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National security is, of course, a constant consideration. In France, as elsewhere, the methods by which a state attempts to ensure such security are equally concerning. The practice of surveilling a nation’s own citizens has been a vexing question for some time, and the methods of obtaining data in pursuit of national security are frequently debated. Deborah Bauer attempts to locate the provenance of modern intelligence-gathering practices in *Marianne Is Watching: Intelligence, Counterintelligence, and the Origins of the French Surveillance State*. With laudable primary research from French military and police archives, Bauer traces the formation and institution of state-operated intelligence agencies and the legal framework that governed them, primarily during the Third Republic. The title misleads somewhat: current intelligence practices are only faintly recognizable in the text, which strictly discusses when Marianne, the personification of the French Republic, is thought to have begun watching, rather than currently doing so. Instead, the author paints a portrait of a period when intelligence services had too much authority and too little oversight, leaving the reader to draw any parallels to present-day operations.

Bauer outlines the history of intelligence services within France, which prior to the Franco-Prussian War, were simplistic and haphazard duties performed by the military, police, and diplomats in a supremely disorganized fashion. The practice of spying was considered a disreputable and unsavory affair, done out of necessity and only in localized circumstances. The defeat of 1870-71 changed that; the need for proper estimations of military strength and morale of foreign enemies became self-evident. Reforms within the military led to the establishment of the well-known Deuxième Bureau, tasked with uncovering data about France’s adversaries, and its subdivision, the Section de Statistique, which essentially managed spies. Germany became both the principal opponent and the model for French intelligence, which imagined that Germany had a vast network of sophisticated spies gathering all manner of intelligence on the French military.

The result of the formation of these agencies was a notable expansion from simply amassing knowledge on foreign militaries to continually watching individuals within France, which contributed to the general atmosphere of xenophobia, antisemitism, and paranoia. Bauer maintains that
these practices ultimately “caused more harm to the nation than it prevented, by encouraging and perpetuating fear” (p. 3). People were encouraged to inform on one another, and many types of non-conformist behavior could land a person on the notorious “Carnet B,” or dossiers of individuals under official suspicion. Often, people were placed on the list for the most spurious of reasons.

Bauer is mainly interested in the bureaucratic nuts and bolts of how this atmosphere came to develop. Thus, she looks to official records and acts to follow the evolution of the powers of the state to engage in surveillance. One of the most interesting components of this growth of the French intelligence services is the crucial role played by General Georges Boulanger during his two-year stint as minister of war. Bauer encourages recognition of his nonpolitical career and all but dubs him the father of French intelligence, crediting him as the force behind the passage of the 1886 law that created a legal process for countering espionage. For Bauer, Boulanger is xenophobic and paranoid but at the same time visionary in developing the framework by which the intelligence apparatus would operate. Boulanger amplified the use of the Section de Statistique as a counterespionage force, which began the surveillance of not only foreigners on French soil but also French citizens. Accordingly, Bauer makes a compelling case to acknowledge Boulanger as a key character in the development of France’s internal surveillance.

Where Bauer is at her best is in setting the stage for the Dreyfus affair. For example, in chapter 7, “Identifying Spies,” Bauer ably portrays the prewar climate as one of anxiety and denunciation of presumed spies, egged on by a robust French press and fully embraced by the public. She capably describes the atmosphere of espionage paranoia and the often inadequate attempts at codifying and instituting counterespionage measures. But the affair itself, as the standout espionage incident of the period, is relegated to a mere background event. Bauer is more attentive to doc-

umenting the underhanded means by which the intelligence services operated, which culminated in forgeries and other means by which Dreyfus was convicted. A larger discussion of why the intelligence agencies felt the need to go to such lengths would be welcome.

Less supported is her position that much of French public policy was driven by information gathered by the intelligence services. Bauer maintains that the “institutionalization of intelligence in France drove the acceptance of a Machiavellian narrative that created a threat and offered surveillance and intelligence gathering as the answer to that threat” (p. 8). This fails to account for the intense pushback against the military and intelligence services as a result of the Dreyfus affair and the strong anti-militarism of socialists and popular individuals, such as Jean Jaurès.

Ultimately, Bauer does make the case that France was all too willing to untether itself from its republican ideals of transparency and civil rights in the name of national security. The resulting atmosphere inaugurated a sort of “cold war” that “led to a feeling of increased militarism and the notion that war was imminent” (p. 268). That the espionage paranoia of fin-de-siècle France contributed to its readiness for war in 1914 is then apparent in Marianne Is Watching; its connection to today’s intelligence gathering is less so.
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