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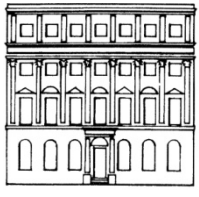

BULLETIN

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Bernhard Sassmann and Tobias Schmitt:
Cultures of Intelligence
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Cultures of Intelligence. Conference co-organized by the University of Potsdam, the University of Leeds, the University of Mannheim, and the German Historical Institute London, and held at the GHIL, 9–11 June 2016.

Until recently, historians of national intelligence systems have focused mainly on the institutional and organizational aspects of the field. But national intelligence systems have never developed fully independent institutional lives. They have, on the contrary, always operated within their respective national strategic cultures, which are not static but bound to the context of national traditions and values, geographical conditions, and their respective countries' ever-changing strategic objectives (military, social, and political). Thus this conference set out to investigate the current state of our understanding of national, international, transnational, and comparative cultures of intelligence. Culture was understood to include the role of intelligence services in society and/or the state, the representation of intelligence in the public sphere and among the members of the military/intelligence community itself, as well as the interests, assumptions, and operating procedures of intelligence. The conference marked the conclusion of two projects on Cultures of Intelligence funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation and the AHRC and coordinated by Sönke Neitzel (University of Potsdam), Philipp Gassert (University of Mannheim), Andreas Gestrich (GHIL), and Simon Ball (Leeds).

In his opening remarks, the German Historical Institute's director and the conference host, Andreas Gestrich, welcomed participants to the Institute, introduced them to the project's underlying ideas, and revealed initial results and hypotheses. Speaking for everyone involved in the ambitious project, Gestrich said that he was looking forward to these results being scrutinized in the light of the participants' research on cultural aspects of intelligence.

Proceedings began with a stimulating keynote lecture delivered by Peter Jackson (Glasgow). In his address, he combined his work on intelligence structures in inter-war France and Britain with his methodological studies of intelligence culture. Jackson highlighted similarities but also several key differences between British and French

The full conference programme can be found under 'Events and Conferences' on the GHIL's website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

intelligence structures during the inter-war years and beyond. On the one hand, they shared traditions of liberalism and democratic representation and both tended towards an increasingly large bureaucracy and bureaucratic professionalization. On the other, they were widely different in their approach to national intelligence. In France, intelligence was always subject to legislation while in Britain, despite its tradition of democratic representation, intelligence was controlled by Army regulations and kept out of legislative and, thus, public view. This difference, according to Jackson, was the essence of the differing cultures of secrecy in Britain and France.

Thursday's panel on US intelligence was opened by discussing Philipp Gassert's (Mannheim) paper, which contextualized the development of American intelligence within a broader political and cultural framework. Before the First World War, espionage and intelligence work were widely regarded as 'un-American', an assessment reinforced by public opposition to the domestic surveillance of 'enemy aliens'. In contrast, the experience of the Second World War was widely perceived as a 'success story' for American espionage. While the curtailment of the intelligence apparatus after 1918 reflected the isolationist mood in the USA, the 1940s discourse on internationalism caused a shift in the discourse on intelligence. The foundation of a central intelligence agency in peacetime was a logical consequence. Thus the USA emerged from the two world wars with different narratives regarding the war effort in general and the use of intelligence in particular.

Bernhard Sassmann (Mannheim) then examined the interconnectivity between bureaucratization processes and public discourses with regard to US intelligence. By focusing on three key phases—the aftermath of the First World War, the 1930s, and the period from 1945 to 1947—Sassmann showed that not only did shifting public debates concerning threat perceptions affect institutional developments, but government and intelligence officials also conducted press campaigns on behalf of intelligence organizations and tried to influence public debates. Sassmann concluded that from 1900 to 1947 this reciprocity was a distinctive feature of US intelligence and its discourses.

Simon Willmetts (Hull) analysed the particular relationship between the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and cinema during the Second World War. Hundreds of Hollywood filmmakers served in the organization and were central to an extensive and systematic use

of motion pictures by the OSS, which both profited from and contributed to the establishment of cinema as an 'objective' medium. Not only did film become a more important part of military planning, but original footage was utilized as evidence in court for the first time during the Nuremberg trials and played a crucial role in the prosecutors' case.

On Friday, the panel on British intelligence opened with a discussion of Simon Ball's (Leeds) paper, which focused on relations between the changes in the reputation of British intelligence services and the effective participation of intelligence officers in (proto-) professional discourses from the end of the First World War to the beginning of the Cold War. In the case of military intelligence, these debates yielded merely organizational accounts. The 1940s, however, were marked by a profound change; Ball emphasized that 1942 was a 'year zero', when military intelligence became a 'definable field' with perceptible boundaries and enjoyed increased prestige.

R. Gerald Hughes (Aberystwyth) elaborated further on the influence of former professionals on academic discourses and methodological issues in particular. By reflecting on how to define 'intelligence culture', Hughes proposed building on existing concepts of 'political culture' or 'habitus' and 'group thinking'. There was 'no need to reinvent the wheel', since the evolution of bureaucratic entities has been a field of scholarly research for decades and offers useful accounts.

Professional discourses on intelligence in British military periodicals from 1919 to 1939 were the main focus of Michael Rupp's (Potsdam) paper. During the inter-war period in Britain, which was characterized by 'fundamental uncertainty', hegemonic overstretch, and the search for a strategic concept, British military experts addressed the problem of cooperation among the three services at strategic level. In this context, Rupp argues, the issue of intelligence was one part of a triangular discourse concerning strategy and operations, which served as a framework for discussing the outlines of a 'joint' intelligence system at national level.

The morning panel was concluded by the discussion of Jérôme aan de Wiel's (Cork) paper that traced the development of the domestic intelligence functions in the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police from the nineteenth century to 1922. Inspired by Joseph Fouché's efforts in France, the British implement-

ed an extensive police system as part of their attempt to control Ireland. In addition to targeting republican and agrarian opposition movements and later also disloyal public servants, core tasks included surveillance of political and social opinion. Aan de Wiel argued that these activities and structures reflected the 'airs of a police state'; Irish intelligence, however, suffered from 'red tape' and a 'culture of distrust'.

Alan MacLeod (Leeds) opened the afternoon panel by setting out what a Bourdieusian approach can reveal about the nature of the developing 'field' of British intelligence and how the transformative experience of the Second World War impacted ideas of 'professionalism' and changed the face of the British secret services. He argued that a focus on intelligence activities rather than on the development of bureaucracies is key to understanding British intelligence culture. Competition for control of 'high-capital' activities, he continued, attracted fresh people into the field during the Second World War, and fostered both a newly won focus on efficiency and professionalism and the emergence of an (increasingly civilian) postwar intelligence elite in Britain.

Presenting a case study of BBC 1's widely viewed and well received early 1980s TV show Spy, Christopher Murphy (Salford) considered the significance of television programmes produced by the BBC in relation to wider public knowledge and understanding of British intelligence. The show's inherent inaccuracies and the BBC's appeasing attitude led to public misconceptions about how British intelligence conducted interrogations of POWs during the Second World War. Although the show's depiction of physical violence against prisoners was repeatedly denied by witnesses of the interrogations, the resulting public misconceptions were in themselves, Murphy argued, an unintended consequence of Britain's long-standing culture of (official) secrecy.

Huw Dylan's (Kings College) paper then examined the struggle to create a culture of 'national intelligence' within the field of defence intelligence after 1945. Key figures of British inter-war intelligence such as Lord Victor Cavendish-Bentinck and Denis Capel-Dunn had understood early on that the age of total war required total intelligence and thus 'national intelligence'. In order to solve chronic problems in British military-related intelligence, they fostered the creation of the Joint Intelligence Bureau which was intended to integrate military

intelligence with the wider machinery of intelligence. The military agencies struggled, however, to integrate with the new arrangements, which relied on many more civilians and were more centralized.

Concluding Friday's presentations, Martin Thomas (Exeter) explored the unique role that France played in equipment provision, officer training, and security service reorganization during the early post-independence years in Algeria. The turmoil surrounding France's violent exit from Algeria in 1962 has tended to obscure how swiftly the security connections between the French authorities and the armed forces of the now independent Algerian Republic were re-established. Thomas's findings challenged prevailing notions that Algeria predominantly received expertise and material from Egypt and the Eastern bloc states.

The conference concluded with Saturday's panel on German intelligence in the first half of the twentieth century. Frederik Müllers (Potsdam) focused on the changing prescriptive perceptions and collective interpretations of what German society (both military and civilian) considered 'intelligence' between 1871 and 1945. Müllers highlighted several constant themes. During the whole period of investigation, the gathering of information was considered important in war, but efficiency and swiftness on the battlefield always remained the military's major concern. Consequently, Müllers also identified a lack of professional meta-reflection on national intelligence during the inter-war years, which obstructed meaningful systemic improvements in German intelligence organization.

The evolution of the all-source military intelligence system in Germany between 1890 and 1918 was at the centre of Markus Pöhlmann's (Potsdam) paper. In the German case, apart from the lack of a civilian culture of surveillance, Pöhlmann argued that the presence of an established culture of (military) intelligence cannot be identified in the first half of the twentieth century. It was not until the emergency of the First World War that military intelligence started to look for answers to the new parameters of war, increased its level of staffing, established subdivisions for East and West, a section for propaganda and censorship (3b), and thus evolved into an all-source intelligence system. Germany's defeat, however, prevented the newly acquired expertise being transferred to the Weimar Republic.

Markus Pahl (Dresden) then presented his research on the nerve centre of Hitler's military intelligence on the Eastern Front, the

General Staff Division of Foreign Armies East (FHO). His major focus was on the organization's working methods during the war. The FHO was efficient, recruited industrial and academic experts on Eastern Europe as *Sonderführer*, and was respected as an important branch within the General Staff. Pahl concluded that although the FHO was on the way to becoming a modern intelligence service, it was still a General Staff organization with only limited expertise at strategic level. Nevertheless, its wartime leader, General Reinhard Gehlen, established himself and his organization and expertise as the nucleus of today's civilian foreign intelligence service, the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND).

In his concluding remarks, Sönke Neitzel (Potsdam), Principal Investigator of the Gerda Henkel Foundation's Cultures of Intelligence research project, brought together some of the results of the conference. As a common denominator of the conference papers he identified that political, social, and military cultures all have an impact on the development und configuration of national intelligence systems. While the emerging national intelligence systems of the first half of the twentieth century seem less far from each other than contemporary media coverage and popular culture suggest, the conference confirmed that national intelligence cultures *did* exist with respect to methods, sources, and public representations. Another factor which seems to hold true for every major intelligence nation under scrutiny at the conference was that public discourse and public opinion were more closely woven into the fabric of professional discourse and political decision-making on intelligence than had been assumed. The conference also pointed to the existence of a British *Sonderweg* in the first half of the century, expressed in a) the close interaction between professionals and the public discourse (for example, through spy novels) and b) the prominence of civilians in controlling and coordinating national intelligence. The following plenary discussion highlighted that the analytical category of 'culture' sometimes remains elusive in its relation to national intelligence, but that it provides a perspective which is a productive point of departure for future research and case studies on national intelligence systems.

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