: "The radical regime and its war ministers, by ignoring the real needs of the army, often work against their own interests. Thus, for example, the effort to continue to train the soldier during his service in his bourgeois vocation, which is now supported by the press and public opinion and enjoys special backing, is alarming from the military point of view" [PA-AA, R 6748, Frankreich 95, 58, Military Report No. 12 by Mutius, April 29, 1906].

³⁹ *Ibid*, Winterfeldt military report no. 13, June 14, 1910.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, R 6752, 52, Winterfeldt to Prussian War Ministry, Oct. 22, 1910.

⁴¹ For the social background and education of Prussian general staff officers, see Grawe, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-37.

⁴² On the development of French aviation, see David G. Herrmann, *op. cit.* p. 140-5 and David Stevenson, *op. cit.* p. 176.

⁴³ PA-AA, R 6751, Frankreich 95, 61, Winterfeldt military report no. 48, December 31, 1909.

unbeatable in this field⁴⁴. He begins his report of June 14th, 1910, with these words:

"I believe it is my duty to draw attention to the fact that the French are today extremely active in the field of aeronautical engineering, and that it looks as if they achieve practical results that will give them a significant lead over us⁴⁵."

In his opinion, aviation could soon become a fully-fledged reconnaissance tool. He became convinced of this during a week's flying in Reims, observing the progress of French military aviation⁴⁶. In the months that followed, Winterfeldt also promised to devote his "greatest attention" to French aviation. He announced the purchase of 400 aircraft by France in 1913, and in view of the developments he was witnessing, the German attaché took issue with the prevailing view in Berlin that French aviation needed to make no great progress⁴⁷.

"The Prussian Chief of General Staff Helmuth von Moltke has to admit that the French air force is "excellently organized" and works "very well"⁴⁸.

Until the outbreak of the First World War, the General Staff kept a close eye on French air armaments, as evidenced by numerous memoranda on the subject⁴⁹. With ongoing advice on the French aviation advance, the General Staff passed on its views to the Prussian War Ministry⁵⁰. From 1911 onwards, the German army was also paying more attention to aircraft and was feverishly trying to catch up with the French. When war broke out, the German army had 232 aircraft ready for use, compared with 165 for the French⁵¹.

Growing Franco-German tensions.

Growing friction between the German Reich and France over the future of Morocco once again increased international tensions, and thus the importance of the military attaché in Paris. Contrary to the 1909 agreements, the French government began to take possession of the whole of North Africa in the spring of 1911, after assessing German resistance. This resistance was not long in coming. The German Foreign Secretary, Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter, saw the French challenge as an opportunity to test the cohesion of the Agreement.

In order to obtain a bargaining chip in Morocco, he sent the gunboat *Panther* off the coast of Agadir on July 1st, triggering an international crisis

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, Winterfeldt military report no. 9, May 15, 1910.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Winterfeldt military report no. 14, June 14, 1910.

⁴⁶ Detlof von Winterfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴⁷ BAArch, PH 3/216, Winterfeldt to the Prussian War Ministry, October 3, 1912.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, Moltke to the Prussian War Ministry, October 21, 1912.

⁴⁹ Cf. the numerous memorandums between 1911 and 1914 in *Ibid*, PH 3/218.

⁵⁰ Lukas Grawe, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

⁵¹ Olaf Groehler, *Geschichte des Luftkriegs. 1910 bis 1970*, Berlin, 1975, p. 19.

that rapidly escalated⁵². From then on, Winterfeldt was asked not only for military-political reports, but also for his assessment of the French army's state of readiness for war. On August 7th, at the height of tensions, Winterfeldt wrote:

"I'm certainly far from underestimating the French army, and since I've been in Paris, I've always insisted that we shouldn't ignore its effective qualities despite the weaknesses I've often identified. But at a time when it would be possible to balance the scales on both sides, I would like to state expressly, in the full sense of my responsibility, that the French army would have no reason to go into battle with any particular confidence in victory⁵³."

Finally, it was only recently that experts realized that the training of the French army was deficient. The frequent change of Minister of War and the mixing of political and military affairs undermined the nation's military power. In addition, a large proportion of the troops were diverted from their duties by strikes. In the end, Winterfeldt comes to the following conclusion:

"I can only express, as I have done on many occasions, the firm conviction that a fight with the French army would not be without heavy sacrifice but could be undertaken with joyful prospects of success⁵⁴."

This judgment was also based on Winterfeldt's assessment that no binding military agreement existed between France and Great Britain. The poor training of British troops, in particular, militated against a massive British commitment on the European continent. There was also the question of whether the British would send their best soldiers to France, while leaving their country unprotected⁵⁵.

Winterfeldt's over-optimistic assessment met with resistance from the German military attaché in London, Roland Ostertag. Ostertag believed that British support for France was assured, while the General Staff in Berlin calculated British participation in a European war, estimating only minor support⁵⁶. Although it is unlikely that the French army would now want a war⁵⁷, the crisis continues to deepen. The German military diplomat in Paris believes that the French are already preparing for the extreme case. "The greater the uncertainty, the better their military situation⁵⁸". On August 19th, Winterfeldt reported that the French army administration had postponed the autumn maneuvers in order to mobilize more quickly in the event of armed conflict,

⁵² For the second Moroccan crisis, see Konrad Canis, *Der Weg in den Abgrund: Deutsche Außenpolitik 1902-1914*, Paderborn, 2011, pp. 403-456 and Jost Dülffer, Martin Kröger, Rolf-Harald Wippich, *op. cit.* pp. 615-639.

⁵³ PA-AA, R 6916, Frankreich 102, 6, Winterfeldt military report no. 38, August 7, 1911 [Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy und Friedrich Thimme, *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914. Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (GP), 29, Berlin 1927, no. 10705].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ PA-AA, R 6900, Frankreich 102, 52, Winterfeldt military report no. 7, February 7, 1911, partially reproduced in GP 29, no. 10520, note **.

⁵⁶ Lukas Grawe, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-314.

⁵⁷ Indeed, French military leaders were keen to avoid war. Cf. David Stevenson, *op. cit.* p. 190.

⁵⁸ GP 29, Nr. 10717, Lancken-Wakenitz to Langwerth von Simmern, August 21, 1911.

without having to take troops from the training grounds. At the same time, opinion on the retention of the 1908 age group was discussed in various newspapers. Winterfeldt states:

"My firm conviction is that our army is considerably superior to the French, not only in many individual aspects, but above all as a whole, and is in no way shaken by French bravado⁵⁹."

Overall, he assessed the situation very favorably for the German army. Although he did not directly advise a pre-emptive attack, his reports clearly show that a victory against the French army was foreseeable. This also supports the assumption that no military agreement had yet been reached between France and the UK. At this point, the Russian army was not considered ready for war. Indeed, the Tsarist retreat in the annexation of Bosnia was recent, and Russian inferiority was firmly entrenched in the minds of General Staff officers. A war at this time seemed to offer Germany a golden opportunity⁶⁰.

A few days later, the French army administration cancelled the autumn maneuvers, as Winterfeldt reported to Berlin on August 24th. What's more, he knew from his Spanish attaché colleague that French troops were preparing for mobilization⁶¹. In the days that followed, Winterfeldt's observations caused a stir among the German civil and military authorities. The German *Reichsleitung* called an extraordinary meeting to discuss appropriate countermeasures. In the absence of Chief of General Staff Moltke, Prussian War Minister Josias von Heeringen pleaded for the cancellation of the German maneuvers, so as not to give the Third Republic a head start in the event of mobilization. He admitted, however, that this would send a disastrous political signal to the French government. In the end, Chancellors Bethmann Hollweg and Kiderlen-Waechter maintained their opinion, the German maneuvers went ahead as planned and the army command took only a few precautions⁶². Meanwhile, Winterfeldt did his best in Paris to minimize the threat posed by the French army to the German military authorities. While admitting that the desire for a war within the French officer corps to erase the "gap of 1870/1871" is widespread, he continues to regard the German army as far better than its counterpart, because it is more meticulous and cautious. Moreover, he considers the officer corps to be superior in terms of loyalty to its warlord and

⁵⁹ On August 19, Winterfeldt had to report that the French army administration had postponed the autumn maneuvers in order to mobilize more quickly in the event of armed conflict, and to avoid having to take troops from the training grounds. At the same time, the "opinion on maintaining the 1908 age group" was being discussed in various newspapers, a possibility to be taken into account on the German side, the military attaché felt.

⁶⁰ Lukas Grawe, *op. cit.* p. 233-276.

⁶¹ PA-AA, R 6916, Frankreich 102, 6, Winterfeldt military report no. 40, August 24, 1911 [GP 29, no. 10723].

⁶² For the extraordinary meeting, see PA-AA, R 6916, Frankreich 102 secr, 6, telegram from Wilhelm II to Foreign Affairs, August 28, 1911, and conference protocol, Heeringen to Kiderlen-Waechter, August 31, 1911 [GP 29, no. 10726]. Cf. also Wandel's diary entries, August 30 and 31, 1911, Gerhard Garnier, "Deutsche Rüstungspolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg: General Franz Wandels Tagebuchaufzeichnungen aus dem preußischen Kriegsministerium", *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 38, 1985, p. 137.

internal cohesion. He concludes that the French military command is not at its best⁶³.

With this assessment, Winterfeldt confirms the existing views of the General Staff. In fact, as early as October 1909, the Berlin military authority drew up an indictment of France's military capabilities in a memorandum dealing with the French military leadership. It stressed that, in the event of war:

"A number of phenomena from the 1870-71 war would probably recur, such as lack of initiative, hesitant groping in difficult situations, insufficient cooperation from leaders⁶⁴."

As a result, an almost bellicose attitude developed within the General Staff, as the Austro-Hungarian military attaché in Berlin, Karl von Bienerth, reported to Vienna⁶⁵. The Chief of the General Staff was also in favor of war against France, as he wrote privately to his wife:

"If we emerge from this affair defeated and do not maintain a forceful demand that we are prepared to impose by the sword, I despair of the future of the German Reich and withdraw. But before that, I shall demand that the army be taken away from me and that we be placed under the protectorate of Japan, which will enable us to make money undisturbed and unambitious⁶⁶."

In his dealings with Kiderlen-Waechter, Moltke refrained from raising the question of war. The *Reichsleitung* now wanted to settle the crisis peacefully, especially as Britain's attitude was worrying. Contrary to Winterfeldt's suppositions, British and French military leaders had already concluded initial military agreements⁶⁷. In addition, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, made a strong contribution to the French position in his famous "Mansion House speech"⁶⁸. Winterfeldt's unshakeable confidence throughout the crisis was welcomed in Berlin, and expressly praised by Wilhelm II. Indeed, when the attaché was received in audience by the emperor, the monarch told him: "I was delighted to have had such a calm military attaché in Paris during this exciting period".

Faced with France's defensive preparations for war, Winterfeldt's statements calmed the emperor's nervousness. Moltke, Chief of the General Staff, also placed his trust in the reports from Paris. His notes for the *Reichsleitung* explicitly drew on Winterfeldt's information, emphasizing that the French army's preparations were merely defensive in nature, and that France wished to avoid war⁶⁹. A few days later, tensions between the German

⁶³ PA-AA, R 6753, Frankreich 95, 63, Winterfeldt military report no. 42, August 30, 1911.

⁶⁴ Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv (BayHStA- KA), Munich, Generalstab (GenSt), 162, Abteilung III, "Die französische Truppenführung in einem zukünftigen Kriege", October 1909.

⁶⁵ Bienerth to Conrad, August 31, 1911, Canaris Canis, *Der Weg in den Abgrund*, p. 451.

⁶⁶ Moltke to his wife, August 19, 1911, Helmuth von Moltke, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

⁶⁷ Samuel R. Williamson, *The Politics of Grand Strategy. Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914*, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 227-248 and 264-283.

⁶⁸ Jost Dülffer, Martin Kröger, Rolf-Harald Wippich, *op. cit.*, p. 631.

⁶⁹ PA-AA, R 995, Deutschland 121, 31/1, Chief of the Army General Staff, "Die

Reich and France eased, not least because Kiderlen-Waechter backed away from his initial demands for compensation. The second Moroccan crisis ended with the Morocco-Congo Treaty of November 4th, 1911, which took into account the demands of both parties. However, German public opinion expected much more, and was disappointed by the outcome. All in all, the conflict worsened Franco-German relations⁷⁰.

Another consequence of the Moroccan crisis was to boost confidence in the French army, which had been greatly weakened by the Dreyfus affair and the "fiches" affair. Since the beginning of the century, French public opinion had perceived the army as a refuge for conservative, royal and anti-republican values, which damaged its reputation⁷¹. Alexandre Millerand, Chief of Staff of the French Army, was the first to realize the importance of the army to France. There was a new Minister of War, who strove to restore the army's prestige in the eyes of the French people, and new service regulations made it compulsory to wear a uniform, even when not on military duty, and to have an officers' dinner. Millerand reintroduced the military parade, hoping for a positive effect on troop morale. The traditional uniform in the national colors was retained for this purpose⁷². At the same time, French military leaders returned to a more offensive ideology. In war, victories can only be achieved through daring offensives, declared the ideological pioneers of the new trend: Louis Loyseau de Grandmaison and Ferdinand Foch⁷³. Based on these new points of view, a profound change took place within the French army, no longer excluding the possibility of an offensive against the German Reich, resulting in the XVII deployment plan⁷⁴. Meanwhile, French President

militärpolitische Lage in Frankreich und England", Moltke to Kiderlen-Waechter, September 7, 1911; BAArch, RM 5/1182, Chief of the Army General Staff, "Nachrichten über die militärische Lage in Frankreich II", September 19, 1911.

⁷⁰ For the consequences of the Moroccan crisis, see Conrad Canis, *op. cit.* pp. 442-455 and Emily Oncken, *Panthersprung nach Agadir: Die deutsche Politik während der Zweiten Marokkokrise 1911*, Düsseldorf, 1981, pp. 416-425.

⁷¹ Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk, 2. Die Hauptmächte Europas und das wilhelminische Reich (1890-1914)*, Munich, 1960, p. 30.

⁷² On Millerand's reforms, see Douglas Porch, *op. cit.* pp. 176-86; Marjorie M. Farrar, "Politics versus Patriotism: Alexandre Millerand as French Minister of War", *French Historical Studies*, 11/4, 1980, pp. 577-609 and David P. Ralston, *op. cit.* pp. 319-342.

⁷³ Douglas Porch, "The French Army... *op. cit.* ; Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, Ithaca, 1989, pp. 42-106; Michael Howard, "Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914", Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, Felix Gilbert (eds), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Oxford, New York, 1986, pp. 510-526 and Basil Liddell Hart, "French Military Ideas before the First World War", Martin Gilbert (ed), *A Century of Conflict 1850-1950. Essays for A.J.P. Taylor*, London, 1967, pp. 135-148.

⁷⁴ For Plan XVII, cf. Douglas Porch, "French War Plans, 1914: The 'Balance of Power Paradox'", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29/1, 2006, pp. 117-144; Stefan Schmidt, "Frankreichs Plan XVII: Zur Interdependenz von Außenpolitik und militärischer Planung in den letzten Jahren vor Ausbruch des Großen Krieges", in Hans Gotthard Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, Gerhard Paul Groß (dirs), *Der Schlieffenplan: Analysen und Dokumente*, Paderborn, 2006, pp. 221-256; Samuel R. Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy, 1911-1913", Paul M. Kennedy (ed.), *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914*, Boston, 1985, pp. 133-154.

Raymond Poincaré did everything in his power to prepare the army for war between Germany and France and sought to consolidate alliances with Russia and Great Britain. He also advocated accelerating Russian mobilization through increased railroad construction and played a decisive role in worsening the politico-military situation in the German Reich⁷⁵.

Although he did not have an overall view of the situation, Winterfeldt was aware of the new offensive views that had come into force in the French army. In his 1911 annual report, he points out that "for some time now, in military circles, an opinion has been emerging, both tactically and strategically, in favor of a more offensive tendency"⁷⁶. Winterfeldt was not convinced of the practical results, even if the French officers welcomed the idea. In May 1912, however, he realized that these offensive tendencies were "gaining in importance in the French army". Until then, he says, it is difficult to see "an aggressive will behind the offensive, that is, if the French, contrary to their former opinions, now intend to take the strategic offensive in a war with Germany from the outset. I am currently inclined to think that this is not the case"⁷⁷. The attaché therefore makes it clear that the new movement should not be overestimated, even though more and more French officers approve of it. He speaks highly of Millerand's energetic role, to whom he attributes a keen sense of the army's wishes⁷⁸. In his view, thanks to the new minister's action, "a fresh spirit and a mode of active service" prevailed in the French army. With these measures, Millerand succeeded in restoring the confidence of his officers, while at the same time making the army more popular with the public. The result was increased chauvinism in the French press, which denigrated the German army.

War was no longer to be avoided at all costs, as France felt equal to Germany⁷⁹. In his annual report, Winterfeldt stresses the exceptional importance of the past year for the development of the French army. Indeed, 1912 was characterized above all by a revival of nationalism and offensive spirit, which, in addition to the absence of a ministerial crisis, favored the reinforcement of the army⁸⁰. The question of whether the French army would

⁷⁵ The reasons for this fundamental change in French strategy have been the subject of some controversy. While earlier studies regarded the new plan as a military disaster, Rainer F. Schmidt has recently emphasized the link between Plan XVII and the policy of preparation for war pursued by French Prime Minister and President Raymond Poincaré [Cf. Stefan Schmidt, *Frankreichs Außenpolitik in der Julikrise 1914: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ausbruchs des Ersten Weltkrieges* (München, 2009), passim; Rainer F. Schmidt, "'Revenge for Sedan'. Frankreich und der Schlieffenplan: Militärische und bündnispolitische Vorbereitung des Ersten Weltkriegs", *Historische Zeitschrift*, 303, 2016, pp. 393-425].

⁷⁶ BArch, N 299/2, Winterfeldt Annual Report 1911, undated and fragmentary.

⁷⁷ PA-AA, R 6753, Frankreich 95, 63, Winterfeldt military report no. 24, May 11, 1912 [GP 31, no. 11522].

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, R 6902, Frankreich 102, 54, Winterfeldt military report no. 11, February 19, 1912 [GP 31, no. 11515].

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, R 6754 Frankreich 95, 64, Winterfeldt annual report, January 13, 1913 [GP 31, no. 11532].

operate on the offensive or the defensive was crucial information for the Prussian general staff. A French offensive could influence the German war plan, which called for the bulk of the German army to advance through neutral Belgium towards the rear of the French armies⁸¹. In a memorandum drawn up in 1912 and updated several times up to the First World War, Berlin's military authority adhered to Winterfeldt's views. Indeed, there was much talk of a French offensive approach, but for Germany, on the contrary, it was preferable not to embark on an offensive attack. As for the Third Department⁸², it only believed in a few offensive movements in Alsace or Lorraine, but not in an "all-out offensive"⁸³. However, referring to Winterfeldt's reports and the declarations of the French department of the General Staff, Moltke modified the German war plan in one important respect. Unlike his predecessor, the Chief of the General Staff believed in a few tactical offensives by the French army. He therefore increased the strength of the left wing of the German army deployed against France, which had previously consisted of just a few troops. Until the outbreak of war, he increased the strength of the two armies of the German left wing to eight corps⁸⁴.

Even if Winterfeldt's reports are only one of Moltke's sources of intelligence, his statements remain an important factor leading to the fundamental change in the German war plan - a change that was strongly criticized by many General Staff officers after the World War⁸⁵. Moltke nevertheless trusted his attaché in Paris, as his various comments⁸⁶ show. If no German soil was to be abandoned, Moltke's reinforcements of the left wing were perfectly reasonable. Nevertheless, the weakening of the right wing further increases the risk of the already hazardous German war plan.

What's more, the years leading up to the Great War were characterized by constant diplomatic and military tensions. The Balkan Wars of 1912/13, in particular, showed that war could happen. At the end of 1912, the young national states around Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria began to realize their ideas of national wealth, at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. In the space of a few weeks, the Balkan states occupied a large part of European Turkey, triggering a new international crisis. Austria-Hungary tried above all

⁸¹ For German war plans, see Hans Gotthard Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, Gerhard Paul Groß (eds), *Der Schlieffenplan. Analysen und Dokumente*, Paderborn, 2006, *passim*; Gerhard Ritter, *Der Schlieffenplan. Kritik eines Mythos*, München, 1956, *passim*.

⁸² BArch, PH 3/256, Abteilung 3, "Aufmarsch und operative Absichten der Franzosen in einem zukünftigen deutsch-französischen Kriege", May 1912, variously corrected, fol. 7-12 and 16-22.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ For Moltke's modifications to the Schlieffenplan, see Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 86-87, "Der Moltkeplan: Modifikation des Schlieffenplans bei gleichen Zielen?", Hans Gotthard Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, Gerhard Paul Groß (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 79-99 and "German War Plans", Richard Hamilton, Holger H. Herwig (eds), *War planning 1914*, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 56-65.

⁸⁵ In addition to Wilhelm Groener, the former close collaborator of Chief of General Staff Erich Ludendorff was among those who criticized the alleged dilution of Schlieffen's "recipe for victory". Cf. Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, *op. cit.* p. 1-6.

⁸⁶ Cf. Moltke's eulogy in GStA-PK, VIII. HA, Slg. Priesdorff, no. 1298.

to prevent further strengthening of the Balkan states, particularly Serbia, and openly threatened military intervention. As protector of the Slavic Balkans, the Austrian threat also worried Russia. In the months that followed, the European partners of the two-power coalition, Germany, and France, also became involved in the conflict. Towards the end of 1912, a general European war seemed imminent for the fourth time in the space of a few years⁸⁷. The Russian army had also recovered from its defeat by Japan and was well on the way to becoming a serious adversary in the eyes of the Prussian general staff⁸⁸. Although Germany's attention was mainly focused on the Czarist Empire's military preparations, the measures taken by France were not overlooked, especially as the French government repeatedly stressed its determination to support the Russian allies in all circumstances⁸⁹.

On November 11th, Winterfeldt reports that the French military administration:

"makes arrangements to be able, in case of acute crisis, to unleash surprise hostilities against Germany without prior declaration of war and without questioning the chamber."

In France, the desire for revenge was palpable⁹⁰. As during the Moroccan crisis, Wilhelm II was deeply disturbed by his attaché's descriptions, and therefore instructed the German ambassador in Paris, Wilhelm von Schoen, and Winterfeldt to monitor French war preparations⁹¹. With the ambassador's authorization, Winterfeldt now reported directly to the General Staff throughout the crisis, avoiding the time-consuming process of conventional reporting. He is convinced that the French government has no intention of going to war, but is preparing for conflict, and speaks of general "precautions", while asserting that reports of preparations for attack are quite exaggerated⁹². Winterfeldt reports conspicuous activity in French garrisons in the border region, which he nevertheless attributes to defensive measures⁹³. As in 1911, he tried to allay fears of a French offensive. Given these optimistic reports from the West and the alleged threat from the East, Moltke advocated a preventive war. This time, he also took an aggressive stance against the *Reichsleitung*⁹⁴.

⁸⁷ On the course of the First Balkan War, see Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg: Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan*, München, 1996, pp. 31-40; Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War*, London, New York, 2000, *passim*. For the evolution of international tensions, see Conrad Canis, *op. cit.* pp. 480-519 and Jost Dülffer, Martin Kröger, Rolf-Harald Wippich, *op. cit.* pp. 641-655.

⁸⁸ For a German assessment of the Russian army during the Balkan Wars, see Lukas Grawe, *op. cit.* pp. 332-359.

⁸⁹ Christoph Schmidt, *Russische Geschichte 1547-1917*, München, 2009, p. 258 and Rainer F. Schmidt, *op. cit.* pp. 404-410.

⁹⁰ PA-AA, R 6916, Frankreich 102 secr, 6, Winterfeldt military report no. 58, November 11, 1912 [GP 31, no. 11529].

⁹¹ *Ibid*, telegram from Wilhelm II to Foreign Affairs, November 14, 1912 [GP 31, no. 11530].

⁹² *Ibid*, Winterfeldt to Moltke, November 24, 1912 [GP 33, no. 12436].

⁹³ *Ibid*, Winterfeldt military report no. 64, November 23, 1912.

⁹⁴ Cf. Moltke's request for war at the *Kriegsrat* of December 8, 1912. John C.G. Röhl, "An der Schwelle zum Weltkrieg. Eine Dokumentation über den *Kriegsrat* vom 8. Dezember 1912",

But Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg wanted to resolve the crisis peacefully, in cooperation with the British government⁹⁵. Moltke remained firmly convinced by the reassuring information reaching him from Paris. On November 21st, he described the situation in France as calm. The military attaché in Paris reported on a series of military measures to be taken in France in the event of war:

"All news items have been carefully examined in the light of the abundance of material. We can state with certainty that there are no effective war preparations in France"⁹⁶

So, because of Winterfeldt's optimistic assessments, Russia remains the main variable for the Germans during the Balkan crisis, as Bienenrath points out in Vienna⁹⁷.

Eventually, tensions around the Balkans subsided peacefully. Together with the British government, the German *Reichsleitung* advocated a peaceful resolution to the crisis and succeeded. At the London Embassy Conference, the European powers agreed on the future borders of the Balkans, and the conflict was settled for a few months. However, the imbalance of forces in Europe caused by the conflict revived the arms race, and the major powers once again increased their armies⁹⁸.

Winterfeldt and French army reinforcements.

The last quarter of Winterfeldt's term as half-military attaché in Paris was marked by a massive effort to arm the French army. For several years, the army of the Third Republic had been suffering from an ever-worsening shortage of recruits, with repercussions on the army's military preparation. In order to cope with the early age of soldiers and to counter the German expansion of the army in 1913⁹⁹, the Minister of War reintroduced three years' military service, compared with two years in 1905. This reform project was controversial and was accompanied by heated debate in political and public circles. Despite sometimes virulent opposition, the French Parliament adopted

Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen, 21, 1977, pp. 77-134.

⁹⁵ Conrad Canis, *op. cit.* p. 507.

⁹⁶ Die PA-AA, R 6916, Frankreich 102 secr, 6, "Die militärische Lage in Frankreich (mit Bezug auf die Berichte des Militär-Attachés in Paris über angebliche Kriegsvorbereitungen)", Moltke to Wilhelm II and Foreign Affairs, November 26/27, 1912 [GP 33, no. 2446].

⁹⁷ After conversations with several Prussian staff officers, Bienenrath was under the impression "that there was practically nothing to fear from France" [John C. G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II, 3, Der Weg in den Abgrund 1900-1914*, Munich, 2008, p. 948].

⁹⁸ On the consequences of the First Balkan War for the balance of power in Europe, see Egmont Zechlin, *Krieg und Krisenrisiko. Zur deutschen Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg. Aufsätze*, Düsseldorf, 1979, p. 151; Jack S. Levy, "The Sources of Preventive Logic in German Decision-making in 1914", Jack S. Levy, John A. Vasquez (eds.), *The Outbreak of the First World War: Structure, Politics, and Decision-Making*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 151 and Conrad Canis, *op. cit.* pp. 51 and 515.

⁹⁹ On the expansion of the German army, see Oliver Stein, *Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik 1890- 1914. Das Militär und der Primat der Politik*, Paderborn, 2007.

the extension of military service on July 19th, 1913, by 358 votes to 204¹⁰⁰. Military service now begins at the age of 20, one year earlier than before. In addition, the total service obligation has been increased from 25 to 28 years, thus swelling the ranks by more than 200,000 soldiers.

This reform had its drawbacks: the French army was strengthened not by one year of training, but by two years of recruitment. What's more, the law only reached its full effect in 1916, since only two and a half classes were called up in a transitional phase. The effect of the reform therefore developed much later than that of the reinforcement of the German army. Unlike the German measure, the new French military law did not alter the amount of material equipment available to the army, so French armed forces remained inferior in terms of heavy artillery and field howitzers¹⁰¹. This law expresses the "last reserves" of French military potential¹⁰². In his 1912 annual report, Winterfeldt stressed that the French army was making great progress, but that there was still much to be done¹⁰³. Then, on January 30th, 1913, he reported for the first time that the reintroduction of long military service was the subject of intense discussion in French military circles¹⁰⁴. These discussions are inflamed by the measures to reinforce the German army, which are a cause for complaint "for the French and especially for those elements who would like to play with fire through chauvinistic anger", as the German attaché puts it.

For Winterfeldt, the French army could not compete with the German army in terms of numbers¹⁰⁵ given the stagnant growth of the French population. Indeed, while the French population grew only slightly, from 37 to 39 million between 1880 and 1910, the population of the German Reich rose from 42 to 62 million over the same period¹⁰⁶. The German Reich therefore had greater military potential. In order to keep up with its adversary, the French army eventually called up 90% conscripts, whereas in the German Reich, only 53% were called up¹⁰⁷. This disparity, which continues to be highlighted in Winterfeldt's reports, was one of the decisive factors that led Moltke to maintain the revised Schlieffen plan. After the first defeats, the French army no longer had any "human reserves", as an assessment by the

¹⁰⁰ On the reintroduction of three-year service, its effects and consequences, cf. Gerd Krumeich, *Aufrüstung und Innenpolitik in Frankreich vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Die Einführung der dreijährigen Dienstpflicht 1913-1914*, Wiesbaden, 1980; Douglas Porch, *The March.. op. cit.*, pp. 191-212; David B. Ralston, *op. cit.* pp. 343-71; Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *op. cit.* pp. 14-19 and Jack L. Snyder, *op. cit.* pp. 48-53.

¹⁰¹ On the disadvantages of reintroducing the three-year term of office, see David Stevenson, *op. cit.* pp. 302-4 and 312.

¹⁰² Stefan Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

¹⁰³ PA-AA, R 6754 Frankreich 95, 64, Winterfeldt's annual report, January 13, 1913 [GP 31, no. .11532]. Winterfeldt gave a copy of the report to the German ambassador in Paris, Wilhelm von Schoen.

¹⁰⁴ PA-AA, R 6755, Frankreich 95, 65, Winterfeldt military report no. 6, January 30, 1913, partially reproduced in GP 39, no. 15624, note *.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, Winterfeldt military report no. 9, February 14, 1913 [GP 39, no. 15624].

¹⁰⁶ Anthony Clayton, *op. cit.* p. 22.

¹⁰⁷ PA-AA, R 995, Deutschland 121 n° 31, 1, Die militärische Leistungsfähigkeit der wichtigsten Staaten Europas", Moltke to Bülow, January 29, 1909.

General Staff¹⁰⁸ repeatedly emphasized. Three weeks later, the German attaché had to revise his assessment. He reported on a meeting of the *Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre* (Superior War Council), which voted unanimously in favor of reintroducing the three-year term of office:

"If the French really want to adopt such a resolution, it would show a willingness to sacrifice, which would lead to the upheaval of local popular culture, which I have thought I have seen in recent years, is not without military interest"¹⁰⁹."

Winterfeldt is unwilling to comment on the consequences of such a radical reform, but warns against exaggerating the benefits of the measure, especially as the initial economic difficulties of implementation and anti-militarist resistance are already apparent¹¹⁰. In his report of March 12th, 1913¹¹¹, he gave the measure of the reform's opponents. He was present at several meetings of the French Chamber and expected that "parliamentary negotiations on the three-year duration will probably last long enough and may yet lead to violent disputes".

The French government "also knows that a struggle is imminent"¹¹² - a sentiment already echoed by the Prussian General Staff¹¹³. As in previous years, Winterfeldt was quick to allay the concerns of the German military authorities in Berlin. Nothing could shake his conviction that the German army was superior to the French. Winterfeldt's judgment proved to be wrong, however. Quicker than expected, the French government introduced the law on July 19th, 1913. In August, the German military diplomat presented a detailed report on the reform and its main provisions. This law, like its predecessors, expresses "the characteristic of the tormented, the artificial, the expedient with which one wants to get out of a difficult situation". So far, the extension of military service has been relatively well received. In the long term, however, the implementation of the new law will create a great deal of discontent in the country, while accentuating resentment towards Germany, which is accused of all the evils¹¹⁴.

Winterfeldt points out the many disadvantages of this law, such as calling up all recruits, instead of trained men, or the length of leave. He also points out that the reforms weaken the French army in a period of transition. It is therefore in the interests of the 3rd Republic to maintain peace. The attaché still doesn't believe in a French attack in the near future, even though he reports

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Moltke had already made a similar statement to the *Reichsleitung* a year earlier. Moltke to the Foreign Office, February 23, 1908.

¹⁰⁹ PA-AA, R 6755, Frankreich 95, 65, Winterfeldt military report no. 11, March 5, 1913 [GP 39, no. 15630].

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* military report no. 13 from Winterfeldt, March 12, 1913 [*Ibid.* no. 15632].

¹¹² *Ibid.* Winterfeldt military report no. 19, May 16, 1913.

¹¹³ BA-B, R 43/1252 a., "Die neue französische Wehrvorlage", March 3, 1913, Moltke to Bethmann Hollweg, March 5, 1913.

¹¹⁴ PA-AA, R 6756, Frankreich 95, 66, Winterfeldt military report no. 39, August 20, 1913 [GP 39, no. 15653].

an increasingly chauvinistic climate in France. For him, it was obvious that the new military law would lead to an increase in the number of deserters: "Indeed, with the restrictive provisions of three-year service, anti-militarism is likely to gain ground"¹¹⁵. He concludes that the law is "a very appreciable patriotic and military effort on the part of France [...] but I don't think that the French army will rise again now, thanks to this law, like a phoenix from its ashes".

Admittedly, the German Reich "has every reason to see its western neighbors more clearly than ever in military terms", but Winterfeldt continues:

"There is no reason to regard the new French military law as more threatening than it actually is. From the experience I have had in Paris up to now, I believe I can confidently express the conviction that the result of the latest German military proposals will be much more real after their execution than the gain the French will derive from the three years of service, purchased at the price of such disproportionate sacrifices"¹¹⁶.

While he sees the French reform as a good thing, he also considers the law to be ill-conceived in several respects. For this reason, he constantly downplays the beneficial effects, insisting that the German measures positively offset the French ones. This assessment resonates with decision-makers in Berlin, and the Third Department of the General Staff essentially follows his attaché's descriptions. On the basis of his arguments, he discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the new French military law point by point in a memorandum dated February 1914. He also compares the situation of the French army before and after the introduction of the law¹¹⁷. Like Winterfeldt, Moltke's deputy, Georg von Waldersee, considered it unlikely that France would go to war in 1914 as a result of the extended length of service.

Finally, the Third Republic

"We now have two young classes per color, which by their very nature can only be poorly trained. The training of heavy artillery has just begun. A new chamber has been elected; questions of domestic policy must be clarified"¹¹⁸.

Even Wilhelm II, who regularly read the reports of his military diplomats, agreed with Winterfeldt's remarks, as shown by the emperor's comments on the Austro-Hungarian military attaché Karl von Bienerth. Wilhelm II was amused by the difficulties encountered by the French in recruiting new soldiers. In many cases the men would have had to be sent home due to the lack of barracks¹¹⁹. In fact, Winterfeldt would probably have reported more extensively on the reinstatement of three-year service, had he not been seriously injured during his visit to the autumn maneuvers on September 16th,

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ BArch, RM 5/1183, Chief of the Army General Staff, "Die französische Armee nach Durchführung der dreijährigen Dienstzeit", February 1914, fol. 4-15.

¹¹⁸ BArch, RH 61/577, no. 94, "Denkschrift über Deutschlands militärische Lage Mai 1914", Waldersee to Moltke, May 18, 1914, fol. 191-192.

¹¹⁹ Bienerth to Austrian War Minister Krobatin, December 22, 1913, quoted in David Stevenson, *op. cit.* pp. 311-312.

1913. The car in which he was riding with his colleagues collapsed on a bend, burying, and ejecting the German officer from the passenger compartment. While the other passengers escaped with minor abrasions, he suffered numerous bone fractures and internal contusions¹²⁰. Operated on several times, he was treated for several months in French hospitals, where he was visited by many high-ranking French military officers and even President Raymond Poincaré¹²¹. The French government showed great commitment and endeavored to give the best treatment to the military representative of the German Reich¹²². A French newspaper wrote: "If all Germans looked like Colonel de Winterfeldt [sic], relations between the two countries would become easier"¹²³."

During his convalescence, the post of military attaché in Paris remained vacant, although his deputy, Hauptmann Janesch, took over his duties so that relations from the French capital were not completely interrupted¹²⁴. By the end of 1913, however, Moltke was certain that "this substitution" was not enough, as "the exact conditions resulting from the introduction of three years' service in France will require careful and thorough observation"¹²⁵. Thus, on April 24th, 1914, Robert von Klüber, an experienced officer, was appointed Germany's most important military attaché¹²⁶. Klüber gained many years' experiences in various positions on the General Staff and served in the Ninth Department (responsible for observing the military forces of the Benelux countries, Spain and the USA) in 1912. Before being sent to Paris, he was employed as a deputy, then as a full-time military attaché in Brussels and The Hague from June 16th, 1913¹²⁷.

Although Winterfeldt's recovery was slow¹²⁸, he was transferred to

¹²⁰ See description in Detlof von Winterfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹²¹ [Anonymus], "Oberstleutnant von Winterfeldt, unser bisheriger Militärattaché in Paris", *Militär-Wochenblatt*, 99, 1914, pp. 1655-1658 and GP 39, No. 15657, note ***. Information on the Winterfeldt accident should also have appeared in BArch, N 299/16F, *Die Memoiren der Colonelle. Aufzeichnungen von Marianne von Winterfeldt über den Autounfall ihres Gatten*. Unfortunately, they no longer exist.

¹²² Detlof von Winterfeldt, *op. cit.*

¹²³ GStA-PK, VIII. HA, Slg. Priesdorff, no. 1298.

¹²⁴ In one of the officer's few surviving reports, he speaks of a weakening of resistance to three-year service. Janesch military report no. 7, March 23, 1914 [GP 39, no. 15670].

¹²⁵ GStA-PK, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ PA-AA, Gesandtschaft Brüssel, no. 8/5, Supreme Order of Wilhelm II, April 24, 1914.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, Supreme Order of Wilhelm II, May 30 and June 16, 1913. Born in 1873, Klüber joined the *Ulanen N. 15* regiment, graduated from the war academy and was appointed to the General Staff in 1903. From 1908 to 1910, he served as General Staff Officer at the General Command of the *Gardekörps*, before taking charge of a squadron of the Third Guards Regiment. During the First World War, Klüber served on the staffs of several major armies, before joining the new *Reichsleitung* in 1919 as liaison officer to the Prussian War Ministry. It was in this capacity that Klüber was assassinated by Spartakists on March 2, 1919. For Klüber's career, see Hanns Möller-Witten, *Geschichte der Ritter des Ordens 'pour le mérite' im Weltkrieg, I*, Berlin, 1935, pp. 588-590; Karl-Friedrich Hildebrand and Christian Zweng, *Die Ritter des Ordens Pour le Mérite des I. Weltkriegs, 2, H-O Erstmals mit Foto, Verleihungsbegründung, Dienstlaufbahn, Beförderungen und verliehenen Orden*, Bissendorf, 2003, pp. 229-30 and BArch, N 12/67, study by Wilhelm Magnus von Eberhardt.

¹²⁸ Detlof von Winterfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

the General Staff in the spring of 1914 but remained on health leave until the end of the year. He was repeatedly praised by his superiors for his reports from Paris, as well as by Chief of General Staff Moltke.

"Until his accident, he performed his duties to the best of his ability. Winterfeldt remained in France for the first half of 1914 but fled to Spain after the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, in order to avoid internment as an 'enemy alien'".

Returning to Germany at the end of 1914, he took command of the Central Department of the Deputy General Staff in Berlin in August 1915¹²⁹. Two years later, he was Supreme Army Command representative and liaison officer to the German Chancellor. In November 1918, he was the army's representative on the German Armistice Commission responsible for negotiating the terms of an armistice with the Entente powers in the forest of Compiègne. After the Versailles peace treaty, incensed by the harshness of its provisions, the former military attaché withdrew from his duties in January 1919. Shortly afterwards, he left the army. From then on, Winterfeldt devoted himself primarily to economic issues, as a member of the Board of Directors of the *Hamburger Verkehrsaktiengesellschaft*. In 1923, he was appointed to the *Reichsrat* as Prussia's representative for military affairs, where he worked for ten years. After his retirement, Winterfeldt retired from the public eye and died on July 3rd, 1940, in Berlin¹³⁰.

As the First World War approached, the Prussian General Staff relied heavily on the reports of its military attachés for detailed information on the armies of foreign states. The German attaché in Paris was therefore of particular importance, especially as international relations were regularly shaken by crises and conflicts that brought France and the German Reich to the brink of war. Under these conditions, Berlin's military authorities depended on the judgment of their expert to assess the French army's readiness for war. Detlof von Winterfeldt was an experienced officer, and his knowledge of France earned him the position of the German Reich's most important military attaché. During his tenure, he was responsible for assessing France's wartime preparedness for two international crises (the second Moroccan crisis and the Balkan wars). He also reported on the numerous reform and armament measures taken by the French army. As the memoirs of the General Staff show, the Berlin military authorities relied on the judgments of the officer in Paris. Indeed, Winterfeldt often accurately assessed the major weaknesses of the French army, such as a lack of cohesion. He also highlights the positive development of French aviation since its inception. His main tasks are to observe activities, but also to carry out detailed analyses of the situation. However, his assessments are not always to the point, and he rules out a French attack on the Reich in summer/autumn 1911. Moreover, he repeatedly stressed

¹²⁹ GStA-PK, *op. cit.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid*; Detlof von Winterfeldt, *op. cit.* pp. 11-20 and [Anonymous], "Oberstleutnant von Winterfeldt... *op. cit.*

the defensive nature of French preparations, while reiterating his confidence in the superiority of the German army in the event of war.

Although he did not explicitly suggest an attack, his reports showed that a victory against the French army was highly probable. The Chief of the General Staff, Moltke, also shared this view, and was always in favor of a pre-emptive attack against Germany's western neighbor. It is safe to assume that Moltke's position, set out in his letters to the Chancellor and the Foreign Office, was largely based on Winterfeldt's reports. As the Moroccan crisis showed, Winterfeldt's assessment of the likelihood of France taking the offensive in the Balkan War in the winter of 1912/1913 enabled the Prussian General Staff to concentrate on Russia and its army during the tense period. In numerous reports, the German military diplomat in Paris agreed with the assessments of his predecessors, Hugo and Mutius. Winterfeldt identifies France's democratic form as a major weakness contributing to its anti-militaristic tendencies, an assumption integral to Germany's negative assessment of the French army. The discipline and obedience of the French army, which Winterfeldt considers much weaker than that of the German army, make French troops, in his opinion, mediocre soldiers who lack drill, seriousness and order.

The conclusions regarding the political views of the General Staff officer corps are obvious. As we have seen, general staff officers saw themselves as a loyal and monarchical corps, marked by an aversion to democratic or socialist tendencies¹³¹. Winterfeldt's reflections on the new offensive mindset of the French army were also highly influential. Moltke and his staff officers had never really believed in the relevance of the type of strategic offensive proposed by Joffre's *Plan XVII*, as they were convinced that the French would only engage in various tactical strikes to achieve terror in Alsace or Lorraine - opinions that were hardened by Winterfeldt's statements. This is why Moltke decisively modified the famous Schlieffen plan. The German military attaché in Paris thus played a decisive role in this fundamental change, and often criticized Germany's war plan. Similarly, the German attaché's assessment of the effects of the reinstatement of three-year military service on France's military capacity was very important to the deliberations of the military authorities in Berlin. Winterfeldt saw this as a very important result, but nevertheless felt that German army reinforcements were much more effective. He also points out the disadvantages of three-year service, including the call-up of recruits instead of trained men, the long vacations provided for in the plan, and the likely increase in the desertion rate. Furthermore, Winterfeldt interpreted the law as a likely catalyst for the development of anti-militarism in France. Only Winterfeldt's accident during the French autumn maneuvers prevented the publication of further reports on the law and possible assessments of France's war readiness during the July crisis.

Winterfeldt's consistently optimistic reports contributed significantly to the Prussian general staff's view of the French army as an easily beatable

¹³¹ Lukas Grawe, *Deutsche Feindaufklärung, op. cit.* p. 34-37.

adversary at the start of the war. In other words, Winterfeldt helped Germany to underestimate its western adversary, while Poincaré's measures to prepare for war were perceived as incomplete. It also appears that Winterfeldt is unconvinced by British aid to France in the event of war. In fact, in the long term, the French could probably be defeated in a repeat of the 1870 war, but not with the intervention of the British and their colonies. The legacy of Winterfeldt's optimistic dispatches can even be found in a report from the Bavarian embassy in Berlin to Munich on July 31st, 1914, shortly before Germany's declaration of war on France: "The Prussian General Staff looks forward to war with France with great confidence and expects to crush France within four weeks"¹³².

During the July crisis, Chief of the General Staff Moltke also spoke out in favor of a "pre-emptive" strike, always stressing the fact that France was "almost a military embarrassment"¹³³. Moltke and the Prussian General Staff certainly didn't believe in an easy "walk" through France in July 1914, but on the German side, the common view was that the war against the Third Republic could still be decisively won. On the basis of Winterfeldt's reports, the General Staff also refused to believe that France was preparing an attack on the German Reich in the next few years. Moltke's deputy, Waldersee, confirmed this view just a few months before the start of the Great War. In the face of this, Moltke's assertion in the early days of August 1914 that he knew Russia and France were planning an attack on Germany seems an *a posteriori* justification¹³⁴.

Lukas Grawe

¹³² Telephone message from the Bavarian embassy in Berlin, July 31, 1914, in Pius Dirr (ed.), *Bayerische Dokumente zum Kriegausbruch und zum Versailler Schuldspruch*, München, Berlin, 1922, pp. 14-15.

¹³³ The Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, Karl von Wenninger, to the Bavarian War Ministry, July 29, 1914, in Bernd F. Schulte, "Neue Dokumente zu Kriegausbruch und Kriegausverlauf 1914", *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 25 (1979), pp. 123-89, here doc. 1, p. 137 and Imanuel Geiss, *Julikrise und Kriegausbruch 1914: Eine Dokumentensammlung*, 2, Hannover, 1964, doc. 704, p. 298.

¹³⁴ Lerchenfeld to Hertling, August 5, 1914, in Ernst Deuerlein, *Briefwechsel Hertling-Lerchenfeld 1912-1917: Dienstliche Privatkorrespondenz zwischen dem bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten Georg Graf von Hertling und dem bayerischen Gesandten in Berlin Hugo Graf von und zu Lerchenfeld, Erster Teil*, Boppard am Rhein, 1973, doc. 119, p. 329.

Exploiting letters and notebooks of German soldiers by French intelligence services (1914-1918)

Dr. Gérald Sawicki

During the First World War, the French intelligence services (SR) understood the value of exploiting the letters and notebooks of German officers and soldiers taken prisoner or killed on the battlefield. A source of military intelligence, these documents also provided invaluable information on morale trends, as well as on the political, economic, and social situation of the German Empire. Special organizations were set up to collect them, and new methods were devised for processing them. Some original documents were even used in press campaigns against the enemy.

What military information was extracted from the letters and notebooks of German soldiers? How were these documents used by French intelligence services? How did they contribute to the study of the German Empire and public opinion during the Great War?

Addresses of German soldiers.

The first task of the French intelligence services was to gather military intelligence. Among the various sources of intelligence, such as contact, agent, aviation, eavesdropping and artillery information, one of the most important was for the officers of the 2nd offices and the military interpreters to go through the documents seized during operations¹. These documents, which varied in nature, were generally of two kinds: general and service papers, and personal papers². Among the latter, which are the only ones of interest to us here, were letters and notebooks (also known as logbooks) recovered from German prisoners of war or on the battlefield. These private documents were "always a valuable source of information", as the German soldier seemed to be "generally

¹ Carrias, *Les renseignements de contact. Etude dans le cadre d'un cas concret historique*, Paris, Charles Lavauzelle, 1937, p. 123.

² Charles Paquet, *Étude sur le fonctionnement interne d'un 2^e bureau en campagne*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1923, p. 47.

an active correspondent", and often carried "letters and postcards from dozens of comrades in other divisions or corps"³. The search of prisoners was thus "a fundamental operation" and was codified in a note dated December 18th, 1916, concerning "the examination of effects and miscellaneous objects found on German soldiers"⁴.

The main purpose of all these documents, including simple letter envelopes, was to systematically collect all the names, addresses and military assignments of German soldiers. A simple, seemingly innocuous postcard seized from a prisoner could reveal the exact composition and location of a unit on the front. For example, a postcard written on May 31st, 1916, by a German soldier in the 20th infantry division of the 20th corps announced that he was now in the rear, some 10 km from Laon, and would soon be returning to the front. Addressed to his brother, pioneer H. Ahler, the card also announced that Ahler belonged to a unit of the 10th corps reserve⁵. Similarly, from other papers found on prisoners, we learned that the commander of the 8th company of the 81st German active infantry regiment was Captain von Brandt, or that Corporal H... belonged to the Guards army corps, the 1st Guards infantry division and the n°236-foot artillery battery⁶. By multiplying all these addresses and identifying all the units on the front, the German order of battle could be reconstructed as accurately as possible. By deduction, the strengths and weaknesses of the German army were assessed, as well as its probable offensive plans.

Another useful type of document was the *Soldbuch*, the military or pay book carried by every German soldier. It was a kind of military curriculum vitae. From the *Soldbuch* of a German soldier killed at La Chapelotte (Vosges), the SR extracted the following information:

"A driver in the 6th train squadron of the 3rd Bavarian corps (reservist) was transferred on 20/8/1915 to the 1st ersatz battalion of the 3rd Bavarian in Augsburg from where he was sent to the front on 6/11/1915⁷."

The *Soldbücher* thus made it possible to track the various operations involved in recruiting, calling up, training, and recovering soldiers⁸.

The Belfort intelligence service operations office.

Headed by an exceptional officer, Commandant Andlauer, the Belfort

³ Ferdinand Tuohy, *Les mystères de l'espionnage pendant la guerre 1914-1918*, Paris, L'Édition française illustrée, 1921, p. 238.

⁴ Olivier Lahaie, "Les interrogatoires des prisonniers allemands par les services de renseignements français (1914-1918)", *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, n° 253, January-March 2014, p. 14.

⁵ Service historique de la Défense, Archives de la Guerre (SHD GR), 16 N 1475, 2^e bureau de l'État-major (EM) de la II^e armée, Extract from a postcard found on a prisoner, June 15, 1916.

⁶ *Ibid*, Extracts from papers found on prisoners (addresses and extracts from letters), April 21, 1916.

⁷ *Ibid*, 2^e bureau EM de la VII^e armée, Renseignements extraits des *Soldbücher* d'Allemands tués à la Chapelotte, May 7, 1916.

⁸ Charles Paquet, *op. cit.* p. 48.

intelligence service developed a particularly effective invention for this type of work, the "*bureau d'exploitation*" (Operating Bureau) (BE). Initially staffed by industrialists and shopkeepers from Alsace-Lorraine, and later reinforced by a number of academics, this branch of the SR in Belfort was responsible for collating, cross-checking and verifying information from a variety of sources, including the German press, letters from the front and the diaries of German soldiers who had been killed or taken prisoner⁹. Enjoying a certain degree of autonomy, this department quickly achieved a high level of output thanks to "industrialized, taylorized" working methods¹⁰.

Lucien Lacaze, an Alsatian secret agent and interpreter for the SR in Belfort, came up with the idea of using the relationships that existed between Alsations mobilized throughout the German Empire and their families who remained in the small part of southern Alsace that the French army had liberated in the summer of 1914. With Andlauer's authorization, he collected letters from the families and had them mailed in Switzerland, after ensuring that they contained no indiscretions. In return, he would receive replies from the German front at cleverly chosen addresses in Switzerland, and then hand them over to the families once the French army had extracted all possible yield from them¹¹. Every day, a report was drawn up, concentrating the information, and quoting the interesting passages with translations opposite: "troop movements, new formations, morale at the front and rear, armaments, food"¹². In this way, the SR obtained first-rate identifications. A system of cards tracked the successive movements of the troops serving the 4 to 500 Alsatian soldiers involved in the scheme¹³.

Thanks to this information, the Belfort station became one of France's most efficient SRs. To give just a few examples, the preparation of the major events of 1915 on the Eastern Front - the German offensives in Masuria, the breakthroughs in Galicia, Poland and then Serbia - was largely monitored thanks to the work of the BE and its exploitation of letters from Alsations¹⁴. The formation of small and large German units, their places of formation, their destinations, their transport, and their deployments were known at a moment's notice¹⁵. Thus, at the end of January 1915, the SR in Belfort learned from letters that the entire 41st German reserve army corps was to be used on the French front, and that three others recently created army corps were being directed towards East Prussia, "with a view to operations in the very near future". The successive passages of a soldier from the 249th reserve infantry regiment were tracked from town to town as his letters were sent¹⁶. Correspondence from Alsations also indicated the reorganization of large

⁹ Henri Navarre, *Le service de renseignements 1871-1944*, Paris, Plon, 1978, p. 19.

¹⁰ SHD, GR, 1K173, Fonds Andlauer, Causerie sur le service des renseignements, February 7, 1925, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

¹² L. Lacaze, *Aventures d'un agent secret français*, Paris, Payot, 1934, p. 79.

¹³ SHD, GR, 1K173, Causerie..., *op. cit.* p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 5

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

German units. On March 20th, 1915, a soldier from the 169th infantry regiment announced that he now belonged to the 52nd division. The following day, the SR in Belfort also received a letter announcing that the 38th infantry regiment was now part of the 56th division. Once these divisions had been formed, it was easy to keep track of them. A postcard with a view of Kaiserslautern, stamped near Frankfurt on May 4th, 1915, and arriving in Belfort three days later, announced that this 56th division was being transported to the Eastern Front¹⁷. Later, the return of the Guards Corps to the French front was similarly reported in a soldier's letter¹⁸.

However, by the end of 1915, the Germans had discovered this source of identification¹⁹. The complete elimination of the letters coincided with preparations for the German offensive in Verdun²⁰. But the methods developed by the BE were systematized and applied extensively to the study of soldiers' letters and notebooks taken from the front in 1916 and 1917, which the *Grand Quartier Général* (main headquarters) (GQG) sent to Belfort²¹ for study. Finally, the SR in Belfort possessed a comprehensive collection of postmarks from the various German military offices. This enabled it to obtain an "excellent yield" from military correspondence until the end of the war, despite Germany's very strict censorship²².

A valuable source on combatants and military operations.

The various papers and documents collected from prisoners or found on the battlefield revealed a wealth of other military information, including details of German soldiers and their operations²³. Interesting letters were even translated and distributed *in extenso*. The original letter from a German radiotelegraph operator in Mesopotamia, found on a German prisoner taken on the Champagne front, described in detail the fighting around Baghdad and the capture of the city by the British in March 1917²⁴. Others, more classic, depicted the hard fighting faced by soldiers, such as this German NCO from the 122nd reserve infantry regiment, who experienced artillery fire north of Verdun at the start of the battle:

"It was often appalling, this rolling overhead: the most terrible thunderstorm is but child's play beside it. The whole earth shakes, and the air pressure of the uninterrupted explosions of shells and shrapnel, which are sent our way in response, is felt extremely unpleasantly in the solid shelters and foxholes deep underground. There's also the oppressive sensation that one of these

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

²⁰ L. Lacaze, *op. cit.* p. 82.

²¹ SHD, GR 1K173, Causerie..., *op. cit.* p. 5.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ For more details on the range of possible information, see the two instructions on the use of papers, letters and documents, including at the indexing centers, in Charles Paquet, *op. cit.* p. 289-295.

²⁴ SHD, GR 16 N 1367, 2^e bureau EM IV^e armée, Translation of a German document, September 15, 1917.

flying devils could still get through the protective cover, which is several meters thick. Outside, in the open air, it's not nearly as deafening; but then there's another nuisance: the damned shrapnel! That's why it's quite impossible to stay outside (...) So we're wishing war on all the devils, including all those who caused it, as long as they're not already in it (...) We've been relieved for a few dozen hours and have had a bit of a rest. Never before has a relief been as welcome to me as this one (...) No reasonable man can wish for a prolongation of this dreadful war²⁵."

These documents were sometimes assembled thematically, as in the case of those relating only "the effects of our bombardments" on the 2nd Guards division and other German divisions. For example, a letter from a pioneer, who thought he and his comrades were safe twenty meters underground, showed how six of the seven exits from a trench were crushed on October 17th, 1917: "The seventh is under such heavy shelling that we can't get out²⁶!"

This artillery shelling often determined the decision to surrender. Numerous letters bear witness to this: On March 14th, 1916, a German soldier explained to his fiancée that, having taken refuge three meters underground in a mine, he was faced with a single alternative: death or captivity: "My comrades and I immediately laid down our arms, as we preferred to go into captivity"²⁷. Similarly, the prisoners captured in front of Verdun made no secret of their satisfaction at feeling safe. Many seemed to have retained "an indelible impression of horror" from what they had seen at Douaumont²⁸. From time to time, their notebooks also indicated the losses they had suffered. One nurse's notebook gave the number of wounded treated daily by his first-aid post. During a review, he learned from the general commanding the 3rd Bavarian corps, who declared to the King of Bavaria that, from September 23rd, 1914, to July 1st, 1916, this army corps lost 16,000 killed²⁹.

The officers of the 2nd French offices were particularly attentive to the correspondence of Alsatian-Lorraine fighters in the German army, from which they often selected extracts. An Alsatian living in Holland revealed in a letter that, since the battle of Verdun, he had been seeing German deserters arrive almost daily, such as this Saxon from the 143rd Strasbourg regiment (15th German army corps), who, already wounded four times, told him "terrible things". Without telling him he was Alsatian, he asked him about his compatriots. His answer delighted him: "The Alsations are false brothers, so they've all been sent to Russia, or else they're in the second and third lines. Because they were all going to the French"³⁰. An Alsatian soldier also told his father how the Germans treated the population in northern France: "He cried sometimes, witnessing such cruelty". He asked to be sent to Russia: "he has a

²⁵ *Ibid*, 16 N 1475, SR Belfort, Extracts from letters, March 10, 1916.

²⁶ *Ibid*, GR 16 NN 106, 2^e bureau GQG, Annexe au bulletin de renseignements (BR) (extrait du BR de la VI^e armée), November 20, 1917.

²⁷ *Ibid*, GR 16 N 1475, SR Belfort, Extracts from letters, March 16, 1916.

²⁸ *Ibid*, GR 7 N 999, Commission de contrôle de Pontarlier, État des prisonniers ennemis (d'après la correspondance des prisonniers de guerre), April 15, 1916.

²⁹ *Ibid*, GR 16 NN 108, 2^e bureau EM de la II^e armée, Extrait du carnet d'un sous-officier infirmier, August 20, 1916.

³⁰ SHD, GR 16 N 1475, SR Belfort, Extracts from letters, May 13, 1916.

piece of paper on him that proves it; he said he didn't want to stay in France and fight his own parents³¹." Another wrote that he no longer wanted to return to the front: "I've suffered enough hunger, cold, anguish and all the rest; for us Alsatians, nowhere would be better than in captivity in France. If only the opportunity presented itself³²..." On the other hand, other correspondence showed that relations had been established with the French civilian population. A letter written in French by a young woman from the town of Senones was found on a German soldier killed at La Chapelotte in the Vosges on April 25th, 1916: she spoke of the difficulties of obtaining supplies in this locality³³.

Finally, the military authorities of the Allied countries sent their French counterparts documents that might be of interest to them. For example, the British supplied extracts from the diary of one of their German prisoners, revealing the state of complete demoralization of his unit in the last days of July 1917, as well as letters showing the heavy losses suffered by the enemy on the Ypres front³⁴. Some of these documents proved decisive from a military point of view. It seems that it was the capture of a German soldier on the Lys on May 25th, 1918, that gave General Foch the first warning that the Germans were preparing to attack the Chemin des Dames. Among the prisoner's belongings, the British found a postcard dated the day before from Laon, the main town behind the offending sector. The author of the postcard said, in hushed tones, that the Germans were going to attack there. The contents of this missive were immediately communicated to the French GQG, and General Pétain set about assembling reserves in the threatened area. While these measures did not prevent the front from breaking up, they did mitigate the immediate consequences³⁵.

The political exploitation of German soldiers' letters and notebooks.

The writings of German soldiers were of another interest. They could be used as evidence to incriminate Germany. They enabled the French authorities to put forward a number of arguments concerning the German atrocities committed at the start of the war in Belgium and northeastern France³⁶. These documents were even used in official memorandums addressed to the signatory powers of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 to demonstrate German non-compliance with these agreements.

Thanks to German notebooks, the French authorities soon became aware of the "systematic devastation" taking place in invaded territory. For them, the burning of villages and the killing of their inhabitants were "general

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, extracts from letters, June 17, 1916.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2^e bureau EM de la VII^e armée, Extraits de lettres trouvées sur des cadavres d'Allemands tués à la Chapelotte, May 7, 1916.

³⁴ SHD, GR 16 NN 106, 2^e bureau GQG, Extraits des BR britanniques des 3 et 23 août 1917.

³⁵ Ferdinand Tuohy, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-239.

³⁶ John Horne and Alan Kramer, 1914. *Les atrocités allemandes*, Paris, Tallandier, 2005, 640 p.

measures³⁷". The means used to propagate the fires³⁸ even led them to believe that there was a "deliberate and premeditated plan". They noted that the exactions had been ordered by the command "in localities defended exclusively by the French army and not by the inhabitants³⁹". They also noted that German soldiers and officers had a veritable obsession with mavericks, who they believed were also guilty of atrocities⁴⁰. In many letters, German fury was motivated by the accusation that civilians had fired on German troops and that the French government had distributed arms and ammunition to them. In a memorandum dated August 19th, 1914, he refuted these allegations, citing a notebook found on the body of German Lieutenant Lehmann. The church in Villerupt (Meurthe-et-Moselle) had been set on fire and the inhabitants shot in retaliation for gunfire. In the notebook, it was written: "The fact is that it was not the inhabitants of Villerupt, but customs officers and foresters⁴¹ who shot us"⁴².

A tool of war propaganda.

On the French side, "German atrocities" were quickly exploited by war propaganda. The theme of "German barbarism" was not new. It was already present in most accounts of the 1870 war⁴³. As early as mid-August 1914, the French authorities sought to base their arguments on international law, replaying the classic republican principle of "law before force", a key legal element in the struggle between "civilization and barbarism⁴⁴". In their view, the evidence of the scenes of murder, looting and burning could not be disputed, as they were "described throughout in the notebooks and diaries of a large number of German prisoners⁴⁵". Stationed in Billy on October 15th, 1914, German NCO Schulz of the 46th reserve infantry regiment of the 5th reserve corps deplored the looting of the Meuse village, from which the civilian population had been driven:

³⁷ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), 1CPCOM1098, Memorandum no. 6, August 20, 1914.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 1CPCOM1114, Ministry of War to Foreign Affairs, October 5, 1914. Report no. 2 to the Minister of War on acts of cruelty committed by German troops, late September 1914.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 1CPCOM1098, Memorandum no. 6, August 20, 1914.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, Extracts from seized letters.

⁴¹ French customs officers and foresters were recognized as belligerents in the event of war.

⁴² MAE, 1CPCOM1098, Memorandum no. 5, August 19, 1914.

⁴³ Michael Jeismann, *La patrie de l'ennemi. La notion d'ennemi national et la représentation de la nation en Allemagne et en France de 1792 à 1918*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 1997, p. 188-211.

⁴⁴ Gérald Sawicki, "Le droit prime la force: réalités et limites d'un principe républicain sous la Troisième République", in Annie Stora-Lamarre, Jean-Louis Halpérin and Frédéric Audren (eds.), *La République et son droit (1870-1930)*, Besançon, Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2011, pp. 263-279.

⁴⁵ MAE, 1CPCOM1114, Ministère de la Guerre à Affaires étrangères, November 17, 1914. Report no. 3 from the Department of Litigation and Military Justice of the Ministry of War.

"This way of waging war is utterly barbaric; I am astonished that we can reproach the Russians for their ways; Ours, in France, are worse than theirs, and on every occasion and at every opportunity we set fire to and burn"⁴⁶."

The press relayed the official accusations. The sources for the article "*Les Allemands avouent leurs crimes*" ("The Germans confess their crimes") published in *Le Rappel* on August 19th, 1914, and the one on "German atrocities" published in *Le Temps* on August 20th, were largely taken from notebooks and letters written by German soldiers who had operated in the Badonviller region (Meurthe-et-Moselle) a week earlier. Almost identical phrases can be found: "The first town after the border has been completely destroyed, it's both a sad and pleasant sight"; "All Frenchmen are shot if they even look suspicious or malevolent"⁴⁷. Similarly, Collège de France professor Joseph Bédier's book *Les crimes allemands d'après les témoignages allemands* (German crimes based on German testimonies) made use of such documents. On August 10th, 1914, Private Reishaupt of the 3rd Bavarian Infantry Regiment wrote: "Parux (Meurthe-et-Moselle) was the first village we burned; after that, the dance began: village after village"⁴⁸. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs also reproduced some fifty excerpts from notebooks in its official publication on German violations of the laws of war⁴⁹. Published in facsimile, these had become a "precious weapon", which stood out "from all the accounts of atrocities of national origin which have been manifestly abused"⁵⁰.

The prisoner-of-war regime in France and Germany.

Prefaced by Louis Renault, one of France's leading jurists of the time, another French government publication used letters and notebooks from German soldiers to show that, when it came to prisoners of war, France was liberal while the German Empire trampled underfoot many humanitarian principles. For example, Private Bohme of the 11th hunter battalion of the 11th German army corps expressed his surprise at being treated well when he was captured on September 10th, 1914⁵¹. Private Winckler of the 106th infantry regiment of the 19th corps showered praise on the prisoner transport from Châlons-sur-Marne to Mâcon⁵². "The treatment, food, beds and medical care were irreproachable", agreed Paul Rudloff of the 82nd infantry regime of the

⁴⁶ SHD, GR 16NN117, Carnet de route du sous-officier Schulz (August 5-November 22, 1914).

⁴⁷ MAE, 1CPCOM1098, Extracts from seized letters, the first from a soldier of 1^{ère} class of the 16^e Bavarian infantry regiment, the second from NCO Guggomos of the 3^e medical company of the 1^{er} Bavarian army corps.

⁴⁸ Joseph Bédier, *Les crimes allemands d'après les témoignages allemands*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1915, p. 22.

⁴⁹ Ministère des Affaires étrangères, *Les violations des lois de la guerre par l'Allemagne*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1915, 208 p.

⁵⁰ MAE, 1CPCOM1713, Chapter IV. Pillaging, arson, murder; Remarks on the last test, June 5, 1915.

⁵¹ Louis Renault, *Le régime des prisonniers de guerre en France et en Allemagne au regard des conventions internationales 1914-1916*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1916, pp. 9-10.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 11-13.

4th reserve corps on his arrival at the Evreux hospital⁵³. The repatriation of seriously wounded soldiers was carried out under similar conditions, according to a letter from German Captain Koenig to his wife dated May 10th, 1915⁵⁴.

A contribution to the study of Germany at war.

The study of correspondence between German prisoners of war and their families also provided access to a wealth of information from inside Germany, which could be exploited in spite of the increasingly severe censorship imposed by the German authorities. The aim was to determine whether the German rearguard would hold out or, on the contrary, collapse under the effect of the Allied naval blockade. The first line of research was to analyze the economic situation of the German Empire. Over time, this investigation became increasingly exhaustive. For example, the monthly summary report on the correspondence of prisoners of war in the Central Army Group for July 1918 totaled 30 pages. Based on the letters received, a detailed picture was drawn up of Germany's domestic situation in terms of agriculture, industry, finance, and health. Everything was reviewed: rationing, requisitions, *Ersatz*, production and price trends, sometimes on a daily basis, for meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread, flour, milk, harvest prospects by region, etc.⁵⁵.

The state of mind in Germany was carefully noted. Extracts from letters were enclosed, including those concerning perceptions of the French and their allies, such as this correspondence to a German soldier in the 44th company: "If the English were not, the French would be our friends"⁵⁶. They even went so far as to estimate the degree of public morality, which was gradually being lowered as a result of the upsurge in theft in Germany⁵⁷. In a sub-section entitled "Protection of young people", certain assessments referred to the evolution of morals, such as this letter from Baden dated May 29th, 1918, addressed to a German prisoner of war in the 56th company: "Women prefer to chat with prisoners of war than with us. You have no idea what happens sometimes"⁵⁸.

Assessing German morale.

Assessing German morale was the second main focus of French intelligence services. By the end of the war, German correspondence was being exploited on an industrial scale. The Pontarlier military postal control commission, in charge of processing letters from German prisoners of war, claimed to have read almost a million letters between May 4th and June 4th,

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 89-90.

⁵⁵ SHD, GR 16 NN 218, Rapport mensuel sur les renseignements recueillis dans la correspondance des prisonniers de guerre de la D.E. du G.A.C. au courant du mois de juillet 1918, August 14, 1918.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 19.

1918. A table of "moral statistics" was drawn up according to two main criteria: the military situation and peace. The military situation was broken down into several categories, such as faith in victory or fear of defeat. Another judged military organization. The number of praises and criticisms of German military command, supplies and ammunition were counted. Opinion on peace was questioned according to several choices. An "indifferent" category was proposed⁵⁹.

The document was also designed to discriminate responses according to the social background of the German population, divided into intellectuals, farmers, shopkeepers, bourgeois, workers, and soldiers. Nevertheless, to put the results of this exhaustive work into perspective, we note that more than half the letters (58%) are counted as indifferent. For 35%, the hopes for peace are unspecified (desires for an early end without precision, weariness). Only 2% want peace at any price, 2.5% would even wish for a French victory, and 3.5% for a shaky or undecided peace. Of course, these figures must also be seen in the context of Germany in May-June 1918, i.e., at the time of its last major offensives in the West, before their real failure and the subsequent moral collapse in the summer of 1918.

Correspondence sent to Germany by prisoners of war was carefully examined. The aim was to assess their mentality and feelings. Regarding their capture, for example, if it had just taken place, there was great relief. Prisoners of war "always expressed the greatest satisfaction at having escaped the carnage and at the certainty of being able to return home". They noted, "often with surprise", that their treatment was very bearable. The wounded were quick to praise the care they had received in military ambulances and hospitals. Nevertheless, if detention was prolonged, the state of mind changed considerably:

"As the memory of danger fades, they become more bitter about the sufferings of captivity, the monotony of their existence and the privations to which they are subjected. It is curious and interesting to note that their frustration is mainly, if not exclusively, directed at their own government, which they accuse of neglecting them"⁶⁰.

Any trace of pacifism or desire to revolt against one's own country was sought, as this extract from a letter from a German prisoner of war in the 26th company to his wife in Silesia shows:

"Those who stayed at home earn a lot of money, and we who sacrificed our skin and our health to our homeland lose out again, and in the end, we'll be laughed at. But let's not rejoice too soon; we'll come back all different from what we left"⁶¹.

The latest report from Army Group East, which had read 122,577 letters and cards in September and October 1918, testified to the ongoing

⁵⁹ SHD, GR 16 N 1367, Rapport mensuel de la commission militaire de contrôle postal de Pontarlier du 15 mai au 15 juin 1918.

⁶⁰ SHD, GR 16 NN 218, Rapport mensuel..., *op. cit.* p. 29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

decomposition of the German Empire. The food situation remained disastrous and bartering often replaced buying. The need for peace was imperative, discouragement prevailed, and the feeling of defeat was accompanied by fear and a kind of stupefaction among intellectuals. The working classes were indifferent, as long as the war ended: "The only thing that matters is peace". The emperor was no longer spared. But amidst the anguish, people continued to enjoy themselves in the cities. In Göttingen, cinemas and theaters were full. This, it seems, was seen by the German military authorities as "a kind of safety valve against growing discontent". Public morality had never been so low. Theft had become so frequent that people were no longer even surprised: "Nobody has a conscience anymore. We steal and cheat as much as we can. Soldiers' morale seemed low. Combatants envied the fate of prisoners, and civilians noticed the change of heart in soldiers who went to the front. They boasted of cheating or bribing doctors "with characteristic cynicism". Voluntary enlistments in the navy were made only to avoid being drafted into the infantry. Similarly, in France, by October 1918, all German POWs were aware of Germany's irretrievable defeat. One of them wrote to his brother in Belgium: "There's nothing to be done, we're lost (...) Escape in time". Another stressed: "Don't take out any more loans; it would be lost". The Allied victory was viewed with resignation, more often with indifference, and quite often with joy. Most of the prisoners only wanted the war to end. They expressed anger at the political regime and the perpetrators of the war: "If our leaders want to continue waging war, let them go to the front themselves". Many were moving "towards democracy, sometimes even maximalism". And so, as the officer-interpreter concluded in his 9-page report, events were having an impact on the prisoners' mentality: "How far we are from the pride and bluster of the first two years"⁶²!

The limits of such documents.

There were, however, a number of limitations to the study of these documents. Their number and interest fluctuated over the course of the conflict. Their use depended on the circumstances. Notebooks, for example, abounded in 1914, but became less numerous thereafter: the war of position, by reducing actions, also reduced their capture. The German military authorities, realizing their value to the enemy, tried to prevent their troops from taking them into battle. But these attempts were in vain, as the habit of writing and keeping such documents was so strong. In fact, during the 1918 offensives, many notebooks were still recovered from German prisoners: although they were not immediately exploited by the 2nd offices, they did help to shed light on certain interesting points, such as troop movements, instructions, or preparations for offensives. The same was true of the *Soldbücher*. During 1917, some German units withdrew them from their soldiers before an operation, but again in 1918, pay books were found in the possession of

⁶² SHD, GR 16N1224, Rapport mensuel de l'officier interprète de la D.E du G.A.E, November 13, 1918.

soldiers⁶³. On the occasion of particularly important events, the Germans stepped up control of correspondence. Troops were instructed not to give any indication of location or sector on their postcards or letters. To avoid any indiscretion, the postal service was even temporarily suspended, and this suspension was accompanied by the closure of borders both to neutral countries and to the zone of operations. Sometimes, to mislead the enemy, German counterespionage would pass on tendentious news to their own troops: These false rumors could thus be found in their various papers⁶⁴. At the same time, German censorship of mail sent by families to German POWs in France became increasingly stringent. At the beginning of 1917, the Pontarlier postal inspectorate found that several of them admitted "frankly" that the censors had told them "not to write anything down". It was "under the caviar" that he was supposed to "discover a notable part of the information on Germany's internal situation", but the Karlsruhe control, "the most severe of all", was "now using scissors much more than India ink", and thus depriving him of some of the information:

"This ever-increasing severity of German censorship is a significant fact in itself, which we must take into account in order to better appreciate the real value of economic or moral information which, despite the extreme vigilance of the censors, may nevertheless have filtered from Germany to France⁶⁵.

By the end of the war, censorship was even more rigorous, reflecting "a great fear of the revelations that could be made about the internal state of Germany". It no longer proceeded by redaction, but by cutting and "more often still by deleting correspondence and returning it to the senders"⁶⁶. A British SR officer estimated that sometimes, during major operations, fifty bags of letters, postcards and notebooks were examined daily, and that of all these papers, perhaps not even 10% were of any real value⁶⁷. Faced with this mass of documents, from the Battle of the Somme onwards in 1916, new special processing centers were set up, which subsequently operated regularly in the 2nd army offices "even during quiet periods"⁶⁸. To further improve and speed up the processing of this information, "a document processing and translation section" was created in early November 1918 within the 2nd office of the GQG. However, with the armistice, this section was unable to provide the expected services due to a lack of personnel:

⁶³ Herbert von Bose, "Le service des renseignements sur le front", *L'espionnage et le contre-espionnage pendant la guerre mondiale d'après les archives du Reich*, I, Paris, Payot, 1934, p. 64. Charles Paquet, *op. cit.* p. 47-48.

⁶⁴ H. von Bosc, "Ruses de guerre et camouflage", *op. cit.* in II, pp. 93, 95-96 and 99.

⁶⁵ SHD, GR 7N999, Commission de contrôle de Pontarlier, Allemagne, état moral, April 15, 1917.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, GR 16N1224, Monthly report by the G.A.E.'s D.E. interpreting officer, November 13, 1918.

⁶⁷ Ferdinand Tuohy, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁶⁸ Charles Paquet, *op. cit.* p. 121.

"In March 1919, there were still many general documents from the last offensive (July-November 1918) that could not be exploited⁶⁹."

Finally, while many of the letters seized from the prisoners were published and regarded as incontrovertible testimony, a specialist in these correspondences, the French lawyer and writer André Hallays, qualified this view. During the war, he worked at another annex of the SR in Belfort, the "Académie de Réchesy". Headed by an Alsatian, Dr. Pierre Bucher, this annex was located close to the front, on the border between Germany and Switzerland. Its mission was to monitor German opinion on a daily basis, in particular by scanning over a hundred German newspapers and magazines. The Réchesy center was largely made up of intellectuals with ties to Alsace-Lorraine, such as novelist Paul Acker, art critic Pierre Hepp and writers Jean Schlumberger and Marcel Drouin, André Gide's brother-in-law⁷⁰.

From his own experience, André Hallays recognized that German correspondence had value when the same words of discouragement or confidence were repeated in a long series of letters. Nevertheless, he did not forget that the senders knew their correspondence was rigorously censored, which made the pessimistic letters more meaningful, but detracted from the optimistic ones. Similarly, while most of these letters lamented the state of German agriculture or complained about the duration of the war, it was important to remember, "before drawing moral or economic conclusions", that "farmers everywhere are accustomed to complaining about the harvest and that, in all the countries at war, there is not a mother, not a fiancée, who does not wish an end to hostilities⁷¹". In fact, "serious misunderstandings" could be made if general conclusions were drawn from a statement, or if these documents were requested "in the direction of France's hopes and fears". "The errors were more errors of judgment than of fact. So, while France was generally well informed about the moral and economic state of Germany, the risk was to interpret this information "according to the French temperament⁷²".

The letters and notebooks of German soldiers were generally put to good use by French intelligence services. Containing a wealth of interesting and original factual information, they were also used to study variations in German morale throughout the war. As major historical sources, they can be the subject of in-depth research, such as that carried out on the opinions of French soldiers, thanks to the analysis of the funds of the postal control to the armies⁷³. A comparative and cross-referenced study of the French and German

⁶⁹ Olivier Lahaie, *op. cit.* p. 22.

⁷⁰ Gisèle Loth, *Un rêve de France. Pierre Bucher, une passion française au cœur de l'Alsace allemande*, Strasbourg, La Nuée Bleue/DNA, 2009, p. 179-276.

⁷¹ André Hallays, "German opinion during the war. I. Les premiers enthousiasmes et les premières espérances (août 1914-décembre 1915)", *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1^{er} November 1918, p. 30.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 27-28.

⁷³ Annick Cochet, *L'opinion et le moral des soldats en 1916 d'après les archives du contrôle postal*, PhD thesis, Paris-X, 1986, 542 p. Jean Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole. Dans les tranchées: lettres du front 1917-1918*, Paris, Editions Complexe, 1998, 592 p.

situations would now be possible, in particular to clarify the points of convergence or divergence between the two countries, and to determine detailed chronologies on related themes such as the willingness to fight or the desire for peace.

Gérald Sawicki

An "intelligence obsessive": Dr Henri Martin

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When the existence of "secret" spiral notebooks belonging to Yves Bertrand, former director of the *Renseignements g  n  raux* (General Intelligence) (1992-2003) and implicated in the Clearstream affair¹ was revealed, the French press began to wonder about the epidemic of graphomania affecting the heads of the French intelligence services. Already, as part of the same legal proceedings, Major General Philippe Rondot, who, before becoming special advisor for intelligence and special operations to various Ministers of Defense (1997-2005), had cut his teeth at the SDECE (1965-1981), the DST (1981-1990), the DRM (1990-1993) and the DGSE (1993-1997), had to hand over his own notebooks². Far from violating the rules of a profession that the media ignore, these notes, handwritten or computerized, packed with confidential information on sensitive affairs, spanning several years, were the basis of their functions as intelligence analysts.

By describing these intelligence officers as "obsessed", to use journalistic phraseology, the importance of analytical work is overlooked. But it's true that the imagination, shaped by years of literature and cinema devoted to research, described as *espionage*³, has little interest in these purveyors of information and knowledge for decision-makers of all kinds, be they civilian or military, political or economic. And did these customers always listen to their analysts? Shermann Kent, who can be considered the theoretician of the profession, has given a great deal of thought to this link between analyst and decision-maker, as well as to the biases that influence the work of the former:

¹ The Clearstream affair is a French political-judicial-media affair which began in 2001 and is still on trial in April 2009. It is based on two main themes. The first concerns money laundering (2001-2002), for which the Luxembourg courts, where the eponymous company is headquartered, dismissed the case in 2004. The second, which began in 2004, is purely Franco-French, and takes as its pretext the struggle for influence between two factions within the management of the EADS group, continuing the struggles between Airbus-Matra-System and Thal  s prior to the merger, notably over the sale of frigates to Taiwan. French political figures appear to be involved, suggesting an attempt at destabilization in the run-up to the presidential election in spring 2007.

² Cf. the excellent biography by   tienne Augris, *Philippe Rondot. Ma  tre espion*, Paris, Novice/Nouveau monde   ditions, 2023.

³ Cf. Alain Dewerpe's indispensable work entitled *Espion. Une anthropologie historique du secret d'  tat*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994.

his ideological environment, his intellectual rigor, his ability not to lock himself into his own logic, but to consider other possibilities while ensuring accurate and timely information, as well as his ability to stand back from his failures⁴.

If these notebooks can be described as memory aids for state intelligence officers, we must not forget that the act of recording the smallest facts and gestures of everyday life is part of the action of undertaking. Intelligence thus becomes "a heterogeneous set of investigative and analytical practices aimed at uncovering previously concealed information by gathering, cross-referencing or analyzing data (...) available in open source"⁵. The latter is even the basis of intelligence work, from visual observation to library visits, via newspaper reading. The note, and therefore the notebook, becomes a habit, less out of a desire to collate, if not to answer a question, than out of a concern to form one's own opinion, extending reflection as well as preparing for action. So, it's not unusual to see intelligence privatized for the benefit of minority political activities.

Long before General Rondot or Superintendent Bertrand, a man like them was fascinated by "second stage curtains", that veritable "stage curtain".

"He had a prime position from which to monitor the hall, the prompter, the orchestra and the backstage area, and the proximity of the fireman on duty was quite a life insurance policy..."

But, unlike them, he didn't serve the state, with or without bias. At best, he was an "intelligence romantic", in the words of Licette, whom he had placed as a reader in a large bourgeois family. At worst, according to the justice system he frequented all too often, he was merely "whimsical and eccentric"⁶. More generally, Dr. *Félix-Victor-Henri* Martin practiced the medical art for less time than he did the art of conspiracy. But this "conspiratorial doctor", as he was kindly dubbed by his unlikely Communist supporter, André Blumel⁷, was no less an intelligence analyst. Naturally, the decision-makers for whom he intended his improved information did not belong to the governmental, let alone the legal, sphere, except at the time when legitimacy was no longer in France but in London. His universe was that of the fight against the Republican regime, mixed with anticommunism, from February 6th, 1934, to the Secret Armed Organization (OAS), via the Cagoule (1937), Vichy intrigues (1940-1942), the Resistance (1943-1945), anti-Gaullism (1945-1947), the fight against the European Defense Community (EDC, 1954) and the plots of Algiers (1958-1962).

Dr. Martin was not strictly speaking an intelligence officer. Having volunteered on September 20th, 1914, for the 22nd Dragons, in Tours, this

⁴ Cf. Jack Davis, "Sherman Kent and the Profession of Intelligence Analysis", *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis Occasional Papers*, vol. 1, no. 5, November 2002, pp. 9-12.

⁵ Kevin Limonier, Maxime Audinet, "De l'enquête au terrain numérique : les apports de l'Osint à l'étude des phénomènes géopolitiques", *Hérodote*, n°186, 2022, p.6.

⁶ According to the act of release dated November 25, 1947 [Archives de Paris (AP), 212/79/3, carton 47].

⁷ In an eponymous article published in *Ici et ailleurs* in June 1969.

former student of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, intern at hospitals in the capital and studying chemistry at the Sorbonne, was quickly transferred to the 9th section of military nurses on July 3rd, 1915, and joined the 112th *d'Artillerie lourde* (heavy artillery) on May 21st as a medical auxiliary. On June 31st, 1917, he was promoted to sous-aide major (adjutant-chef), and ended the war with the 78th infantry, which he joined on July 17th, 1918. Demobilized on October 3rd, 1919, with a certificate of good conduct⁸ (two commendations, on April 17th, 1917 and November 15th, 1918 during his Italian campaign), he was unable to resume his studies until the following academic year, as a day student at Saint-Antoine (1920-1921) and a boarder at Broca, then at La Pitié (1921-1923), where he specialized in respiratory tracts⁹. An Action française activist before the war, he returned to his activities with the *Camelots du Roi* (The King's Camelots). He soon established himself as one of the most "particularly qualified leaders"¹⁰ in the military art, and particularly in the art of intelligence¹¹. In March 1930, in open warfare with the new leadership of Action Française, whose secretary general, Pierre Lecœur, he suspected of being a police informer¹², he was forced to withdraw. He went to Brussels to meet the pretender to the French throne, Jean d'Orléans, who was himself in the process of distancing himself from the Maurassian movement condemned by the Holy See. Through the intermediary of cavalry colonel Elie de Froidemont, whom he had known since at least the autumn of 1929¹³ and who had apparently joined the army's intelligence service, he was put in charge of the Duchess Isabelle's security during her stays in Paris at the home of her daughter Isabelle, the young widow of Count Bruno d'Harcourt. He was responsible for ensuring the honorability of the various people seeking to meet the wife of the Orleanist suitor.

Although he had left the Action Française, he continued to associate with some of its members, notably the Camelots. He also looked for a new plot to support, rather than hatch, against the "Gueuse". Keen to unite nationalist forces in a single movement, he pursued a lifelong dream of partisan entryism. After integral monarchism, he turned to the Agrarian and Peasant Party of Henri-Auguste d'Hallauin, known as Henry Dorgères, whose *Centre d'action et de documentation contre le marxisme agraire* (CADMA) (Action and documentation center against agrarian Marxism) he headed. Throughout his life, Martin sought to take control of a corporatist rebellion, joining after the Second World War Pierre Poujade and his Union de défense des commerçants et artisans (UDCA) (*Union for the Defense of Retailers and Artisans*), before returning to agriculture, attempting to infiltrate the *Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles* (FNSEA) (National Federation of Farmers' Unions)¹⁴.

⁸ AP, D4 RI 1860, registration card for Félix Victor Henri Martin.

⁹ Jean-Pierre Matin, *Le monde des Martin*, Paris, Éditions de l'Olivier, 2022, p. 523.

¹⁰ Archives nationales, Paris (AN), F⁷ 13 195, note from Sûreté générale dated October 19, 1926.

¹¹ *Ibid*, F⁷ 13 194, Record of telephone tapping, December 15, 1927.

¹² Eugène Weber, *L'Action française* (Paris: Hachette, 1990), p. 306.

¹³ AN, F⁷ 13 199, Sûreté notes of October 28, 30 and 31, 1929.

¹⁴ Pierre Péan, *Le mystérieux Docteur Martin. 1895-1969*, Paris, Fayard, 1996, pp. 77-87, 391,

But where his "obsession" with intelligence was most evident was in the various conspiracies he joined. Presumably based on the short-lived CADMA structure at his home, Rue de Bucarest 7, or *the Centre d'études des problèmes de l'État* (Center for the Study of Problems of State), Martin set up an intelligence service, private rather than clandestine, for thirty years. Apart from the periods from September 1940 to March 1942, when he worked for the Vichy services, and from September 1944 to February 1945, when he was "Commandant Bernard" in a combined operation between the G-2 of the 7th Army and the *Office of Strategic Services* (OSS), and perhaps again in 1946 in a Belgian monarchist epic, under the name of "Monsieur Leloup"¹⁵, he did not belong to any official service. But his activities were no secret. Before the war, his notes were widely distributed to the extreme right-wing press (*Choc*, *L'Insurgé*, *Gringoire*, *Jour*), then, after the Second World War, to some three hundred recipients, including government officials, members of parliament, civil servants, bankers, and other notables whom he believed to be sympathetic to his ideas. He thus departed from Sherman Kent's principle of ideological neutrality!

The Martin House

Nevertheless, the operation of the "Maison Martin"¹⁶ resembled a second office or branch of the security service. It's true that it often borrowed its men too. Most of them had been met in the 1930s, during the hood adventure of Eugène Deloncle's *Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire* (CSAR) (Secret Revolutionary Action Committee). In the aftermath of the Second World War, one of his "agents", former Navy intelligence correspondent Corvette Captain Jean Joba, reported that Dr. Martin could count on three categories of personnel¹⁷:

- the "little guys", fellow conspirators since the Action française and the Cagoule;
- old friends", well-placed contacts in French society;
- the "barons", notables well established in their regions and not suspected of belonging to the extreme right.

Not all of them belonged to the world of intelligence, and the structure of the network suggests that it was built more for conspiracy than for the analysis of political information. For the most part, they came from monarchist or nationalist backgrounds, and tended to follow a trajectory parallel to that of Dr. Martin.

Jacques de Place was one of them. In 1936, at the age of twenty-four,

468. The work of Dr. Martin's only true biographer will be used extensively in this work.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 367-369; National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (MD), RG 226.6.3, reports by Captain Thompson of October 29, 1944 and Henry Hyde of February 3, 1945; Philippe Bourdrel, *La Cagoule. 30 ans de complots*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1970, p. 267; Francis Balace, "Les mouvements léopoldistes", Michel Dumoulin, Mark van den Wijngaert, Vincent Dujardin, *Léopold III*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 2001, p. 292-293.

¹⁶ As his biographer, Pierre Péan, calls him, *passim*.

¹⁷ Quoted in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 373.

he had met the doctor at the instigation of a certain Félix Dessolier¹⁸; immediately seduced, he never left him, despite the vicissitudes. The young man took on the role of "secretary general", the permanent face of a network that was as compartmentalized as it was sprawling and shifting. At the time of the "Cagoule", it would appear that Aristide Corre (Dagore) acted as liaison between the "Maison Martin" and the CSAR¹⁹. In 1954, Place shared some of his duties with the young Viscount Yves de Pontfarcy²⁰.

The men who followed, permanent or otherwise, organized the network less according to thematic skills than to personal abilities. Thus, in Vichy, within the *Centre d'informations et d'études* (CIE, September 1940-February 1941) (Information and study centre) and Admiral Darlan's "black service"²¹, which multiplied the number of Deuxième Bureaux (March 1941-March 1942), a dozen collaborators provided a framework. They had been half as many during the Cagoule conspiracy, and not many more put themselves at the service of anti-Gaullism and French Algeria. Perhaps this was due to the hardships of illegality, when government service offered greater working comfort?

All were capable of producing an analysis, conducting documentary research, "handling" informants or carrying out investigations. The judicial investigations into the Cagoule conspiracy show the scope of the missions carried out by the "Maison Martin", based on a "work plan and research program" drawn up by reserve lieutenant-colonel Georges Cachier, "head" of the Third Bureau²². The unfolding of the intelligence cycle clearly confirmed the independence of the "Second Bureau" formed by Martin and his recruits from the "authorities" they served. And although the doctor had contributed to the formation of the CSAR, it appears that he was never part of it, as the person in charge of intelligence was Aristide Corre²³. The same was true of Vichy, where the "Maison Martin" was employed by Colonel Georges Groussard in the CIE, and then by Captain Jean Tracou in Darlan's cabinet.

A private intelligence agency

For intelligence gathering, the "Maison Martin" (*Martin House*) had seemingly limitless resources of intelligence and action at its disposal. The basis was the exploitation of open sources such as the media. In this case, it was essentially the print media. Specializing in anti-communism, Dr. Martin

¹⁸ Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 110.

¹⁹ The editor of his notebooks, Christian Bernadac, cannot make up his mind whether Dagore was a secretary to Dr. Martin, his archivist or Gabriel Jeantet's accountant, in charge of arms purchases [*Carnets secrets de la Cagoule*, Paris, France Empire, 1977, p. 17]. The final indictment concerning the case of the Organisation secrète d'action révolutionnaire nationale of July 1st 1939 nevertheless made him head of the CSAR's Second Bureau [AP, 212/79/3, carton 46, p. 67].

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 390.

²¹ Cf. Gérald Arboit, *Des services pour la France. Du Dépôt de la Guerre à la DGSE (1856-2014)*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2014, p. 205, 209-211.

²² AP, 212/79/3, box 20.

²³ *Ibid.*, box 46, final indictment, *op. cit.* 1939, p. 67.

delighted in reading the press of this tendency, starting with *L'Humanité*. But it was also a way of feeding his need for potential informers. Reading *Le Fonctionnaire de France*, for example, enabled him to pick out the names of Action Française members who would join the pool of people he would use for human intelligence. Frequenting Parisian cafés was another method²⁴. In short, in both cases, the ABCs of open-source intelligence.

The "Maison Martin" officers dealt with a variety of sources. The most numerous were occasional contacts and informers. There were, of course, former members of the Action Française movement, well introduced into Parisian and provincial society²⁵. Some were police informers, classified in Martin's files as P1, P2, P3, P4...; as there were many Parisian concierges, the doors of private buildings were open to him. One of them, Thomas Bourlier, turned out to be a police penetration agent; Dr. Martin tried to dissuade CSAR from employing him, but to no avail²⁶. Others had been approached during infiltrations into strategic sectors of the French economy, government departments, political parties, and associations... In June 1937, Rouyat and Pochet, tasked with studying the activities of the *Comintern* (Communist International) in France, naturally joined the Communist Party to infiltrate Cell 113, where Pochet was appointed secretary in September. As for Dr. Martin, he approached Pierre de Harting, a Baltic baron who had married the owner of the Honoré Champion bookshop. When he learned that this French war veteran had served in intelligence during the First World War and was the son of a former head of the Paris office of the Okhrana, the tsarist secret police²⁷, Harting ceased to be a mere contact and emerged as one of the main agents of the "Martin". "Extraordinarily well-informed about the Comintern and above all about what affected the Bolsheviks and the CP"²⁸, he was still present at its side in the 1950s.

Through Harting, but also through other channels, such as that of the Catholic lawyer Jean Viollet in the 1950s, the "Maison Martin" also obtained information from the official services from the 1930s to the 1960s, both from the *Second Bureau and the Service de renseignement* (SR) (Second Bureau and the Intelligence Service), then the post-war *Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage* (SDECE) (External documentation and counter-espionage service), and from the *Sûreté* (Security), then the *Renseignements généraux* (RG) (General Informations) and the *Direction de la surveillance du territoire* (DST) (Territorial Surveillance Department). Some of his post-1945 contacts had nothing to do with the conspiracies of the interwar period, but came from the Vichy era, such as Roger Warin, known as Wybot (DST), or Robert Dumont (SDECE), whom Martin had met at the

²⁴ Testimony of Jacques de Place in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 112.

²⁵ AP, 212/79/3, carton 47, minutes of the second hearing of Dr. Martin after his arrest on March 24, 1942.

²⁶ Testimony of Jacques de Place in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 111.

²⁷ Cf. "Rita T. Kronenbitter", "The Illustrious Career of Arkadiy Harting", <https://www.cia.gov/static/Illustrious-Career-Arkadiy-Harting.pdf> [accessed June 13, 2023].

²⁸ Testimony of Jacques de Place in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 151.

CIE²⁹, before finding him again at the counter-espionage directorate of the IV^e republic (1944-1958). Others, such as commissaires Marc Bergé (Sûreté, then RG; Wybot's intimate enemy) and Jean Dides (RG) or colonel Pierre Fourcaud (SDECE), came from the oldest anti-communism. These men, who could hardly be described as agents, seemed to have an official relationship with Dr. Martin.

At the time of the Cagoule, Marshal Louis Franchet d'Esperey had invited Colonel Groussard and Major Loustaunau-Lacau to provide information to the secret organization³⁰. The intelligence networks, christened Corvignoles, after the family name of Marshal Sébastien Le Presle de Vauban's mother, which Groussard led to "cleanse the army of the cells that the Communist Party was constantly developing", were placed at the service of the "Maison Martin"³¹. For his part, Groussard brought in the resources of the Second Bureau, headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Louis Rivet, as well as the SRs of the three armies. Battalion Chief Guy Schlessier (Land), Frigate Captain Robert Labat (Sea) and Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Heurteaux (Air), either headed them or were close to them, shared their information with the "Maison Martin". Although not all these relationships were of Dr. Martin's making, but of the conspiratorial environment in which he gravitated, links were formed between these men, constituting an information network that endured through the vicissitudes of the uncertain times into which France was plunging.

Although the "Maison Martin" maintained relations with foreign services at this time, particularly Italian and Spanish, it does not appear that these links were one of its initiatives. In fact, contact with the Fascist *Servizio informazioni militare* (SIM) (Military Information Service) was the initiative of industrialist François Méténier. From the end of January 1937, in Nice, then in Monte Carlo and finally in San Remo, this former artillery lieutenant met with the Italian service's Turin postmaster, Commandant Roberto Navale³²; on March 22nd, in exchange for the assassination of two opponents of Fascism, the brothers Carlo and Nello Rosseli, by the Cagoule, he offered to supply Méténier³³ with one hundred musketballs. Likewise, through no fault of

²⁹ Philippe Bernert, *Roger Wybot et la bataille pour la DST*, Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1975, p. 15-17.

³⁰ AP, 212/79/3, cartons 24, 46, réquisitoire définitif, *op. cit.* 1939, pp. 275-283, and 49, minutes of Georges Groussard to Robert Lévy dated February 11, 1945 and Georges Loustaunau-Lacau's deposition dated February 4, 1946. Cf. also Georges Loustaunau-Lacau, *Mémoires d'un Français rebelle*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1948, p. 98.

³¹ Georges Loustaunau-Lacau, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-108. Simon Epstein, *Un paradoxe français. Antiracistes dans la collaboration, antisémites dans la Résistance*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2008, p. 399-402.

³² AP, 212/79/3, carton 50, reports by Commandant Roberto Navale to Colonel Emmanuele Santo, January 29, February 3, August 12, 1937, and carton 49, minutes of hearings of Ambassador Filippo Anfuso, former chief of staff to Fascist Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano, by Léon Dauzas, October 19, and Robert Lévy, November 9, 1945.

³³ Cf. Navale's report to Colonel Emmanuele Santo, April 2, 1937, in Clara Conti, *Servizio segreto. Cronache e documenti dei delitti di Stato*, Rome, De Luigi Ed., 1945, pp. 234-239. Giuseppe De Lutiis considers that the "Ed" of the Navale report could be the Nice-born Joseph Darnand [*I servizi segreti in Italia. Dal fascismo alla seconda Repubblica*, Rome, Edizioni Riuniti, 1998, pp. 27-30]. In fact, after Pierre Péan [*op. cit.*, p. 145], Brigitte Delluc and Gilles Delluc

Martin's, the Cagoule, via the Niçois doctor, Jean Farent, sought contact with the Nazis³⁴. The situation was radically different after 1945. Thanks to its passage through the OSS and that of its son-in-law, Pierre Faillan de Villemarest, through the SDECE, as well as its anti-Communist stance, the "Maison Martin" was close to the Allied services, both the Gehlen organization and officers from the Belgian, Dutch, Italian and even Soviet services.

Dr. Martin did not neglect to penetrate the press, in order to supply himself with information that, while open, was largely inaccessible to a penniless private individual like himself. At all times, the journalists who received his briefing notes were also purveyors of politically sensitive information, which was not necessarily covered by the media. After 1945, he was served by two "loyalists": Yves Daude, who had joined the CIE, and Pierre Faillant de Villemarest, who became his son-in-law after serving in the Resistance and SDECE. Both began their careers at Agence France Presse (*French Press Agency*), before moving on to other media.

The "Maison Martin" at work

The "Maison Martin" was not above resorting to methods which, given that the whole of its activities were extra-legal, if not illegal, were morally reprehensible. Since he had been in charge of "counterespionage" for the Duchess Isabelle d'Orléans, he had put his methods to the test. The home visits he carried out, or had his staff carry out, served as much to ensure the safety of individuals seeking to join the secret society of the day as to fulfill the intelligence objectives ordered³⁵. With the help of the concierges, whether they were regular contacts or had been fooled by some unknown subterfuge, Martin's men visited apartments, drew up floor plans and searched as methodically as possible all areas likely to conceal useful information. Once again, this was the most successful operation in the history of the Cagoule. When the police seized all CSAR's documentation, they were astonished to find all kinds of information on Popular Front ministers, their apartments, their ministries, the Parisian electricity, telephone, subway, and old quarry networks, as well as sewer and cellar access to the Elysée Palace, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, War, the Navy, the Interior, Public Works, and the Palais Bourbon. His greatest failure, at the same time, was that he was unable to uncover the Communist arms caches... if they ever existed.

In spite of this, "Maison Martin" fulfilled the mission of any intelligence service, namely, to make action possible. Under no circumstances did it have tactical operational responsibility. The involvement of Luc Robet, a Douarnenez-based insurance agent and reserve lieutenant³⁶, in the abortive boarding of the Spanish Republican submarine C2 in Brest harbor on

specify that it was Méténier [*Jean Filliol, du Périgord à la Cagoule, de la milice à Oradour, Périgueux, Pilote 24, 2005, p. 54*].

³⁴ AP, 212/79/3, carton 46, réquisitoire définitif, *op. cit.*, 1939, pp. 132-133.

³⁵ Testimony of Jacques de Place in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 112.

³⁶ Simon Epstein, *op. cit.* p. 410.

September 18th, 1937, was limited to a quick reconnaissance. He then let Commander Julian Troncoso, head of the Spanish Nationalist SR in France, act with four men³⁷. In the same way, but with the resources of AFP, where Pierre Faillan de Villemarest worked, and of its correspondents in Belgium, Switzerland and Trieste, the "Maison Martin" set out in November 1957 - the doctor had just been released from prison - to trace the armament of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). It revealed a transfer from Yugoslavia. The improved information was passed on to Villemarest's contacts in the official services and the army. On January 18th, 1958, the navy boarded the cargo ship *Slovenija*, loaded with 150 tons of weapons³⁸. A fortnight later, on February 6th, an arms smuggler, Michel Beerthelo, was arrested by Belgian police on Villemarest's information.

Intelligence led to action. In the Thirties, alongside the surveillance of clandestine arms deliveries to Republican Spain by customs unionist Gaston Cusin, several assassinations were credited to the information work of the "Maison Martin". The case of Dimitri Navachine was even exemplary. This Russian economist, former High Commissioner for Transport in the Kerensky government (1917), former director of the Commercial Bank for Northern Europe (1927-1930), close to the Popular Front and White Russian circles in Paris, had been under CADMA surveillance since early 1935³⁹. But this Freemason, however detestable he may have been to these integral nationalists, was not a target for CSAR; he only became one at the request of Marshal Franchet d'Esperey, eager to have proof of the seriousness of the conspiratorial organization. His fate was definitively sealed by the chance drawing of his name from a hat held by Dr. Martin⁴⁰. After a quick reconnaissance of his habits by the "action" department (André Tenaille, Jean-Marie Bouvyier and Derville), on January 25th, 1937, Navachine was put to death by Jean Filliol at the end of his daily walk in the Bois de Boulogne⁴¹... The police investigation was not to reveal the involvement of the Cagoule; Martin kept a close watch on it, even obtaining on the following June 9th a copy of the report transmitted to the Ministry of Justice⁴². A few months later, he used the same network to obtain the file on the Stavinsky/Prince affair, which had led to the anti-parliamentary riots of February 6th, 1934, and the formation of OSARN/CSAR...

While the involvement of the "Maison Martin" in the murder of the Rosselli brothers does not seem obvious, since the information on the two

³⁷ His involvement is not even mentioned in Commissaire Valentin's report of July 6, 1937 [AN, F⁷ 16024²]. See also AP, 212/79/3, carton 46, réquisitoire définitif, *op. cit.* 1939, p. 156-165 and Christian Bernadac (ed.), *Carnets secrets...*, *op. cit.* p. 303.

³⁸ SHD, GR 10 T 534, boarding of the Yugoslav cargo ship *Slovenija* and state of seized armaments.

³⁹ Pierre Péan quotes a note from Dr. Martin dated May 30, 1935, linking him to Pierre Cot, with whom he was "very intimate" [*op. cit.*, p. 88]. The "Young Turk" of the Radical Party had become a deputy for Savoie once again, after a year as Air Minister in various governments.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 124.

⁴¹ AP, 212/79/3, carton 43, reports by inspectors Simon and Bascou dated January 13 and March 3, 1939.

⁴² Christian Bernadac (ed.), *op. cit.* pp. 38-39.

Italian socialists certainly came from the Mussolini services, the situation was different for three cases of executions linked to the security of the Cagoule. The conditions of the internal investigations into the cases of the organization's first two "arms manufacturers", Adolphe Juif and Léon Gabriel Jean-Baptiste, which necessarily fell to Martin's men, if not to the doctor alone, remain unknown. All we know is that they were suspected of embezzlement. On February 3rd, 1937, François Méténier told Commandant Navale that he had killed the former in Italian territory⁴³; Juif had disappeared on December 14th, 1936, in San Remo, his bullet-riddled body not to be found in a ditch near Canarotto until five days after the meeting with the SIM station chief. As for Jean-Baptiste, he had simply disappeared on his way to a meeting with Eugène Deloncle on the evening of October 26th, 1936⁴⁴. With the involvement of the Italian services ruled out⁴⁵, that left Dr. Martin... The same applied to the death of Laetitia Toureaux on May 16th, 1937. This young widow of twenty-nine, originally from the Val d'Aoste, employed in a shoe-shine factory in Saint-Ouen, was also an informant for the Rouff detective agency, headed by Georges Rouffignac, for Inspector Seltour of the judicial police⁴⁶, and for the Italian embassy in Paris⁴⁷. Add to this the fact that she was in a relationship with Gabriel Jeantet, and all explanations are possible (crime of passion, linked to arms trafficking between Switzerland and the Cagoule or to the preparation of the murder of the Rosselli brothers), but only one thing was certain: the "Maison Martin" had unmasked the beautiful woman. Only, unlike Thomas Bourlier, no one at CSAR had taken her side... not even Jeantet!

Some twenty years later, the "Maison Martin" was involved in a new series of murders. The targets were FLN leaders in Europe, eliminated by the "Big O" on information from the former Cagoulard. In the summer of 1961, led by his son-in-law, who had created the *Comité de résistance à la désagrégation* (CRD)⁴⁸ (Disintegration Resistance Committee), the "Maison Martin" embarked on a series of attacks on behalf of the *Organisation de*

⁴³ AP, 212/79/3, carton 50, report from Commander Roberto Navale to Colonel Emmanuele Santo, February 3, 1937.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, cartons 11 and 46, final indictment, *op. cit.* 1939, pp. 103-124, 129-134 and 319-350. Juif must have suspected something. As early as October 1936, he had sent Jean-Baptiste, poste restante in Lille, two males containing explicit evidence of the Cagoule's criminal activities: arms invoices, the address of the main Belgian arms dealer and the names of several CSAR members, including Deloncle. Five months later, they were opened by the relevant departments, triggering a Sûreté investigation that linked the deaths and disappearances to CSAR as early as May 1937 [AN, BB¹⁸, reports from the Douai public prosecutor to the Minister of Justice, March 5 and May 12, 1937]. Six months later, the Cagoule was dismantled.

⁴⁵ Joel Blatt seems to support this thesis, linking the return of Deloncle and Duseigneur from Rome to the disappearance of Jean-Baptiste, although the Navale report refutes this ["The cagoule Plot, 1936-1937", Kenneth Moure, Martin S. Alexander (eds.), *Crisis and Renewal in France, 1918-1962*, New-York, Berghahn Books, 2002, p. 90].

⁴⁶ AN, F⁷ 14816, Meurtres attribués au CSAR (...) Laetitia Toureaux (1937-1939); Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, Ea/137 III, "L'affaire Laetitia Toureaux"; Annette Finley-Croswhite, Gayle K. Brunelle, "'Murder in the Metro': Masking and Unmasking Laetitia Toureaux in 1930s France", *French Cultural Studies*, 2003, n° 14, pp. 53-80.

⁴⁷ Philippe Bourdrel, *op. cit.* p. 151.

⁴⁸ Claude Faure, *Aux services de la république*, Paris, Fayard, 2004, p. 295.

l'Armée secrète (OAS) (Organization of the Secret Army), targeting Gaullist "barbouzes". At the end of 1961, a bistro on rue de Gergovie was the scene of meetings between a "barbouze" and two FLN and KGB agents, who were exchanging information on the OAS. The information came from the SDECE⁴⁹...

The problem Martin inevitably encountered in his intelligence analysis work was auto-intoxication. Since all he could think about was "his plot"⁵⁰,

"The Doctor welcomed all kinds of information with a disconcerting naivety... The Bib was an incorrigible mythomaniac - even though he was a most serious practitioner! - and his information was of the same order"⁵¹."

His anti-communist bias always led him to overestimate the threat, if not to invent it. "He did not seek to verify and even tended to transform suppositions into information"⁵². His life as a conjurer was an illustration of his lack of discernment in the face of the information he gathered. In Vichy, following in the footsteps of his former friend Eugène Deloncle, a zealous Parisian collaborationist, he readily and unreservedly embraced the fiction that poly-technicians and high-ranking French government officials formed a secret society, the Synarchy, which had seized power⁵³. Over the next decade, he plunged with equal energy into the hunt for the Soviet "mole", with equal assiduity and the same consequences for the careers of such as James Jesus Angleton, head of CIA counterespionage between 1954 and 1974, set about pursuing Sacha, the Soviet penetration agent allegedly nesting in the American agency⁵⁴. In each case, the amalgam was used as a way of thinking.

Like any private, legal intelligence agency, the "Maison Martin" had to deal with the ups and downs of the market... the only difference being that, even in France, conspiracy remains an unusual occupation. This condition of employment was not without consequences for his analyses. Undeniably, his most prolific years were those of the Cagoulard movement. From spring 1936 to autumn 1937, she belonged to a structure to which she provided information in return for regular funding; Eugène Deloncle had invaluable "subscribers", such as Colonel Heurteaux and industrialist Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, who were able to penetrate the major employers⁵⁵ and Protestant high banks⁵⁶. The financial, if not political, heart of OSARN seemed to lie in the Clermont-Lyon

⁴⁹ Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 458.

⁵⁰ Luc Robet's testimony in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 393.

⁵¹ Henry Charbonneau, *Les Mémoires de Porthos (1920-1943)*, Paris, Clan, 1967, p. 194-195.

⁵² Roger Stéphane, *Chaque homme est lié au monde, I* (Paris, Sagittaire, 1946), p. 250 and *Tout est bien*, Paris, Quai Voltaire, 1989, p. 150.

⁵³ Cf. Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* pp. 243-294; Richard F. Kuisel, "The Legend of the Vichy Synarchy", *French Historical Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, Spring 1970, pp. 384-388.

⁵⁴ On this question, see G rald Arboit, *James Jesus Angleton, le contre-espion de la CIA*, Paris, Nouveau monde, 2007, pp. 129-142.

⁵⁵ Ren  de Peyrecave of *Renault*, Schueler of *L'Or al*, Pierre Michelin (Clermont), Bernard de Revel (Marseille), Pavin of *Lafarge*, Gibbs, Violet of *Byrrh*. The police suspected that *Chantiers de Saint-Nazaire*, *Syndicat de l'industrie lyonnaise* and *Pont- -Mousson* had also contributed to the OSARN/CSAR budget.

⁵⁶ Mirabaud, Hottinguer, Neufelize.

area⁵⁷. The first post-war years were tougher. To finance his intelligence activities, he had no intention of returning to the practice of medicine⁵⁸, preferring instead to sell a family property in Raincy. Until 1955 and the launch of a new conspiracy, that of the "Grand O", his wife was his sole collaborator, and he lived off the expedients provided by friends old and new. At this time, he obtained the support of Alain de Mieulle, Marquis d'Angosse, a farmer living in the VIII^e (8th) arrondissement of Paris. The subsidies he received enabled him to pay for papers and stamps to send his summary notes around the country, and soon for plane tickets to Algeria. In May 1964, the "Maison Martin" was once again penniless. It was the end... Five years later, on June 6th, 1969, Dr. Martin died in the hospital where he had been mobilized on his return from exile in San Remo (from November 22nd, 1937, to August 31, 1939).

Doctor Martin liked to write that "the III^e (3rd), the IV^e (4th), the V^e (5th) [had] pursued, arrested or sought him out. The most varied pretexts were evoked"⁵⁹. But from July 1923 to August 1960, he was incarcerated for a total of three years and four months, divided into five stays, four of which were at the Santé prison... In addition, he spent a further twenty-one months on the run in Italy. The three times his military service records were requested from the administrative archives were either as a result of a communication from the reserve second lieutenant doctor's punishments, on July 21st, 1930, or as a result of two requests, one from the Paris office of the *Service de sécurité de la Défense nationale et des forces armées*, (National Defense and Armed Forces Security Service) on August 4th, 1960, the other being his own, on November 18th, 1957. This latter concern, at a time when he had just been released from prison and the "Maison Martin" was pledging its support to the Republic against Algerian sedition, was a matter of some concern. Indeed, it was less a matter of the whimsical doctor's coquetry, but rather a desire to find out about his relations with the Armies. Three years later, he was no longer on the same side, and the new Republic did not forget him, even if it absolved him with the amnesty law of July 31st, 1968⁶⁰. It should be noted that the French state, which he officially served, gave him the longest sentence (two years and two months) ... His knowledge, real or supposed, of the French political scene was disturbing. His files were frightening because they did not serve legality, but were put at the service of a conspiracy, always different, though always similar. He was never arrested for illegal actions. The intelligence he gathered was, on the whole, regular, since it usually came from open sources.

However, it's important to understand the successive eras in which the doctor and the men who populated his "House" operated. Those thirty years were a succession of troubled periods in French political history.

⁵⁷ AP, 212/79/3, carton 46, réquisitoire définitif, *op. cit.* 1939, pp. 245-248.

⁵⁸ In any case, he hardly ever charged his customers before the war... Cf. Pierre Péan, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Letter from Martin to "Mon cher ami", April 1960, quoted in Pierre Péan, *op. cit.* p. 449.

⁶⁰ AP, D4 RI 1860.

Anticommunism ran through it. And the European nationalist explosion of the 1930s explained the Cagoule and Vichy, while the agony of the IV^e (4th) republic, against the backdrop of the Algerian crisis, justified the "Grand O" and the OAS. Two of the biases Sherman Kent points to in the analyst's work thus emerge: the ideological environment and confinement within one's own logic.

But there are two points to bear in mind. Firstly, the difference in chronology: Martin began his "career" in 1930s France, while Kent formulated his professional conclusions in the United States thirty years later. The former, who pursued conspiracy after conspiracy as a matter of course, did not experience the split that the creation of the CIA represented, after the mix of genres that presided over the OSS. Reflection on the framework within which the various contemporary intelligence professions operate was made possible within the official framework by the very political reflection on the type of service desired. This change of framework - and this is the second element - never affected Dr. Martin. From Action Française to the Cagoule, then to Vichy, anti-Gaullism, anti-Europeanism, and French Algeria, he served the same two causes: anti-communism and integral nationalism. As the ultimate effect remained the same, so did the methods.

Gérald Arboit

The hood's arms purchases in Belgium (1936-1937) Chronicle of a failure foretold

Étienne Verhoeyen

The Cagoule, a French fascist and terrorist organization, was much in the news between 1936 and 1940. Did it have branches in Belgium? There are indications that it did. The same phenomenon occurred with the *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS) (The Secret Army Organization), which after 1960 had a certain infrastructure in Belgium, enabling it to prepare terrorist attacks against those who, in its eyes, had "sold out" French Algeria. There's a certain recurrence here that merits wider development.

Let's return to the Cagoule and its arms purchases in Belgium. We'll focus on the development of the police investigation led by Superintendent George Block, then head of the Antwerp Judicial Police's "political cabinet". Given that the activities of the Cagoule took place in a turbulent period, very much occupied by the Spanish Civil War, we will at the same time focus on the arms purchases made in Belgium for the benefit of the Spanish Republic and the "rebels" led by General Franco. This may seem beyond the scope of the Cagoule, but it's only superficial, as the latter took a close interest in deliveries to the Republic. We'll take a closer look at this insofar as these deliveries attracted the attention of far-right forces. In 1936, Belgium saw the spectacular rise of Rexism (a French far-right political party), led by Léon Degrelle. The press and Rexist deputies raged against these deliveries to the Spanish Republic; they were documented by the Antwerp arms manufacturer, who at the same time did business with the Cagoule. And so, the story comes full circle.

La Cagoule's coup d'État plans

In 1977, Éditions France-Empire published a rather unusual book entitled *Dagore, les carnets secrets de la Cagoule* (Dagore, the secret notebooks of the hood), presented and annotated by Christian Bernadac. *Dagore* is the war name used by Aristide Corre within the *Organisation secrète d'Action révolutionnaire* (OSAR) (Secret Organization for Revolutionary Action), better known by the nickname Cagoule (as the group was known in *Action française*). Corre assumed the role of secretary-archivist in a "2nd Bureau", with the same functions as the Army's intelligence service, as it was

commonly known in the interwar press and publishing industry. Since the publication of this book, we know that the Cagoule twice tried, in 1936 and 1937, to buy arms in Belgium to prepare a coup d'état in France. New sources that have recently become available (mainly the files of the Antwerp judicial police) enable us to reconstruct this Belgian page in the history of the Cagoule, and at the same time provide a fascinating picture of an era when arms trafficking was omnipresent, especially during the troubled times of the Spanish Civil War.

Aristide Corre, man of letters and political activist, was born in Brest in 1895. A childhood friend of Eugène Deloncle, head of the Cagoule, he joined Deloncle in the Action Française movement. As a member of the 2^e *Bureau de l'organisation* (2nd Bureau of Organization), he holds many secrets. In particular, he keeps a file of "subscribers" (sworn-in members), regularly attends the swearing-in of new members, prepares certain actions, and knows the location of the organization's arms depots. In October 1937, the French police discovered at his home a number of uncounted membership files (1,200), which the Cagoule considered to be a serious offence warranting summary execution. No doubt because Corre was one of the founders of the Cagoule, the Cagoulard "tribunal" settled for a suspended death sentence and sent him into forced exile in Franco's Spain. This was precisely where the Cagoule had many friends and accomplices, notably to prepare the transfer to France of weapons obtained or arriving in Spain and destined for the organization. He probably returned to France after the French defeat of June 1940, at which point he must have joined the Resistance - although it is not known in what form or organization. He was arrested and executed as a hostage in March 1942, under the false name of Claude Meunier. Previously, he had entrusted his notebooks to the care of Father Joseph Fily (Father Armand in la Cagoule), who made some of them available to Bernadac, specifying that their author would certainly have liked them to be published.

The Secret Organization for Revolutionary Action (OSAR), or la Cagoule, was created in 1936¹. Militarily structured, at its peak it could count on several thousand-armed men. It grew out of Action Française and its youth organization, the Camelots du Roi (The King's Camelots). However, the future Cagoulards considered them too moderate and "sold out" to the regime. In the summer of 1936, following the election of the Front Populaire, a coalition of Socialists, Communists and Radicals, the Cagoulards extended their support to the entire Republic, the "Wench" so detested by the far-right. From then on, the Cagoule, with its strong fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies, prepared for a coup d'état - which presupposed complicity within the Army - to establish a dictatorship and perhaps even restore the monarchy. The supposed need for this coup d'état can be blamed on the Communists. Indeed, the Cagoule wants

¹ In addition to the archives currently available, we have also drawn on the few books devoted to the Cagoule: Joseph Désert, *Toute la vérité sur l'affaire de la Cagoule*, Paris, Librairie des Sciences et des Arts, 1946; Philippe Bourdrel, *La Cagoule. Trente ans de complots*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1970; Christian Bernadac, *Dagore. Les carnets secrets de la Cagoule*, Paris, Ed. France-Empire, 1977.

to "prove" that the Communists themselves are working on an armed insurrection, which must be avoided at all costs. Hence the "necessity" of a preventive, muscular intervention by the Cagoulards. It's a well-known and age-old cloak: to justify one's own plans, one attributes to one's adversary similar projects that need to be cut short. As a result, the Cagoule is careful to wave the scarecrow of armed Communist insurrection in front of industrialists - to obtain money - and in front of the Army - to win its collaboration or at least its complicity. According to the Cagoule, this Communist insurrection was due to break out on the night of November 15th to 16th, 1937. This was precisely the date they chose to attempt their own coup de force. Indeed, Corre speaks of "our first attempt", and his notebooks contain enough indications to conclude that the communist insurrection was a pure fabrication.

Already on September 11th, hoodlums carried out two high-profile bomb attacks, one on the *Confédération Générale du Patronat* (The General Confederation of Employers) on rue de Presbourg, the other on the *Union des Industriels Métallurgistes* (Union of Industrial Metalworkers) on rue Boissière, two important icons of French capitalism. The buildings attacked were near the Place de l'Étoile, hence the name "attentats de l'Étoile" (Star attacks) in the press. The Cagoule obviously wanted to attribute these attacks to the Communists. They were the beginning of an action that was to culminate in the Cagoule's seizure of power. The most famous of these was the murder of the Rosselli brothers, Italian political refugees, on June 9th. According to the Italian secret service, one of them, Carlo, possessed compromising papers for Mussolini's regime. They prove the activity of the Italian secret police all the way to Normandy, where they track down, with the complicity of the Cagoule, opponents of the Italian fascist regime who, like Carlo Rosselli, have gone to fight in the International Brigades against Franco. Aristide Corre was closely involved in the preparation of the murder, and it was he who handed over the compromising papers found on Carlo Rosselli to an Italian intelligence officer, Commander Roberto Navale, who ordered the operation².

But to take power, you need weapons. The hood tried to obtain them by various means and in various countries. They obtained them in Italy (notably Beretta submachine guns, the currency of exchange for the assassination of the Rosselli brothers), Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, and France itself. The latter are either salvaged weapons or weapons stolen from barracks (four machine guns and three submachine guns from a barracks in Laon on March 18th, 1937; there is also mention of a similar operation in a barracks in Eu, Normandy). These weapons were to be stored until the "Great Day" of the Cagoule. To this end, the organization set up a large number of depots, including at least thirteen in Paris, six in the suburbs and an unknown number in the provinces. Most of these depots were discovered at the end of 1937-beginning of 1938, during a large-scale operation launched by the French police against the Cagoulards.

² Giuseppe Conti, *Una guerra segreta. Il SIM nel secondo conflitto mondiale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009, pp. 40-41.

The Spanish war, the question of weapons and the role of Georges Fromont

As these events took place during a turbulent period in which the "Spanish question" was omnipresent, we'll try to put this arms deal in its context. It goes far beyond the Cagoule itself, although it is closely intertwined with it. The Cagoule and General Franco's intelligence services enjoyed an excellent relationship. The uprising of Spanish generals led by Franco began on July 18th, 1936. This marked the start of a civil war between the legal Republican government and the army, which culminated in the establishment of a fascist regime in 1939. From the start of the civil war, the Republican government sent emissaries to democratic countries in an attempt to obtain arms. The Socialist MP for Malaga, Antonio Fernando Bolanos-Mola, was reported in Belgium as early as July 31st, 1936³. He stayed first at the Century Hotel in Antwerp, then at the Hôtel de la Bécasse in Liège. At La Populaire - a meeting place for socialists in Liège - he met socialist trade unionist René Delbrouck, as well as trade union leaders from the socialist-leaning *Belgische Transportarbeidersbond* (BTB) (Belgian Transport Workers Union) in Antwerp, including Philemon De Witte and Frans Daems. At the beginning of August, Bolanos meets at the Hôtel Palace in Brussels with a representative of the Spanish legation and Jean Delvigne, national secretary of the Belgian Workers' Party.⁴ His aim was clearly to buy weapons and find volunteers willing to fight in the Republican ranks. At the time, buying arms for a government recognized by Belgium was still legal.

But on August 15th, 1936, Belgium joined the non-intervention convention, which implied a policy of strict neutrality with regard to the civil war. A Royal Decree of August 19th, replacing that of August 4th, made arms exports subject to a license from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Even without saying so explicitly, it is clear that this decree is aimed at possible deliveries to Spain, and that the government does not intend to issue licenses for arms destined for that country, on any side whatsoever. This is also the official attitude of France, even though arms have been delivered to the Spanish Republic with the tacit consent of the French government. Indeed, on July 22nd, 1936, the Council of Ministers of the French Republic decided that war material would be sent to the Spanish Republic, but under the pretext that the material came from Mexico. In the days that followed, arms, aircraft and ammunition were transported to Spain using this subterfuge⁵.

In Belgium, delegates from the Spanish Republic approached well-known arms manufacturers: FN (National Firm) in Herstal, Pieper and other gunsmiths in Liège, and various arms dealers in Antwerp and Brussels. Among the latter, we find an Antwerp dealer who plays a role in our story on the Balaclava: Georges Fromont, managing director of S.A. Armat (Weapons and

³ For context, see Michel Vincineau, "Les exportations belges d'armes", *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* (RBHC), 1987, 1-2, pp. 81-124.

⁴ State Archives (AE) Beveren, Procureur des Konings (PK) Antwerpen, 2001 C, 1178/1.

⁵ Cf. Gérald Arboit, *Des services secrets pour la France*, Paris, 2015, p. 172-176.

military equipment)⁶.

Like his colleagues, Fromont was in great demand at the time. On August 4th, 1936, he was visited by two arms dealers, Camille Bockholtz and a certain Lardinois, who had come to discuss arms deliveries to a Latin American country. It is likely that these two merchants were emissaries of delegates from the Spanish Republic, as they were present when these delegates arrived at Armat's home on August 10th, 1936. On the morning of August 10th, Fromont was approached by the Spanish socialist deputy Bolanos-Mola, two BTB trade unionists (Philemon De Witte and Frans Daems) and the arms dealer Leopold Sanctorum, who had connections with the BTB leadership and ran a café on the Rijnkaai in Antwerp. Fromont refuses to supply them with weapons. A little later, the chargé d'affaires (project manager) from Mexico (most probably the Latin American country mentioned above) raised the same issue. Fromont again refused. Also on August 10th, during the afternoon, Bolanos-Mola and the two BTB trade unionists, this time accompanied by Bockholtz and Lardinois, returned to the matter. Although Bolanos showed him an official mission order from the Spanish government and revealed that he had a deposit of 17 million Belgian francs (BF) and 40,000 pounds sterling at the *National City Bank* in Brussels, Fromont was obstinate. He later told the Antwerp judicial police that these people might have known he wouldn't hand over anything if they had noticed the Rexist pennants decorating Armat's offices.

A few days later, on August 12th or 13th, other representatives of the Spanish Republicans came to Fromont with the definitive order for Bolanos. They were a French air force commander, Pierre Colas, accompanied by Amedeo Azzi, "commercial impresario", and Spanish captain Antonio Huerta. Colas and Azzi were introduced to Fromont by a Belgian reserve officer, unidentified except for the fact that he was Croix de Feu and a former pilot. They showed him a contract signed by the Minister of Mexico⁷. All Fromont had to do, he later wrote, was to affix the amount of his choice. Azzi assured him that it would be easy to obtain the necessary licenses via "Foreign Affairs" and its minister, "Comrade" Spaak. He was also confident of the cooperation of the socialist dockers' and transport workers' union. But Fromont didn't change his mind.

Unfortunately for the trade unionists and socialist politicians involved, Captain Huerta made the mistake of forgetting a briefcase on the train on September 16th, 1936. The briefcase was discovered at Antwerp station and its contents deposited with the public prosecutor's office. It contained important documents relating to a major arms deal. The Spanish officer claimed to be an engineer. According to the Brussels Judicial Police, he was in fact temporarily seconded to the Spanish legation to place arms orders on

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, our information on arms deliveries to the Spanish Republic comes from several Antwerp police files (AE Beveren, PK Antwerpen, 2001 C, 1178-1179-1180-1186).

⁷ We know that arms were delivered through Mexico to the Spanish Republic, even after the publication of the Royal Decree of August 19, 1936.

behalf of his government⁸. On September 23rd and 24th, 1936, the Gendarmerie's Information Brigade and officers of the Judicial Police were watching the said legation in the vain hope of arresting Huerta and Bolanos. The police were told that Bolanos had left a few days earlier "with no intention of returning and taking his luggage with him"⁹. According to a "nationalist source", before coming to Belgium, Huerta had been attached to the Paris legation, with the task of smuggling as many ammunitions and weapons as possible into Spain. Burned in France, he then travelled to Belgium with letters of introduction issued by French ministers¹⁰.

The documents found in the briefcase implicate Belgian arms dealers, Spaniards, and Belgian socialists. Among the traffickers were Camille Bockholtz, of Luxembourg origin but living in Uccle, and Albert Defrance. Around August 20th, 1936, an anonymous letter had already informed the Brussels judicial police that these two dealers had sold war material to two Spaniards, Ferdinand Cuito, claiming to be an engineer, and Alfredo Saujan. Searches carried out at Bockholtz's home revealed that he was indeed involved in intense arms trafficking, in collaboration with a number of accomplices, including engineer Paul Legrand. Legrand was managing director of Société Bepro (Belgian Society for Metallurgical Processes). According to the Brussels judicial police, "this company is also suspected of supplying arms and ammunition to Spain, under cover of an export license to Mexico and other countries".¹¹ At Legrand, police found letters from Bockholtz concerning the supply of aircraft bombs to Barcelona, as well as an undeclared depot of revolvers, pistols, and cartridges.

Among the Belgian socialists implicated by the "Huerta documents" was Jean Delvigne, national secretary of the Belgian Workers' Party. Huerta and Bolanos-Mola held talks not only with him, but also with René Delbrouck, a socialist trade unionist from Liège, and Adrien Tommen, deputy national secretary of the *Centrale des metallurgists* (Metalworkers' Central Office). The order in question was for 200 Maxim machine guns, 10,000 Mauser rifles and 12 million rounds of ammunition. Letters concerning this order, discovered in the briefcase, were sent by "a personality from the Mexican Legation to Albert Defrance"¹². Huerta also appears to have been in contact with Bockholtz. The elements contained in the anonymous letter sent to the Brussels judicial police therefore appear to be accurate. The identity of the author remains unknown. Could it be Fromont? Fromont had been in contact

⁸ AGR, Bruxelles, Ministère de la Justice, Administration de la Sûreté Publique, Service de la Police des étrangers, (PE), 216124 (A. Huerta), note from the Commissaire principal aux délégations judiciaires du parquet de Bruxelles to the Administrateur de la Sûreté Publique, 20.09.1936.

⁹ *Ibid*, report by the Commander of the Information Brigade, 24.09.1936.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, note from the Commissaire en chef aux délégations judiciaires to the Administrateur de la Sûreté Publique, 22.09.1936.

¹¹ *Ibid*, report by the Commissaire principal aux délégations judiciaires auprès du Parquet du Procureur du Roi de Bruxelles, addressed to the Administrateur de la Sûreté Publique, 20.09.1936.

¹² *La Nation Belge*, 20.09.1936. Albert Defrance, a former employee of the Société de Développement économique, was very active in the arms trade at the time. He lived in Nivelles at the time.

with the Spanish delegates who would later deal with Bockholtz and Defrance, and he met Bockholtz at least once, on August 4th, 1936, when he came to talk openly about arms purchases. Fromont did not shrink from taking steps that could be described as denunciatory, if not towards the police, then at least towards the Rexist press, which was eager to accuse the Socialists of engaging in illicit arms trafficking. He also tried, through his representative in Liège, Lescrinier, to thwart attempts by Belgian socialists and Spanish republicans to obtain weapons from Liège arms dealers.

Despite Fromont's intervention, some socialists managed to obtain weapons in Liège. Thus, around September 15th, 1936, the cargo ship *Alice* left the port of Antwerp, supposedly bound for an English port. In reality, its cargo (74 tons of arms and munitions destined for the Spanish Republic) was transshipped at sea onto a Spanish cargo ship. The weapons were camouflaged as machine parts. Amedeo Azzi - and perhaps other Spanish buyers such as Bolanos and Huerta - was involved in this purchase.

On September 21st, alerted by the discovery of Captain Huerta's briefcase, Ostend customs discovered 121 crates on the *Raymond* cargo ship containing 300 rifles with bayonets, 320 carbines and 210,000 rounds of ammunition, disguised as glass crates ostensibly for Hamburg. In reality, it soon became apparent that the crates were destined for the Spanish Republic. Since then, it has been established that the weapons passed through Antwerp, and that Ostend delegates from the BTB went to Antwerp to arrange the transfer of the weapons¹³. The discovery of the crates led to searches at the home of Louis Major, a BTB trade unionist and local counsellor in Ostend, and at the home of Captain Arsène Blondé, a member of the same union and also a local counsellor. Blondé had leased the cargo and Major was on the Ostend docks when the cargo was due to leave the port¹⁴. Following the discovery in Ostend, the police arrested Philemon De Witte and Omer Becu, secretary of the Marine Officers' Union. The investigation revealed that, before leaving Belgium on August 22nd, 1936, Bolanos had deposited a considerable sum of money in a *National City Bank* account belonging to De Witte and Becu¹⁵.

In June 1937, these operations resulted in Philemon De Witte, of the Antwerp BTB, and Omer Bécu being sentenced to 1000 FB and 500 FB respectively. According to these unionists, *Raymond's* weapons were initially intended for the Nationalists. Thanks to De Witte's intervention, they were switched to the Republicans¹⁶. On June 25th, 1937, Amedeo Azzi was

¹³ Answer from the Minister of Justice F. Bovesse to an interpellation by MP H. Horward, 24.11.1936, quoted in Michel Vincineau, *op.cit.* There was also a network passing through the extreme south of Belgium. Weapons were loaded in Liège onto trucks belonging to the Union Coopérative Socialiste. These lorries then travelled to the province of Luxembourg. In Aubange, militants from the Syndicat des Métallurgistes took charge of passing these weapons on to steelworkers in Lorraine, France. See Linda Musin-Flagothier, "Le P.O.B. liégeois et la guerre d'Espagne", *RBHC*, *op. cit.* p. 314.

¹⁴ This information was reported in the press on 23.09.1936 (in particular *La Gazette* of that date).

¹⁵ AE Beveren, PK Antwerpen 2001 C, 1180 ('Raymond' case).

¹⁶ *Ullenspiegel*, *weekblad der Socialistische Jongeren*, 24.06.1937. According to this periodical, the cargo consisted of 320 rifles, 800 rifles with bayonets and 67 boxes of ammunition.)

sentenced in absentia for exporting weapons of war without authorization. On June 25th, 1938, Pierre Colas, associated with Captain Huerta and Bolanos-Mola, was sentenced in absentia by the Brussels Court of Appeal to four months' imprisonment and a heavy fine "for the fraudulent export of arms and munitions"¹⁷. Given that Colas was charged as early as September 28th, 1936, we can assume that he was involved in the *Raymond* cargo affair.

It is likely that Huerta's briefcase also contained documents pointing to Georges Fromont. Indeed, on September 19th, 1936, barely three days after the discovery of the briefcase, the criminal investigation department raided S.A. Armat's premises, without uncovering any incriminating clues. As for Fromont, he confessed to having been visited by several Belgian trade unionists who had come to ask him to supply them with weapons. To his friend, Baron Eugène de Waha-Baillonville, a bank manager in Antwerp who was close to Rexist circles at the time, he wrote that he had refused "very tempting offers"¹⁸.

Georges Fromont and S.A. Armat

Born in Berchem in 1899, Georges Fromont joined the army voluntarily in 1919 and attended the Cadet School. He left the service in 1924¹⁹. He then set up as a stockbroker but went bankrupt in 1929. On October 20th, 1932, he and members of his family (including his father, brother and wife) founded S.A. Armat (Weapons and Military Equipment), headquartered at Place du Meir, 24, in the *Torenggebouw* (better known as *Boerentoren*), in the heart of Antwerp. Fromont is the Belgian representative of the Danish arms manufacturer Madsen. Since 1934, the company has published the *Revue Armat*, a monthly magazine sent free of charge to a large number of industrialists and military personnel. It offers not only interesting documentation on weapons, but also articles of a more general scope, such as a study on the Spanish Phalangists.

Fromont kept in touch with former comrades who had become officers, from whom he undoubtedly hoped for support in obtaining orders from the Ministry of National Defense. During a search of Armat's headquarters, the Antwerp criminal investigation department found a large number of business cards, including those of staff officers with links to the Ministry. However, it is conceivable that Fromont, as an arms dealer, was looking for business all over the place. Despite his refusal to deal with supporters of the Spanish Republic, he did not hesitate, in 1937 for example, to send documentation to the USSR military attaché in Paris. But preferably, he looked to the other side of the political spectrum. In 1937, for example, he

¹⁷ AGR, PE, A 285258, P. Colas, Projet d'arrêté d'expulsion, 03.12.1938. It does not appear from this file that Colas was a French aviator. The Minister of Justice simply notes that he is of undetermined nationality and was born in 1897.

¹⁸ Letter from G. Fromont to Baron de Waha, 14.08.1936. According to *Ulenspiegel* of 6/24/1937, Omer Bécu had two million BF at his disposal, officially earmarked for the purchase of foodstuffs on behalf of the Spanish Republican government.

¹⁹ Défense, Notariat, 3262851, G. Fromont.

tried to obtain a commission from Portugal.

It is certain that Fromont had excellent relations with Franco's representatives in Belgium since 1936, to whom he reported arms buyers for the opposing camp. Nor is there any doubt that he sympathized with them. Among these Francoist Spaniards living in Belgium was Luis Marimon Carbonell, born in Barcelona in 1892. He had been in Belgium since August 18th, 1936, living with the Argentine consul general, to whom he was related. According to Commissioner Block, Marimon is Franco's representative in Antwerp. He was a technical advisor to the Spanish National Chamber of Commerce, located at 192 rue Royale in Brussels, where other Spanish offices linked to Franco's cause set up shop in 1937. These included the *Bureau de renseignements consulaires* (Consular Information Office), headed by former Spanish consulate chancellor Graciano Cantelli, and the *Service d'information espagnole* (Spanish Information Service), headed by Marimon. This service was banned by the Belgian government in early 1938. Its leaders then tried to reconstitute it under the cover of the pro-Franco (and pro-Fascist) organization Action et Civilisation, headed by Commandant e.r. Eugène de Launoy.

Alongside Marimon, another of Fromont's Francoist contacts was Spanish deputy José Casabo, born in Barcelona in 1898 and a member of the Lliga Catalana. He was a director at Sofina and lived at the Résidence Palace, 155 rue de la Loi in Brussels. Reporting on December 12th, 1938, on the newspaper *La Nation Espagnole* (also headquartered at 192 rue Royale), a *Sûreté Publique* (Public Security) investigation officer notes that Casabo is among the industrialists and merchants who subsidize the paper, "hoping in this way to retain the confidence of the Burgos government for their commercial affairs and for the future". *The Société financière de transports et d'entreprises industrielles* (The Financial Society of transport and industrial businesses) S.A. (Sofina), a Brussels-based electrical holding company based in Barcelona²⁰, supports the paper with a monthly subsidy of 7,500 BF²¹. At the beginning of 1940, while still in Belgium, Casabo refused to appear at the Brussels police station, arguing that he was a "delegate of the Spanish embassy" and that the police should contact the embassy for all matters concerning him. A police request to the protocol department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, establishes that Casabo is unknown there...

Did Fromont deliver arms to Franco's "rebels"? In any case, Commissioner Block of the Antwerp Criminal Investigation Department believes that Fromont is in contact with these Francoist Spaniards through arms deliveries. In March 1937, the *Sûreté Publique* sent a note to the Brussels Public Prosecutor, reporting that a certain "From" was looking to sell arms in Spain; the information did not mention which side was involved, and if it was Fromont - which is very likely - it was not deliveries to the Spanish Republic. In any case, when delegates from the Cagoule knocked on Fromont's door, claiming that they had come to buy arms for the Spanish Nationalists, Fromont

²⁰ Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, *La Belgique entre la France et l'Allemagne, 1905-1914*, Paris, Éd. de la Sorbonne, 1994, p. 177.

²¹ AGR, PE, Casabo, note from a *Sûreté Publique* research officer dated 12.12.1938.

did not object - quite the contrary.

Commissioner Block also points out that Fromont calls himself an "unrepentant Rexist"²². He is in fact a secret member of the Rexist Movement, under the name of "Legrand", and his office is decorated with Rexist pennants. After refusing outright requests from Spanish Republicans and Belgian trade unionists to buy weapons, he informs his Rexist friends of their plans. He specified the sums available to Balanos (17 million French francs, FF) and Colas (20 million FF). He boasted that he had refused their proposals:

"I'd rather do anything than supply anything to the socialist communists, with whom I've refused to do business".

When the Rexist deputy for Verviers, Henri Horward, prepared for an interpellation of Justice Minister Bovesse, in November 1936, on the subject of arms deliveries to the Spanish Republic, Fromont took it upon himself to document it through the intermediary of his Rexist friends: Louis Bastyns, Serge Doring (editor of the Rexist newspaper *Le Pays Réel*) and Count Eugène de Waha de Baillonville, bank manager in Antwerp. Moreover, through these contacts, Fromont contributes to Rexist criticism of the intrigues at the Ministry of National Defense, whose head, Albert Devèze, is a prime target for Degrelle and his press. Fromont claims to possess documentation relating to acts of favoritism and exaggerated, unnecessary expenditure. He provides related material to the newspaper *La Wallonie* and to the Rexist deputy Ursmar Legros. He regularly uses the expression "the so-called Minister of Justice". But according to Commissioner Block, Fromont's Rexist zeal was inspired above all by his failure to win major defense orders. "He hoped to get them en masse," remarks Block, "when Rex came to power"²³.

Aside from opportunism, which is never absent in a merchant, Fromont does seem to have embraced at least some of the theses of fascism. In August 1937, he reported to his friend Marimon that he had been approached (through his representative in Liège, Lescrenier) by a certain Eugène Ornstein "who claimed to be back from Spain and in charge of buying arms for General Franco's troops". Fromont deems the case "untenable", adding: "From the sound of the name, it would seem that we are dealing with a Jew, and under these conditions the matter is settled. He asks Marimon to keep an eye on Ornstein and ends his letter "hoping that the capture of Santander will soon lead to the liberation of your beloved homeland"²⁴.

It's not out of the question that Fromont managed to seize the *Raymond's* cargo, confiscated in Ostend in August 1936, to thwart the Socialists' attempts to obtain arms. In November 1936, he wrote to Serge Doring, after outlining Bolanos' and Colas' arms purchases for the Spanish Republic, that he had managed "to take back the arms when embarking on the *Raymond* in Ostend"²⁵. How did Fromont know that this *steamer* was to carry

²² AE Beveren, PK Antwerpen 2001 C, 1181, report by G. Block, 22.02.1938.

²³ *Ibid.* G. Block report, 19.07.1937.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, letter from G. Fromont to L. Marimon, 26.08.1937.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, letter from Fromont to S. Doring, 19.11.1936.

arms to Spain? We can only speculate. On August 22nd, 1936, with a view to transporting these weapons from Antwerp to Ostend, the Sanctorum smuggler asked Gaston Brismée, Managing Director of the Schenker transport company, about his possibilities. Brismée was a member of the *Légion Nationale* (National Legion) and an acquaintance of Fromont. Brismée did not seem to agree with Sanctorum's plans and informed the Block commissioner²⁶. It is therefore not impossible that Brismée also reported the matter to Fromont. If Fromont really succeeded in recovering the weapons loaded on the cargo ship *Raymond*, we can assume that he did not keep them in front of him, and that he tried to sell them, for example to the Franquistes. This could bring us closer to the Public Safety memo of March 1937.

We also know that militants from the National Legion have organized surveillance teams for the Antwerp docks. These teams were involved in a far from clear case of arms trafficking. Their activity led, on August 9th, 1936, to the embargoing of no less than 49 wagons of arms and ammunition, purchased in Liège and arriving at Antwerp-Bassins in the early days of August. They are to be loaded onto the Dutch-flagged *steamer Lodewijk*, officially chartered for Guatemala. The BTB claims that the arms are destined for the Franco rebels. On August 11th, socialist union leaders appealed to the conscience of their militants to stop the loading of the contents of the wagons, and the *steamer* left the port without the weapons²⁷.

*Armat and the Balaclava*²⁸

On August 10th, 1936, Fromont's agenda was full. Not only did he receive two insistent visits from delegates of the Spanish Republic, but he also had meetings with a number of Frenchmen, about whom he said nothing in his statement to the judicial police on September 19th. And with good reason!

The case began with the discovery by the Liège judicial police, on September 21st, 1936, at the home of transport contractor Médart d'Ans, of a truck loaded with 300 Schmeisser-type machine pistols. The weapons came from the German firm Veeland, who had delivered them to *Établissements Pieper* (Pieper Establishment) in Herstal, who in turn delivered them to S.A. Armat in Antwerp via the forwarding agent Médart. Médart had been hired on September 16th, 1936, by Alphonse Lescrenier d'Alleur, Armat's representative in Liège. On September 24th, the judicial police raided Armat's offices. During the ensuing interrogation, Fromont declared that he had indeed purchased 300 machine pistols from Veeland through the firm Kersten, Veeland's representative in Amsterdam²⁹. His intention, he declares, is to build up a stock

²⁶ AGR, PE, Huerta, report by G. Block dated 16.11.1936.

²⁷ AE Beveren, PK Antwerpen, 2001 C, 1178/1, s/s 'Lodewijk'. Cf. Francis Balace, "La droite belge et l'aide à Franco", *RBHC*, XVIII, 1987, 3-4, pp. 680-681.

²⁸ Unless otherwise stated, this section is based on files compiled by the Antwerp public prosecutor's office and criminal investigation department concerning the Armat company and its dealings with the Cagoule [AE Beveren, PK Antwerpen 2001 C, 1181-1185 (Armat) and 1773 (R. Boufflers)].

²⁹ In some documents, the name "Veeland" is also spelled "Weeland" or "Wieland". An undated

in the hope of selling the weapons legally abroad, as Armat has a store at Solvijnstraat in Antwerp. There are no written orders and no invoices yet, because, he argues, "I didn't have a consignee yet". This is patently false!

According to Fromont, the discovery of these weapons was the result of a denunciation by "the communist cell at Pieper's". In fact, in his reply to a Rexist interpellation on November 24th, 1936, Justice Minister François Bovesse mentioned several denunciations of arms trafficking, specifying that "one of the denunciations [led] to the discovery of a depot of 300 machine guns, sent by a large local firm to a firm in Antwerp through the intermediary of a broker, himself in contact with suspicious elements"³⁰. There can be no doubt that Bovesse is referring to the discovery made in Ans, which, at this stage of the investigation, is still being investigated in the context of attempted purchases by Spanish Republicans. For the moment, at this stage of the judicial investigation, there is no question of the Cagoule or French buyers.

Everything changed in February 1937, when two suitcases full of papers were discovered at the Lille station luggage office. The suitcases had been sent from Basel as accompanied luggage to a certain Léon Gabriel Jean-Baptiste, who was supposed to be staying temporarily at the Hôtel Métropole on Place de Brouckère in Brussels. They arrived in Lille on October 19th, 1936. As they had not been claimed within the prescribed three-month period, around the following January 20th, customs officials opened them and got their hands on the contents. They then notified the National Security, who delegated Division Commissioner Jobard to investigate in Lille.

The contents of these suitcases shed light on the recipient's arms trafficking activities, revealing that he belonged to a secret organization called OSAR, whose leader was "Marie" (Deloncle), who purchased arms in Italy in particular. What's more, the documents seized suggest, at the very least, that Armat is also involved in illicit trafficking. The suitcases contain a business card in Fromont's name, which reads: "receipt 50,000 FF for business in progress", signed by the same name, two receipts also signed and made out in Antwerp, one on August 26th for the amount of 175,268 FB "for guarantee to be given to various firms including Ets Pieper in Liège from Messieurs [the names are not mentioned on the receipt]", the other three days later for 30,000 FF "to serve as a guarantee to be paid to various suppliers for the purchase of equipment" and, finally, a note relating to the price of barrels and magazines for submachine guns from the Danish firm Madsen, of which Fromont is the

note from the Public Prosecutor's Office in Brussels confirms that Pierre Kersten, who manages the *Nederlandsche Wapenhandel* firm in Amsterdam (Damrak, 11), negotiated the sale of weapons to the Fabrique Veeland through Jules Perel, an engineer in Amsterdam, who had been involved in several arms trafficking cases, the sale of weapons deposited at the Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre and the Pieper factories in Herstal (AGR Anderlecht, Tribunal de 1^{ère} Instance, parquet du Procureur du Roi, dossiers d'information politiques, 103/957). From 16.02.1937, a warrant was issued for Kersten's arrest, and he was effectively imprisoned in Liège on 24.05.1937 on suspicion of illegal arms sales. On 08.06.1937, he was sentenced in Liège to three fines of 500 BF each for "undeclared arms trading, illegal arms sales and unauthorized arms storage" (AGR, PE, 834527, P. Kersten).

³⁰ Quoted in Michel Vincineau, *op.cit.*

Antwerp representative. One of the suitcases also contains a duplicate of a letter signed Juif, undated and whose addressee, who could be Jean-Baptiste, is unknown to us. In it, Maurice Juif asks us to call him at the home of a lady Colognis, who lives in Antwerp and whom Juif describes as "a sympathizer, who knows my address in Antwerp".

Marie-Charles Juif (known as "Maurice" or "Adolphe") was the sender of the suitcases consigned to Lille. The documents found in the suitcases correspond closely to the data discovered by the Antwerp judicial police in Armat's accounts seized during the search on September 24th, 1936. These show that Armat had indeed made payments to the Amsterdam firm Kersten for a total amount of 1,015,240 BF. These payments were made on August 25th and 27th, as well as on September 17th, 1936. The latter date is the day after the arms were delivered to the Médart carrier in Ans. The name of a Jew was also found on documents confiscated from Armat. Inspector George Block, a perceptive policeman, points out that the amount of one of Armat's payments to Kersten on August 27th, 1936 (152,750 FB) corresponds exactly to the sum of the receipt Fromont had issued to unknown persons the day before. These are, indeed, damning findings based on the accounting documentation found in the suitcases shipped to Lille.

Maurice Juif, born in 1893, was one of the founders of the *Chevaliers du Glaive* (Knights of the Sword) in Nice, one of the secret organizations that became part of the Cagoule. A self-styled industrialist, he actually ran a shoe store in Nice. He has a keen interest in esotericism, and the costume worn by the Chevaliers at their meetings was a major factor in the name given to the OSAR by its opponents in the Action Française. Since 1936, Juif, along with Jean-Baptiste and a few others, including Henri Barbier, a friend of Jean-Baptiste's from their time together in Action Française, has been in charge of buying weapons for the organization. At the end of December 1936, Juif was murdered in Italy by other Cagoulards.

To establish the link between the discoveries of the Belgian and French police forces and the clandestine activities of the Cagoule in Belgium, we need to go back a few months. The Antwerp judicial police files on the Armat company and on a key figure in this story, Robert Boufflers, who acted as intermediary between Fromont and Juif, enable us to retrace exactly the events of 1936.

One of the most important documents in these files is a detailed report written by Commissioner Block on April 7th, 1937. In it, he mentions "confidential information" obtained by him which sheds interesting light on the origin of this affair. His source is Boufflers. Block's report followed a visit by Inspector Jobard of the National Security, who arrived in Antwerp from Paris on April 3, 1937, after a stopover in Brussels, where he had met the *Commissaire Général aux Délégations judiciaires* (General Commissioner for Judicial Delegations), Florent Louwage, and the manager of the Hôtel Métropole. This visit to Antwerp was necessary after the discovery of the Jewish suitcases, whose contents pointed in the direction of the Flemish city. The manager of the Hôtel Métropole draws Jobard's attention to the fact that

Jean-Baptiste was receiving a certain Boufflers from Antwerp. The French policeman easily tracked him down in Antwerp and questioned him on April 5th, 1937. Boufflers told him in detail what he knew about the affair. His motivation was, he said later in a letter to his Minister of the Interior, that he had a strong interest in Jews and a pronounced aversion to extreme right-wing ideas.

It is interesting to note that, in his note written for Jobard, Boufflers cites the names of several members of the Cagoule: Crespin, General Franchet d'Espérey, Corrèze (Deloncle's right-hand man), Jeantet (spelled "Gentet"), Corre, Barbier, Pigoury, an engineer from the Hotchkiss car and arms factory, Bousset, another said to be a member of the 2nd Bureau, Duchamp and the Italian car dealer Felice Bonetto, who sold several cars to Juif and Jean-Baptiste (including a Bugatti). Boufflers' enumeration shows that Juif and/or Jean-Baptiste confided copiously in him, which is not appropriate in a secret society...

According to Boufflers, the sequence of events in the Armat affair is as follows. In fact, he repeats the accounts given to him in 1936 by Juif and Jean-Baptiste, as well as the testimonies he gathered from Mme Juif and other people around them, whose names he does not mention. The two men had known each other since the 1920s. Indeed, Juif had been employed by Boufflers in several of his businesses in Marseille, South America, and Antwerp. Boufflers considered him a close friend.

So it was in May 1936 that Deloncle, boss of the Cagoule, decided to entrust Juif and Jean-Baptiste with the mission of buying weapons in Belgium. The money they needed was provided by Armand Crespin, an important member of the organization, who ran the *Office Technique d'Assurances* (Technical Insurance Office) in Paris, where Jean-Baptiste was a broker. Crespin had sponsored Jean-Baptiste, whom he had known since 1924, to join the Cagoule. Preparatory meetings were held at the company's headquarters at 64 rue du Rocher. It was also here that correspondence from Belgium arrived. Crespin signed his telegrams "Irma" or "Aunt Irma". According to Commissar Block, the shareholders of the Technical Office did not instruct Crespin, Jean-Baptiste and Juif to buy weapons in Liège until July 1936. The purchases were paid for in cash, without invoices.

A small group responsible for the purchase was immediately formed, comprising Juif, Jean-Baptiste, Henri Barbier (who had known Jean-Baptiste since 1933 at Action Française), Louis Pigoury (a friend of Barbier's) and Charles Duchamp, an acquaintance of Juif. Also, according to Boufflers, Juif, Jean-Baptiste and his mistress traveled to Belgium, in particular Liège, where they stayed at the Hôtel du Chemin de fer and the Hôtel du Commerce. Before July 15th, 1936, they bought 75 to 80 machine guns from various suppliers, including Edgard Grimard, and two hundred machine guns from Pieper. These weapons were smuggled to France in cars purchased for the purpose and fitted with double bottoms by Jean-Baptiste. But Deloncle was unhappy with the small quantities purchased and insisted that the team buy more weapons in Belgium.

It was then that Juif remembered that he had a friend in Antwerp, whose name, Boufflers wrote, "is unknown to us" and who had already delivered arms to Bolivia. Other documents in the file confirm that this friend is none other than Boufflers himself. Juif went to Antwerp, where Boufflers introduced him to Fromont; Boufflers attended the first meeting, which took place in early July 1936. Juif subsequently introduced Jean-Baptiste to Fromont, and the decision to purchase three hundred Schmeisser machine pistols via Fromont was taken in early August 1936. On August 15th, 1936, Juif brought his wife and children to Antwerp; they took up residence at Koningin Astridplein 13, opposite Antwerp Central Station, with a Marseillaise woman, Irène Colognis, Boufflers' mistress, who, according to Juif, was a sympathizer of the *Cagoule*. Juif resides there under the name of his wife, Renouart. Around August 15th, 1936, Henri Barbier, Jean-Baptiste and Juif meet Fromont at the *Sandeman* café on Place du Meir and begin talks that lead to the final conclusion of the deal. Boufflers insisted that the 300 machine pistols had been ordered by "a French fascist organization", which was the owner, having paid the full price. The receipts signed By Fromont, found in Jean-Baptiste's suitcases, are proof of these payments, for even if Fromont did not mention the names of the recipients of the weapons, the fact that these receipts were in the possession of Juif, a member of the *Cagoule*, is in itself a convincing argument. According to Boufflers, Juif and Jean-Baptiste led Fromont to believe that the weapons they wanted to buy were destined for Franco's troops.

To test the guns purchased in Liège in September 1936, Deloncle sent André Boussel, an engineer from the Hotchkiss factory in Levallois-Perret (Seine), to Liège. The tests took place at Pieper in the presence of Fromont. Boussel, known as Pierrot, a "subscriber" to *La Cagoule* under the number 363³¹, had stolen ten machine guns and three submachine guns from the factory where he worked. He moved them in pieces in his own car. The initial plan was to temporarily stockpile the weapons near the Franco-Belgian border and transport them in small quantities to France. According to Boufflers, the fascist organization had depots not far from the border for this purpose. As a relay, it rented a villa in Oudenburg, near Ostend. On September 21st, the 300 Schmeissers were loaded onto a truck and set off for Oudenburg. The truck stopped in Ans, where the merchandise was inspected for the last time: the hoods wanted to check that it was indeed the same merchandise as the one previously tried out at Pieper's house. It was here, according to Boufflers, that a leak occurred, and the public prosecutor was alerted to the presence of the weapons in Ans. The weapons were seized and stored in the cellars of the Palais de Justice in Liège. According to Boufflers and Fromont, the leak was the work of a communist worker at Pieper, who thought the weapons were intended for Franco. Legally, this was not a seizure as such, but a detention. This is an important distinction, as the *Cagoule* still considered itself the rightful owner of the machine guns in 1937.

Juif and Jean-Baptiste, who had accompanied the truck in a separate

³¹ Philippe Bourdrel, *op. cit.* p. 114.

car, warned "Paris" of the failure. The response is immediate: "Marie" (Deloncle) sends a telegram to Jean-Baptiste, who is still in Oudenburg, summoning him to Paris without delay. Jean-Baptiste, sensing the drama, sends Juif off to try and obtain a license to export the weapons to Italy, where they can enter France more easily. In Paris, Juif was received by Crespín, who reproached him for the duo's exaggerated expenses and failure. Consequently, in early October 1936, Deloncle sent two hoods to Antwerp to verify what had happened. According to Boufflers, these two delegates were Armand Crespín and a certain "Jentet", i.e., Gabriel Jeantet, former president of the Action Française students and secretary of the *Société des Huiles Antar* (Antar Oils Company). Since 1936, he has been responsible for purchasing and trafficking arms for the Cagoule³². To introduce Crespín to Fromont, Juif sends him a note.

Together with Fromont, the two Cagoule delegates realized that the bill had been royally inflated by Juif and Jean-Baptiste: they'd made a profit of 300,000 FF! This was their death sentence. On the other hand, Juif and Jean-Baptiste's easy lifestyle aroused the suspicions of the Cagoule's leaders. Between August 13th and October 31st, 1936, they often stayed at the Hôtel Métropole in Brussels (nine nights for Juif, fifteen for Jean-Baptiste). Hotel bills in their names, and in Henri Barbier's name, were also found in Italy for the period from September 22nd to October 6th. Moreover, according to Aristide Corre, Juif and Jean-Baptiste also attended the NSDAP congress in Germany in September 1936.

On October 26th, 1936, Jean-Baptiste, having failed to obtain an export license to Italy, finally went to Paris to appear before the Cagoule's Court of Honor. On arrival, he contacts his cousin, who also works for Crespín. Jacques Corrèze, the "boss's" secretary, welcomed them and took them to dinner at the *Colysée* on the Champs-Élysées. Corrèze then led Jean-Baptiste alone before the court, composed of Deloncle, General Duseigneur, Crespín, Jeantet and Corrèze. The verdict was swift: Jean-Baptiste was condemned to death, butchered with a dagger, and his body buried in a desolate spot on the outskirts of Paris, where it would not soon be found again³³.

Back in Brussels, Juif realizes that Jean-Baptiste won't be returning as originally planned. He travels to Nice (where there is a large Cagoularde "colony"), then to Italy, where he tries again to buy weapons. To obtain the money to pay for them, he approached the Cagoule leadership. This was a fatal error, as Deloncle and his accomplices knew where he was. Using a clever subterfuge, Jeantet brings the Cagoulard who is keeping Juif company to Paris.

³² During the Second World War, Gabriel Jeantet (1906-1978) joined the Vichy regime, then the Resistance. In Vichy, he was one of François Mitterrand's sponsors in obtaining the Francisque, a Petainist decoration. After the war, he was convicted in the Cagoule trial and went on to direct the *Histoire contemporaine* collection at Éditions de la Table Ronde. Towards the end of his life, he was close to the far-right movements *Ordre nouveau* and *Parti des forces nouvelles*.

³³ According to the French police, Jean-Baptiste disappeared on October 27, 1936 at around 9 p.m., after having dined in a restaurant on Avenue des Champs-Élysées with two friends (AGR Anderlecht, Tribunal de 1^{ère} instance, Parquet du Procureur du Roi, dossiers d'information politiques, 148/1904, Avis de recherche de Jean-Baptiste, 24.05.1937).

Meanwhile, on December 14th, 1936, a group of cagouards from Nice brutally murdered their companion³⁴. Juif's body was not found until February 2nd, 1937, near San Remo, where he had rented a villa.

The question arises as to why Juif has sent suitcases destined for Jean-Baptiste to the left luggage office at Lille station. Does he realize at this moment that his days are numbered, and does he want to take revenge, in a way, for the fate that awaits him? For, by sending these compromising documents to Jean-Baptiste, he knows that their eventual discovery will bring to light a clandestine arms deal by the Cagoule.

A troubled and disturbing character: Robert Boufflers

The role and personality of Boufflers, a close friend of Juif, are remarkable from several points of view. By providing information to Commissioners Jobard and Block, he considers that he is doing a service to Belgian justice and the State Treasury. This remark is rather picturesque, given Boufflers' background³⁵. Born in 1899, between 1916 and 1918 he worked for the German counter-espionage service in Antwerp³⁶. In 1920, the Antwerp Assize Court sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment. After his release, he obviously did business in the South of France, where he met not only Juif, but also the woman who became his mistress: Irène Colognis, born in Marseille in 1903. On May 8th, 1927, the examining magistrate in Marseille, Escoffier, issued an arrest warrant for Boufflers, charged with simple bankruptcy and fraud³⁷. But the couple had already left Marseille on April 18th, 1927, bound for Belgium. Following the arrest warrant, the Public Security instructed the Gendarmerie to search the Brussels hotel lists. But to no avail. Boufflers was again seen in Antwerp on April 20th, but the Security believed the couple were already in a Dutch port preparing to leave for America. They carry passports with visas for Colombia and Mexico.

In September 1929, Colognis returned from Chile and settled in Schaerbeek. His friend Boufflers remained temporarily in South America. It is likely that, during this period, he was involved in arms trafficking, notably with Bolivia. Returning to Belgium in 1930, Boufflers set up business in Antwerp with the firm Consignation - *commissionnaire en marchandises* (goods commissioner), which was entered in the Antwerp trade register in 1933 and declared bankrupt two years later. Subsequently, Boufflers founded Firme R.

³⁴ According to information from the French police, transmitted to the Commissaire Général aux Délégations judiciaires in Brussels in April 1937, Juif disappeared on December 14, 1936, "after his evening meal" (AGR Anderlecht, Tribunal de 1^{ère} instance, parquet du Procureur du Roi, dossiers d'information politiques, 148/1905, Juif).

³⁵ Unless otherwise stated, these items come from his Belgian Military Justice file (*Krijgsraad Antwerpen*, 2452/47).

³⁶ Since November 1914, the German secret service has had a *Kriegsnachrichtenstelle* in Antwerp, including an espionage school (Thomas Boghardt, *Spies of the Kaiser, German covert operations in Great Britain during the First World War*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, p. 80 ff).

³⁷ AGR, PE, 1476450 (Colognis), *Bulletin hebdomadaire de Police criminelle*, 06.06.1927.

Boufflers for wholesale trade, notably in pharmaceutical accessories. This firm did not flourish either: on February 25th, 1937, Boufflers was sentenced to two months' imprisonment for simple bankruptcy.

Notwithstanding the fact that Boufflers had acted as an informer, Commissioner Block continued to regard him as a suspect and had him administratively arrested on May 10, 1940, following a general government decision. Boufflers was deported to France and returned home in the second half of 1940. As in 1916, he immediately placed himself at the disposal of German counterespionage. Under the pseudonym "Bill", he became an active agent of Karl Ulrich ("Harry"), one of the most zealous German spies in the Antwerp *Abwehr*. The Boufflers file contains a number of reports, written by "Harry", on Boufflers or on people he was asked to find out about. During the occupation, Boufflers and Colognis lived in Brussels. Through his firm, he also engaged in economic collaboration, delivering goods of all kinds to the Germans. In 1947, Boufflers fled to France, no doubt in the hope of escaping Belgian justice. But he was arrested there on October 15th, 1948, following an extradition request from Belgium. On November 10th, 1947, the Antwerp War Council had sentenced him to death in absentia and loss of nationality³⁸.

If Boufflers is to be believed, his attachment to Juif, and no doubt his suspicions about his friend's disappearance, prompted him to make his crucial revelations to the Belgian and French police. But is Boufflers really that disinterested? His file with the judicial police contains a note to the effect that he gave information in the hope of obtaining a lighter sentence than that imposed on him following the bankruptcy of his company... This no doubt explains why he continued to provide information to both Block and Jobard after April 1937. He received a commission of 20,000 BF on the order for the 300 Schmeissers, and he himself reports that, in a conversation with Fromont and Barbier, there was talk of further commissions on subsequent transactions.

Boufflers' revelations come from the most direct of sources: his Jewish friend. There are a few additional elements to complete the picture. On August 22nd, 1936, Jean-Baptiste rented the villa in Oudenburg, Weststraat 6, for one year. Some two days earlier, seven people, including Jean-Baptiste, had visited several Belgian cities: Liège, Ghent, Bruges and Ostend. These were undoubtedly the people who would be moving into the villa. From September 12th, Jean-Baptiste stayed there intermittently with Henri Barbier, a Jew, and two other members of the Cagoule³⁹. The villa was to serve as a temporary storage facility. Indeed, in October 1936, the Bruges judicial police reported that:

³⁸ It's remarkable that Boufflers and his partner in several firms (and at the same time his mistress) hoped after the war that Commissaire Jobard would be able to come to their aid, and from the correspondence in the file, Jobard seems to have promised to intervene on their behalf.

³⁹ They were Raymond Blot and Louis Pigoury, part of the weapons team (AGR Anderlecht, Tribunal de 1^{ère} instance, Parquet du Procureur du Roi, dossiers d'information politiques, 148/1902, note from the Contrôleur général des services de police criminelle (France), 21.10.1936). In all, we have only five people here, but it appears from the file that Barbier's parents also stayed at the villa and may have toured Belgian cities.

We were informed of "the suspicious activities of several individuals who had rented a villa in Oudenburg. Based on certain information obtained, it can be assumed that these individuals are involved in illicit arms trafficking".

Barbier and Jean-Baptiste are mentioned by name in this document⁴⁰. The Oudenburg villa was clearly part of the Cagoule infrastructure: it was occupied a few days before the date on which Fromont's representative in Liège entrusted Médart with the transport of weapons (September 16th); on September 18th and 19th, Jean-Baptiste telephoned from the Hôtel Métropole (Brussels) to Gistel (the commune in whose territory the villa is located) and, on September 21st, 1936, "Marie" (Eugène Deloncle) sent a telegram to P.O. Box 80 at the Ostend post office, rented by Juif. As a result, Deloncle knows that the hoods reside there. Meanwhile, on September 17th, 1936, To conclude the deal desired by the Cagoule, Fromont paid Kersten 765,250 FB.

The 300 Schmeissers were not Fromont's only purchase from the Cagoule. In August 1936, Fromont placed an order for 700 7.65 automatic pistols with Pieper in Liège. By late August or early September of the same year, he had sold 100 of them to another member of the Cagoule, Bernard d'Oncieu, Marquis de Chaffardon, introduced by Juif and Jean-Baptiste and who claimed to be in contact with Jeantet, in charge of the Cagoule's arms trafficking⁴¹. Bernard d'Oncieu, accompanied by Juif, was personally in charge of receiving the weapons. Fromont, who has no invoice for the sale, says that the transaction took place "*in complete confidence*". According to the examining magistrate Halleux of the Liège public prosecutor's office, this batch of automatic pistols was ordered by Henri Moreau de la Meuse, who was responsible for transport and equipment in the Cagoule. Fromont has always denied knowing Moreau, but it's true that he also denied having concluded an operation with Juif, even though according to his own diary, he had no fewer than twenty-four meetings with Juif, Jean-Baptiste or both (sometimes accompanied by Barbier) between August 10th and October 8th, 1936. In addition, Barbier and another hood involved in arms trafficking, Charles Duchamp, were arrested in Halluin on October 29th, 1929, 1936. Barbier was carrying an undeclared revolver taken from a batch purchased by Fromont on behalf of Juif and Jean-Baptiste.

To be as well-informed about Fromont's secret plans as Boufflers is, he must have had a relationship of great trust with Fromont. Fromont confided to him, for example, that he had been visited by two delegates from the Cagoule who had come to investigate Juif and Jean-Baptiste's expense accounts. It was Boufflers who introduced Juif to Fromont in July or August 1936. It is possible that Boufflers, who made all kinds of deals, sold arms to Bolivia on Fromont's behalf. In this connection, he points to a subterfuge used by Fromont to cover himself in the event of an illicit sale, which proves that Boufflers is well introduced into Armat's business:

⁴⁰ AGR, PE, A 217948 (Jew), note from Commissaire général aux Délégations Judiciaires Louwage, 04.05.1937.

⁴¹ Bernard d'Oncieu de Chaffardon, from a noble Savoyard family, was born in 1926. He is half Belgian, as his mother belongs to the d'Oultremont de Wégimont family. This purchase of pistols is the only one in which d'Oncieu appears.

"In order to comply later on, he applied for an export license to a country where no refusal was to be feared (South America). He would then load a consignment of crates identical to those delivered by Pieper, with the same marks and numbers, the same weight and containing scrap metal (since exports from Belgium were not checked), onto a random steamer in Antwerp. The whole lot was sent to a port in America, in transit. Consignors: a forwarding agent of some kind. Consignee: promissory bill of lading. Once there, the merchandise was stored in a bonded warehouse and remained there for years, unless it was sold at the company's own public auction.

It's worth pointing out that Boufflers isn't the only shadowy figure with whom Fromont is in contact. The Juif business card discovered by the criminal investigation department at Armat's home, and intended to introduce Crespín, is a sobering reminder. The back of the card bears a cryptic but potentially interesting sentence, which reads as follows:

"Dear Monsieur Fromont, please give the bearer the warmest of welcomes and do your utmost to give him satisfaction, for I am where you know ("does he mean Italy?"), impatiently awaiting the word promised by M. l'Abbé."

At the time, there were obviously hundreds of Abbés in Belgium; certainly not as many were connected with both Fromont and Juif, or at least known to both men.

So, let's venture a hypothesis. By "M. l'Abbé", Juif most probably means Abbé Vincent De Moor. Co-founder of *Libre Belgique* clandestine 1914-1918, he has been "doing intelligence" since that time (he was decorated by the British in 1919). During the Spanish Civil War, he showed such warm sympathy for the Nationalists that he spent six months in Franco's Spain in 1936. He engaged

"to rather non-ecclesiastical tasks such as investigations into the Belgian origin of Republican munitions, the destination of cheques paid by Madrid, etc...".⁴²

Abbé De Moor returned to Spain in 1938 and sent war correspondence to *Le Pays Réel*. At the same time, he ran a Franco propaganda office in Brussels, the *Bureau Universel de Presse* (BUP). In 1939, he placed himself at the disposal of the French 5th Bureau and founded an intelligence network under his war name, Lieutenant Marcel⁴³.

He's no stranger to the hood. Aristide Corre didn't trust him too much. He met him again in Spain in October 1938. In 1936, did the Abbé liaise between Fromont and Juif when the latter was in Italy? Did de Moor provide information to the Cagoule or Fromont, for example on arms deliveries to the Republic or on the International Brigades? These questions are all the more important as Fromont, in the course of 1936, was in contact with a Spanish adventurer known as the "Count of Santa Lucia" who, like Abbé De Moor, was no stranger to Aristide Corre. Fromont refers to him only by initials ("cte de S.-L."), notably in a letter of November 19th, 1936 to the Rexist journalist Serge

⁴² Francis Balace, *op. cit.* p. 679.

⁴³ Center d'étude Guerre et Société (CegeSoma), Anderlecht, AA 1115, Activity report for the group of intelligence agent Abbé Vincent De Moor.

Doring, in which he describes his meetings with arms buyers for the Spanish Republic. According to Corre, the Count served for a few weeks in Franco's ranks in July-August 1936, before being sent on a mission to France, during which he also visited Belgium and the Netherlands. Even if we do not know the nature of the probable relations between Fromont, Abbé De Moor and the Spanish "Count", we feel that they should be mentioned to better situate the movement in which the Antwerp arms dealer moved.

Weapons for Iraq?

In 1937, a group of hoods made several attempts to recover weapons "held back" in Ans the previous year. To this end, they mounted an extraordinary clandestine operation, in which a member of the organization, Fabien-Maurice Marchal, director of Établissements Marchal, Boulevard Sébastopol 19th, Paris, played a leading role. This is also where Gabriel Jeantet comes into the picture once again.

The project was already underway in March 1937. On March 24th of that year, Fromont sent an initial letter to the Minister of Iraq in Paris. On March 27th, the Minister sent S.A. Armat an initial order for weapons. The letter was signed by the "Head of the Military Mission". Following this correspondence, Fromont met Marchal in Paris, who sent Armat, on May 3rd, 1937, an official arms order from the Legation of the Kingdom of Iraq in Paris, whose representative Marchal claimed to be. The order included 300 Schmeisser machine pistols, 500,000 rounds of 9 mm ammunition, 2,000 7.65 mm automatic pistols and 500,000 rounds of 7.65 mm ammunition. The order was received by the Antwerp firm on May 11th, 1937. Marchal urged Fromont to try and obtain an export permit. Fromont complied, via a lawyer, with the magistrate in charge of the investigation in Liège, juge d'instruction Halleux, to have the confiscation of the 300 Schmeissers, immobilized since September 1936, lifted.

As a result, the Liège arms test bench, responsible for issuing the licenses provided for in the Royal Decree of August 19th, 1936, received a request to examine the matter, probably in June or July 1937. On July 14th, 1937, Colonel J. Fraikin, Director General of the Bench, responded to a request for information from the Brussels Public Prosecutor. Fraikin reported that

"Société Anonyme Armes et Matériel Militaires (Anonymous Weapons and Military Materials Company) does not rank among the arms manufacturers established in Belgium. This company has never had a firearm tested at the Liège Proof House".

Officially, ARMAT has imported only a tiny quantity of weapons. Fraikin adds:

"Nevertheless, [the Society] has found sufficient resources to publish a monthly illustrated review of some thirty pages for the past three years, which it sends free of charge to a large number of people. Surely it is not with the proceeds of a capital of 30,000 francs that it can meet such an expense".

Later, Fraikin recalls the confiscation of the 300 Schmeissers in Ans, adding - and here the story gets really interesting:

"These are the same machine pistols we're now talking about delivering to Iraq.

And Fraikin concludes:

"the Société Armat, with its insignificant capital (...) seems suspicious to me, without my being able to articulate a precise grievance against it".

To complete the camouflage, Ernest Heyman, a manager from the German firm Haenkel & Suhl in Berlin, which manufactures the Schmeissers, was received at the Iraqi Legation in Paris on June 24th, 1937, by three men claiming to be senior Iraqi officials. They place a major order for a total of 1,888,727 FF. It was paid for by four cheques issued in pounds sterling in July 1937 by the Société Parisienne de Banque (Parisian Banking Society) and given to Ernest Heyman. The arms were to be sent to the Swiss arms dealer Jean Deletra, 20 rue du Grand Conseil, Geneva. On August 15th, 1937, Jeantet, under the name "Jean", confirmed the order with Armat:

"Further to our talks on Friday, I would like to inform you that I have written to the director of the Gerhard & Hey Company, asking him to contact you to arrange for our goods to be shipped and stored in Hamburg, pending shipment to Basra.

This was a considerable order: 710 pistols, 300 Schmeisser submachine guns, 2,700 magazines, 750,000 rounds of 9 mm ammunition, 500,000 rounds of 7.65 mm ammunition, 125 Smith Wessons, 25 belts, 5 loading machines. It is therefore very likely that the 300 Schmeissers, immobilized in Liège since September 1936, are included in this order, given that Fromont tried to have the confiscation of these weapons lifted.

On August 25, 1937, a note from Armat mentions "an expedition we are to make to Hamburg on behalf of the Iraqi government through Gerhard and Hey". The Antwerp judicial police file contains an anonymous, undated note, according to which Fromont was regularly visited by a certain Jean Delangre, who lived at 20 rue de la Source in Paris, the home of Jeantet's sister⁴⁴. The author of the note (presumably Boufflers, who promised Block and Jobard that he would continue to keep them informed) tells Commissaire Block that Fromont is trying to sell arms to Iraq through a certain Marchal. He adds: "M. Jobard is aware of this affair". There is no doubt that Jeantet and Marchal are behind this clandestine operation: they are both among the so-called senior Iraqi officials...

In addition to this order from the Iraqi legation, the Cagoule placed yet another order with Armat via Deletra in Geneva. On August 9th, 1937, Deletra placed an order with Fromont for 750 pistols on behalf of "Jean". Jeantet

⁴⁴ Jeantet often used the name of another Cagoulard, Jacques Jean Marie Delangre, born in Douai on 23.1.1910, living in Paris, 3 rue Guichard, and registered with the Cagoule under no. 263. The use of another 'subscriber's' name was common among Cagoulards. For example, Corrèze sometimes used the name of Raymond Lainey, whom we will meet again in the course of this story.

contacted Fromont for this order. He came to Belgium in the company of hood Fernand Jakubiez. On August 25th, Fromont wrote to the Antwerp shipper Kennedy & Hunter about the shipment of ten cases with 750 automatic pistols to Sauvin and Schmidt in Basel. The 750 pistols are to be packed in Antwerp and handed over to the shipping company for transit to Deletra. From there, they had to be smuggled.

On September 5th, 1937, Corre reports Jeantet's departure for Switzerland to pick up some 700 pistols. Proof that this was indeed the same purchase can be found in an undated note, reporting that a J. Deletra from Geneva visited Armat on October 8th, 1937, as "Jean's" delegate. When in Belgium, Deletra used the false name of "Henri Martinot", under which he corresponded with "Jean". In addition, on January 27th, 1938, Commissioner Block noted that the criminal investigation department had found a bill at Armat's head office in which an employee of the company informed Fromont that "Deletra had come on J.'s orders to make an inventory of the equipment here". There is therefore no doubt that Fromont's transaction with Deletra was intended for the Cagoule.

Clearly, the delivery never took place. A regular bill of lading was issued by the Belgian authorities for the shipment of these weapons "to Iraq", but Belgian customs got hold of it because the weapons were heavier than the weight stipulated in the export license. Once again, a purchase by the Cagoule ended in failure. However, on October 3rd, 1937, Jeantet and Jakubiez received machine guns, pistols and cartridges from Deletra. These weapons had been smuggled into France. Jakubiez's first attempt to smuggle cartridges goes wrong: he loses part of his shipment en route, and so the French police are put on the trail of Jakubiez, who, when arrested, talks profusely.

We do not know whether Fromont was aware of the setting up of the Cagoule. It only became known after the arrest of Marchal and his deputy on September 2nd, 1937, following a complaint of fraud from the real Iraqi legation, and no doubt also following Boufflers' revelations to Commissioners Block and Jobard. On this occasion, the French police seized weapons from Marchal and three other Cagoulards. Corre notes: "This affects us closely in that Gabès [Jeantet] has often dealt with the former [Marchal]. This is a serious matter"⁴⁵. In the course of the investigation, it emerged that the Iraqi Minister in Paris had not in fact placed any orders with S.A. Armat via Marchal. The affair was set up by Marchal, who, usurping the position of Iraqi government delegate, bribed an employee of the Iraqi legation in Paris to use the legation's premises in the absence of the Iraqi minister, during the visit of the German arms manufacturer Haenkel & Suhl. It also emerged that the 300 Schmeissers and the other weapons in the order were actually to arrive in Spain, not in Basra in the Persian Gulf⁴⁶ ... The Cagoule was indeed behind this set-up. This was confirmed by one of the "Cagoule leaders" interviewed by Bourdrel in the 1960s - probably Jeantet:

⁴⁵ Christian Bernadac, *op.cit.*, p. 135. This statement was probably made by Jeantet.

⁴⁶ *La Dernière Heure*, 08.11.1937.

"The goodwill of a member of the Iraqi embassy in Paris proved invaluable. Weapons "ordered" by the Iraqi government from a factory in Berlin flowed into the organization's stocks⁴⁷."

In 1937 the Cagoule formed a bold new project: smuggling weapons into France by boat. The weapons were in Antwerp. Maurice Duclos ("subscriber" to the Cagoule under number 277 and future secret agent for General De Gaulle in London) was put in charge of organizing the project. He recruited a certain Prayer, and Duclos chartered the ship *L'Atalante*, anchored in Le Havre, with a crew of six sailors. The arms are disguised as a "cargo of cotton bound for Rio de Janeiro". In all likelihood, this was the order placed with Fromont by Jeantet in August 1937, which would be in transit in Hamburg, and which the sailors of *L'Atalante* would be responsible for repatriating to France. But this project, like so many others, fell through when the arms were seized in Antwerp.

As a provisional conclusion, we can say that the various attempts by the Cagoule to buy weapons from the Armat company were unsuccessful, even though the 300 Schmeissers were indeed paid for in 1936.

The Van Hecke affair: mutual trust?

In his notebooks, Aristide Corre reveals that the Cagoule once again tried to buy weapons in Antwerp, this time through a French officer⁴⁸. On July 18th, 1937, French commander Alphonse Van Hecke (Corre spells his name incorrectly Van Eyek) telephoned from Belgium to the mistress of a fairly prominent member of the Cagoule to announce, in agreed language, that he could arrange the delivery of 24 Maxim machine guns to Lille⁴⁹. The hood in question was Raymond Lainey, who had already been dispatched to Antwerp in April 1937 to find out what could be done to take possession of the weapons held in Ans in September 1936. We don't know who he may have met in Antwerp, but it's possible that he saw Fromont there, and that he knows about the operation supposedly planned with the Iraqi legation. Raymond Lainey is the head of a Center for Information and Coordination (CIC), an organization with a similar aim to that of the Belgian armed patriots. Lainey made the CIC part of one of the Cagoule's constituent organizations, General Duseigneur's UCAD.

A few days after Van Hecke's phone call to Lainey's mistress, on July 18th, 1937, he went to Paris, where he was given 175,000 BF for the purchase of the machine guns. By August 20th, 1937, everything was ready for delivery. Van Hecke drives with the truck carrying the guns. The border crossing was to take place at Mouscron, while Van Hecke would continue to follow the truck

⁴⁷ Philippe Bourdrel, *op. cit.* p. 156.

⁴⁸ Christian Bernadac, *op. cit.* p. 107-112.

⁴⁹ In Lille, the hood had a "subscriber" named Norbert Seys, a goatherd by profession, who was arrested in November 1937. The police discovered a submachine gun and cartridges in his home (Philippe Bourdrel, *op. cit.*, p. 293). However, we do not know whether Van Hecke was to deliver the weapons via or to Seys.

in France to an agreed location, which his colleague Jean G  n  brias de Fredaigue would notify by telegram to a leader of the Cagoule. But as he approached the border, the truck driver increased his speed to such an extent that Van Hecke was unable to keep up, especially as he was stopped at a level crossing by a closed barrier. At the crossing, he is stopped by two fake customs officers who chloroform him while robbing him of the 200,000 BF he is carrying. He was soon released and was able to tell his story (as described above) to the leaders of the Cagoule. They soon became convinced that they had been duped, either by Van Hecke himself, or that Van Hecke had been misled by his contacts. At one point, Aristide Corre questions the very existence of the truck!

This incredible story requires some clarification, particularly as regards the personalities involved. Commandant Van Hecke and G  n  brias de Fredaigue belonged to the Antwerp branch of the French military intelligence service (SR). Created in 1934 and headed by Colonel Henri Beliard, this outpost was part of the *Bureau d'  tudes du Nord-Est* (North-East Engineering Office) (BENE) in Lille. BENE also has outposts at the French embassies in Brussels, Li  ge, Charleroi, and Rotterdam. The Antwerp branch is disguised as a commercial enterprise, *S.A. La Confiance Mutuelle* (Mutual Confidence), created on March 28th, 1934, with headquarters at Place du Meir, 15, not far from the Armat offices. It provides financial loans and commercial information to subscribers⁵⁰. Van Hecke and de Fredaigue are Managing Director and Chairman of the Board respectively. They have long been household names in Antwerp. Alphonse Sylvestre Van Hecke was born here in 1890. After a military career, notably with the *21^e R  giment d'infanterie coloniale* (Colonial Infantry Regiment), he left Tonkin and settled in Antwerp on January 5th, 1934⁵¹. Jean G  n  brias de Fredaigue, born in Nantes in 1888 to an old noble Picardy family, had already been employed at the Antwerp subsidiary of *Soci  t   Fran  aise de Banque et de D  p  ts*, Meir 74, since 1910. He left Belgium at the start of the First World War, returning in 1926 after marrying a Belgian woman in Belgrade. The Antwerp police reported him as a "trader", but according to Jan Pauwels, an officer in the *Bijzondere Opdrachten* (Special Missions) section of the Antwerp municipal police, who knew de Fredaigue well, he was already representing the French SR at that time⁵². In April 1940, when de Fredaigue qualified as "auxiliary attach   at the French Consulate General in Antwerp", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued him and four other members of the consulate staff with a special residence permit⁵³.

Van Hecke and de Fredaigue had several things in common: both had married Belgian women, both had served in the Foreign Legion, and both were president or director of the many French patriotic associations that existed in

⁵⁰ Moniteur Belge, 18.04.1934, no. 4733. The AA 1423 (7/1/770) collection at CegeSoma contains a few copies of a "Personal and confidential reply, without guarantee or recourse" dated April 1940.

⁵¹ AGR, PE, 1113859, A. Van Hecke. He died in Antwerp on July 19, 1981.

⁵² CegeSoma, AA 2044, *Archief J. Pauwels*.

⁵³ The biographical details of G  n  brias de Fredaigue are taken from his file with the Foreign Police, AGR, 937836.

Antwerp at the time: *Les Combattants Français* (French Combatants) 1914-1918, of which the former head of the French military SR Robert Lainey was president, *Les Bleuets d'Anvers*, *Les Groupements français d'Anvers* (French Groups of Anvers), *La Société française de bienfaisance* (The French Charitable Society) and *La Société française de préparation militaire* (The French Society for Military Preparation). During the Second World War, Van Hecke and de Fredaigue again played a role in the Chantiers de Jeunesse, a kind of substitute for the French Army. Van Hecke, for his part, took part in the Algiers Conspiracy (1942), which also involved the Count of Paris, Henri d'Orléans, the very man the Cagoule wanted to install on the French throne⁵⁴.

In the 1930s, Van Hecke and de Fredaigue maintained excellent relations with the head of a special section of the Antwerp municipal police, the *Bijzondere Opdrachten* (BO), with whom they exchanged information⁵⁵. On the other hand, their relations with the judicial police are less cordial. In November 1939, judicial police inspector Fernand Metsers drew up a detailed report on the French SR branch in Antwerp, mentioning *La Confiance Mutuelle* and its role as a cover, as this is indeed the main reason for the company's existence⁵⁶.

To complete the picture, we must mention a third person linked to *La Confiance Mutuelle* and who seems to be at the crossroads of the meetings: company director Jean Stroobant, a retired officer who retained many friendships in the Belgian army. Without mentioning his position at *La Confiance Mutuelle*, Inspector Metsers cites Stroobant as one of Van Hecke and Génébrias de Fredaigue's main collaborators. What is important for us is the sale by Stroobant, at any rate before July 20, 1937, of two machine guns to S.A. Armat, to Fromont, who personally collected them from Stroobant's home (these weapons were confiscated two days later from Armat following a new denunciation from Boufflers, who only mentions a "Belgian major" without naming any names). Commissaire Block drew up a report of these observations, adding: "It seems that these arms will be shipped to France

⁵⁴ A member of the Chantiers de Jeunesse staff since 1940, Van Hecke was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and became its regional commissioner for North Africa in 1941. Although he was not obliged to abandon Vichy ideas (the Chantiers de Jeunesse were in fact an emanation of the Vichy regime), from January 1942 he was part of a small group intended to welcome American troops to North Africa (the "Committee" or "Group of Five", depending on the source), which organized the failed putsch in Algiers to depose Admiral Darlan, Pétain's representative in North Africa. Darlan, freed, strengthened his positions. It was then that members of the "Committee of Five", led by the very royalist Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie and with the complicity of Colonel Van Hecke, plotted Darlan's assassination on December 24, 1942, by a former member of the Chantiers. The aim was to replace Darlan with the Count of Paris at the head of a future government institution, presided over by the Prince flanked by General Giraud and General De Gaulle. Clearly, Darlan's murder was carried out at the instigation of General François d'Astier de la Vigerie, Henri's brother and a close associate of General De Gaulle (Geoffroy d'Astier de la Vigerie, "Amiral Darlan : la vérité sur son exécution", geoffroy.dastier.free.fr [accessed June 14, 2023]. The author is a grandson of General d'Astier).

⁵⁵ The B.O. archives prior to May 1940 were destroyed during the German invasion. Useful information can be found in CegeSoma, AA 2044, *Archief J. Pauwels betreffende de B.O. These* are post-war notes by Jan Pauwels, one of the B.O. agents between 1937 and 1940.

⁵⁶ Belgian Military Justice, F. Metsers file, report dated 08.11.1939.

during the course of this week". This sale leads us straight to the Cagoule and Van Hecke.

To recap: on July 18th, 1937, Van Hecke telephoned from Antwerp that he could deliver 24 machine guns; before July 20th, Commandant Stroobant sold two machine guns to Fromont; on July 21st, after shuttling between Antwerp and Paris, Van Hecke returned to Belgium with a sum of 175,000 BF provided by the Cagoule. Aristide Corre noted at the time that the weapons had been stolen "by a Belgian officer who trades in them", obviously at a bargain price judging by the amounts mentioned by Corre. Without wishing to impugn Commandant e.r. Stroobant, we can, however, put forward the very likely theory that Van Hecke, perhaps in combination with Stroobant and other Belgian officers, had set up an intoxication operation by simulating an arms delivery, a maneuver which would not fail to expose the Cagoule dangerously. Assuming that this was the case, it is reasonable to assume that Van Hecke would have been covered up by his SR chiefs. It should not be forgotten that in July 1937, the first revelations of the Cagoule's activities appeared in the press, and that the examining magistrate Bêteille soon began a wide-ranging investigation, which may have been singularly fueled by the provocation probably engineered by Van Hecke. It cannot be ruled out that Raymond Lainey played an ill-defined role, especially as after the Étoile attacks and the start of the major police operation against the Cagoule in November 1937, he was one of the first to "sit up and take notice" after his arrest, and was able to leave in complete peace for... Papeete (Tahiti), no doubt with the agreement and under the protection of a French intelligence service. We can therefore assume - although there is no certain proof - that Lainey, on coming to Antwerp in April 1937, consulted with Van Hecke, and that the incredible operation of August 1937 resulted from this.⁵⁷

Was Van Hecke "a friend of the Cagoule", as Aristide Corre claimed at one point? He notes that Van Hecke was "given to them as a man of perfect safety and probity". Corre, who unfortunately does not say when or by whom Van Hecke was recommended, only saw the latter once, on July 18th, 1937. He adds that Van Hecke was instructed, prior to the planned arms delivery, to carry out banking operations on behalf of the Cagoule. Given that the Cagoule's leadership includes many sympathizers and even a number of "subscribers" in the ranks of the French Army, it's safe to assume that the Cagoule will have been fixated on Van Hecke through this channel. On the other hand, de Fredaigue also has extensive contacts among French servicemen and veterans, including in Belgium. However, given the absence of any documents on the subject, it's a big leap to say that they were Cagoule sympathizers.

We don't know whether Van Hecke and Fromont knew each other personally at the time. In any case, among the business cards discovered by the criminal investigation department at Armat's home is that of Major Van Hecke.

⁵⁷ In May 1937, Raymond Lainey took part with Aristide Corre in the preparation of an operation to steal weapons from a barracks in Eu, Normandy. On this occasion, the duo made several stops at the home of Lainey's mother, who had just lost her husband (Christian Bernadac, *op. cit.*, p.58-59).

This suggests that the two men must have met in order to make the arms delivery, unless we assume that everything was settled between Fromont and Stroobant, Van Hecke's collaborator.

Any ramifications in Belgium?

Did the Cagoule have ramifications in Belgium? In his notebooks, Aristide Corre mentions "multiple accomplices among the Belgians"⁵⁸. In 1937, Deloncle told the head of Italian counterespionage, Colonel Emanuele Santo, that the Cagoule had three transmitting stations, one in Monaco, another in Nationalist Spain and a third in Belgium⁵⁹. All this is very vague, and there's no guarantee that these stations actually worked. Nevertheless, in the wake of raids carried out at the end of 1937, the French police discovered equipment that could have been used to set up transmitting stations. For his part, Philippe Bourdrel publishes the testimony of a "prominent member" of the Cagoule (probably Jeantet), who claims that the organization had "important supporters in Belgium, in veterans' circles"⁶⁰. These could be *French* veterans living in Belgium, a movement in which both Van Hecke and de Fredaigue play an important role. The "Corre list" contains the names of two people of French nationality living in Belgium, one in Brasschaat, the other in Brussels, but it is not at all clear what role they may have played in the Cagoule.

It is important to note that this "former member of the Cagoule" refers to arms depots set up by the organization outside France. Does this mean that the Cagoule had one or more depots in Belgium? In any case, we have found nothing to point in this direction, unless the former leader of the Cagoule is referring to the transitional depot set up near Ostend in September 1936. According to Boufflers, his Jewish friend intended to set up depots in the provinces of Namur and Luxembourg, but this remained at the project stage. In a "Project for the reorganization of OSAR", dated late 1937, mention is made of "bases abroad", including a "subsidiary" in Belgium. And when it came to continuing the action from abroad - which had become necessary after the numerous arrests of hoods in France - the number two of the hood, Jacques Corrèze, proposed, at the beginning of 1938, to set up in Belgium "our Paris military command during the period of preparation".

In a relatively short space of time, the Cagoule succeeded in building up a remarkably well-structured organization. Building up, camouflaging, and guarding the numerous arms depots, among other things, required personnel accustomed to illegal activity and iron discipline. Despite this, it can be argued that the Cagoule collapsed, particularly after the start of the judicial investigation in July 1937 and certainly after the Étoile attacks in September 1937. Some leaders fled to friendly countries (mainly Spain and Italy), while others spoke widely after their arrest, despite the threat of summary execution

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 253.

⁵⁹ Philippe Bourdrel, *La Cagoule*, p. 151.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 119.

reserved for traitors. In short, the only achievements of the Cagoule - if we can put it that way - are the assassinations of political opponents and traitors to the organization, and the aforementioned bomb attacks. These exploits also require a well-oiled and necessarily clandestine organization, a communication system using an agreed language and several codes, which, we agree, does not make investigations any easier. All this has not prevented the French police from succeeding, if not in dismantling the Cagoule, at least in reducing it to nothing, thereby rendering it harmless.

In this context, the role of infiltration should be emphasized. At the time, the French *Sûreté Nationale* had at least one informer fairly high up in the Cagoule hierarchy. A mistress of one of the leaders also revealed secrets to the *Sûreté*. The information given by the "anonymous source" Robert Boufflers, not only to Superintendent Jobard of the *Sûreté Nationale* but also to Superintendent Block of the Antwerp Criminal Investigation Department, was instrumental in uncovering the mechanism behind the arms purchases in Belgium. In this way, the failures of the Cagoule in Belgium were to some extent foreshadowed, as it is certain that Juif's confidences to Boufflers helped to short-circuit the plans of the Cagoulards and Fromont.

La Cagoule has long occupied the minds of people in France and elsewhere. Certainly, not everything is known about the events described above, particularly as regards arms deliveries. Readers of the carnets will certainly agree with *Dagore* when he writes:

"If posterity opens these notes later, if they are of any interest, it will be some reader of the year 2000 who will deplore such a gap or such a silence that I consider insignificant today in its object⁶¹."

We believe, however, that long after the year 2000, we have contributed to a better understanding of the activities of the Cagoule in Belgium, which, by its very nature, had to take place in the shadows.

Étienne Verhoeven

⁶¹ Christian Bernadac, *op. cit.* p. 388.

Going back to *Lucie's* roots

Network survey

by Rudolf Roessler

Dr. Christian Rossé

Usually associated with the Soviet network he worked for from 1942 onwards, and better known by the war name his Communist contacts gave him, *Lucie* - because he lived in the Swiss town of Lucerne - Rudolf Roessler remains a mysterious figure today. Mysterious, first and foremost, from the point of view of his private life, which, although considerably enlightened by the research of author Peter Kamber, still presents large and important grey areas. His working methods are equally mysterious, given the sheer volume of his output. Mysterious above all in terms of his sources, which have been much talked about, but whose nature is still not known with any certainty. And finally, its motives. Like an iceberg, only a small part of the Roessler *affair* is now well known to historians and even the general public. But the submerged part, fantasized by a large number of authors, remains unknown, illuminated only here and there by recent dives into the archives. The present article does not pretend to shed light on the depths of the affair, but rather, after a brief review of the known facts and a questioning of the myths, to present some interesting advances obtained through archive research and document study.

Building a myth

Archives, the historian's basic source material, are essential to any serious study of Roessler, 80 years after the event. This is because he has appeared in literature of varying degrees of seriousness (especially less so) for practically the same length of time, which has, so to speak, turned him into a fictional character. In any case, it's extremely difficult to get to the bottom of it all, as most authors don't cite any sources until the 2000s. It may be useful to recall the main stages in the construction of the Roessler myth.

The first allusion to *Lucie* to reach the general public came from an Englishman, Alexander Allan Foote, who published his memoirs in 1949 with the help of MI5. Trained as a radio operator by the GRU and attached during the war to the *Dora* network, headed by the Hungarian Sandor Rado, who established him and his transmitter in Lausanne, Foote evokes this source of the Soviet network in Switzerland in particularly flattering terms. The myth continued to be forged in the 1960s with the publication of Pierre Accoce and

Pierre Quet's *La guerre a été gagnée en Suisse* (The war has been won in Switzerland). The French journalists who launched *Lucie's* legend as the best allied source of the Second World War, however, made the mistake of confusing it with *Wiking*, a line of the Swiss Intelligence Service (SR) which was in fact run by another German, the industrialist Eduard Schulte¹. Then, in 1973, German journalist Bernd Ruland further muddled the waters by making Roessler the vessel for the heroic work of two female operators at the OKW communications center in Berlin's Bendlerstrasse. The man of letters, himself assigned to this service during the war, would then have surprised them by hijacking the ticker tapes in favor of a highly complex network leading to Lucerne. 30 years later, he would have liked to pay tribute to these two ladies, but without naming them, keeping their identities in a safe to be opened after his death - a safe which, to our knowledge, has obviously never been opened. Finally, let's mention two British TV men, Anthony Read and David Fisher, who, in the 1980's *Operation Lucy*, took up Roessler's character, this time making him the link in a Secret Intelligence Service plot to let the overly suspicious Stalin benefit from the discoveries of the Bletchley Park scientists and the ULTRA program. Riding the wave of historian Harry Hinsley's revelations on the importance of SIGINT in the Allies' intelligence successes, the two authors don't seem to have realized that *Lucie*, before serving the interests of the USSR, was delivering his precious intelligence to Her Majesty's Secret Service.

In 1969, the first serious study of Roessler's sources was published. Unfortunately, it was published in the journal of the CIA's historical service, *Studies in Intelligence*, and was not opened to the public until the 2010s². The author, Mark Tittenhofer, critically examines various hypotheses, without reaching a definitive conclusion. Despite its scientific ambition, this article suffers from two weaknesses. Firstly, it still refers to works from the 1960s and, secondly, *Lucie* is only considered as a source for the *Rado* network - and through the prism of the *Rado* network and its telegrams to Moscow. Yet Roessler's output far exceeded what he delivered to the Soviet network, let alone what was communicated to the GRU Center.

The character

Rudolf Roessler was born into a Protestant family in Kaufbeuren, Bavaria, on November 22nd, 1897. He attended secondary school in Augsburg. He enlisted as a volunteer at the age of seventeen and took part in the First World War as an ordinary soldier, without promotion or distinction, but marked by the inhumanity of the conflict³. There is no indication that he

¹ Cf. Christian Rossé, *Guerre secrète en Suisse, 1939-1945*, Paris, Nouveau Monde, 2015, pp. 55-56.

² Mark A. Tittenhofer, "The Rote Drei. Getting Behind the 'Lucy' Myth", *Studies In Intelligence*, 1969, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 51-90.

³ Cf. Peter Kamber, "Die Macht der Gesinnung" und "das romantische Ich": Rudolf Roessler

acquired any military expertise, nor that he made friends with future senior officers of the future Wehrmacht - as some authors have suggested. Back in Augsburg, he then entered the world of writing and journalism. In 1921, he co-founded the Augsburg Literary Society and became its president. In 1925, he founded his own art and literature magazine, *Form und Sinn*, which he edited for two years.

In 1928, he was appointed head of the *Deutscher Bühnenvolksbund* (German Stage People's Association), an organization founded in 1919 as part of a general movement in Germany to make theater accessible to everyone. Opposing its communist counterpart, the Bühnenvolksbund is Christian conservative in orientation. After the Nazis came to power in 1933, Roessler refused to bring his organization into line, which earned him a smear campaign in the media and the courts. He opted for exile. Supported by a Swiss student he had met and befriended in Berlin, Xaver Schnieper, he settled in Lucerne in 1934. That same year, with the support of a patron and a leading local bookseller, he founded the Vita Nova publishing house, which focused on art and philosophy. The editorial choices of its director give a strong indication of his own ideological orientation. In particular, the publication of works by Jacques Maritain shows Roessler's great interest in social Catholicism, an interest he shared with a circle formed around himself and theologian Otto Karrer. Alongside his friend Schnieper, these two mentors included Arnold Stöckli, Hans Ulrich Segesser von Brunegg and Bernhard Mayr von Baldegg. Together, they founded the magazine *Entscheidung* in 1936, which claimed to be apolitical, but was clearly opposed to the totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and anti-democratic forces which, in the eyes of its founders, were gaining ground in traditional Catholic circles⁴.

For reasons that remain unclear, the Reich government stripped Roessler of his German nationality in 1937. In the eyes of the Swiss authorities, he was now stateless. In the face of this void, the question of his nationality further inflated the Roessler myth. Some authors make him out to be a Czechoslovakian national. He explains himself in a letter to the examining magistrate:

"I informed my interrogators that the German National Socialist government had stripped me of my nationality and that, since then, I had also been considered 'stateless' or 'without nationality' in Switzerland⁵."

He adds:

"I informed the police officers who were to question me on behalf of the Swiss Federal Prosecutor's Office that I had held Czechoslovakian

und der deutsche Widerstand 1939-1945", in *Exil. Forschung / Erkenntnisse / Ergebnisse*, 2011, pp. 94-95.

⁴ On *Entscheidung*, see in particular Edith Hiltbrunner and Floriane Gasser, "Entscheidung" file, on revuesculturelles.ch (University of Lausanne) [accessed 01.07.2023].

⁵ Swiss Federal Archives, Bern (SFA), E5330-01#1982/1#988*, letter from Roessler to Samuel Blaser, August 21, 1944. Most of the quotations in this article have been freely translated from German or English.

nationality since 1940. As the Czechoslovak state is not recognized by Switzerland, this nationality was disregarded⁶."

Another myth is that Roessler was a communist - or at least a cryptocommunist - because of his collaboration with Sandor Rado's network. As far as his own political views are concerned, two elements can be considered in an attempt to approach them: his actions and eyewitness accounts. In terms of his actions, it should be remembered that during his last years in Germany, Roessler was involved in a conservative theatrical association. Once in Switzerland, he founded a publishing house which, among other things, published anti-communist works. While it's true that his friend Schnieper, in search of a more social Catholicism, moved to the left - he joined the newly created Labor Party after the war - there's no trace of such an ideological movement in Roessler. Nor should his post-war espionage activities on behalf of the Czechoslovak intelligence service, for which he was tried a second time in 1953, be taken as confirmation of Roessler's - or Schnieper's - shift towards communist ideology. Launched at the request of Karel Sedlacek directly after the war, they were launched partly out of friendship for him, but also and above all for economic reasons. It should also be pointed out that, at the start of the post-war period, Czechoslovakia, led by Benes, had not yet clearly joined the Soviet bloc.

Established in Lucerne, Roessler became part of a progressive Catholic milieu to the point of becoming one of the two masters of thought - along with Catholic thinker Otto Karrer - of the *Entscheidung* circle, a magazine founded by a group of young people including his friend Xaver Schnieper. While these young people's desire to develop a more social Catholicism may have made them appear to the very conservative patriarchs of this corner of Central Switzerland as veritable left-wing troublemakers, it was not so. They are not.

The Roessler network

Faced with the various investigators who questioned him after his arrest in 1944, Roessler's version of how he set up his network was invariably the same. In the summer of 1939, a month before the outbreak of hostilities, he met at *Landi 39*, the national exhibition in Zurich, two good acquaintances of German nationality, one based in Switzerland and the other from Germany⁷. Together they decided on a way to send him information from the Reich. He will say no more. Of course, he refuses to name the people he has sworn to keep anonymous. He will remain silent until long after the war.

"I cannot reveal the names of these people. I gave them the assurance on my honor. Otherwise, I wouldn't have received anything from them⁸."

Clearly, trying to determine, if not the exact identity - which will probably

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ AFS, E27#1000/721#9538*, Ulrich report, 1.6.1944.

⁸ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 7.6.1944.

remain an enigma, since the meeting left no trace - then at least the background from which the two Germans who spoke with Roessler at *Landi 39* came, is crucial to tracing his line of intelligence between Germany and Lucerne. While he deliberately sought to conceal his sources until the end of his life - with undeniable effectiveness - the historian is reduced to making hypotheses which, at best, he can weigh up.

According to the legend surrounding Roessler's character, some time before his death he confessed to the son of his friend Xaver Schnieper - out of pity for all those who were no longer asleep wondering about the identity of his sources - that four personalities were behind his tremendous success: a German major who had been head of the Abwehr before Wilhelm Canaris, Gisevius, Goerdeler and "General Boelitz, then deceased"⁹. Although no major had headed the Abwehr before Canaris, it was with this rank that Hans Oster joined the service in 1935, taking charge of its central services. A staunch opponent of Nazism, he built up a circle of officers and civilians who actively fought against the government. He took part in preparations for the bombing of July 20th, 1944 - he was to be president of the military tribunal in the provisional government. He was dismissed on March 31st, 1944, arrested on July 21st and executed on April 9th, 1945, in Flossenburg, along with Canaris and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Oster is of particular interest in the search for Roessler's sources, as he has a documented history of military treason, having communicated to the Dutch military attaché in Berlin the date of the West offensive in May 1940¹⁰. This act, which could result in German casualties on the battlefield, is not an obvious one for a military man, and most opponents of Nazism would refuse to resort to it.

Hans Bernd Gisevius was a Prussian jurist who joined the Gestapo in 1933, before clashing with his superior and being dismissed in 1936. His friendships included Hans Oster and Hjalmar Schacht, Reich Minister of Economics from 1933 to 1937. He joined the Abwehr in 1939 and was sent to Zurich as vice-consul in 1940. In 1943, he came into contact with Allen W. Dulles, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) mission in Switzerland and became one of his informants on resistance movements in Germany. The future CIA director recounts:

"Our first secret meeting took place in January 1943, after I had carefully sounded out the man I was to meet. Sources I trusted had told me confidentially about the work he was doing, and that he was the only person in Switzerland who could tell me the story of the German underground from the inside. This he did, and much more. As soon as mutual trust had been established, Gisevius revealed to me the secret of the conspiracy led by General Beck and Carl Friedrich Goerdeler¹¹."

Carl Friedrich Goerdeler was one of the pillars of the German resistance and

⁹ Tittenhofer, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁰ On the question of treason as a form of resistance in the German army, see Klemens von Klemperer, *German Resistance Against Hitler. The Search For Allies Abroad, 1938-1945*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, pp. 192-198.

¹¹ Mudd Library, Princeton, Allen W. Dulles Papers: Digital Files Series, MC019.09, Series 3, Dulles memo concerning Gisevius, unsigned and undated.

of the July 20th, 1944, conspiracy - he was to become Chancellor in the provisional government. Conservative mayor of Leipzig from 1930 to 1937, he openly opposed the Nazis, against whom he waged a veritable crusade both inside and outside the Reich's borders.

The traditional route has the advantage of the presence in Switzerland in 1939 of Gisevius¹² and Schacht, later joined by Goerdeler, who came to contact the Allies¹³. Gisevius does not date this trip exactly. However, he does say:

"Goerdeler intended to stay in Berlin until the Czech crisis was over, then follow us as soon as possible¹⁴."

Referring to the entry of German troops into Czechoslovakia on March 15th, 1939, this passage places the trip to Switzerland in the second half of March, with a possible extension into April.

According to Gisevius's memoirs, he and Schacht began their stay in Basel, then spent a few days in Ticino. There, they were contacted by Goerdeler, who arranged to meet them on the shores of Lake Geneva the following day. They met him at Ouchy for a meeting with a representative of the Western powers - whom the author did not name.

"Goerdeler took with him his intermediary, a very influential person in London and Parisian political circles¹⁵."

According to historian Peter Hoffmann, this emissary was Reinhold Schairer¹⁶. Very active in German student associations before 1933, he moved to London, where he forged links with the Foreign Office. At the same time, he became Goerdeler's liaison man with the British. Before returning to Germany, Schacht and Gisevius stopped off again in Basel to meet Montagu Norman, former Chairman of the British Central Bank and then at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS). Gisevius does not appear to have returned to Switzerland before the outbreak of war.

There are, however, three weaknesses to this line of inquiry. The first is that there never was a General Boelitz, which raises the question of the credibility of the testimony as a whole. The second, which is chronological, is that the presence of Gisevius and Goerdeler in Switzerland in March or April 1939 does not coincide with Roessler's statements¹⁷. The third is that it does not shed any light on the way in which the three sources channeled the considerable mass of information obtained by Roessler. Although Gisevius

¹² Gisevius' presence in Switzerland in 1939 is cited by Tittenhofer [*op.cit.*, p. 68] as an argument in favor of his participation in Roessler's network.

¹³ Cf. Hans Bernd Gisevius, *To the Bitter End. An Insider's Account of the Plot to Kill Hitler, 1933-1944*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1998, pp. 343-352.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

¹⁶ Peter Hoffmann, *History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996, p. 106.

¹⁷ It's worth pointing out that *Landi 39* opened its doors on May 6, 1939, which eliminates the risk of a gross temporal approximation on Roessler's part.

was indeed appointed vice-consul in Zurich - which placed him in geographical proximity to Lucerne and gave him the benefit of the diplomatic pouch - he did not arrive in Switzerland until 1940, whereas Roessler began his production as early as 1939. Only Oster, likely to use the Abwehr's communication channels, could provide the beginnings of an explanation. Unfortunately, he was not mentioned by name by Roessler, and his identification with the "Major" is open to interpretation.

In a 1954 memo, Federal Police Inspector Schmid relates a theory on the origin of Roessler's network, which he got from a German informant whom he named *Jola*¹⁸. According to the informant, it was Waldemar Pabst who put the publisher in touch with a circle of German officers. Waldemar Pabst was a World War I officer, right-wing extremist and anti-communist who distinguished himself as a leader of the Corps-francs during the Weimar Republic. He is credited with ordering the execution of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Despite his far-right activism, he never joined the Nazi party. He was arrested for the first time during the Night of the Long Knives, and again in 1939. From the early 1930s until the middle of the war, he was active in the arms industry, importing weapons, particularly from Switzerland, and contributing to the rearmament of the German army. In 1944, he avoided further arrest by moving to Lucerne, Switzerland, and taking up a position with Oerlikon. According to *Jola*, Pabst and Roessler had met in Berlin, before the latter's exile to Switzerland, in Otto Strasser's Black Front circles. According to the Federal Police informant, both men were National-Bolsheviks, as was Joseph Wirth, a former German chancellor also in exile in Lucerne.

National-Bolshevism, as found in Strasser's work, was a movement that emerged in Germany during the Weimar Republic, characterized by a combination of virulent anti-capitalism and extreme nationalism. Primarily made up of intellectuals, it advocated a rebirth of the German nation at the cost of a victory over communism, which the "conservative permanence" of the German people would enable the nationalists to recapture¹⁹. One of the cornerstones of the movement was the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo on April 16th, 1922, between the USSR and Chancellor Wirth's Germany. This alliance, considered by some to be unnatural - the German signatory, Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau, was assassinated shortly afterwards - included a secret clause, a military alliance that would allow the German army, in exchange for its know-how, to rebuild discreetly on Russian soil despite the Treaty of Versailles. The ensuing period of collaboration between the Reichswehr and the Red Army was to have a profound effect on many of the senior German officers who opposed the Nazis over the invasion of the USSR. Pabst's role as intermediary between Roessler and the German military resistance is an interesting one. Like most of the personalities likely to have played an intermediary role between Lucerne and Germany, he was a "network character", a man of many connections, including, it would seem, a close friend

¹⁸ AFS, E4320B#1971/78#428*, memo from Schmid, 18.1.1954.

¹⁹ For an illuminating overview of this movement, see Patrick Moreau's review of Louis Dupeux's work, in *Revue française de science politique*, 1981, 31-1, pp. 265-266.

of Wilhelm Canaris, the head of the Abwehr²⁰.

This hypothesis is also interesting in that it is in line with a passage in a personal letter from Hans Hausamann to a historian who contacted him in 1962:

"Until now, Roessler had never been concerned with politics in the strict sense of the word, or even party politics. But in the course of 1931, he became increasingly aware that the representatives of intellectual Germany could not continue to observe the developing political crisis without reacting. He began lecturing in selected circles to draw attention to the political dangers he had identified. Roessler hoped that the more conservative circles, which were close to him by nature and into which he had introduced himself through his friend Edgar Jung, would mobilize to take effective political action against National Socialism²¹."

Edgar Julius Jung was an intellectual and lawyer by training, who, with the publication of his work *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen* (The rule of the Inferior), established himself as one of the leaders of a branch of the conservative revolution - distinct from the National-Bolsheviks. A brilliant political advisor to Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen during the coalition government of 1933, he was eliminated by the Nazis during the Night of the Long Knives. Apart from the fact that no link between Pabst, Jung and Roessler has yet been established, the weak point of this line of inquiry is that the ideals of the first two do not sit well with the Christian values of the third. However, it is not necessary for the publisher to have embraced the conservative revolution in order to have maintained a friendly relationship with some of his eminences, each of whom was also an opponent of National Socialism. Finally, like the previous one, this lead offers no explanation as to how the information reached Pabst.

The Holy Grail for the historian working on Roessler seems to have existed in the *Archiv für Zeitgeschichte of Zurich Polytechnic* (Archive for Contemporary History of Zurich Polytechnic). In the 2000s, a one-page memoir by Adolf Gasser entitled "*Erinnerungen an Rudolf Rößler*"²² (Memories of Rudolf Rößler) appeared in this institution's files on the director of Vita Nova. A lecturer at the University of Basel, Gasser was both a theorist and a political activist for communal autonomy²³. During the war, his research aroused the interest of a think-tank of German exiles who wondered what political form Germany should take after its defeat. These included Heinrich Ritzel, a social-democrat politician, and Michael von Godin. Known as the police officer who ordered fire to be opened against insurgents during the 1923 Munich Brewery Putsch, the latter has been a refugee in the canton of Lucerne since 1938. Gasser recounts:

²⁰ See "Waldemar Pabst" entry, *Wikipedia*, unsupported assertion, accessed 1.7.2023.

²¹ AFS, J1.107#2012/140#500*, letter from Hausamann to Allen Roberts, 19.07.1962.

²² Archiv für Zeitgeschichte, Zurich (AfZ), NL Roessler, Adolf Gasser, "Erinnerungen an Rudolf Rößler". Consulted in 2005, this document was not found in the Roessler collection during a visit in 2021.

²³ Thomas Schibler, "Gasser, Adolf", in *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, online version 17.5.2005 accessed 3.7.2023.

"During the war years, Ritzel also worked for the Swiss intelligence service. On several occasions, he let me read secret information that must have come directly from German headquarters. [...] He pointed me to Baron Michel von Godin (b. 1896), an émigré living in Emmenbrücke, as the author of the reports that reached the Swiss and American secret services. [...] During my first three meetings with Godin, Rudolf Rößler was always present, recognizable as his faithful paladin. Given his shy, dreamy nature and his silence, I was astonished by his reappearance. By chance, I met him at the end of 1943 in Basel's Freie Strasse, where we had a lively conversation in the Café Pellmont about the books on Russia by Walter Schubart and Karl Nötzel. I had no idea that Rößler was also involved in the secret service²⁴."

Whether this text is a forgery removed from the archives, a fabrication or a true testimony, it has the advantage of highlighting the character of von Godin, who is of great interest in the search for Roessler's informers. Indeed, it resonates with other documents, such as a 1944 memo written by Dulles assistant Royall Tyler, which reads:

"G[odin] himself says that he has done [intelligence] work (without saying for whom), that he has good relations with the Communists and that 'if some people don't treat him well, they may wake up one day and find him on the other side of the fence'²⁵."

Von Godin is a recognized informant for the OSS and Dulles, to whom he delivers military intelligence, some with the collaboration of Wirth²⁶, claiming that the source of his reports are generals²⁷. He was also part of an influential group, called the Musketeers by the Americans, along with exiled politicians Wilhelm Hoegner and Fritz Andreae. At the end of the war, together with Otto Braun, Hoegner, Ritzel and Wirth, he took part in *Das Demokratische Deutschland* (Democratic Germany), a new working group dedicated to post-war Germany, before heading to Munich, led by the Americans, to take charge of the Bavarian police. The main weakness of this line of inquiry is, once again, the lack of solid evidence of a link between von Godin and Roessler. On the other hand, it does have the advantage that the Bavarian police officer was known to have delivered military intelligence to the Allies in Switzerland. Finally, at this stage of the research, it is very difficult to weigh up the fact that, according to the Americans, von Godin had very close links with Federal Police Inspector Max Ulrich²⁸ - the very man who would lead a veritable crusade against Roessler and his friends in the spring of 1944.

Born in 1886, Hans Ritter was a pilot during the First World War. He is considered one of the theoreticians of the German Air Force, having

²⁴ AfZ, NL Roessler, Gasser, "Erinnerungen an Rudolf Rößler".

²⁵ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (NARA), RG226 E125 B6 F79, memo from Tyler to Dulles, 15.8.1944.

²⁶ Cf. Neal H. Petersen, *From Hitler's Doorstep. The Wartime Intelligence Reports of Allen Dulles, 1939-1945*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, doc. 1-34, p. 47.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 92.

²⁸ NARA, RG226 E125 B6 F79, memo from Tyler to Dulles, 15.8.1944.

published a work on strategy in 1926²⁹. From 1935 to 1938, he was assistant to the German Military and Air Attaché in Paris. An opponent of Nazism, before the war he forged ties with Malcolm Grahame Christie, British Air Attaché in Berlin in the late 1920s and SIS officer in Germany during the 1930s. On September 23, 1939, Ritter contacted Waibel and offered him the job of SR informer³⁰. On this occasion, the German officer gave the head of NS1 three personalities from the world of Swiss journalism as references, including Ernst Schürch, editor-in-chief of the Bernese newspaper *Der Bund* and father of the lawyer Gerhart Schürch - who would defend Roessler in his two trials. Suspicious, Waibel asked the Lucerne cantonal police to investigate Ritter. The police investigations showed that Ritter had already spent a month in Lucerne the previous year, from September 7th to November 1st, 1938. On this occasion, he stayed in the same hotel as the former mayor of Leipzig, Goerdeler, with whom he was in contact. Ritter returned to Switzerland via Basel on August 7, 1939, and stayed in Bad Ragaz until September, before coming to Lucerne on the 13th - where he remained on the 23rd. On November 3rd, 1939, Ritter was summoned by the Lucerne police chief and questioned about the reasons for his stay on Lake Lucerne³¹. He stated that he was only in Lucerne for treatment and rest. He also reiterates his list of references, this time expanded to include German residents of Switzerland, including Otto Karrer and Otto Strasser. In February 1940, Christie was in Lucerne, where he made contact with Ritter and Wirth³².

The Christie-Ritter binomial is interesting in that it is linked to the *Boschkreis* (bosch Circle), the circle of directors of the German company Bosch³³, which during the war fed an intelligence line to Switzerland on behalf of the Allies. This fact resonates with the post-war statements of Horst Kopkow, a German officer in charge of hunting down the *Rote Drei* (Red Three) - also called *Edelweiss* (Nobelwhite) by the *Stapo* - during the war. Questioned by the Allies, he stated in 1946 about the trails the Germans were following to discover the sources of the *Dora* network:

"RADO's sources of information are said to have included:

- a) NORTHERN ITALY, where he was in contact with Russian informers, names unknown.
- b) BALKANS.
- c) German military circles; suspicion focused on anc. gen. VEIEL³⁴ (?) and at one time a German military center in RADOM.

²⁹ Hans Ritter, *Luftkrieg*, Berlin, K.F. Koehler, 1926.

³⁰ AFS, E4320B#1971/78#428*, Stocker report from the Lucerne cantonal police, 23.09.1939.

³¹ *Ibid*, report from Joseph Isenschmid to Werner Balsiger, 5.11.1939.

³² *Ibid*, report by Bucher of the Lucerne cantonal police, 19.2.1940.

³³ On this connection, see Joachim Scholtyseck, *Robert Bosch und der liberale Widerstand gegen Hitler, 1933-1945* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), pp. 237-239.

³⁴ General Rudolf Veiel was relieved of his command on suspicion of involvement in the plot of July 20, 1944, but nothing has been proven against him. German investigators may have confused him with Georg Ernst Veiel, a German living in Basel and an agent of Elizabeth Wiskemann of the British PWE (cf. Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret. Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's Final Solution*, New Brunswick/London, Transaction Publishers, 2012, p. 100). G. E. Veiel was also connected with the *Boschkreis*.

d) German industrialist SCHLOSSBERG in STUTTGART was also under suspicion.

e) The Swiss General Staff, which was always well informed; it was not thought that Swiss staff officers were in the pay of Russian intelligence, but simply that they were careless, even indifferent, about the information they possessed³⁵."

"Schlossberg" is obviously Willy Schlosstein, head of Robert Bosch's private secretariat, who frequently visited Switzerland. German investigation reports forwarded to the Swiss counter-espionage service during the investigations that followed the arrest of the Dora network in Geneva, confirm that Schlosstein was on the radar of the Nazi government's spy hunters³⁶. According to these documents, the industrialist delivered his windfall to Agent Long, the Zurich-based French journalist Georges Blun, i.e., to another branch of the *Dora* network. Be that as it may, this lead has the great advantage of involving personalities whose intelligence work on behalf of the Allies is otherwise recognized, as well as acquaintances of Roessler, such as Karrer, Schürch and Wirth. However, to date, as with the other leads, there is no direct evidence linking Roessler to Ritter.

However, Roessler obtained his information, his network was already in place when war broke out. All that remained was for him to find an outlet for his reports, written as early as September 1939. Once again, it was his friend Schnieper who found it for him. Hans Hausamann testifies:

"The line [...] was offered to me before the outbreak of war by Dr. Xaver Schnieper [...]. At the time, Dr. Schnieper offered me the services of the line for a fee of 12,000 francs a year. I accepted and paid the resulting costs out of my own pocket, since, as we all know, the credit available to the intelligence section at the time would not have allowed such amounts to be allocated.

Thereafter, I maintained this connection as the "Waldstätter" line, under this code name, because Dr. Schnieper, at my instigation, would give receipt of advances paid to him for travel, etc. under the name Sepp Waldstätter³⁷."

Unlike some of his colleagues at the head of the SR - notably Roger Masson, Alfred Ernst, Max Waibel and Bernard Cuénoud - Hans Hausamann is a pure product of the Swiss militia system³⁸. The owner of a chain of photography stores in civilian life and a captain in the army, it was partly out of passion, but also out of fear of the rise of extremism in Europe, the danger of which he perceived very early on, that he set up a form of press agency in the early 1930s. He wrote for the *Revue militaire suisse*, edited by Roger Masson, and to keep himself informed, he built up a network of foreign military correspondents. When mobilization came in September 1939, faced with the need to build a service worthy of the name from scratch - or almost - Masson,

³⁵ The National Archives, Kew (NA), KV2 1647, extract of 30.04.1946 from CSDIC(WEA) Second Interim Report No. 56 on Horst Kopkow, 21.03.1946.

³⁶ AFS, E27#1000/721#11168*, report from *Schulze 20* to *Peter* and appendices, 31.05.1943.

³⁷ AFS, E27#1000/721#9850*, letter from Hausamann to Müller, 16.12.1944.

³⁸ On Hausamann and the *Büro Ha*, see for example Christian Rossé, *Le service de renseignements suisse face à la menace allemande, 1939-1945*, Panazol, Lavauzelle, 2006, pp. 63-65.

head of the SR, integrated the *Büro Ha* (Ha Office) into his organization. Hausamann was mobilized and given a budget and a few soldiers by the Army General Staff.

According to Roessler himself, he began working for the *Büro Ha* in 1939 at a salary of CHF 400 per month - a sum which later rose to CHF 1,550³⁹. Information was transmitted exclusively via an intermediary, a young Austrian named Franz Wallner⁴⁰.

"Subsequently, Dr. Schnieper introduced me to a personal friend of his, who was to pass on the material to me instead of Schnieper. As Dr. Schnieper was very busy as an employee of the Lucerne Cantonal Library, I didn't want to ask him to work for me as well. So, I hired his friend, who moved in with Dr. Schnieper.

Until then, according to Dr. Schnieper, the line worked only for me. As Dr. Schnieper formally assured me, I had no reason to doubt it⁴¹."

Hans Hausamann is an extremely complex character. He's a stickler for moral principles when it comes to other people's attitudes towards him, and he's not above breaking them if he feels it's necessary. In his eyes, exclusivity is a principle that brooks no exceptions for an intelligence source working for him. Despite Hausamann's suspicion and anger, Roessler continued to work for Büro Ha until the end of the war.

Yellow reports

The vast majority of Roessler's output can now be seen through the prism of the few *Dora* network telegrams intercepted by the Germans and the Swiss. It takes the form of collections of typed reports on yellow bible paper⁴². The period available ranges from report no. 59 of February 28th, 1940, to report no. 35 of May 10th, 1944. This corpus was seized in 1953 during a search of Schnieper's home.

Period	Number of reports		Number of sheets	
February 1940 (first on 28.2)	62	(incomplete)	(9)	(incomplete)
March 1940	66		124	
April 1940	84		148	
May 1940	80		125	
June 1940	75		149	
July 1940	80		177	
August 1940	80		188	

³⁹ AFS E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 7.6.1944.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ AFS, E27#1000/721#9850*, letter from Hausamann to Müller, 16.12.1944.

⁴² AFS, E4320B#1980/77#185* (1940), E4320B#1980/77#186* (1941), E4320B#1980/77#187* (1942), E4320B#1980/77#188* (1943), E4320B#1980/77#184* (1944).

September 1940	79		182	
October 1940	84		183	
November 1940	88		177	
December 1940	90		146	
<i>Total 1940</i>	<i>868</i>	<i>(without January)</i>	<i>1599</i>	<i>(excluding January and February)</i>
January 1941	87		151	
February 1941	87		142	
March 1941	99		169	
April 1941	94		137	
May 1941	88		152	
June 1941	95		126	
July 1941	97		130	
August 1941	100		134	
September 1941	90		129	
October 1941	96		129	
November 1941	101		134	
December 1941	109		136	
<i>Total 1941</i>	<i>1143</i>		<i>1669</i>	
January 1942	106		128	
February 1942	93		109	
March 1942	106		127	
April 1942	101		118	
May 1942	102		140	
June 1942	110		145	
July 1942	118		155	
August 1942 incomplete	(34)	<i>(incomplete)</i>	(43)	<i>(incomplete)</i>
September 1942	120		143	
October 1942	123		147	
November 1942	115		140	
December 1942	116		146	
<i>Total 1942</i>	<i>1176</i>	<i>(August incomplete)</i>	<i>1455</i>	<i>(August incomplete)</i>
January 1943	117		146	
February 1943	104		134	
March 1943	116		150	
April 1943	115		133	

May 1943	113		132	
June 1943	113		132	
July 1943	120		134	
August 1943	126		147	
September 1943	132		144	
October 1943	126		141	
November 1943	122		141	
December 1943	131		146	
<i>Total 1943</i>	<i>1435</i>		<i>1680</i>	
January 1944	126		146	
February 1944	114		138	
March 1944	124		141	
April 1944	118		130	
May 1944 (last on 10.5)	35	(complete)	35	(complete)
<i>Total 1944</i>	<i>517</i>		<i>590</i>	

It goes without saying that the main recipient of the yellow reports is Hans Hausamann. Their presence in Schnieper's apartment, in the room occupied by Wallner during the war, indicates that they must have been typed in several copies on carbon paper, and that he kept a copy for himself. Surprisingly, however, a substantial quantity of these reports has been found in the OSS archives in Washington, under the title *X Reports*⁴³. These are exact copies, down to the last typographical error. On the header, written in pencil, are the OSS codes of the source, either 511, attributed to SR, or 513⁴⁴.

Roessler was personally known to the OSS even before Dulles' arrival in Switzerland. Indeed, a memo dated September 30th, 1942, from Russel G. D'Oench of the OSS in Washington to Charles B. Dyar, then head of mission in Berne, mentions three letters entrusted to the latter, which were to be placed in the safe of the American legation until he received orders to send them⁴⁵. The recipients are Wirth, Ulrich von Segesser, a member of the *Entscheidung* group, and Roessler. Unfortunately, these letters have not been found, and the memo makes no mention of their contents. However, their mention shows that in one way or another the three Lucerne residents were of interest to the OSS. Yet it seems highly unlikely that Roessler delivered reports directly to the British and Americans. Questioned by the examining magistrate in 1944, he

⁴³ NARA, RG226 E123 B7 F77-87.

⁴⁴ In his reference work, Petersen attributes this code to "a Polish source" (*op.cit.*, p. 546). This is an error. For example, doc 3-36 (p. 232-233), source 513, corresponds to yellow reports no. 59, 76, 79 and 91 of February 1944. It is unlikely that the report passed through a Polish intermediary between Wallner and Dulles.

⁴⁵ NARA, RG226 E214 B7 F2, memo from R. G. D'Oench to Charles B. Dyar, 30.09.1942.

claimed to have worked only for the Swiss, apart from his work for Rachel Dübendorfer⁴⁶. Most likely, Hausamann himself passed on the reports to the OSS, being in contact with Dulles himself⁴⁷.

For a short time, Hausamann also sent reports to the British SIS, which he labelled "Capt. X's flimsies":

" 6. Between September 1939 and February 1940, HAUSAMANN passed on to this service a great deal of information in German, all of which seemed to emanate from sources located in Germany - widely scattered throughout the German army, ministries, and industry. These reports were dubbed 'Capt. X's flimsies' by our local representative⁴⁸."

It seems that if delivery to the SIS representative in Switzerland was stopped, it was because Hausamann preferred another channel for sending the yellow reports to London:

" 7. On one occasion (around 1941 or 1942), when SEDLACEK's transmitter broke down, he asked our Geneva station to transmit a quantity of material on his behalf. A study of this material showed that it appeared to come from the same network as the 'Capt. X's flimsies'. In 1943 or 1944, Rachel DUEBENDORFER reported to our representative in Geneva that the RADO transmitter had broken down and that he had a large quantity of material which he did not wish to see disappear for the Allied effort, and which she passed on to us in his name on the express condition that we did not pass it on to Moscow. The material in question was easily identifiable as 'Capt. X's flimsies'⁴⁹."

Karel Sedlacek was sent to London by the Czechoslovak government's intelligence service in exile. He had moved to Switzerland in 1939 with the help of the SIS under the name of Charles Simpson⁵⁰ and lived in Hausamann's own house in Teufen.

Based in Lucerne, *Nachrichtensammelstelle 1* (News collection point) (NS1), code-named *Rigi*, is the SR body responsible for collecting intelligence from the various "receiving stations" set up in German-speaking Switzerland and Ticino, along the border and in the major cities. It also receives reports from the *Büro Ha*. Further, it is also responsible for the initial processing of information, such as compilation and cross-checking. Through its head, Major Max Waibel, it also has its own intelligence sources. Waibel is a career military man. A staff officer, he took command of the NS1 as soon as it was created in September 1939, a position he held until the end of the conflict. At least on paper, since, like all staff officers, Waibel also commanded a troop unit and was regularly called up for duty. During his absences, he was replaced by his second-in-command, Captain Bernhard Mayr von Baldegg, a

⁴⁶ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 07.06.1944.

⁴⁷ Cf. for example, Pierre-Th. Braunschweig, *Secret Channel to Berlin. The Masson-Schellenberg Connection and Swiss Intelligence in World War II*, Philadelphia, Casemate, 2004, pp. 201-202.

⁴⁸ NA, KV2 1657, extract dated 14.04.1953 from an MI6 report dated 27.03.1953 concerning Sedlacek.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Doctor of Law and lawyer from Lucerne. The latter joined the NS1 relatively late, thanks to Hausamann's support:

"Cape Mayr joined the NS1 much later, through me and on my recommendation. Cape Mayr asked me for this service at the time through Dr. Schnieper and I gladly honored him⁵¹."

Surprisingly, the young officer from Lucerne never served in NS1 at the same time as his superior. He simply replaces him. However, perhaps aware that the personal aspect is very important when dealing with a source, Waibel does not share his contacts with Mayr von Baldegg. When the former is absent, NS1 informers can no longer be contacted, leaving the latter at a loss when it comes to calling on them to cross-check information. So, in 1942, Mayr von Baldegg called on a friend, also a member of the *Entscheidung* circle (Decision circle)- of which he was a member of the publishing committee - who he knew to be an excellent *Büro Ha* informer: Rudolf Roessler. The NS1 line designated by the codes *Ariel* and *Dakar* was born. The German exile recounts:

"In 1942, my relationship with Captain Mayr led him to ask me several times for details about the composition of the German army. Whenever possible, I provided this information. From the beginning of 1943, this resulted in a continuous supply of material to Captain Mayr, which was of specific interest to NS1. This material was not derived from information Major Hausamann received through Dr. Wallner, but came largely from reports and information I obtained, partly by asking for details, from my correspondents. On average, I received 12 reports a month⁵²."

Imitating the practices of his boss, Mayr maintains the exclusivity of his source. Roessler continues:

"I've only spoken to Captain Mayr. I don't know any other NS1 officers. When Captain Mayr was away, I put my letters in the mailbox in his office, sometimes I also sent them to him by field mail on duty. I gave the following three types of messages:

1. status and changes in German army formations.
2. messages of particular importance from British sources.
3. messages of particular importance from Russian sources⁵³.

Roessler adds:

"Cape Mayr knew that I was receiving messages from German and Allied sources. He didn't know, however, that I was passing on messages to the Allies, or by what means. As part of NS1's work, he was primarily interested in information of particular importance in determining the actual state of the German army and its regrouping. He was particularly interested in clarifying unclear or dubious facts. Such facts were particularly often the result of cases of contradictory or not entirely overlapping information on certain German formations (army and Waffen SS divisions, air force combat formations), on their composition, on new weapons and the like -

⁵¹ AFS, E27#1000/721#9850*, letter from Hausamann to Müller, 16.12.1944.

⁵² AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 7.6.1944.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

information which the NSI had at its disposal or which it had received from the most diverse sources⁵⁴."

In the eyes of Mayr von Baldegg and Roessler, their collaboration is focused on establishing the German order of battle and does not create duplication of information for the SR.

Cooperation with the Dora network

From a bibliographical point of view, the way in which Roessler's and Rado's networks came together, and the period in which this collaboration took place, differ considerably from one book to another.

Christian Schneider was born on October 15th, 1896, in Schierstein, Germany. Orphaned from both parents in 1904, he studied in various German cities, eventually obtaining his doctorate in law and political science in Würzburg⁵⁵. He served in the infantry from November 1915 until the Armistice. He arrived in Switzerland in 1926 to join the staff of the International Labor Office (ILO) in Geneva, where he settled. Three months later, he married German author Elisabeth Behrend - who also published a book with Vita Nova in 1942⁵⁶. For the ILO, he wrote and translated legal, economic, and social texts in German, French, English, Spanish and Italian. In the summer of 1939, the ILO was forced to cut back considerably, and Schneider paid the price. However, his superior was full of praise for him in a statement he wrote on the occasion of his dismissal on August 31st, 1939:

"Mr. Schneider has always shown remarkable professional competence. His capacity for work, his intelligent zeal, his irreproachable conduct and his assiduity in service have made him a highly appreciated civil servant⁵⁷."

Roessler explains:

"I met Dr. Schneider in 1939. [Our relationship] was initially limited to the literary and ideological sphere and continued to develop on this basis⁵⁸."

On June 25th, 1939, the *NZZ* carried an advertisement proposing:

"A well-known publishing house is offering a good, permanent and progressive position to a dynamic individual who will contribute around 20,000 francs to the company's development. Literary knowledge, good general culture and, if possible, commercial skills⁵⁹."

The chronology - June-July 1939 for the first contact - and the details of the announcement are confirmed by Christian Schneider in his statements of May 19th, 1944, to the Federal Police⁶⁰.

Roessler continues:

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, April 26, 1944.

⁵⁶ Elisabeth Behrend, *Das goldene Land. Aus Heimat u. Kinderzeit*, Lucerne, Vita Nova, 1942.

⁵⁷ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, attestation of Schneider's work by Alex Michelet, 21.9.1939.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 7.6.1944.

⁵⁹ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Erste Ausgabe N° 1145, Sunday 25.6.1939, Blatt 1, p. 12.

⁶⁰ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 19.06.1944.

"At first, there was no question of an intelligence service between us. Not even in 1940 and 1941⁶¹."

He adds that:

"As early as the spring of 1942, Dr Schneider knew from me that I was collecting information of military or political interest and passing it on to the Swiss army⁶²."

Schneider then began to give him some of the information in his possession:

"He left it up to me to exploit the information he gave me in his letters, also in my intelligence service. But most of the time, it was news that could already be known to anyone who corresponded abroad. I wasn't giving Schneider any news myself at the time. I didn't know at the time that he was in contact with British intelligence agents⁶³."

Roessler also states:

"In September 1942, Schneider told me that he was in contact with a lady in Geneva who was collecting information of a military and political nature from Axis countries for England and Russia. In the course of our conversation, we agreed that I would also give this agent my information, and she would give me hers⁶⁴."

For his part, Christian Schneider confirms that "towards the end of 1942", he was contacted by the said agent's companion to "ask him to establish a line with the Swiss intelligence service." He explains:

"He was receiving information from Germany and France that needed to be exploited. As Rössler had already told me that he was working in the intelligence field for Switzerland, I contacted Rössler later for Böttcher⁶⁵. Rössler immediately agreed to receive the information on behalf of the Swiss Intelligence Service⁶⁶."

The agent in question is Rachele Dübendorfer, alias *Sissy*. She was born Hepner in Warsaw on July 18th, 1900. She subsequently lived in various German cities - Danzig, Leipzig, Berlin - before moving to Geneva in 1936 and joining the ILO as a shorthand typist, where she met Schneider. Like Schneider, she was made redundant in the summer of 1939.

In Geneva, Rachele Dübendorfer lives with Paul Böttcher, a German journalist and illegal refugee in Switzerland. He uses a false name when dealing with the authorities, and passes himself off to acquaintances as Monsieur Dübendorfer, Rachele's husband. His place in the *Dora* network is ambiguous. In his memoirs, Sandor Rado refers to him only as *Sissy's* companion, not as a collaborator⁶⁷. Yet he seems to play an active role in the network, as his companion's right-hand man. It should be noted, however, that Paul Böttcher is not *Paul* in the telegrams between Geneva and Moscow, as

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Record of Roessler hearing, 07.06.1944.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Paul Böttcher, see below.

⁶⁶ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 19.06.1944.

⁶⁷ Sandor Rado, *Sous le pseudonyme "Dora"* (Paris: Julliard, 1972), pp. 134-135, p. 292.

the journalist Drago Arsenijevic⁶⁸ thought, and that he therefore does not have, for the Centre, the status of the person behind the pseudonym⁶⁹. According to Christian Schneider's statements, he is the one who involves the translator in this collaboration between the *Dora* and Roessler networks:

"I learned that Böttcher had a kind of document collection in which he gathered all political and military information. This collection consisted of numerous files. He told me that he had already been offered 7,000 francs for this collection. I myself supplied him several times with news from English newspapers for his collection. I also gave him the news that Rössler had given me for this collection. I didn't know at the time that Böttcher and Mrs. Dübendorfer were collecting news for the Allies. Böttcher himself sometimes communicated this or that information to me orally, which I then passed on to Rössler orally or in writing for his ND⁷⁰."

In addition to demonstrating the premises of the Roessler-Schneider-Dübendorfer-Rado line, this passage highlights a quasi-predisposition to intelligence on Böttcher's part, which can be found among many of the "amateur spies" in this case - and perhaps in general at this time. Firstly, the vast majority of them had at some time been involved in journalism. Secondly, some of them had the ambition of setting up their own press agency or intelligence service, which for them meant gathering information in all directions. When Roessler was raided in a second case in 1953, the police discovered a cupboard full of newspaper cuttings in thematic files⁷¹. It should be noted in passing that only a tiny quantity dates from before 1945, but he must also have had such a tool at his disposal during the war, which was destroyed before his arrest. As we have seen, Hausamann created his famous *Büro Ha* in the 1930s, with the aim of setting up a form of press agency. Thus, Roessler, Hausamann, Böttcher and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Schneider, were all fascinated by the accumulation and classification of information, by the creation of veritable databases, in a logic close to that of the collector.

Of course, this passion for information is not enough to explain their commitment to Germany. The ideological dimension plays a predominant role. However, they are not necessarily of the same political persuasion, far from it. Schneider, for example, says of Rachele Dübendorfer and Böttcher:

"Ideologically, we agree only insofar as we are opposed to National Socialism. Politically, they are Communists, whereas I, as a Catholic, am not⁷²."

The minutes of the first hearings of Rachele Dübendorfer and Böttcher are difficult to use, because they are obviously lying. As Communist activists,

⁶⁸ Drago Arsenijevic, *Genève appelle Moscou*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1969, p. 238.

⁶⁹ *Paul* was in fact a Russian officer sent to Switzerland by the GRU named Fedor Fedorovich Kruglikov, alias Karel Wybiral (see the revelations of his son Pavel Fedorovich on history.milportal.ru). He later became known for recruiting Israeli agent Zeev Avni (cf. Zeev Avni, *False Flag*, London, St Ermin's Press, 1999). Thanks to Eric Michel for sharing his find with me.

⁷⁰ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 07.06.1944.

⁷¹ This collection was acquired by the AfZ of ETH Zurich and can be consulted in the NL Roessler collection.

⁷² AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 07.06.1944.

they are more accustomed to the clandestine struggle than Roessler and, above all, they have no quarrel with the Swiss authorities, unlike the latter, who has been working for the SR and living in Lucerne since 1934. *Sissy* has long maintained that she works for the British and has done so since the German offensive of May 1940⁷³. She is said to have asked Schneider to set up a line to the SR in order to exchange information and at the same time pass on her own intelligence to the Swiss authorities. She admits that she only began supplying information to the Russians in May 1943⁷⁴.

"I don't know for sure which of us was behind this exchange of messages. In any case, I was looking for news myself. [...] The counterpart on Schneider's side was not excessive in quantity, but very good in quality, often unique. The exchange ended with the arrest of Mrs. Dübendorfer⁷⁵."

Schneider acts as a "circuit breaker" between the Rado and Roessler networks. Of course, he knows Rachele Dübendorfer on one side and Roessler on the other, but he does not know the identity of the sources of the two⁷⁶ lines, and he refuses to communicate *Lucie's* name to the Soviets. He does, however, learn from Roessler the identity of Franz Wallner and his links with NS1 and Hausamann⁷⁷. It seems that what he knows of Roessler's sources boils down to this statement of May 19, 1944, to the Federal Police:

"Rössler was always very cautious. He was always reserved, but he told me again last year (around the end of 1943) that he had already organized the setting up of the intelligence service in Germany for Switzerland with Germans in Switzerland two months before the war. Since the beginning of the war, he has headed this intelligence service, which speaks volumes about the capabilities and efficiency of this man⁷⁸."

While the testimonies of Roessler, Schneider and Dübendorfer are unanimous in stating that the two networks began collaborating from autumn 1942, it cannot be ruled out that a very small amount of information passed from Lucerne to Geneva before this date, probably without *Lucie's* knowledge. Schneider recounts:

"From the start of the war in 1939 to the establishment of the Böttcher-Rössler intelligence line in 1942, I received private letters from time to time describing the war situation. I showed some of them to Böttcher, whose interest I suspected from his collection of documents. In all, this happened three or four times⁷⁹."

Roessler declares:

"The exchange developed more strongly from the beginning of 1943. From then on, both sides supplied more material. I myself was able to receive

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Dübendorfer hearing, 25.05.1944.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 7.06.1944.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 15.06.1944.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 19.05.1944.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, 20.05.1944.

more material from people I trusted. From mid-1943, the exchange reached its peak. Things stayed that way until the beginning of April 1944⁸⁰."

Christian Schneider's statements are perfectly in line with this and quantify the increase: "The number of reports I supplied to Böttcher started at around ten, and until recently rose to around thirty a week⁸¹."

The frequency with which Schneider travels to Lucerne, Zurich or Berne to meet Roessler and take possession of the reports is also a sign of the gradual increase in the flow of information, rising on average from two to four times a month in the first period - that is, as we have just seen in the autumn of 1942 - to once a week, then finally to twice a week⁸².

Examination of the mass of material delivered to the *Dora* network masks the fact that Roessler produced a considerable amount, right from the start of the war.

"At first, the exchange took place only slowly. It seemed to me that, at the time, Dr. Schneider's side was mainly interested in news about Russia, which is why I initially provided almost exclusively news about the Eastern Front. I didn't pass on everything I had. Soon enough, I was asked what might be of interest to England. Particularly after the Allied landings in Africa in November 1942. From then on, I also supplied the information that was of interest to England, but not all of it either - just over half. I was a bit worried because there wasn't much in front of me. [...] I gave Schneider just about everything that might interest the Allies from the summer of 1943 onwards⁸³."

Roessler also told the Federal Police:

"While I was delivering 10 to 15 reports a month to NS1, I was delivering around 80 to 130 reports a month to Dr. Wallner for Hausamann. The number of reports delivered by Schneider in Geneva should be around 70 per month at the beginning in October 1942, then around 90 to 100 per month and finally, i.e., during the last 6 months, around 110 per month on average⁸⁴."

The figures given by Roessler correspond to the quantities of yellow reports found (see table above).

Roessler's knowledge of the network to which he provides information seems minimal, to say the least. He has known since early 1943 that his reports are given to the Russians and, he says, to the British⁸⁵. But he knows virtually nothing about the people who make up this network.

"It was only in the spring of 1944 that I learned the name Dübendorfer from Schneider, when Mrs. Dübendorfer was arrested. Thanks to Schneider, I knew that people passed on information mainly by radio, and to a lesser extent by mail. Later, I learned that a certain Hamel was in charge of the

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 07.06.1944.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Schneider hearing, May 20, 1944.

⁸² *Ibid*, E27#1000/721#9538*, Ulrich report, 1.6.1944.

⁸³ *Ibid*, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, minutes of Roessler hearing, 7.6.1944.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, E27#1000/721#9538*, Ulrich report, 1.6.1944.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

radio⁸⁶. There were also other people whose names I don't know. Schneider described Mrs. Dübendorfer to me as a skillful and reliable person⁸⁷."

When he asserts that "the Schneider side" was delivering its intelligence not only to the Russians, but also to the British, we don't know whether he's trying to improve his image in front of a Swiss military judge who is unlikely to have any sympathy for the communist regime of the USSR, or whether he himself has been deceived. It is known that, once all the pianists in the network had been locked up, *Sissy* tried to deliver the information she was accumulating to the head of the Geneva branch of the SIS, Victor C. Farrel - which may well have led to her deportation to the Gulag. But it is highly unlikely that Moscow would have tolerated any collaboration between its service in Switzerland and Her Majesty's service.

Financial aspects

Alongside anti-Nazism and a passion for intelligence, financial considerations certainly played a part in Roessler's motivation. The sums paid to him were considerable for the time. According to his own statements to the Federal Police, the amounts received each month from the various recipients of his reports were as follows⁸⁸:

Recipient	Minimum sum CHF / month	Maximum sum CHF / month	Average CHF / month
<i>Büro Ha</i> (Wallner)	400.--	1550.--	900.--
<i>Dora</i> network (Schneider)	500.--	3900.--	2800.--
NS1 (Mayr von Baldegg)	200.--	300.--	250.--

However, Roessler's financial motives do not relate to personal enrichment. Examination of his accounts by the Swiss Federal Police showed that CHF 1,700 of the money collected each month went to a German informant and CHF 1,250 to the Vita Nova account⁸⁹. It was therefore partly to save his publishing house that he was selling his information at such a high price.

The *Dora* network is not one of the recipients of the yellow reports. Roessler specifically prepared more concise documents with a different layout for them - we'll call them *white reports*, although their true color is unknown. Some of these have come down to us - in the form of photocopies with a black background - recovered during a search of Rachele Dübendorfer's home⁹⁰. Unlike the yellow reports, which give no indication of their source, the blanks

⁸⁶ Probably only after his own incarceration.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, minutes of Roessler hearing, 7.6.1944.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, E27#1000/721#9538*, Ulrich report, 1.6.1944.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁹⁰ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, photocopies of reports m 42, m 43, m 51, m 52, m 53, m 76, m 77, m 84, m 88, m 89.

show a letter next to the date:

"The letters 'W', 'O', 'Des', 'A', 'Do', which appear in the corner of the reports in question, at the top of the card, are the designator of the agent who supplied the information bearing the indication in question⁹¹."

The contents of these white reports can be cross-checked, mainly with the yellow ones⁹². However, some, marked "Des" for "deserters", come from another source and are at the root of Roessler's arrest.

Deserter reports and arrest

One of the SR's many sources during the war was the interrogation of people crossing the border, such as Swiss and foreign commercial travelers, refugees and deserters from the German army who came to ask to be interned in Switzerland. During the periods when Mayr von Baldegg was deputizing as head of the NS1, as his chief did not share his privileged sources with him, he had to find his own way of confirming the reports he received from the outposts, including the reports drawn from the hearings of German deserters. Naturally, he turned to his friend Roessler to cross-check the information. But Roessler, always anxious to obtain information to exchange, was quick to pass it on further afield.

"Capt Mayr could not have known that I was using the testimonies of deserters for purposes other than establishing the facts through requests for clarification or research⁹³."

Especially since, according to him, this type of report comes from all sides:

"In addition to Cape Mayr, I received information about testimonies of German deserters from my German correspondents and, in a few cases, from Dr. Schneider, or through Dr. Schneider⁹⁴."

On April 19th, 1944, following on from the investigation that had led to the arrest of some of the members of the *Dora* network in September 1943, Rachele Dübendorfer and Böttcher were in turn incarcerated. The shadowing they had undergone also revealed their frequent, almost daily contact with Christian Schneider⁹⁵. The Federal Police will trace the line.

What's more, during a search of *Sissy's* home, four deserter's reports were discovered. After examining these documents, the investigators determined that they originated from NS1 and had certainly been forwarded by Mayr von Baldegg to Roessler. As these documents were of national defense significance, both men were suspected of violating military secrecy and arrested in their turn. Roessler and Schneider were arrested on May 19th,

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.v. of Dübendorfer hearing, 25.05.1944.

⁹² The white report m 51 (AFS E5330-01#1982/1#988*) corresponds, for example, to the yellow report n° 17 of 03.04.1944 (AFS E4320B#1980/77#184*).

⁹³ AFS, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, p.v. of Roessler hearing, 07.06.1944.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, report by inspectors Ducry, Humbert, Muller, Schmid and Knecht, May 23, 1944.

1944, and Mayr von Baldegg on May 31st. On this occasion, the SR officer objected to the search of his home, arguing that only a military authority had the right to order it. After successfully contacting his superior, Max Waibel, by telephone, Waibel in turn tried to stop the operation, but to no avail, the Federal Police inspector in charge of the operation hiding behind the orders of the Attorney General of the Confederation, Stämpfli⁹⁶.

The Federal Police inspector in charge of investigating Roessler and Mayr von Baldegg's actions, and the man who arrested them, was, ironically enough, Max Ulrich, who would himself be sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison in the Dubois case for providing French intelligence with information on the Algerian FLN. For this police officer, Roessler's confession leaves no doubt as to his guilt. In return for "substantial remuneration", he handed over "information of Swiss origin"⁹⁷. Particularly aggressive towards the Lucerne-based publisher, even if it means mitigating the charges against Rachele Dübendorfer, he maintains that Dübendorfer's statements prove that she was prepared from the outset to hand over information to the SR for no consideration, and that the "give and take" argument put forward by Roessler's defenders therefore does not hold water.

To drive the point home, Inspector Ulrich notes, among other things, that Roessler tried to use his contacts at the SR to interfere in the investigations, first against Hamel et al.⁹⁸, then against Rachele Dübendorfer.

"In April 1944, when the political police in Geneva were attacking the Böttcher/Dübendorfer circle, Rössler, after a discussion with Schneider, asked Mayr von Baldegg to intervene with the relevant army departments to encourage the Federal Prosecutor's Office to stop prosecuting people in this line. Mayr von Baldegg assured his superior that he would intervene⁹⁹."

Ulrich then quotes a statement by Mayr von Baldegg:"

"Rössler justified his request on the grounds that arresting these people would put the Gestapo, already in the thick of things, on the trail of his intelligence source and endanger his informers in Germany. In both cases, I submitted the matter to my chief, Major Waibel, who took care of it; I don't know what he did¹⁰⁰."

The arrest of Mayr von Baldegg and Roessler immediately triggered an outcry from some SR officers. Two officers in particular had harsh words for the Attorney General of the Confederation, Stämpfli, which later prompted him, a year and a half after the event, to lodge a complaint against them for defamation¹⁰¹. The first of these was Major Emil Häberli, head of the Basel police station, which dealt with the *Wiking* Line and, in civilian life, was head of the political police for the canton of Basel-Stadt. Ironically, in July 1941, he

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, E27#1000/721#9538*, Ulrich report, 01.06.1944.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁸ This refers to the first wave of arrests in October and November 1943 against the *Dora* network, of which Edmond Hamel was one of the radio operators.

⁹⁹ AFS, E27#1000/721#9538*, Ulrich report, 01.06.1944.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, E27#1000/721#9538*.

was undoubtedly the first to report to the Geneva authorities "that GEOPRESS and ATLAS PERMANENT S.A. was a secret Russian espionage center and that its director was a Hungarian Communist"¹⁰². The second was Captain Rolf Eberhard, a theologian and journalist, who headed *Büro D*, the SR's organ for analysis of Germany. Both believed - as did Major Waibel at the time of the search - that the Federal Prosecutor's Office had acted on its own initiative and without consulting the head of the SR. In fact, Colonel Werner Müller, Masson's replacement, had been informed and had authorized the operation¹⁰³. Häberli subsequently apologized for his remarks.

Thus, the officers' sling against the Federal Police is based primarily on the procedural aspect of Mayr von Baldegg's arrest, and less on an unconditional defense of their colleague. However, they are also defending a practice - the exchange of information - which they themselves practice and which they consider necessary and effective. Mayr von Baldegg was released on June 8th and will not be prosecuted. For Schneider and Roessler, the ordeal began. Both intellectuals and of weak physical build, they were unable to cope with incarceration in unhygienic, uncomfortable conditions and solitary confinement. Their wives and friends keep asking for their release on bail. After more than three months behind bars, Schneider was released on September 1st, 1944, and Rudolf Roessler on September 6th. The trial of the Dübendorfer, Roessler et al. case was held on October 22nd and 23rd, 1945, in Berne, under the auspices of the 2B Division Military Court¹⁰⁴. Only Roessler and Schneider were present. Rachele Dübendorfer and Böttcher left Switzerland after their release on bail. Roessler is represented by Berne lawyer Captain Gerhart Schürch. The four defendants are charged with providing intelligence services to a foreign state (art. 301 CPS and art. 93 CPM¹⁰⁵). At the end of the trial, all four defendants were found guilty. Rachele Dübendorfer and Böttcher were both sentenced in absentia to two years' imprisonment and a fine of CHF 10,000. Roessler was sentenced without penalty, in view of the services he had rendered to Switzerland, and Schneider to 30 days' imprisonment deemed to have been incurred through preventive detention.

An interim report

None of the avenues explored provides a definitive answer to the question of the upstream milieu of Rudolf Roessler's network. Research must continue, and new avenues must be explored. New ones may emerge. This article is only an interim assessment. However, certain facts now seem established. The publisher, in particular, obtains his raw material from a

¹⁰² *Ibid*, E5330-01#1982/1#989*, letter from François Vibert to Samuel Blaser, 21.02.1944.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, E27#1000/721#9538*, letter from Häberli to Karl Brunner, 11.01.1946.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, E5330-01#1982/1#988*, judgment in the case of Dübendorfer et al. by the 2B divisional court, October 23, 1945.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of Swiss espionage legislation, cf. Christian Rossé, *Les échanges de l'ombre. Passages des services de renseignement suisse et alliés à travers la frontière de l'Arc jurassien 1939-1945*, Neuchâtel/Montbéliard, 2013, thesis published on theses.fr, p. 239-243.

nebulous group of exiles and travelers from Germany, not from a single narrow line which it is hard to imagine could have ensured such a flow of information - and with such regularity. Roessler goes to great lengths to enrich his knowledge base. He uses the press, but also exchanges information with other networks. But he's not just an intermediary: he compiles, cross-checks, analyzes and writes his own reports. This is a far cry from the image of the spy as a field agent. The hefty sums he allocates to his "informant" suggest that he is not in direct contact with the nebula, and that someone is in charge of gathering information from different sources and forwarding it to him - a person who at the same time plays the role of "circuit breaker" and enables Roessler to remain in the shadows. Perhaps he himself knew nothing about his sources.

Christian Rossé

Research notebook

Florian Bunoust-Becques, PhD student in Contemporary History, Université Paris HESAM: **The assertion of the role of French submarine forces in the military intelligence chain from 1890 to 1970.**

In October 1896, Édouard Lockroy, Minister of the Navy, launched a new call for projects¹ for submarine torpedo boats. The jury selected the *Narval* (Q4) prototype. Designed by engineer Maxime Laubeuf², this first autonomous submersible torpedo boat was launched on October 21st, 1899, and served as a prototype for many French vessels, and sometimes, in spite of itself, for foreign innovations. Seventy years later, in 1964, the French Navy commissioned the high-performance, conventionally powered Daphne³ attack submarine. Seven decades separate these two major milestones in French naval history, whose evolution was made possible in particular by and for the action of intelligence.

Like aircraft and armored vehicles, the development of the submarine is intrinsically linked to its military use. A naval-industrial boom deployed to psychologically and actually dominate and deter allied and opposing fleets. Like any ship, the submarine will be equipped with its own onboard instruments, helping to gather intelligence for itself and to provide it to elements in the naval intelligence chain. Submersibles and submarines became both players in and consequences of the arms race, a veritable part of the mechanics of contemporary naval warfare.

¹ Since the unsuccessful development of Robert Fulton's *Nautilus* in 1797, attempts at underwater navigation have been the work of isolated experiments by independent engineers. In France, political doctrine changed in January 1888, when the Minister of the Navy, Admiral Hyacinthe Aube, a supporter of the Jeune École, issued a ministerial dispatch for the construction of a submarine boat under the direction of Gustave Zédé.

² In 1896, Maxime Laubeuf was a graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique and Chief Engineer at Toulon Shipbuilding. He followed in the footsteps of a generation of shipbuilders including Gustave Zédé, Dupuy de Lôme, Gabriel Maugas and Gaston Ramazzotti. The arrival of Minister Edouard Lockroy, anxious not to miss out on a promising invention, supported not only Maxime Laubeuf's project, but also that of Ramazzotti with *Le Morse* and Maugas with *Le Farfadet*.

³ The Daphné series stems from a note from Admiral Rosset, in charge of the fleet under construction at the General Staff of the French Navy, dated September 17, 1952, to the Naval Construction Technical Department, asking it to draw up a preliminary design for a "second-class torpedo submarine".

French submarines: the blind spot of contemporary naval intelligence?

For French military intelligence, the war of 1870 marked an important stage in its structuring, with the creation of an analysis unit, the 2nd Bureau, and a German-centric intelligence service (SR)⁴ and resolutely land-based⁵. As for the maritimization of information, it was not until the First World War, and the empirical emergence of new needs and tactical capabilities such as naval aeronautics and submarine fleets, that it began to be efficiently structured around the 2^e *Bureau de l'État-major général de la Marine* (2nd Office of the Navy General Staff) (EMGM-2). The need, from 1914-1915 onwards, was to strengthen inter-allied communications to protect both military and merchant convoys from the threat of U-boats and the implementation of all-out German submarine warfare. The study of intelligence techniques reveals the implementation within the SR Marine of the mechanics of an *Intelligence Cycle*, complex to identify in wartime as in peacetime, but which nonetheless appeared structured long before Kent Sherman⁶ theorized it in 1949. In France, it was the November 30th, 1925, instruction issued by the Minister of the Navy, Georges Leygues, which gave the first extensive definition of naval intelligence, aimed at gathering information of two kinds: technical and strategic. During this doctrinal development of naval intelligence, what role did submarines play and what prospects did the government intend to open up for them in achieving this dual objective?

It's a fact that, at the beginning of the 20th century, the path from submersible to submarine could only be followed by an almost uninterrupted succession of questions, sometimes raised by the Navy's General Staff, sometimes by the scientific and technical structures dedicated to this objective. This is where the *Centre d'études de Toulon* (Toulon Research Center) (CET) comes in. Over the years, specific commissions such as those for practical submarine studies (CEPSM) or wireless telegraphy (CEPSTF), as well as civilian and military players, have stimulated and directed intelligence for the benefit of submarines and their crews, using a variety of research methods and tools.

Following in the footsteps of Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, we can say that "all theorists agree that intelligence is indispensable to strategic decision-making"⁷. So, what role does intelligence play in establishing the French submarine force as a strategic naval weapon? In fact, a complementary study

⁴ The Germanocentrism of the intelligence services is notably conceptualized and described by Gérald Arboit, *Des services secrets pour la France*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2014.

⁵ Since time immemorial, seafarers, both civilian and military, have been important relays and sensors of information and reconnaissance, thanks to their navigations and port calls. However, it wasn't until the beginning of the 19th century that France began to structure its intelligence network, and was forced to do so for the Navy in view of the issues at stake with the Allies during the First World War.

⁶ Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949.

⁷ Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, "Le renseignement dans la pensée militaire française", *Stratégique*, n° 73, 1999/1, pp. 9-36.

of French submarine forces as an intelligence object and tool, from their inception to the 1970s, has never been undertaken before. A singular approach that aims to shed light on a contemporary scientific grey area by calling on a variety of sources to create an archival dialogue is still unexplored by the aforementioned academic community.

This work is based on the consultation of several archive collections, such as those of the *Service historique de la Défense à Vincennes* (Historical Defense Service at Vincennes), in its *Département de la Marine* (Marine Department), where we find the sub-series devoted to First World War vessels (MV SS YC). We will also consult the archives of the various organizations of the *Centre d'études de Toulon* (CET) from 1920 to 1940, formerly the *Commission d'étude pratique des sous-marins* (Commission for the Practical Study of Submarines) (CEPSM), the sub-series (DD6 and 1 DD6) devoted to the *Commission d'étude pratique de la TSF* (Commission of Practical Study for the TSF) (CEPTSF) and the sub-series MV 1 BB8 67-70, devoted to the *Commission d'études pratiques et de télémétrie* (Commission for practical studies and telemetry) (CEPOT). This collection of sources aims to answer the general question of why submarines are a weapon that receives special intelligence attention, and how various technological developments have enabled them to establish themselves as a fully-fledged contributor to the naval intelligence chain.

Submarines: the object and tool of naval intelligence?

The historiography of submarine forces allows us to surmise their role as an object of intelligence interest. It should be remembered that interest in the submersible grew as soon as the Navy was able to organize the scientific and technical emulation needed to perfect it, and to derive some tactical and, in the longer term, commercial dividends from it.

As Christopher Andrews points out, when it comes to intelligence, the First World War is regularly approached from the angle of innovation, "and rarely from that of oblivion"⁸ of the importance of cryptology and intelligence. The subject of submarines should not obscure the role played by certain players in their favor, though it's easy to overlook the fact that, far from having accomplished any great feats during the Great War, submarines fulfilled relatively simple missions, conditioned as they were by their still-limited capabilities, which the scientific watch would endeavor to surpass. The submarine is also of interest to other naval powers, and those in the making, such as Germany. This study will identify the intelligence processes that enabled the German firm Krupp to produce and sell the first German submarine in 1902, based on Laubeuf's *Narval* design.

Finally, in view of the needs expressed by the various CET commissions, we analyze the means and methods used by French naval attachés to gather intelligence on both submarines and foreign innovations,

⁸ Interviewed on the occasion of the Colloque "*Renseignement et espionnage durant la Première Guerre mondiale*" on November 26, 2014.

with a view to improving French submarines and the navigation conditions of their crews. While a few books and articles examine this contribution⁹, the literature devotes little space to technological and industrial espionage in response to specific military needs. However, evidence and traces of these efforts do exist. They are to be found, in part, in the various archival sources of the *Service Historique de la Défense* (SHD) of the French Ministry of the Armed Forces; archives that deserve to be analyzed in order to appreciate, on the one hand, the needs expressed by the EMGM in conjunction with those of the scientific and technical services and, on the other hand, to map the methods, means and interactions implemented to gather intelligence aimed at meeting them through intelligence research plans illustrating the legacy of the First World War, which, for Olivier Forcade, erected a "logic of annual intelligence planning".

In the light of these challenges, a number of research questions emerge. Why did Paul Langevin's work on ultrasonic waves prevent France from developing the kind of underwater wave detection equipment deployed by the British and Germans? How, from 1943 onwards, were French submarines equipped with ASDIC devices? How, after the Liberation, did France organize the scientific hunt and the repatriation of German engineers for the benefit of its own ambitions, anxious to make up for the time lost before and during the conflict, in order to increase its power and acquire industrial autonomy, which was strategic in this field in the early days of the Cold War?

With regard to the contribution of submersibles and submarines to intelligence missions, although the diachronic literature of the Second World War highlights the missions of the Free French Submarine Forces (FNFL), few sources dwell on the complementarity of intelligence chains to the benefit of and thanks to the action of submarines and their crews (apart from the example of the *Casabianca* in Corsica and Spain). The literature on the global environment of clandestine missions (landing or re-embarkation of weapons and agents on the coasts of Norway and France) is rarer. The literature on American and Soviet submarine missions during the¹⁰ Cold War is more abundant, but relatively limited when it comes to French submarines. The present work aims to shed light on this grey area by studying the activities of several vessels during specific missions, to understand what was at stake, how they were carried out and the feedback they received.

For a definition of underwater intelligence?

Over the years, experience has enabled submarine forces to become a key player in the intelligence arena. But to what extent? While their lethal capacity is used in hostilities, in peacetime, it is just as much their functionality as an intelligence tool that is increased and called upon. *Ultimately*, in the light

⁹ Proceedings of the international symposium "*Internationalisation des méthodes de renseignements : le cas des attachés militaires*", March 30-31, 2023, forthcoming 2024.

¹⁰ Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, Peter A. Huchthausen, *Guerre Froide et espionnage naval*, Paris, Nouveau monde Éditions, 2009.

of these observations, this work will attempt to answer a novel question: can we define submarine intelligence? At first glance, this definition would seem to be at the crossroads of electromagnetic and image intelligence, since it concerns a source evolving beneath the surface of the water. However, in the light of this presentation and the various questions it raises, more precise characteristics could, if certain research hypotheses are confirmed, even if they are contradicted, lead to a completely original definition, bringing added academic value to this purely maritime field and a new chapter in a page of the history of intelligence, unknown or even underestimated.

The interview

Vincent Crouzet, **Service Action, intelligence, Africa...**

Vincent Crouzet is a prolific author, publishing under his pseudonym "Victor K" *Louve Alpha*, the third volume in his series on the Action Service¹ of the French Foreign Security Agency (DGSE), as well as novels under his own name, always in tune with current events, whether international or personal. Vincent Crouzet is also a *Coldwarrior*, having participated in the end of the East-West confrontation through guerrilla warfare, from the youth of Angola's Unita to the Afghan Mujahideen. He did so as much out of political conviction, with the Young Giscardiens, as out of professional practice. After completing his military service, he joined a unit that does not appear in the DGSE organization chart, the same one to which journalist-reporter Philippe de Dieuleveult would have belonged. In the early 1990s, he was involved in all the battles on the African stage: southern Africa was his field of action, as was Angola, his point of interest for the DGSE, Mozambique, post-apartheid South Africa, and Zimbabwe during the farmers' crisis. And trafficking, from diamonds to international finance, which will bring the novelist into contact with one of the scandals of the 5th Republic, the Areva affair, indirectly through retro-commissions², and more closely with the question of unworkable uranium deposits fraudulently sold to the French company³.

Today, Vincent Crouzet uses this background to describe real-life clandestine operations in his novels. Fascinated by British spy writers, from Ian Fleming to John le Carré, he is no stranger to the masters of the spy novel, such as Robert Ludlum. Of course, it's hard for him to escape Gérard de Villiers' SAS, from whose service connections and documentation of today's international society he borrows.

Special Forces have been all the rage with the media, and therefore the public, for the last ten years or so. How do you explain this? Is it the same for the DGSE? Is it a Bureau des légendes effect?

When it comes to special forces, fascination is nothing new. In fact, it has been constant ever since the creation of the British *Special Air Service* during the Second World War, which imprinted on the Western imagination a factory of heroes: a small number of united and determined fighters against often heavier structures, working for totalitarian regimes. It's a continuation of the myth of David versus Goliath, and also of the first commando action: that

¹ *Cible Sierra, Sauvez Zelensky, Louve Alpha*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2022 and 2023.

² *Radioactif*, Paris, Belfond, 2014.

³ *Une affaire atomique*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2017.

of the Trojan Horse, recounted by Homer. These special forces, which remained fairly confidential outside the specialized press (*Raids*, *DSI*...), are now known to the general public, as the work of the elite regiments seems to be similar, even though each of them are developing a real specificity of use.

The DGSE (or Service), and the world of intelligence in general, is a different story, particularly in France, where for a very long time, the work of the secret services was rather disparaged, with fiction taking it up mainly for pastiches or parodies. The pejorative term "barbouze", coined in the 1950s, has long had a negative impact on French intelligence. Moreover, as the Service never claimed its successes, the press only noted its failures, the most resounding of which was the sabotage of the *Rainbow Warrior*. The Service's image took a long time to recover. But its efficient involvement in conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East and Afghanistan, and its unrivalled expertise in Africa, have enabled the DGSE to emerge as, and remain, one of the Western services of reference. But fiction, with a few exceptions, had never seriously taken hold of this service. We owe it to Éric Rochant to have finally, through a very realistic series, legitimized through fiction the day-to-day work of the "Box". This is also what I'm trying to do with the "Service Action" collection. Fiction is also a weapon of war. The Anglo-Saxons understood this a long time ago and were able to convey the power of their intelligence services through the genre of literature, cinema and then TV series. The CIA and MI-6 exist in the world more through fictional imagination than anything else. Today, it can be said that British and American intelligence agencies have played a direct role in the creation of a genre, that of espionage, in fiction. Bernard Bajolet, the former Director General of the French Ministry of External Security, perfectly understood the benefits that could be derived from fictional works in terms of images (particularly for recruitment purposes) and influence, by supporting the *Bureau des Légendes*. The current Director General, Bernard Émié, is continuing this trend, with the added bonus of very positive institutional communication, centered around the 2022 memorial year: the eightieth anniversary of the BCRA, and the fortieth anniversary of the DGSE, the BCRA-DGSE filiation allowing for further fictional developments.

Why did you choose to work on the Service Action in your eponymous trilogy, which was already shrouded in mystery, with ancestors such as Foccard, Aussaresses, Chaumien and Maloubier?

Curiously, very few novels or films have dealt with the work of the Service Action (SA), despite it being the most fantastical unit ever to serve the Republic. In terms of feature films, only Frédéric Schoendorffer has tackled the subject in *Agents Secrets* (2004). Perhaps the difficulty lies in the paucity of open information available on the SA. For my part, I feel indebted to the "Action", having worked for over twenty years for a sister entity of the Operations Directorate, long referred to within the DGSE as "the clandestine service" because it did not appear on the Box's organization chart. Most of my case officers came from the Service Action. Army officers, they were well

versed in clandestine operations. I have so much respect for their position, and for the empathy that accompanied their approach as case officers. And often, behind what I was able to bring into my "nets" in terms of intelligence gathering in crisis zones, I suspected that the work would be continued by "action"... So, for a long time, I toyed with the idea of recounting the daily life of the SA. In 2021, my editors at Robert Laffont, Sophie Charnavel and Françoise Delivet, gave the go-ahead for this new collection, whose aim is to publish two opuses a year, with a very exciting principle for a writer: embedding plots fully in current events. For example, in the second volume, *Sauvez Zelensky!* the Service Action is thrown into Kiev during the first hours of Russian aggression. In issue 3, *Louve Alpha*, the SA battles Wagner in the Sahel and the Central African Republic.

On reflection, only fiction can "tell the story" of the work of this unit, unique in the world of intelligence. The DGSE is the only major Western secret service to have an "action" unit (like Russia's FSB, or the GRU with its Spetsnaz detachments). The Military Intelligence Directorate, for its part, has a regiment specialized in intelligence gathering in theaters of operation, the 13th Parachute Dragoon Regiment, but which is not (in theory) dedicated to violent, so-called "hindering" actions. This specificity means that the DGSE appears to be an "integrated" service. Maintaining an action component within the company is one of the proudest achievements of the current Director General, Bernard Émié, who lays great claim to the heritage of clandestine action, that of the Central Intelligence and Action Bureau (BCRA) in London during the Second World War.

However, Service Action is not only involved in hindrance operations (known as *homos* for elimination, or *armas* for sabotage), but also provides support and protection for essential intelligence and exfiltration missions. It is deployed in case of extraction operations (Kabul, Khartoum) of our diplomatic personnel and expatriates... The unit's scope of action is vast, allowing a novelist to easily diversify themes and conjunctures.

Since the days of the BCRA and Jacques Foccart, and later of the SA teams within the SDCE, things have changed. "L'Action" under Alexandre de Marenches operated with genuine autonomy. Only successes were revealed to the hierarchy, but many "coups" remained hidden. It was a small team, with the creation of the "swimmers" group in Aspreto, who invented everything in a certain informality. Today's "swimmers" unit, the *Centre d'Entraînement aux Opérations Maritimes* (Maritime Operations Training Center) (CPEOM), now based at Quéln (Crozon peninsula), is fully committed to inheriting the spirit of this first generation of forerunners. From 1985 onwards, following the sabotage of the *Rainbow Warrior* (ordered against the advice of "l'Action"), the SA's operations became much more stringent, but without losing any of its original effectiveness.

Is intelligence as feminized as you seem to imply? Is it going so badly? Is this a by-product of the civilianization that has been underway since the late 1990s? Is it comparable to the inevitable decline, for external reasons, in the

share of military personnel?

It is undeniably more so in my novels, particularly for the SA commanded, in my series of books, by a senior female officer, Colonel Coralie Desnoyers, alias Athéna (her boutique pseudonym). On the Operations side, there's a marked shortfall, but that's to be expected since recruitment is primarily carried out within the specialized regiments of the Armed Forces. It's true that the decline in the proportion of military personnel is benefiting the feminization of the Service. On the strictly intelligence side, parity is more prevalent, with recruitment almost exclusively among civilians. I only note that the DGSE remains one of the few Western services never to have been headed by a woman. That will certainly change soon. I should add that men and women have long been treated equally within the Service, which integrated the notion of professional equality very early on. Of course, as is the case everywhere, some misogynistic behavior does occur, but this is often swallowed up by the work done by the female staff. Respect is what prevails above all else. Last but not least, a number of measures are now being proposed to integrate more women into the DGSE: encouraging maternity leave, creating a crèche...

You evoke Africa in several of your books, but in Radioactif and Une affaire atomique, you portray a cruel image of globalization and economic intelligence, which agitated the intelligence community at the same time as the release of your sixth novel. Is this continent, where France was powerful, really lost to the services? In what way is this affair representative of France's unpreparedness for this war of a different kind? Did you actually attend Steve Dattels and James Mellon's dinner party at the Jules Verne?

It's a cruel image, but unfortunately a fair one. As regards the influence of our intelligence services, we dropped our flag in the mid-2000s, redirecting personnel to counterterrorism, but also geographically to the Near and Middle East, Iran, and of course China. It's also part of the DGSE's role to constantly adapt to new threats and changing challenges. Having worked for a long time on the African continent, I could deplore this, but it's understandable that the Service is giving priority to "hot" zones and neglecting its traditional territories. Above all, I believe that the DGSE evolves in line with government foreign policy. We're very hesitant about our relationship with Africa. Interventionism or disengagement? It's a debate worth having. But to temper the notion of abandonment or dereliction on this issue, it's worth noting that never before has the DGSE been so involved in the Sahelian strip since 2013, accumulating unrivalled experience in the area.

Above all, the Areva-Uramin affair highlighted the steering problems of our major public companies. Intelligence services play a minor role in this type of case. They can play a role in *due diligence*, by reporting on the "environment", but are in no way involved in decision-making. Then, of course, they keep the government informed of developments and consequences. The Areva-Uramin case was a highly sensitive one since it

affected the entire French energy industry. Areva did not survive the crisis and was transformed into Orano.... Nuclear power is a key issue for France. We are a dual power: military, guaranteeing our place on the United Nations Security Council, and civil, with our 56 reactors providing us with energy independence. So, it's only natural that the French intelligence community, both DGSI and DGSE, should have paid particular attention to this issue, in which I personally played a part, somewhat in spite of myself. Yes, in a very strange way, in an exceptional coincidence, I did witness this dinner party, at *Le Jules Verne* restaurant, for Steve Dattels and James Mellon, the two main sellers of Uramin to Areva... A touch of African magic?

Yesterday's news

Laurence Rullan, An American star in the service of French counterespionage. Josephine Baker's funny war

When historian Mona Ozouf, in the middle of winter 2013, spoke of the forthcoming pantheonization planned by President François Hollande, she was astonished, believing that "it is no longer the political division of France that casts doubt on the pantheonizable, but the flat constraints of a prosaic age". However, agreeing with the philosopher Régis Debray, who "said the essential thing: the hero is an ordinary man, but one who accomplishes the extraordinary", she believes that:

"Resistance to the Nazi occupiers is the last great heroic story of French history, capable of reconciling, around the fighters of the shadows, and in common pride, French people so often inclined to denigrate their country."

His choice was "Brossolette-liberté, Tillion-égalité, Anthonioz-fraternité"¹, the trifecta chosen for the May 20th, 2015, ceremony. Régis Debray replied two days later, proposing Joséphine Baker, "an American naturalized in 1937, libertarian and Gaullist", whom "all those throughout the world who have two loves, their countries and Paris", should vote for².

The latest transfer of Alexandre Dumas to the French patrimony dates back to the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy and is less a question of competition for memorial status than of political choice. On the previous October 10th, a report by the *Centre des monuments nationaux* (Centre for National Monuments), drafted by its president Philippe Bélaïval, recommended that the elected representative should be a woman, preferably from the 20th century, who had distinguished herself through her "courage", "tenacity" and "republican commitment". He had been mandated by the Head of State, the previous May³.

The choice of a person to be enshrined in the Pantheon must therefore have a civic aura and a political temporality. Eight years later, as a result of some astute lobbying by Régis Debray, Joséphine Baker's name is as obvious as Mona Ozouf's third choice in 2013. She is a heroine, a unifying symbol, in a word, a model for society. But isn't she just as innovative an artist as she is a

¹ Mona Ozouf, "La Résistance au Panthéon!", *Le Monde*, December 13, 2013.

² Régis Debray, "Et si Joséphine Baker entrait au Panthéon?", *Ibid*, December 16, 2013.

³ Agence France Presse, October 10, 2013.

"heroine of the Resistance"⁴? What's more, this committed, black, foreign woman, who proclaimed her love of the country that welcomed her and her profound desire to serve it, is a perfect match for the France ravaged by Covid. Freda Joséphine Baker will thus enter the Panthéon on November 30th, 2021, a powerful gesture aimed at building the "reconciled France" that President Emmanuel Macron has been calling for since the start of his term⁵.

Yet nothing destined this woman born in Missouri in 1906, this showgirl, to become the heroine we're honoring on this cold November day in 2021. Apart from her shows, her eccentricity, and her big heart, we know very little about her. And certainly not about her actions during the war. This unpublished study presents this "honorable correspondent" who, from autumn 1939 to spring 1942, formed a duo with Captain Maurice Léonard Abtey, an intelligence officer. Between this dealer and his intelligence officer, a phony war was to be played out, while being swept up in the vicissitudes inherent in the conflict, notably between those who, in July 1940, chose to remain in unoccupied France, and the few who left for London.

Joséphine Baker, "honorable correspondent"

We don't know what made Joséphine Baker decide to go into the intelligence business. Perhaps her faith as a new Frenchwoman, naturalized by marriage on November 30th, 1937? Or perhaps "the prestige of the 2nd Bureau also played its part"⁶? In any case, with the declaration of war against Nazi Germany, she felt that:

"France made me what I am (...). I will be eternally grateful. You see, France is sweet, it's good to live there. I gave my heart to Paris, just as Paris gave me hers (...) I'm ready to give my life to my country today"⁷.

The request came from Joséphine Baker. She used the services of her manager Félix Marouani, in the Émile Audiffred agency⁸, whose brother Daniel was director of the Municipal Casino of Nice and honorable correspondent of the *Section d'études régionales de Marseille* (Regional Studies Section of Marseille). Joséphine Baker stayed here after returning from her South American tour, from early August to late September 1939⁹.

⁴ Jean-Baptiste Urbain, "osez Joséphine : une pétition pour panthéoniser Joséphine Baker", France musiques, May 7, 2021, <https://www.radiofrance.fr/francemusique/podcasts/au-fil-de-l-actu/osez-josephine-une-petition-pour-pantheoniser-josephine-baker-5971054> [accessed June 13, 2023].

⁵ Claire Gatinois, "L'entrée au Panthéon de Joséphine Baker, un symbole pour Emmanuel Macron", *Le Monde*, August 23, 2021.

⁶ Michel Garder, *La guerre secrète des services spéciaux français (1935-1945)*, Paris, Plon, 1967, p. 84.

⁷ Colonel Rémy, J.A. *Épisodes de la vie d'un agent du S.R. et du contre-espionnage français*, Paris, Galic, 1961, pp. 8-9.

⁸ Charley Marouani, *Une vie en coulisses*, Paris, Fayard, 2011, p. 26; Delphine Naudier, "La construction sociale d'un territoire professionnel : les agents artistiques", *Le Mouvement Social*, 243/2, 2013, p. 41-51.

⁹ Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris (APPP), Le Pré-Saint-Germain, 72.614, note August 2, 1939. *Le Figaro*, August 5, 1939.

As Joséphine had been living in Le Vésinet, in the plush villa Beauchêne, since May 1939, the file was forwarded to the *Bureau régional d'études de Paris* (Paris Office of Regional Studies) (BREP). Captain Maurice Léonard Abtey, known as Jacques, was given the task of interviewing the applicant. Initially, he requested an investigation from the *renseignements généraux of the Préfecture de police* in Paris (General Information of the Paris Prefecture), who issued their report on October 22, 1939¹⁰. The interest in this recruit is twofold: she seems willing to work for fame and not for money, and she has connections in the Parisian diplomatic world. But Abtey seems moderately enthusiastic about taking on a star in the shadow world; last time, during the previous war, the disappointment of Mata Hari, née Margaretha Zelle, had been enough for 5th Bureau, the cover name for the Intelligence Service (SR)¹¹. More likely, Abtey was thinking of Lydia Oswald, whose activities seemed to benefit the Germans¹². For the time being, he was dubious: "When he suggested I go and see Joséphine, I must admit I grimaced," he later recounted¹³.

A meeting was quickly scheduled, apparently at the end of November 1939, at the artist's home, at the instigation of Félix Marouani. Military as well as Alsatian, Abtey, 31, was athletic and blond enough for Joséphine Baker to find him to her liking: "Captain (...) dispose of me as you wish," she said. Abtey, who chose to present himself under the false identity of "Fox", decided to start training¹⁴. Six days later, he sends her his first test mission. As he had mentioned at the meeting in Le Vésinet, he expected the apprentice agent to put forward her connections with the "Italian Embassy". Joséphine Baker had replied that it was "just an attaché", the Marquis Giuliano Capranica Del Grillo, the only Italian diplomat to be in Paris from February 8th, 1939, to April 8th, 1940¹⁵. The main collaborator of Ambassador Raffaele Guariglia, he was an important source for Joséphine's principals. Six days later, on November 29th, 1939, after she had been to the Italian Embassy, Abtey informed her of her new mission: to join the *Infirmières pilotes secouristes de l'Air* (Air Rescue Nurse Pilots) (IPSA)¹⁶. She knew one of its founders, Baroness Lilia de Vendevre, and had held a pilot's license since June 7th, 1937¹⁷. In fact, as early as December 1st, she was easily named Honorary IPSA and "lavishes herself kindly in galas for the benefit of the Army"¹⁸. Is she "Head of the Airmen's

¹⁰ APPP, *op. cit.* note October 22, 1939.

¹¹ Jacques Abtey, *La Guerre Secrète de Joséphine Baker*, Siboney, 1948, p. 5; cf. Gérald Arboit, "Mata Hari, Un escroc au renseignement", in Christophe Vuilleumier (ed.), *Le renseignement dans les pays neutres*, Genève, Slatkine, 2018, pp. 87-105.

¹² Cf. Fabien Lostec, "Lydia Oswald, une espionne de grande envergure ou un "mince chaînon" de l'espionnage nazi?", *Revue de recherche sur le renseignement*, n° 1, 2023, pp. 127-151.

¹³ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 8-9 and Jacques Abtey, *op. cit.* p. 4-6.

¹⁵ Ministero degli Affari Esteri (s.d. Mario Toscano), *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, 8^a Serie: 15 aprile 1935-3 settembre 1939 et 9^a Serie: 4 settembre 1939-8 settembre 1943, vol. XII, XIII, I, II, III, IV, Roma, Libreria Dello Stato, 2006, *passim*.

¹⁶ Jacques Abtey, *op. cit.* p. 12.

¹⁷ APPP, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Germaine L'Herbier-Montagnon, *Jusqu'au sacrifice*, L'Isle-Adam, Éd. ECLAIR, 1960, p. 29.

Games Section", as she claims¹⁹, or is this IPSA mission a way of keeping BREP up to date with the refugees flocking to Paris?

A third mission was entrusted to him for completion after December 17th²⁰. It concerned the other relationship of interest to Abtey, although nowhere does he mention it²¹, Renzō Sawada, the new Japanese ambassador to France, whose wife Mikki was a very close friend of Joséphine's²².

"After the trial missions, which may seem easy but are fraught with pitfalls, confidence is gradually built up. After throwing the newcomer into the water to judge his reflexes, we patiently begin his training. There's no such thing as a spy school: the trade is learned in the field, by the direct method. In this business, big moves are rare, unnecessarily dangerous, and ultimately not very rewarding²³.

The first half of 1940 saw a dearth of missions that might have been carried out by Joséphine Baker. Given her notoriety, it is more likely that Abtey's agent kept in touch with the Italian Embassy, especially as Mussolini's claims to the Balkans and the Mediterranean at the end of April, followed by the uncertain alliance between Rome, Paris, and Berlin, led to tensions between the two governments. His relationship with the Sawadas was also strategic, particularly with regard to Indochina. And let's not forget that, since December 1st 1939²⁴, the artist has been performing the revue "Paris London" at the Casino de Paris, alongside Maurice Chevalier, and that her evenings are taken up with benevolent missions, both for IPSAs and radio stations. And when she's not in front of an audience, she shoots *Fausse alerte*, a film by Jacques de Baroncelli begun on February 14, 1940, for a month and a half²⁵. Finally, after May 10th, the flood of refugees from Belgium and Luxembourg occupied the honorary IPSA, assigned to Entr'aide Air and its mobile dispensary, where she volunteered.

Nevertheless, as she was registered as an "honorable correspondent" with BREP, as Abtey recalled that they saw each other twice a week, and as Abtey, after sheltering his wife and young son in Brittany, also asked her to leave Paris²⁶, it was clear that Joséphine had been employed for one or more intelligence missions. On June 7th, 1940, she decided to withdraw to Les Mirandes in the Dordogne, to the château she had been renting for over two years. Two trucks left Le Vésinet, loaded with the artist's belongings. The Sawadas followed between July 18th and August 25th. The ambassador,

¹⁹ Josephine Baker to Maurice Blech, April 9, 1940, *Drouot*, "Collection Claude Signolle", December 14-15, 2022, lot 226.

²⁰ *Le Temps*, December 18, 1939.

²¹ Service historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, Guerre (GR) 16 P 28445, memorandum from General Bouscat to Edmond Michelet, n.d. [July 8, 1946] and in the decree awarding the Légion d'honneur on December 9, 1957 (*Journal officiel*, December 14, 1957).

²² Miki Sawada, 黒い肌と白い心 [Black skin and white heart], Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1963 [ed. 2001], pp. 103-104.

²³ Michel Garder, *op. cit.*

²⁴ *Le Figaro*, December 2, 1939.

²⁵ Jacques de Baroncelli, *Écrits sur le cinéma, followed by : Mémoires*, Perpignan, Institut Jean Vigo, 1996, pp. 262-263, 293-294.

²⁶ SHD, GR 16 P 28445, *op. cit.*; Jacques Abtey, *op. cit.*, p. 18-21; Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

knowing that Joséphine is an "honorable correspondent" of the French services, hears about this *Unternehmen Felix*, i.e., a conquest of Gibraltar from Spanish territory, which his colleague in Berlin, Kurusu Saburō, had overheard in conversations on Wilhelmstrasse, while negotiating the Tripartite Pact.

This was a "big move", too big for Joséphine's staff, especially as Abtey was no longer an "*ancien de la Maison-mère*"²⁷ (a former member of the parent company), but had been returned to his original corps, the intendance. He was due to take up his post in Toulouse, but preferred to spend the summer in Les Milandes, his salary being covered by funds formerly allocated to the 5th Bureau, on which BREP depended. Unless, of course, he was waiting for the clandestine reconstitution of the Intelligence Service before resuming his clandestine activities. On hearing of Sawada's information, he broke the rules of compartmentalization to which he and his colleagues had committed themselves in their oaths of office on June 26th²⁸. He contacted Captain Bernard d'Hoffelize, head of the *Office de retour à la terre* (Office for a return to the land), a branch of the SR in Toulouse, renamed *Travaux ruraux* (rural work) (TR) 117. The latter referred him directly to Commandant Paul Paillole in Marseille²⁹. A second meeting took place in the first half of September, when the head of the TR network asked Abtey to liaise with the *Intelligence Service* in Lisbon. Joséphine Baker pretended to be preparing a tour of South America, and Abtey assumed the identity of her secretary.

The choice of this officer for this liaison is easily explained. Firstly, he knew the *Intelligence Service's* head of France, Wilfred (Biffy) Dunderdale, who had represented his service to the SR since at least 1937, i.e. at the same time as Abtey, integrated in July of that year. Secondly, he could well be this "Victor", so named after the command post of the head of the SR, Colonel Louis Rivet, from August 1939 to the defeat; arriving in Lisbon on November 24th, 1940, he recalls his previous stay, "four months earlier arriving from England"³⁰. Three months would be the right date, since on the previous September 5, a French emissary, "Victor", had met Biffy Dunderdale, informing him in particular about *Unternehmen Felix*, since it was offering SR support for sabotage in Spain³¹. Finally, in February 1941, the same "Victor" tried to organize a meeting in Tangiers between a representative of the SR metropolitan and a member of the local *Intelligence Service* station, this type of liaison being Abtey's mission³².

Although simple in execution, but not without risks, such an operation takes time to set up, in peacetime as in war. The first step was to forge false identity papers for Abtey, who took the name Jean-François Hébert, born six

²⁷ Michel Garder, *op. cit.* p. 251.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 218-229; Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 30-32.

²⁹ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 48.

³¹ Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The history of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949*, London, Bloomsbury, 2010, pp. 393-394. Louis Rivet (Olivier Forcade, Sébastien Laurent, eds.), *Carnets du chef des services secrets 1936-1944*, Paris, Nouveau Monde, 2010, p. 414, says nothing about this, devoting a brief paragraph to the period from August 31 to September 9, 1940.

³² The National Archives, London, HW 14/12, "Victor" to Denniston, February 11 and 20, 1941.

years before the former officer from Alsace, on September 16th, 1899, in Toulouse; French legislation at the time prohibited French citizens under the age of fifty from leaving the country. In addition to the time needed to prepare identity documents, there were also delays in obtaining Portuguese visas. Consul José Augusto Magalhães reminded them that it takes three weeks³³. Indeed, since a 1938 circular, authorization to issue this precious sesame must be issued by the *Polícia de Vigilância e Defeza do Estado* (PVDE, State Vigilance and Defense Police), most certainly by agent Jose Correia de Almeida, from the Director's office, member of the counter-espionage section and informer for the German legation³⁴. These events took place around September 15, 1940.

In mid-September, Abtey returned to Les Mirandes, where Joséphine told him that by contacting the Brazilian ambassador, Luiz Martins de Souza Dantas³⁵, whom she "knew very well", she could have had them in twenty-four hours. However, the artist and her secretary left on November 21st, via Toulouse, Pau, Canfranc (where Joséphine Baker's presence had French and Spanish customs officers and policemen in a panic), Madrid and Sintra. After three days of travel, the two went their separate ways, Joséphine staying in a luxury hotel at her own expense, the Aviz, while Abtey (Hébert) chose one more within the means granted to him by Paillole, the Avenida Palace, where he had stayed on his previous visit. A British contact, Harry J.³⁶, put him in touch with Wing Commander Paul Chamberlayn, the Air Attaché, who directed him to the Financial Attaché, Richmond Stopford. The latter introduced himself to Abtey (Hébert) under the name of Bacon; originally from the *Security Service*, he acted as station chief for the *Intelligence Service*, due to the indolence of its incumbent, Commander of the Royal Navy Austin Walsh³⁷.

The meeting takes place on November 28th. Abtey (Hébert) did not come empty-handed. On Joséphine's scores, he reprinted Paillole's report in sympathetic ink: main German divisions stationed in Western France, designation of manpower and equipment; complete summary of auxiliary airfields, indication of type and number of aircraft spotted; details of parachute formations; names of German agents designated to go to England (Irish Republican Army, Abwehr and Welsh autonomists), notably from Yugoslavia; photos of barges planned for a landing on the English coast³⁸. The absence of

³³ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 45.

³⁴ Douglas L. Wheeler, "In the Service of Order: The Portuguese Political Police and the British, German and Spanish Intelligence, 1932-1945", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 18, 1983, pp. 11-12. Cf. Mary Jane Gold, *Crossroads Marseilles. 1940*, New York 1980

³⁵ Cf. Fábio Koifman, *Quixote nas trevas: o embaixador Souza Dantas e os refugiados do nazismo* [Quixote in the darkness: Ambassador Souza Dantas and the Nazi refugees], Sao Paulo, Record, 2002.

³⁶ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 49.

³⁷ SHD, GR 28 P^o 14280, Abtey, July 24, 1943; Nigel West, *MI6 British Secret Intelligence Service Operations 1909-45*, Glasgow, Collins, 1985, pp. 150, 229.

³⁸ Paul Paillole, *Services Spéciaux (1935-1945)*, Paris, Laffont, 1975, pp. 251-252.

the Sawada data once again supports Abtey's "Victor" mission of September 5th.

Four days later, on December 2nd, Stopford (Bacon) confirmed London's interest in a liaison mission, the details of which were communicated to her on December 20th. Meanwhile, having organized a singing tour of Portugal and Spain in the spring of 1941, Joséphine returned to Marseilles to report to Paillole on the success of the mission, the extension of Abtey's (Hébert) stay in Lisbon and the scheduling of a new trip from April 19th, 1941, to May 21st. Paillole urged him to stage Offenbach's *La Créole* at the Opéra Municipal; in Abtey's (Hébert's) absence, he made available as impresario a naval officer on armistice leave, Emmanuel Bayonne, who had acted as liaison with the SR before the war. The premiere took place on the evening of December 24th³⁹, just as Abtey (Hébert) was returning from Portugal. Paillole was informed of the *Intelligence Service's* wish to set up a link from Casablanca.

Immediately, Bayonne was sent to Les Mirandes, to prepare the stewardship of Joséphine Baker's property⁴⁰, while Abtey (Hébert) arranged to have Joséphine's contract with the Opéra municipal lifted; the "irrevocably last performance" took place on January 7th, 1941⁴¹. Joséphine claimed she was suffering from a lung congestion, which caused her to flee the cold of Marsellais⁴². A week later, Paillole announced that Joséphine Baker, her secretary Abtey (Hébert) and her impresario Bayonne were to travel with *Governor General Gueydon*, who left on January 16.

Joséphine Baker, intelligence agent?

The next day, the small crew disembarked in Algiers, where Joséphine intended to make a short stay before heading for Casablanca⁴³. This delay seems to be a ploy to ward off suspicion in the event of a leak about the operation in progress. Arriving at the Hotel Aletti, the city's most symbolic and historic establishment, a policeman is waiting for Joséphine: the Marseilles Municipal Opera has sued her for breach of contract⁴⁴. Abtey (Hébert) telephones Paillole, who takes charge of settling the matter, and delegates the case to Bayonne. Then he leaves for Casablanca, to set up the connection down to the last detail:

- A contact with the director of the *Compagnie chérifienne d'armement* (Cherifian Armaments Company), Louis Lantz, a French reserve captain whom Stopford (Bacon) had asked him to contact. The *Intelligence Service* was to acquire a phosphate sailing ship and was still looking for it before the previous

³⁹ *Le Petit Marseillais*, December 24, 1940.

⁴⁰ Pouvoirs between Joséphine Baker and Robert Delord, January 10, 1941, Ader Nordmann, "Lettres & manuscrits, autographes", November 26, 2015, lot 48.

⁴¹ *Le Petit Marseillais*.

⁴² Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 64.

⁴³ *L'Echo d'Alger*, January 19, 1941.

⁴⁴ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 65.

Christmas.

- To obtain visas for Joséphine and himself from António Adérito Carmona, the Portuguese Consul General in Casablanca. He didn't forget that the application had to be sent to Lisbon, and that the return of the PVDE was notoriously long. Joséphine had signed up for singing tours from March 19th to April 21st, 1941.

While waiting for the resolution of her Marseilles affair in Algiers, which takes a week in Paillolle, Joséphine is caught up in her Drôle de Guerre (Strange War) involvement with the IPSA. On February 1st, she performed at the *Gala de l'aviation d'Algérie* (Algerian Aviation Gala) as a "sensational attraction (...) just passing through". Then, the "astonishing Joséphine Baker"⁴⁵ took the first train to Casablanca. There, she learned that her Portuguese visa had arrived, but that Abtey's (Hébert) had been refused. The latter's approaches to Lantz, who mobilized his contact in Lisbon, who was also Stopford's (Bacon) contact, Albert Oulman, of the Louis-Dreyfus shipping company. His approach had the opposite effect of confirming the PVDE's suspicion that Abtey (Hébert) was indeed an *Intelligence Service* agent⁴⁶. Henceforth, the doors to Portugal were closed to her, and Joséphine's relations were also powerless, such as the Swiss ambassador Henri Martin, whom she unsuccessfully lobbied in Lisbon⁴⁷.

On March 13th, Joséphine took the train to Tangier alone. Paillolle's intelligence summary was transcribed onto a score in sympathetic ink. To await the departure of her plane for Lisbon, she is taken in charge by a British protégé, Si Abderrahman Menebhi, and thus witnesses the end of Mendoub's mandate by the Spanish authorities. They take refuge in Rabat, as the diplomat Herbert Conrad Nöhring moves into the building to set up the *Reich* consulate (March 16th and 17th, 1941). At a dinner party, she also approached Spanish staff officers. Notes on the events of her stay in Tangier are attached to Paillolle's summary and forwarded to Albert Oulman, who is asked to pass them on to Royal Navy Commander Philipp Jones, who has just replaced Stopford (Bacon)⁴⁸.

Of course, neither Joséphine nor Abtey were informed of this change. All that happened was that Lieutenant Pierre Beckhardt, sent by Paillolle, informed him of the end of the liaison with the British. The reason for this had less to do with the dismissal of Abtey's Lisbon contact, or with Abtey's inability to obtain a Portuguese visa, than with the SR metropolitan. The latter now has a secure radio link⁴⁹. In other words, the phosphate sailboat link from Tangier to Gibraltar had lost all interest for both the French and the British.

Joséphine's stay in Portugal was otherwise punctuated by performances at the Teatros da Trindade and Variedades in Lisbon, then Sá da

⁴⁵ *L'Echo d'Alger*, January 30, February 1 and 2, 1941.

⁴⁶ SHD, GR 16 P 2170, Abtey, exposé succinct des états de service du commandant Abtey..., March 5, 1954.

⁴⁷ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 68.

⁴⁸ Nigel West, *op. cit.* p. 299.

⁴⁹ Gérald Arboit, *Des services secrets pour la France. Du Dépôt de la Guerre à la DGSE (1856-2013)*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2014, p. 220-221.

Bandeira in Porto, between March 19th and April 21st⁵⁰. On her return, she learned of the end of Abtey's affair and his placement on armistice leave as of February 15th, 1941⁵¹. In other words, he rejoined TR 120, commanded by Captain Albert Bréteil, but no longer retained his full salary for three months⁵², the time it took for the top-up in secret funds to be implemented. For the time being, Abtey took leave with Joséphine in Marrakech⁵³. Joséphine then intends to return to the stage, this time in Spain. No longer in charge of liaison with the *Intelligence Service*, Abtey remained in Morocco. But another stopover in Tangiers, followed by a tour of the Teatros de la Zarzuela in Madrid, the Casa Mariana in Valencia, and the Principal Palacio in Barcelona, from May 1st to May 21st. On her return, she brought back a wealth of information on her journey and the personalities she had met; this time, "the notes were hung inside her dress by a large safety pin"⁵⁴.

Joséphine's return soon marked the onset of her illness, which kept her bedridden until December 1st, 1942, when she took up residence at the Clinique Comte in Casablanca. Abtey also took up residence there. The presence of the artist and her knight in shining armor did not go unnoticed. In particular, the American vice-consul David W. King, who had been in Casablanca since April 1941⁵⁵. An indiscretion from the head of the *Intelligence Service* post in Gibraltar, Lieutenant-Colonel John Codrington, to Colonel Robert Solborg, of the American *Office of Strategic Service* (OSS), had been communicated to him: Joséphine Baker was the cover for Jacques Hébert, of the French SR. The singer's entry into the hospital and her American origins offered an opportunity to make contact with the "French S.R./C.E., which had gone underground when the Second Office was officially abolished by the terms of the German armistice"⁵⁶. Abtey (Pump) once again became the "liaison man" who, in the space of fourteen months, enabled the OSS to build up a network across the French security services in Morocco. He began by reporting to Breitel (Patron), "head of the department but not head of the group". Abtey (Pump) was approached by Commandant Michel Despax (Pinkeye), King's "trusted leader"⁵⁷, who shares his legionnaire background. King was represented first by his colleague Franklin Olmsted Canfield until August 1941, then by Sidney L. Bartlett until July 1942, and finally by W. Stafford Reid. For greater discretion, meetings between Abtey (Pump) and his

⁵⁰ Cf. João Moreira dos Santos, *Josephine Baker em Portugal. Cronica da artista, agente secreta, mãe universal e activista dos direitos cívicos (1933-1960)*, Cascais, Casa Sassetti, 2010, p. 45-64.

⁵¹ SHD, GR 16 P 2170, extrait des États signalétique et des services, n.d [July 1959].

⁵² *Journal officiel. Lois et décrets*, August 25, 1940, p. 4812; État français, Ministère de la Guerre, *Bulletin officiel. Édition chronologique*, Paris, 1940, pp. 1100, 1112, 1241.

⁵³ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 70.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 72.

⁵⁵ Leon Borden Blair, "Amateurs in Diplomacy: The American Vice Consuls in North Africa 1941-1943", *The Historian*, 35(4), 1973, pp. 607-620.

⁵⁶ CIA-RDP13X00001R000100440008-8, David W. King to Donovan, January 26, 1943.

⁵⁷ CIA-RDP13X00001R000100330006-2, [David W. King], "part III", n.d. [before August 3, 1942].

American contacts were held in Josephine Baker's bedroom⁵⁸. Canfield agreed to the French officer's request to be put in touch with Dunderdale, which was carried out at the end of June 1941. He also agreed to let Paillole in on the secret. This did not prevent him from joining the Casablanca underground command in October 1942, as head of the 2nd Bureau, under the orders of Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Lorillard, sponsored by TR 120⁵⁹.

This operation, in the months leading up to the Torch Plan, i.e., the Allied landings in North Africa, was the last in which the singer took part. The fighting in Morocco lasted until November 11th, and Joséphine was not discharged from hospital until December 1st, before convalescing in the Menebhi palace. She had to overcome another attack of typhoid before she was able to return to the stage in Casablanca in February 1943, on behalf of American troops.

Abtey remains in charge of liaison with the Allies. He continues to be involved in counter-espionage activities (collecting and analyzing documents seized from the German consulate and armistice commission in Casablanca, then monitoring enlistments in the Corps franc d'Afrique⁶⁰). In mid-January 1943, he met up again with his boss, Commandant Paillole, in Rabat, just over eight months after their last meeting in Marseille the previous May. He rejected Paillole's offer to join the *Sécurité Militaire* (Military Security), preferring to join the 'Perchoirs' (those who perch), as the *Armée d'Afrique* (African Army) called the Gaullists because of their Cross of Lorraine⁶¹. His choice was not the most certain, as confirmed by an April 11th intelligence report on counterespionage from the Algerian authorities prior to the merger of services decided by de Gaulle⁶². Abtey's real change came at the end of July 1943, when he joined the *Bureau central de renseignements et d'action* (Central Intelligence and Action Bureau) (BCRA), making a definitive break with his previous life. This change was made possible by his meeting with Squadron Leader Amédée Brousset, head of the Second Bureau of the 1st Free French Division. Her meeting with this officer was also decisive for Joséphine: it enabled her to go on an entertainment mission with French troops in Tunisia, to be received by de Gaulle on August 13th, and then to embark on a three-month tour of the Middle East on behalf of the Free French. Si Menebhi accompanied him as lieutenant-interpreter, and Abtey provided security.

Back in Algiers at the end of November, the BCRA officer let the singer go back to Marrakech. He joined her surreptitiously, at the request of Paillole, head of military security at the Directorate General of Special Services (DGSS), following the merger of French intelligence services in North Africa and London. He returned to Morocco only twice, at the end of December 1943, less for the festive season than to monitor nationalism, and

⁵⁸ Jacques Abtey, *op. cit.* p. 123-126; Colonel Rivet, *op. cit.* p. . Paul Paillole, *op. cit.* p. 252; Gilbert Guillaume, *Mes missions face à l'Abwehr*, 2, Paris, Plon, 1971, p. 90.

⁵⁹ SHD, GR 28 P⁹ 14280, Abtey, July 24, 1943. Marie Gatard, Fabienne Mercier-Bernadet, *Combats de femmes, d'une guerre à l'autre*, Paris, Esprit des livres, 2009, p. 134.

⁶⁰ SHD, GR 16 P 13224.

⁶¹ Michel Garder, *op. cit.* p. 417n1.

⁶² SHD, *op. cit.*

then in January 1944, after the events that followed the delivery of a nationalist manifesto to the sovereign. The precursory effects that led Josephine and Abtey's mission to the Near East to end their stay in Alexandria on November 10th, 1943, were repeated in this French protectorate. Thanks to Joséphine, Abtey was in contact with leading Moroccan leaders, including Moulay Larbi al Alaoui, the "occult leader of the nationalist movement"⁶³, whom he had put in touch with the OSS a year earlier. Moulay Larbi accompanied him into the nationalist movement for a fortnight. The result was a report that Brousset, now head of intelligence for the external services of the DGSS's Technical Directorate (Rivet), sent directly to General de Gaulle⁶⁴. On this occasion, Joséphine Baker carried out a final intelligence mission, this time on an unofficial basis. In Tangier, she met a British agent, the Norman Countess Madeleine de Montgomery. Joséphine was able to obtain from the latter a copy of a letter sent to her by René Massigli, while Abtey discovered the meeting between the French minister and the British spy in Marrakech on January 13th. Not only was the nationalist uprising the work of the British allies, but French complicity was also proven.

This report earned Abtey and Brousset deaf opposition from Jacques Soustelle, Director General of the DGSS. As for Joséphine, she was invited to join the women's units of the Armée de l'Air, signing up for the duration of the war plus three months on May 23rd, 1944⁶⁵. Abtey tried to support her in this initiative as best he could, going so far as to ask General Louis Rivet, their former leader, for his help. Indeed, after an epic ditching in Corsica on June 6th, 1944, Josephine was "suffering" in Oran three and a half months later. In one of his last acts of authority, Rivet allowed her to reach Paris on October 1st⁶⁶. As for Abtey, his fate was in the hands of the director of the DGSS: he first sent him to a sedentary post at Aïn Sefra, in the Oran district, until the Provence landings, and then allowed him to move to Marseille to guard the Mediterranean border⁶⁷.

Joséphine Baker and Maurice Abtey, victims of the post-1945 intelligence battle?

Josephine and Abtey's return to Paris marks the end of a phase in their lives marked by the war. The war had led the former to join a world that, while not really alien to her artistic state, should neither have attracted nor employed her. It was her connections with the Italian embassy, for family reasons - her relationship with Giuseppe (Pepito) Abatino enabled her to attend a speech by the *Duce* that had an effect - if not ideological⁶⁸, that enabled her to become an

⁶³ Archives nationales, Paris, AG/3(1)/284/2, Abtey, "Aspect du Maroc en mai 1944", sd.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, Cf. Brousset, notes dated March 8 and April 8, 1944.

⁶⁵ SHD, GR 16 P 28445.

⁶⁶ Louis Rivet, *op. cit.* p. 727 (September 25, 1944).

⁶⁷ SHD, GR 16 P 2170, Abtey, exposé succinct des états de service du commandant Abtey..., March 5 1954; Jacques Abtey, Fritz Unterberg-Gibhardt, 2^e *Bureau contre Abwehr*, Paris, La Table Ronde, 1967, p. 127.

⁶⁸ Michel Georges-Michel, "Un message de Joséphine Baker à ses frères de couleurs", *Le*

"honorable correspondent". In Lisbon, on December 2nd, 1940, while covering for Abtey on a liaison mission, she charmed the Spanish ambassador, Nicolás Franco Bahamonde, for a transit visa⁶⁹. The following May, this relationship enabled her to organize a singing tour of Spain, and carry out her second real intelligence mission, after the one to Tangiers. Ironically, it took place just as his liaison with the *Intelligence Service* was coming to an end.

The war in North Africa only put Abtey in a position to provide intelligence to the Allies, but always in relation to Paillole. As soon as he met Stopford (Bacon), he asked that his action be credited to Free France. But in August 1943, "Captain Abtey's name was unknown (...) until that moment" to Gaullist counterespionage. Of course, the *Intelligence Service* confirmed Abtey's version of the previous July 24th. However, the British service admitted that it had received nothing from the French officer since his liaison with Canfield, in the spring of 1941⁷⁰. The rest of his immediate career depended on this suspicion of his loyalty to Free France. This suspicion began as soon as Free French structures arrived in Morocco. A report in January 1943 pointed to Joséphine and Abtey's friendships with notables in Tangiers and Casablanca, on the pretext that one or other was suspected of "Germanophile sentiments", specified by a handwritten addition⁷¹. Three months later, a new report pointed to Abtey's business dealings. He was accused of transporting Jews to England "in return for large sums of money"⁷². In both cases, the reports landed on Paillole's desk, the second emanating directly from Algiers. In each case, Josephine's probity and usefulness are praised, both for the distrust in which "the American services" hold her, and for "the circles of the great Moroccan chiefs, where she is better introduced than ever". Each time, Abtey is discredited for having defected to the Gaullists.

This accusation of prevarication, especially in the case of refugees seeking to leave Vichy legislation for a better future, doesn't hold water for a second. In fact, Abtey and Joséphine each had the best networks for issuing passports to freedom. The presence of Elie Cohen and Moulay Larbi al Alaoui, on the same Vichy counterespionage report, helps reveal the only clandestine operation that the archives do not support, except for specific research. Especially if we take into account the handwritten reference linking the two men in connection with "the rental of a villa" to a man called "Sublet"⁷³, who was none other than Jean Sublet, a Tangier architect involved in humanitarian operations, even before he became a correspondent for the International Committee of the Red Cross the following October⁷⁴. Add to this the fact that Cohen was a former member of the Tangier administration and an activist with

Journal, 1^{er} October 1935.

⁶⁹ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 50.

⁷⁰ SHD, GR 28 P⁹ 14280, Thierry-Mieg (Vandreuil) to Pélabon, August 24, 1943; Westmacott to Passy, August 17, 1943.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, GR 28 P⁹ 390, De Couedic, January 11, 1943.

⁷² *Ibid.* and GR 28 P⁹ 14280, April 17, 1943.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, GR 28 P⁹ 390, De Couedic, January 11, 1943.

⁷⁴ François Bugnion, "ICRC Action during the Second World War", *International Review of the Red Cross*, 37/317, April 1997, pp. 167-168.

the Zionist Federation, that Moulay Larbi had the ear of the sovereign, and that Josephine, whose generosity was well known⁷⁵, would encourage the "rush of Jewish journalists" to Jerusalem⁷⁶, and we see the beginnings of a relief organization for Jewish refugees. But funding was lacking, and this is where the accusation of "currency trafficking" takes on its full meaning. Fake passports, for which Tangier has become a specialist, must be paid for. You have to pay for visas, which Joséphine seems to negotiate skillfully, particularly at the Spanish consulate. This practice has always been a popular way for intelligence services to create the funds they need for operations that can't be accounted for and require both rapid and constant use. And in 1943, over three thousand refugees were looking for a safe haven before leaving.

In addition to this contempt for Paillole and the *Sécurité Militaire*, Abtey had a stormy relationship with André Pélabon. He had known him in Casablanca as a senior marine engineer and a Dempaix (Pinckeye) recruit under the name Penguin; as head of intelligence, Abtey was perhaps no stranger to his departure from Casablanca in August 1942. The following March, he returned to Algiers as head of the local BCRA branch, where Pélabon alienated many people. However, Pélabon returned in November and took part in the merger of the Vichy and London intelligence services⁷⁷. Pélabon began by opposing Baker's ventures in the Middle East, obtaining Abtey's dismissal from the service in November 1943⁷⁸. He then called for the head of the officer, still stationed in Morocco on behalf of non-Gaullist services, following his report implicating Massigli⁷⁹. Each time, Abtey was protected, but it was in the intendance, his original arm, that he returned to Ain Sefra, before being recalled by General Gaston Schmitt, then commander of the Marseille subdivision, to take charge of the border service of the 15th military region⁸⁰. He did not stay there long, however, as in December 1944 he returned to Paris, where he was reunited with Joséphine. On September 10th, 1945, he was sent back to Morocco, officially to liaise with the American armies, but unofficially to resume contact with his network within the nationalist movement. He was sent by the Ministry of War, then by Henri Ribière, Director General of the *Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage* (External documentation and counter-espionage service) (SDECE), although he was not a member of it⁸¹. On his return to France on January 21st, 1948, he joined the *Service de sécurité aux forces armées* (Armed forces security service)...

Joséphine was officially demobilized on September 1st, 1945. In fact, she had already left the Air Force in mid-July, on statutory leave⁸². Her service

⁷⁵ APPP, *op. cit.* note October 22, 1939.

⁷⁶ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* p. 271.

⁷⁷ Gérald Arboit, *op. cit.* p. 211-218.

⁷⁸ Colonel Rémy, *op. cit.* pp. 255-256, 277, 286.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 298.

⁸⁰ SHD, GR 16 P 2170, Abtey, exposé succinct des états de service du commandant Abtey..., March 5, 1954; GR 28 P⁹ 14280, Abtey, July 2, 1948.

⁸¹ GR 28 P⁹ 14280, tlg Richard to Verneuil, January 29, 1948

⁸² SHD, AI 1 P 6679 1, Gouet, August 10, 1945.

earned her, with no other explanation than the support of General René Bouscat, the short-lived former Chief of General Staff (1943-1944, 1946) who detected her in Algiers in the spring of 1943, the Resistance medal. She was thinking of being awarded the Légion d'honneur⁸³, but the military commission was not convinced by her lack of convincing action in the Air Force. Above all, Paillole's lack of conviction "in all sincerity" to mention Joséphine's actions in intelligence, both for reasons of confidentiality and because of the same acrimony as towards Abtey, blocked her path to the red ribbon⁸⁴. All they have to do is publicize their situation. Basically, Joséphine remains an artist, and succeeds in getting the counterespionage officer to abandon his deep attachment to discretion. However, the staging of the affair will not help their situation.

During her farewell tour of Morocco and North Africa in the summer of 1946, Joséphine told her Moroccan audience:

"I cannot reveal the name of the author who is currently writing a book for me about my secret missions and my role in the resistance⁸⁵."

It's Abtey, of course, whom she sees during her stay in Marrakech. He writes her a heroic book, but not only that; he also tries to make clear his service to fighting France, which he never calls Free France. But his assaults on Gaullism sound as bad as they did in 1943, when Paillole's military security found that he "seemed to regret his admission to de Gaulle"⁸⁶. Joséphine may not have liked the tone of the book either, as she said on March 14th, 1948, to *L'Aurore*, the daily that also claimed to be *L'organe de la résistance républicaine* (the organ of the republican resistance). She was certainly "without rancor" but feared "being 'double-crossed'"⁸⁷. Is this why, a year later, she adds a chapter to her memoirs⁸⁸? Certainly not. On April 17th, she joined Abtey to sign *Joséphine Baker's La Guerre Secrète* at the Club des Champs-Élysées in Paris, where she was "responsible (...) for the artistic direction"⁸⁹. But her rant in *L'Aurore* joins Joséphine's military file⁹⁰. However, we can't find an interview with the artist showing that everything was arranged between the two former "comrades-in-arms". Despite its intentional errors, this first book establishes a Joséphine Baker legend, which even feeds into the notes of the *Renseignements généraux of the Préfecture de police de Paris*⁹¹. The latter continued to follow her until February 1957, in connection with two applications for promotion to the Legion of Honor, which she finally received on December 9th, 1957⁹².

Unable to obtain reparation for the development of his military career,

⁸³ *Le Petit Marocain*, July 4, 1946.

⁸⁴ SHD, *op. cit.*, Paillole, sdnl [1946].

⁸⁵ *Le Petit Marocain*, July 4, 1946.

⁸⁶ SHD, GR 28 P⁹ 390 and GR 28 P⁹ 14280, April 17, 1943.

⁸⁷ *L'Aurore*, March 13, 1948.

⁸⁸ Marcel Sauvage, *Les mémoires de Joséphine Baker*, Paris, Corrêa, 1949.

⁸⁹ APPP, *op. cit.* note March 14, 1949.

⁹⁰ SHD, GR 28 P⁹ 390.

⁹¹ APPP, notes March 14, 1949, February 1954 and February 1957.

⁹² SHD, GR 16 P 28445; *Journal officiel*, December 14, 1957.

particularly in the direction of Jacques Soustelle, former director of the DGSS, Abtey tries one last time to take advantage of the notoriety of his former agent, by asking the repentant Gaullist author Gilbert Renault, better known as Colonel Rémy, to revise *Josephine Baker's Secret War* in a more mainstream sense. Abtey settles accounts with "a certain person", a "Q" that fits him like a glove⁹³, referring to André Pélabon, former head of the BCRA's Algerian branch, then short-lived Director General of National Security from November 1944 to September 1946, before joining the prefecture and finally the private sector in 1956. This testimony, in the form of an interview in which it is unclear whether the countless demonstrations of adherence to Gaullism are by Abtey or Rémy, can only please the former "honorable correspondent". She thus has the complete editorial file of the book⁹⁴. Although both men were pariahs of Gaullism in 1961, Joséphine and Abtey never hid anything from each other. Abtey never failed to defend her, even going so far as to make the trip to New York, as he had done ten years earlier⁹⁵. These United States of America are at the heart of their problems in gaining recognition for their resistance activities, i.e., their intelligence work from 1940 to 1941 for Joséphine, and 1945 for Abtey. This ostracism is common for resistance fighters who served in the Allied intelligence services, both British and American. Abtey only paid a higher price by combining his service for Paillole with his clandestine activity in Morocco on behalf of "a person from the metropole"⁹⁶, on the bangs of the SDECE...

⁹³ Colonel Rémy, *J. A., op. cit.* p. 255.

⁹⁴ Gilbert Renault (Rémy) to Abtey, September 29, 1961 and file (correspondence with the publisher, publicity, contract...), *Ader Nordmann, op. cit.* lots 68 and 72.

⁹⁵ Josephine Baker to Jacques and Jacqueline Abtey, November 21 and 26, 1951, December 16, 1951 and January 23, 1952, *Ibid.* lot 60. *Combat*, December 24, 1951.

⁹⁶ SHD, GR 28 P⁹ 14280, C8 (Rabat) to Verneuil, December 27, 1948.

Reports

David Omand, *How Spies Think: Ten Lessons in Intelligence*, London, Viking, 2020, 344 p.

Former Director General of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), Sir David Omand is Visiting Professor of War Studies at King's College London and ESDR3C Research Associate. He is also the author of *How Spies Think: Ten Lessons in Intelligence*, a primer for those seeking the truth in an age when information can be doubted and fake news is commonplace, opening the door to the advent of a false reality. The book is built around four sessions from the analyst's point of view: "ordering our thoughts", "checking our reasons", "using intelligence intelligently" and a "final optimist's lesson". Each part consists of three progressive lessons, with the exception of the first, which has three, and the last, just one.

The first part presents the techniques used by intelligence analysts to reduce the "ignorance of decision-makers" - in this case, the reader who wishes to develop a critical mind to discover what's going on in his or her environment and beyond. To maintain this understanding of current affairs, you need to be able to evaluate the information, identify hidden messages and recognize your own biases. Drawing on the reality of his life close to the highest levels of British government, David Omand reminds us that the challenge is always to "tell it like it is".

For this purpose, there are analytical techniques shared by intelligence professionals, which the author intends to make available to ordinary people concerned with evaluating the information they encounter in their daily lives, in order to thwart the conspiracy theories that surround them, elaborated by various groups anxious to achieve a myriad of sometimes contradictory objectives. He proposes a basic process based on a simple model of analytical thinking, known as SEES:

- ✓ Situation: being aware of what's going on.
- ✓ Explanation: why things happen.
- ✓ Estimates: how events may unfold.
- ✓ Strategic: impact of events.

This method is a novel reconfiguration of conventional analytical technique. By following these analytical steps, the reader can arrive at realistic assessments of the various theories confronting society, enabling objective and statistical determinations of narratives. However, it is important to be aware of cognitive biases, the real obstacle to any assessment of intelligence. All the more so as these convictions are not, contrary to common belief, universally shared by everyone. It is therefore necessary to immerse oneself in the history, culture, and beliefs of an adversary in order to understand him. But these observations are not impartial. Confirmation bias leads decision-makers to choose the explanation that best fits their preconceptions and prejudices.

The second part of the book explores this experience, which influences every individual's interpretation of their environment. Omand points out that there are many different versions of this challenge: mirror-image, judgmental transference and groupthink are all examples. He explains that knowledge of these cognitive biases is the first step in reducing their influence. When the author was an intelligence analyst, the dilemma was explained as follows: only by putting yourself in the head of an adversary could you see the world from his point of view and make decisions like him. It is imperative to explain events accurately. Omand emphasizes that facts are not neutral. Their context is a factor of interpretation.

The author shows very well the process of determining the level of risk (ranging from "very improbable" to "almost certain") but does not sufficiently address the eternal question of whether the level of risk differs

subjectively from one person to another. In fact, it's very difficult to assign a degree of certainty to things that are intrinsically uncertain, since the importance attached to the probability of an event reflects a personal bias that differs from person to person. This problem is less acute when it comes to making judgements at the extremes of probability. What is more problematic is the narrow range of belief in the occurrence or non-occurrence of a detected event. All intelligence analysts are faced with this dilemma. It becomes more acute when it comes to determining strategic versus tactical surprises. They open the door to the existence of deceptions thrown in our path by adversaries. Today, "fake news" is gaining in credibility in certain circles as it is repeated. In the world of intelligence, deception is used by all sides to spectacular effect, in war and peace.

The third part tests the tools and methodology presented in the first part. Conspiracy theories have always existed, but today they seem to outweigh common sense. Conspiracy theories are based on a series of supposedly correct data, providing easy and often satisfying answers to complex questions. No conspiracy theory has ever been proven true. Most are based on a deep-seated belief in an alternative reality. This type of falsehood is spreading through social media on the occasion of the Brexit referendum and the presidential elections in the USA and France in particular, as well as deliberate attempts to increase divisions in democratic societies. Omand points out that this kind of destabilization also exists in the intelligence field. He refers to the near-destruction of the CIA, and by extension Western intelligence services, by the obsessive hunt for the mole launched by James Angleton, its head of counterespionage. No mole was immediately found, until a real mole, Aldrich Ames, was identified years later. Conspiracies are hard to dismantle, but Omand provides some tools. His SEES analytical model is a way for ordinary people to make sense of the world. It avoids the inductive fallacy of going straight from fact to prediction, without a solid explanation of what's really going on beneath the surface - a trap for the unwary. In other words, in all critical decision-making, satisfying and understanding the

emotional needs related to the decision itself and its outcomes must be linked to understanding the rational constraints of decision-making. The recent legal challenges to the 2020 US elections are a good example of this. Omand suggests that a dangerous new world is on the horizon. We are in a new political sphere, where opinions will be artificially formed without anyone knowing who created them and for what purpose. Subversion via the digital space is the new norm. It is easier to perceive and counter when directed from the outside, but more insidious and dangerous when it comes from within. Targeting voters with information that confirms their beliefs and addresses their fears is happening. Omand details Russian electoral intervention in the 2016 US election in favor of Trump and with attacks on Hillary Clinton. He provides precise details of efforts to influence the vote and details the involvement of Trump associates.

Omand's hope lies in better decisions made with full knowledge of his own unconscious biases. Analysts cannot totally escape their unconscious emotional framing of problems, precisely because they are unconscious. Information is obtained through our senses and goes straight into our minds, and unknowingly, the emotional framing process begins. This is why analysis should be a team sport, so that others can spot what a single individual cannot. Policymakers can also benefit from such an approach. Sometimes, there can be specific warning failures that fall between adequate prior knowledge and appropriate precautionary action, often because policymakers fail to probe everyone's position, and adopting the SEES model makes such gaps less likely.

Gérald Arboit

Étienne Augris, *Philippe Rondot maître espion*, Paris, Novice/Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2023, 329 p.

It is rare for a historian to devote a biography to a personality who has been gone for such a short time. Yet that's what Étienne Augris, associate professor of history, has done with the figure of Philippe Rondot, who passed away in December 2017. Six years on, while the figure was entangled in the throes of the Clearstream

politico-financial affair at the end of his life, the author gives him back that human perspective that the media's renewed presentism had robbed him of. Above all, he offers a stroll through the world of French intelligence, from his entry into the Action department of the *Service de documentation et de contre-espionnage* (Documentation and counterespionage service) (SDECE), in the aftermath of the Algerian War (1964), to his implementation of the coordination of services, as advisor for intelligence and special operations (CROS, 1997-2005). During this period, and it is to the author's credit that he outlines it, Rondot crossed the desert (1977-1982), spending time at the *Centre des Hautes Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Moderne* (Center for Advanced Studies on Modern Africa and Asia) (CHEAM) as a research fellow, while also teaching at the *Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires* (Center for Advanced Military Studies). He then joined the Analysis and Forecasting Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1982-1984), the first stage in his integration into the *Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire* (Territory Surveillance Department) (DST, 1984-1997), with two interludes, a short one with the Minister of the Interior (1991-1993), where he took part in the creation of the *Direction du renseignement militaire* (Directorate of Military Intelligence) (DRM), and a final one with the Minister of Defense as CROS.

The starting point of this wandering, on which the author finally provides information drawn from Romanian archives, is the two-year mission that the young Captain Rondot carried out in Bucharest. As head of post at the age of thirty, it's easy to imagine the officer's potential. As soon as he arrived in Romania as deputy military attaché, the cover for foreign intelligence officers assigned to embassies until the mid-1990s, he was followed by the *Departamentul Securității Statului* (Department of State Security, *Securitate*), which even tried to recruit him. After two years on the other side of the Iron Curtain (1966-1968), Rondot returned to Paris, working for Service Action. Until, in 1977, he was asked to answer the question of trust - that condition without reason or logic which, better than secrecy, governs any career in the services - for a variety of reasons relating to Romania. Rondot's

answers were unconvincing, and he was forced to end his career with the SDECE. In 1982, taking advantage of the change in management at the head of the service, which had become the *Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure* (General Directorate of External Security) (DGSE), he tried to return, but was refused reincorporation.

However, Rondot did not put an end to his career in intelligence. He remained close to Alain de Marolles, head of the Action department, who did not hesitate to use him as a "consultant". His father, Pierre Rondot, opened the doors to the mysterious and complicated Orient, where current events quickly thrust him. He steered his son towards a sociology thesis at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*, under the supervision of Jacques Vernant, on *Les projets de paix arabo-israéliens: 1947-1978*, which he defended in March 1980. To this end, his father opened his Levantine networks to him. Philippe Rondot also learned to communicate with journalists. In 1983, he honed his network skills by attending the national session of the *Institut des hautes études de défense nationale*. The political changeover made him an expert in Middle Eastern affairs, which the new team seemed to lack. He thus carried out missions for the Élysée to the Palestinians and Iraqis. Fourteen years later, he was reunited with his Saint-Cyr classmates at the head of the intelligence community: Jacques Dewatre headed the DGSE, Bruno Elie the DRM, Michel Théodoly-Lannes the young intelligence and electric warfare brigade, while Rondot was CROS in the cabinet of Defense Minister Alain Richard (1999-2002).

Rondot's specialization in anti-terrorism dates from this period. As soon as Carlos appeared on the scene, with the attack on rue Toullier in Paris, which claimed the lives of two DST policemen, Inspector Raymond Dous and Inspector Jean Donatini, and seriously wounded a third, Superintendent Jean Herranz, on June 27th, 1975, Rondot was put in charge of the case. First with the SDECE, then with the DST, he relentlessly tracked down the terrorist, even putting him up in Sudan in November 1993. A man of intelligence, he left arrest and extradition to politicians and diplomats. He returned to his clandestine operations. Étienne Augris clearly shows the difference in Rondot's treatment of

Carlos and that other terrorist who bloodied France in the early 1980s, Abu Nidal. While he refused to meet the Venezuelan, he set up a liaison with the Palestinian, right up to his assassination in Iraq in 2002, because of his relations with foreign governments... In this way, Rondot was able to provide the French intelligence community with information from the terrorist sphere that was bringing bloodshed to France, whether from the Mashreq or the Maghreb. The *Silco* hostages were freed thanks to this liaison... This is how Carlos' arrest came about. Rondot was also the negotiator involved in the release of French hostages in Iraq, journalists Hervé Brusini in 1991, Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot in 2004, and Florence Aubenas six months later. He organized the exfiltration (*Operation Hortensia*) of the Lebanese President, General Michel Aoun, in 1991. He was also involved in the efforts to free the monks of Tibhirine, kidnapped under murky circumstances by Algerian jihadists manipulated by the Algerian intelligence services, the Département du renseignement et de la sécurité (the Intelligence and Security Department) (DRS), which in turn manipulated the competing French services. Rondot is bitter about this. This imbroglio, which led to the murder of the clerics, prompted political decision-makers to set up CROS. The missions in former Yugoslavia that followed, with turbulent new players such as the DRM's human research office, in the hands of Lieutenant-Colonel Christophe Gomart (1999-2004), but also the DGSE, which sought to destabilize him in the autumn of 2001.

The author hides nothing of Rondot's successes and failures at the heart of French intelligence for thirty years. In this exercise in immediate history to explain the present day, Étienne Augris demonstrates obvious research skills, multiplying indirect sources in the absence of access to direct ones, notably Philippe Rondot's famous notebooks, in order to get as close as possible to the activities not only of his hero, but of all the players with whom he had to work. In doing so, he shows us a Philippe Rondot in the hollow. For him, Algeria was more than just a youthful episode at the start of his military career. It was also part of the intellectual path that linked Rondot to the Arab world. This may explain the author's naïve view of CROS's

relationship with Smaïn Lamari, a former fighter commando officer who, thirty years later, became head of counterespionage for the DRS. Of course, he's no fool when Lamari demands that contact be made through him. He was even aware of his dependence on the DRS for information. But, as Étienne Augris notes, Lamari probably manipulated him, assuring him that the monks had been killed by an Islamist group.

Rondot's working methods may also be responsible for this kind of naiveté. The author shows how little he shares, not hesitating to short-circuit the chains of command in order to move quickly and be more efficient. This is the best way to create adversaries. It's also the key to the success of the Rondot family, father, and son, since Philippe inherited this behavior from Pierre, as did his habit of taking note of everything. He worked alone because he was a loner, an essential quality in the service industry. However, he was not a free electron. He was loyal and very humble, even if he did have an ego that he knew how to maintain with some journalists. He was undeniably courageous. His superior in Algeria told Étienne Augris that Rondot was the one who hung in with the enemy the most, and who went into the fire the most. He was also lucky throughout his career, an important character trait for a man in the shadows, as when his driver stepped on a mine while they were on their way to a rendezvous in Lebanon. But this solitude was to darken his prolific career in the intelligence service. It was the Clearstream affair, on which both Rondot's life and Augris's book ended. Rondot is involved in this political settlement of accounts between Nicolas Sarkozy and Dominique de Villepin through his connections. First of all, his old friend Jean-Louis Gergorin, who put him in touch with a source, French businessman Imad Lahoud. Out of naivety towards this Levantine, Rondot believed that he could thus receive information on Osama Bin Laden's financial network. And his weakness was to believe that by dealing directly with him, he would do better than the DGSE, which had realized that Lahoud had nothing to provide. And then the courts got involved, releasing Rondot's notebooks to the media, to the point of making him very uncomfortable, even if his notes had served as a judge of peace between the

statements of one side and the other. Nevertheless, he escaped unscathed from a legal standpoint. But his image was irreparably damaged, to the point where he has never recovered.

Étienne Augris has produced a fundamental work, based on precise research, combining archival and oral sources, and a highly enjoyable style of writing. He does justice to a man who played a central role in French intelligence for over thirty years. And as is often the case in France, his brilliant career was conducted on the bangs of the services and ended in a media-political confusion reminiscent of other similar cases that have marked the history of intelligence since the end of the Second World War.

Laurence Rullan

Résumé/Abstract/Resumen/

The French army in reports
from the German military attaché in
France, Detlof von Winterfeldt, 1909-1914

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Exploiting letters
and notebooks of German soldiers by
French intelligence services (1914-1918)

L

An "intelligence obsessive":
Dr Henri Martin

L

The hood's arms purchases
in Belgium (1936-1937).
Chronicle of a failure foretold

L

Going back to Lucie's roots
Investigation into the Rudolf Roessler
network

L

The role of French submarines in the

military intelligence chain from 1890 to
1970

L

An American star in the service of French
counter-espionage. Josephine Baker's
funny war

L