

***Spies of the Kaiser: German Covert Operations in Great Britain during the First World War Era.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 224 pp. \$75.00**

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With this slim volume, Thomas Boghardt, historian at the International Spy Museum in Washington, DC, has produced a valuable contribution to the small but growing body of scholarly works on intelligence during the First World War. For intelligence historians, the period before the First World War is known primarily as the beginning of the modern British Secret Intelligence Services, British naval intelligence, Room 40 and the birth of signals intelligence, and the famous Zimmermann Telegram. The historical foil for these British successes has been the belief in a massive but ill-defined German intelligence threat, created largely by the memoirs of senior British intelligence officers and German agents. Most of these accounts were written shortly after the war and were often heavily sensationalized. In contrast to the view from these works, Boghardt offers a careful reconstruction of German intelligence penetration of World War One Britain and provides an essential context for understanding British intelligence and German naval planning before and during the war.

Boghardt places the German naval intelligence network in Britain firmly in the context of German naval intelligence during the naval race with Great Britain. In many ways, the establishment of a German naval intelligence organization in 1901 was an outgrowth of the same professionalizing efforts that created the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882. However, German naval intelligence was handicapped from the start by the division of the German Navy bureaucracy between the Navy Staff and the Naval Office. The Navy Staff, which was focused on operational planning, had advocated the establishment of an intelligence section over the objections of the Naval Office. An Imperial order finally ended Naval Office foot-dragging and established a naval intelligence section as part of the Navy Staff, but under the German administrative system the Naval Office controlled funding for the new office. This arrangement insured that naval intelligence was always under-resourced. Further, the naval intelligence's main overseas collection assets reported to the Naval Office, not the Navy Staff. As a result of the division, attaches' responsiveness to Navy Staff intelligence requirements was at best uncertain and sometimes non-existent.

The British reaction to German espionage was almost entirely divorced from the reality of the German effort. In fact, the establishment of British counter-intelligence efforts can be traced primarily to a series of spy novels that captured the public imagination in Britain between 1908 and 1914. The "Tom Clancy" thrillers of their day, these novels lead to governmental hearings and official inquiries—in some cases with the novelists as primary witnesses on the topic. In the context of British concerns over German naval build up, much of the government and the press simply assumed the existence of a large German intelligence network. The resulting British counter-intelligence organization was established with an official probationary period—a bureaucratic guarantee that the new organization would be strongly motivated to find some evidence of German espionage in Britain. Officially, they did, though Boghardt carefully documents that their successes were at best limited.

Boghardt documents that the German network in Britain was extremely limited before the war, presenting an agent-by-agent reconstruction of the network, its limitations and successes. Ineffective in peacetime, the outbreak of the war found it without a plan for wartime operations. While the popular views of the period presents British counter-intelligence as highly effective against a considerable German threat, Boghardt documents convincingly that an astonishing lack of German planning and sweeping British postal censorship effectively ended German naval intelligence's operations in Britain during the early stages of the war.

For historians and generalists with an interest in the period, Boghardt has produced a fascinating and exceptionally well-documented work. His extensive endnotes often provide not only source documentation, but also detailed insights into the source's personal history and motivations. Beyond pure scholarship, however, *Spies of the Kaiser* is also a worthwhile story of how public perception can drive government decisions on intelligence questions.