

Jonathan Haslam, Karina Urbach, eds.. *Secret Intelligence in the European States System, 1918-1989*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. 256 pp. \$54.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-8359-0.



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Secret Intelligence in the European State System, 1918-1989 is an excellent collection and valuable contribution to the field of European intelligence history during the twentieth century. While bookshelves groan under the weight of books on Anglo-American intelligence history, much less attention has been paid to the European continent. The seven chapters are organized geographically and chronologically, with two contributions on the Soviet Union, two on France, one on Britain, and two on divided Germany. Four of the chapters focus on the Cold War, two on the period up to 1940, and one on World War II. The somewhat discursive introduction does not really tie the chapters together in an overview but rather reviews some earlier pioneering histories of intelligence and complains that intelligence history is still not always welcome by other genres of history despite its importance in illuminating international relations.

The most striking contribution because of its incisive analysis, good questions, and clarity is the model essay by David Holloway. He compares two

Soviet intelligence cases from World War II. One case—Barbarossa—was an intelligence failure, while the second—the case of the bomb—was an intelligence success. Holloway uses these important case studies to answer the general questions of how important intelligence was for international relations in the twentieth century. He does this by focusing on three specific questions for each case: what intelligence the Soviet Union acquired, how it used it to formulate policy, and what the consequences were for international relations. On the one hand, despite the fact that Joseph Stalin received many reports about German plans to attack the Soviet Union, he did not heed them and prepare the Red Army for the German invasion of June 22, 1941, the start of a long and deadly war. On the other hand, between 1940 and 1945, the Soviet Union received a lot of useful information about British and American nuclear research, including progress on the Manhattan Project. As a result, the Soviet Union was able to launch and accelerate its own project. It is probably the most successful case of scientific-technical

intelligence in the twentieth century. The atomic project helped propel the Soviet Union onto the superpower stage as it became a rival to the United States.

In his contribution on Soviet intelligence from 1917 to 1941, Jonathan Haslam reaches the conclusion that Soviet intelligence became good at human intelligence gathering (“Humint”) by default because it failed at technical intelligence gathering. He also shows that Soviet leaders were always suspicious of intelligence and the people who provided it.

There are two chapters on intelligence in France. One is by Stephen A. Schuker, covering the post-World War I period up to 1940 and focusing on the fall of France in May-June 1940. The other is by Georges-Henri Soutou on the Cold War and French intelligence about the East. Schuker’s and Soutou’s pieces are welcome additions to the historiography because not much is known about French intelligence and the archives there have not been as open as those in England, the Soviet Union, and Germany. While Schuker concludes that good intelligence would not have made a difference in the fall of France due to an inherently weak military, Soutou shows that French intelligence was generally weak from 1945 to 1968. His contribution does not consider the spectacular and successful “Farewell” case in 1980-82 since it comes over a decade after his time limit, but it might have changed the image of French intelligence and counterintelligence. “Farewell” was the prophetic codename for Vladimir Vetrov, a defector from the KGB’s science and technology unit, recruited by the French Directorate of Territorial Surveillance.

The lone chapter on British intelligence brilliantly follows the money to chart major British intelligence activities during the Cold War. Richard J. Aldrich characterizes British intelligence as “impecunious” as compared to the rich American services, but the period also included rising costs for technological espionage (p. 149).

Aldrich argues that British intelligence spent quite a bit of energy and money on the capability to provide warning of conventional or nuclear attack—however “patchy” that performance was in the end (p. 154). Another rationale for providing financing for intelligence was to keep the Anglo-American intelligence connection alive. In addition, intelligence provided stability in international relations. British signals intelligence from the Government Communications Headquarters was costly but valued by the United States. Unlike its U.S. counterpart, Britain only used about 60 percent of its effort against the Soviet Bloc and continued to deal with national and global issues surrounding colonial and postcolonial crises. Aldrich concludes by pointing out that more was spent on intelligence during the first decade of the twenty-first century than at any point during the Cold War.

The chapters on Germany both focus on the Cold War—one examines the Stasi and détente and the other offers an overview of the Federal Intelligence Service’s (the BND, *Bundesnachrichtendienst*) activities. Despite the latter’s misleading title, “The West German Secret Service during the Cold War,” this chapter clearly and persuasively argues, by drawing on secondary literature, that the BND was successful in military espionage but not political espionage. The chapter on East Germany is not as successful because it focuses primarily on an extensive and detailed discussion of détente. The Stasi is an afterthought, only occupying a couple of pages and not successfully integrated into the chapter.

The takeaway from these chapters is that intelligence does have an impact on international affairs especially with big cases, but everyday intelligence often consists of minutia about military numbers. Furthermore, one should not overestimate the power of intelligence. Like other parts of history, it should always be looked at as one aspect in a larger context and not as a sole overriding factor in the course of events.

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