

H-Net Reviews

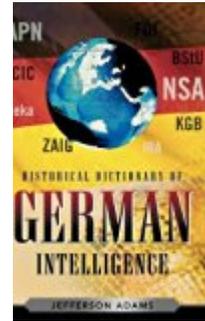
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jefferson Adams. *Historical Dictionary of German Intelligence*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009. xxxv + 543 pp. \$120.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-5543-4.

Reviewed by Timothy Dowling (Virginia Military Institute)

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Out from the Inky Shadows

Gleaning solid information is the business of intelligence operatives; rarely, however, do they make it readily available to scholars. The publication of the *Historical Dictionary of German Intelligence*, therefore, is a boon to the specialist in German history who happens to be a non-specialist in intelligence, or vice versa. It is also an excellent resource for students working on projects where those two fields intersect.

Jefferson Adams, who currently serves as senior editor of the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, draws on a wide array of sources to provide a thorough list of intelligence operatives and operations, with an emphasis on the National Socialist and East German regimes. While he does provide some straightforward definitions for terms like “West Arbeit” and “Brieftaube”, most of the work is encyclopedic in form. Each entry is cross-referenced internally with other entries in bold face and followed by a short list of related entries, whether operations, major administrative units, or persons. Biographies comprise the bulk of the entries, and Adams methodically renders each figure as fully as possible. A short sentence relates the role and significance of the person; the details of his or her life follow, along with a dispassionate narration of his or her intelligence activities.

Adams’s definition of intelligence is broad. Within Nazi Germany, for example, he covers not just the Abwehr and the Gestapo, but the whole of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) as well. Adams provides lengthy

entries on Adolf Eichmann, Otto Nebe, and the Einsatzgruppen, for instance. Presumably, Adams’s premise is that it is better for an encyclopedia’s coverage to extend too far than to fall short. The only evident intelligence connection in Willy Brandt’s entry, for instance, is that he was the target of several intelligence operations, but a student working on the Guillaume Affair would likely turn to that entry. Any work on intelligence, however, can only extend as far as there is reliable source material. This consideration means that the National Socialist regime and the German Democratic Republic are covered quite extensively, whereas there is less information about the Federal Republic of Germany and the Weimar Republic.

Adams also fails to follow up convincingly on assertions regarding the long history of intelligence in the German lands. He mentions Frederick the Great in his introduction and affords him an entry, but there is only one other entry from the eighteenth century, and none predating Frederick’s reign. Most of the entries from the nineteenth century are drawn from Hapsburg intelligence activities. Considering the reputation of Prince Clemens von Metternich in this area, readers might reasonably expect more than Adams delivers. While there are handy appendices listing all the heads of the Austro-Hungarian Evidenzbuero from 1850 on, only a few of these men appear in the body of the work. The same scarcity is true of the period from 1870 to the First World War. Otto von Bismarck, noted in the opening chronology, is nowhere to be found thereafter. The work thus

might be more accurately called a historical dictionary of *modern*, or even twentieth-century, German intelligence.

The work is not confined to Germany by any means though. German agents working in foreign countries can be found here, as can foreign agents working in Germany and the occasional Hapsburg or Austrian operative. Unfortunately, operatives are listed only by their real name and not their code names, though searching a known alias will sometimes turn up a cross-reference, and not all operations mentioned in biographies merit an entry.

There are other curiosities in the cross-referencing system as well. The entry on *Ausspähen*, for instance, helpfully notes that the term is used only “in reference to the activities of an enemy intelligence organization” while “the preferred expression for one’s own procurement of secret information” is *Beschaffen*, but there is no

entry for the latter term (p. 17). Translations can also be problematic on occasion. The entry on *Geheimhaltungsgrad*, for example, reads: “A system for designating the various degrees of secrecy.” Adams then lists the German grades (“*Verschlusssache*, *Vertraulich*, *Geheim* and *Streng Geheim*”) without translation (p. 127).

These, however, are mere nits to pick; most users will likely not even notice these things. By and large, the *Historical Dictionary of German Intelligence* is a clear, concise, and enlightening resource. Its chronological scope is more limited than it might appear at first glance, but for the years 1933-99 it is as comprehensive as might be reasonably hoped. Given the nature of encyclopedic information today the work might not be as indispensable as the publishers claim, but given the nature of information regarding intelligence activities in particular, it would certainly be helpful to have a copy on hand.

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