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Gérald Arboit, ed., *Renseignement et avant-guerre de 1914 en Grande Région*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016. 163pp. 22€ (pb). ISBN: 978-2-271-09085-0.

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The border regions between France, Germany, and their neighbors are notorious as the site of anguish and bloodshed during the war of attrition from 1914–1918. Gérald Arboit and his co-contributors bring our attention to this region in a different way, however, by focusing on the competition and animosity present in the border region in the decades prior to 1914. In particular, they seek to illustrate the importance of intelligence and surveillance in this area, and the role that these practices played in heightening tensions among belligerent and neutral powers in the pre-war years.

In *Renseignement et avant-guerre de 1914 en Grande Région*, Gérald Arboit, director of the Centre français de recherche sur le renseignement in Paris, brings together scholars of European intelligence. Arboit's much needed contribution to the study of the development of European intelligence agencies in the pre-World War I era offers insight into what intelligence historians have long referred to as the "missing dimension" in diplomatic and military histories.^[1] The book focuses on the "*Grande Région*," defined in this case as the area encompassing Alsace, Lorraine (German, French, and Walloon), and the Sarre, as well as parts of Belgium and Luxembourg (p. 5), as a means of contributing not only to the history of intelligence, but also to the study of border regions. The chapters cover a variety of aspects of espionage and intelligence in France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg, along with a large first chapter by Arboit himself on Serbia.

By approaching the history of intelligence in this region as one based on borders and reciprocity, this collection offers an analysis of the development of espionage and surveillance that is not necessarily found in national histories of the topic. The book demonstrates how practices and institutions grew in reaction to decisions made in neighboring countries, as well as how the competition, fears, and anxieties prevalent across cultures at the end of the nineteenth century influenced populations to exaggerate the spy menace and the need to combat it. Readers unfamiliar with intelligence history in its early stages will take from this collection the lesson that European nations placed increasing importance on information in the years prior to World War I.

Well over half the work in the collection focuses on the structure and functioning of the French intelligence services, with this emphasis present even in those chapters that claim a transnational approach (i.e. Lahaie, Schwindt). French military intelligence was professionalized early in the Third Republic as part of the army's reorganization in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. While the main intelligence organizations were the military's Deuxième Bureau and the smaller Service de renseignements (SR), sources of intelligence included diplomats, military and naval attachés, officers 'on vacation,' police forces, tax collectors, forest guards, and even civilians. As Pascal Pirot details in his chapter, the focus for French intelligence at the turn of the century shifted heavily towards counterespionage.

French intelligence focused its resources almost exclusively on Germany, and thus both intelligence gathering and counterintelligence took place to a large degree along France's eastern border. While some of this practice was centralized in Paris, as Gérald Sawicki shows us in his chapter, "*A la frontière des deux Lorraine*," many border posts also developed their own activities. Among other things, this chapter describes one unique French invention, the Service de secteurs de renseignements territoriaux, which was "an impressive clandestine network of agents," comprised of French patriots from various professions, ranging from retired officers to breeders of carrier pigeons. As he writes, "one could estimate several thousand agents spread out along the Eastern border, ready to act in case of war" (p. 131). Intelligence activity along the border took place in train stations, forts, cafes, and other places of circulation, testifying to the extent of the presence of intelligence agents in everyday border locales.

The collection also offers good insight into the functioning of German intelligence. Contrary to turn-of-the-century understanding in French military and political circles, as well as in the public sphere, these chapters demonstrate a German service reacting to the French service, rather than the other way around.^[2] Both Pirot and Sawicki identify the Schnaebelle affair of 1887, when Germany captured a French police agent and spy in Pagny-sur-Moselle, as a wake-up call for German planners to seek parity with the growing French intelligence apparatus. Germany's military intelligence service was the Abteilung IIIb, created in 1889, connected to the army's general staff, and eventually headed by a man named Walter Nicolai. As we learn from Markus Pöhlmann's chapter, in reality the Abteilung IIIb was not the efficient system it was later imagined to be, but was, rather, relatively small and focused exclusively on France and Russia, while naval intelligence was charged with observing Great Britain.

The collection demonstrates that German and French intelligence services at the turn of the century shared a number of characteristics. As the German military intelligence service was progressively strengthened, the Empire added to its border security with a corps of *Nachrichtenoﬃziere* (army intelligence officers) similar to those working with French military intelligence. Like in France, a German police akin to the Sûreté générale practiced surveillance and espionage. Additionally, Germany set up border intelligence posts in places like forts and train stations where they, too, recruited *Spannungsreisende* (civilian voyagers) who were retired officers disguised as merchants or tourists and sent abroad to gather information. Both sides also had agents focused on sabotage, though in practice such activities were not really carried out.

While the authors do identify similarities, they also point out that Germany was slower to adapt than its French counterparts. For example, whereas France had—since 1880—arranged for other state administrations (such as Douanes, Eaux et forêts and Ponts et chaussées) to support the intelligence service in case of war, Germany only made similar arrangements in 1908 (pp. 129-130). Germany was also late to imitate French networks of non-professional agents and informers along the border in Alsace and Lorraine. Unlike the case with the French Deuxième Bureau and SR, the Abteilung IIIb did not count counterespionage among its tasks.

Probably the most interesting contrast between intelligence agencies in the two countries is explained by their differing political structures. The issue that both Sawicki and Pöhlmann identify as the greatest challenge for German intelligence was the federal nature of the Empire, which translated to a decentralized organizational intelligence structure, especially in face of highly centralized France. The Reichstag viewed a national intelligence service with skepticism, and a number of the other states disapproved of anything that seemed like Prussian dominance.

The collection also provides insight into the development and workings of intelligence in Belgium and in Serbia, the latter the site of the famed assassination that served as 'the spark' that led Europe to war in 1914. The fourth country in the borderland region, Luxembourg, did not develop an intelligence service before 1914 (p. 13). Details of Belgian attitudes towards intelligence practices appear in Pascal Pirot's chapter on the "exportability" of the French model. Belgian leadership belatedly overcame its hesitation to employ intelligence, reacting to concerns of possible invasion of Belgian territory by either France or

Germany. In the early twentieth century, Belgium did work to build services that would keep the country informed of others' plans, by utilizing, as did the French, a number of different branches of public administration, though not entirely successfully. Seeking to avoid assigning military officers spying duties, they recruited civilians to play a part in a decentralized service, and also took advantage of military attachés stationed abroad to gather information and influence opinion. The onus, Pirot stresses, was on creating an intelligence system that would "sound the alarm" in the event of an attack (p. 117).

In Serbia, as Arboit shows us, intelligence played a variety of roles in attempts to secure the state, from working to shore up Serbian power in the nineteenth century, to protecting its autonomy in the face of the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary into the twentieth century. Arboit's chapter focuses on the service's head, Dragutin T. Dimitrijević, with an aim of rehabilitating him from the prevailing view that he was a criminal responsible for allowing the assassination of Franz Ferdinand (p. 19). Arboit concludes that the Serbian services were riddled with problems of insecurity and competition, and that such issues were still not worked out in the years following the war.

In addition to these surveys of the various services, the collection contributes to our understanding of intelligence cultures in a variety of ways. Frédéric Schwindt's approach to the region is particularly interesting, looking at collective psychology, shared anxieties and preoccupations on both sides of the border where so many confrontations had taken place across generations. Schwindt's presentation of the contemporary aspects of French intelligence services comes through the lens of novels by the writer Emile Danrit (the pseudonym of lieutenant colonel Driant, General Boulanger's son-in-law). These novels display strategy (anticipating the Schlieffen Plan), technology (such as the zeppelin balloon) and anxieties, as manifested by settings in fortresses like Metz where spies try to learn about enemy placements. Between actual confrontations and those presented in the press and novels such as Danrit's, Schwindt explains that the area became a particularly fertile ground for espionage. With the addition of movement of men and information, Schwindt explains, "the region was, more than others, victim of spy fever, and the psychosis of espionage." (p. 71)

The notions of spy fever and anxieties over espionage also appear in Arboit's chapter on espionage legislation in the countries of the *Grande Région*. In another lengthy chapter, Arboit shows that as espionage became increasingly recognized as a threat to national security, countries felt the need to address it with specific definitions and punishments, apart from the clauses touching on treason and sharing intelligence found in the Napoleonic Code. The question of espionage legislation became, increasingly, a political issue, with the neutral states in particular recognizing the need to establish legal limits so as not to "pick sides" between France and Germany in the event that spies from either country were caught practicing espionage in neutral territory. Arboit's chapter shows that, with nations drafting codes that closely resembled each other, intelligence, while a domestic issue, was tied up in international competition and reciprocity.

This demonstration of borrowing and replicating ideas and practices across borders is one of the central themes of the book, and appears in a number of cases. For example, Sawicki describes German officers "motivated by 'the tension of the political situation'" seeking to improve German intelligence because of French organizations that Moltke and others judged superior (pp. 121). Pirot's article on the "exportability" of the French model similarly described practices, such as the use of border guards, as being borrowed by both the German and Belgian services from the French. Additionally, Arboit's chapter on Serbia shows that the Serbian services borrowed from German military intelligence in the nineteenth century.

In sum, this collection will be useful for anyone interested in learning about the development and practice of intelligence in Western Europe prior to WWI. Although not a lot of the material presented here constitutes new research, the collection's greatest strength comes in comparing and contrasting the various intelligence services in one volume. The themes of borrowing and reciprocity, fears and anxieties, and confrontation and circulation, highlight the benefits of focusing on borders and border regions in this

study of structures of intelligence. I especially appreciated learning that Germany was so reactive to France, as studies from the French perspective tend not to acknowledge this phenomenon.

On the other hand, I found the choices of geographical focus to be somewhat unbalanced and a bit confusing. A lot of the material in the collection overlapped, with the same or similar examples given in multiple chapters. It still is not clear why the Serbian case was chosen for the first chapter in a book dedicated to the region along the Western Front. It is also notable that the book did not dedicate much space (only two pages) to the British intelligence services, which did of course operate in occupied France and Belgium during the war. The book also ignored Italy, whose border with France was a very real concern for French intelligence prior to 1914. Likewise, Russia receives only a brief mention. If these countries were excluded in order to focus on the *Grande Région*, why include Serbia? Sourcing within the chapters was mixed, with some authors neglecting to include sufficient citation (Lahaie) and others relying almost exclusively on secondary sources (Arboit, "Ambitions").

Finally, this reader found that many of the chapters failed to offer a broader analysis, leaving us without a sense of the successes or failures of the intelligence practices under consideration. The collection also missed the opportunity to fully explore many important themes raised in the preface and introduction, such as questions of citizenship and regional identity, or to meaningfully contribute to debates on the entry into war in the summer of 1914. Happily, the final two articles (Sawicki and Pöhlmann) provide a good sense of the transition between intelligence in its "embryonic" stage prior to World War I and the more mature practice of espionage and surveillance of the later twentieth century. Pöhlmann's chapter, in particular, offers insight into how intelligence influenced battle plans and how WWI contributed to changes in the practice and structure of intelligence. As borders closed and tensions accelerated with the onset of war, intelligence practitioners were forced to adjust their strategies. In Germany, espionage and counterespionage services were finally integrated into the armed forces, allowing intelligence to firm up a legitimate place within a military culture that had once relegated it to the margins.

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NOTES

[1] Christopher M. Andrew and David Dilks, *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

[2] Deborah Bauer, "Planting the Espionage Tree: The French Military and the Professionalization of Intelligence at the end of the Nineteenth Century," *Intelligence and National Security*, 31:5 (2016): 7-8.

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