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Simon Kitson. *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis 1940-1942: Complexitès de la politique de collaboration.* Paris: Editions Autrement, 2005. 268 S. EUR 18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-2-7467-0588-3.

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The Dark Years Revisited

The period of modern French history known as the "Dark Years" has been so extensively studied that a new work on the subject will inevitably have to convince its readers that it is indeed adding a new dimension to an old discussion. Simon Kitson has certainly succeeded in providing new insight into the complexities of the Vichy regime. His final conclusions are not necessarily new, and, one may ask, how could they be, given the nature of the subject? Yet Kitson's approach is bold and fresh and takes a fascinating look at an old story from an interesting perspective. Rather than relying only on the memoirs of French spies and other already studied materials, for this book Kitson worked through 1,400 boxes of information in the "fonds de Moscou," which have been returned to France from the former Soviet Union. He focuses on the question of how and why Vichy intelligence services worked actively against Nazi spies in non-occupied France and French North Africa from 1940 until the occupation of all of France in 1942.

When analyzed through the lens of its counter-espionage efforts, the essence of the Vichy regime is revealed as a partially opportunistic yet independent political entity with its own strong ideological convictions. Did PÃ©tain's regime betray the French nation or save what little there was to be saved? The answer, especially when one considers Vichy's counter-espionage efforts, depends on one's definition of France. PÃ©tain certainly did not save the Third Republic. He did, however, preserve the French nation–or, rather, a French nation. What survived was a France closer to the vision of militaristic and anti-Semitic/anti-Dreyfusard organizations like Charles Maurras's royalist Action FranÃ§aise or proto-fascist movements, like Jacques Doriot's Parti Populaire FranÃ§ais (PPF).[1] The supporters of this version of France, staunch nationalists, were not necessarily pro-German although some of them may have been pro-Nazi. Hence what we find is the strange combination of allegiance to a French nation and possible adherence to at least some elements of a supposedly foreign ideology.[2] Thus those who kept "defending" France after 1940–especially those in the intelligence community who often like to portray their work as a form of resistance in their memoirs–frequently defended their own vision of France, one that had existed at least since the late nineteenth century, and which could finally, in part,

be realized with the defeat of the Third Republic. "Those who had never accepted 1789 finally took their revenge," as historian RÃ©nÃ© RÃ©mond put it.[3]

The question of who collaborated and who resisted is impossible to answer in brief because it operates on the premise of a simplified binary opposition. Kitson does not accept this simple dichotomy and instead masterfully dissects the complexities of the collaboration/resistance problematic by investigating Vichy's counter-espionage efforts. If done well, the investigation of a smaller subject of study will often shed light on a field as a whole. This is certainly the case for Kitson's work.

The book allows one to recognize at least five distinct groups, aside from bystanders and opportunists. These include a minority of Gaullists opposed to the Nazis and Vichy; Vichy supporters, both pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi and/or anti-German who thought limited collaboration was the best way to preserve at least part of France; militaristic anti-Semites who wanted to create their own version of France; individuals who were pro-Nazi and anti-Vichy to such an extent that they can truly be labeled collaborators; and people whose convictions overlapped with those of the previous groups: French nationals who spied for the Nazis because they believed they were acting in the best interest of France–whichever "France" it may have been. The analysis of the latter group is just one example why Kitson's work has still much to add to the already infinite amount of scholarship on Vichy.

Before Kitson investigates the details of Nazi intelligence gathering and French counter-espionage, he sets the events in the context of the time. Considering the brutality of the occupiers, one may wonder why Vichy counter-espionage was even possible and, to some extent, tolerated. On the other hand, one may also question why the Germans would expend resources and manpower to spy on Vichy, a "friendly" regime. Kitson reminds us that friendly countries, even close allies, have been known to spy on each other. Plus, good intelligence involving Allied activities in France and North Africa was essential to German continental hegemony. So was keeping the French state more or less intact. An apparently friendly French state that was at the same time the subject of massive surveillance efforts enabled Germany to pursue its military and ideological goals: attacking Britain and the Soviet Union and persecuting Jews and communists in France.

Furthermore, the Germans had not forgotten the Treaty of Versailles, which, like the 1940 armistice, outlawed espionage on the part of the vanquished. The Germans ignored this part of the treaty, and they knew there was no reason why the French would not do the same. Similarly, the German forces had never accepted their defeat in World War I and eventually rearmed themselves. Thus another reason for German espionage in France was to make sure the French military, unlike its German counterpart, stayed defeated.

Historians of the National Socialist regime are all too familiar with one particular reason for the "massive activity" of the Abwehr (the intelligence branch of the German military) in France: competition within the Nazi state apparatus (p. 14). The SD, Gestapo, and Abwehr found themselves constantly competing for power once the Wehrmacht had conquered new territory. This state of affairs of course also speaks to the continued conflict between the SS and the Wehrmacht. Kitson makes it clear that the Wehrmacht often exhibited no less of an ideological zeal in its activities than the SS. Still, by 1942, the Abwehr had lost much of its authority over intelligence matters in France to the SD.

The rivalry between these organizations may also partially explain why Vichy was able to pursue its counter-espionage efforts relatively undetected. But the primary reason why German intervention in Vichy counter-espionage was limited seems to have been Vichy's assertion that such activities were only directed against Gaullists, communists and the Allies. The severity of the occupation of France paled in comparison with that in the East, making counter-espionage slightly more feasible in France. This fact does not mean that the Germans played by the rules. They did not hesitate to violate the neutrality of the German Red Cross by placing spies within its delegation in France. Finally, German espionage also had economic justifications. Not being able to engage in the kind of pillaging committed in the East, Germany used its espionage apparatus to exploit the French economy. Nazi spies inquired about available natural resources and the state of heavy industry in order to facilitate profits by German companies.

Who were the spies who made all of this possible for Germany? Kitson reveals that 80 percent of German spies were French citizens. They worked for the Germans for a wide variety of reasons and came from all social strata. Suzanne Desseigne, for example, spied for the Germans because she had been a member of the PPF and, as a Catholic, was convinced that it was her religious duty to oppose Bolshevism and Judaism in defense of her country and civilization (p. 39). While numerous other ideologues like Desseigne worked for Germany,

hunger and greed often served as the primary motivators for French citizens to betray their country. The Germans paid their informants well. Unemployed veterans of the defeated French army became easy targets. Denouncing a Jew was worth 1,000 francs, a Gaullist or communist, 3,000 francs. If one helped discover a weapons depot, one could make as much as 30,000 francs (p. 43). Aside from profiteers and the desperate, the Nazis also recruited adventurers, French veteran spies who had lost their livelihood, and French mistresses of German officers. Kitson makes the interesting point that some German citizens who worked as spies were not necessarily ideologues either. Many did so to be on good terms with their regime, or even to make amends for something they had done to displease it.

Chapter 5, in many ways the most interesting chapter of the book, deals with the political rationale behind Vichy counter-espionage and the resulting ambiguities. The DeuxiÃ¨me Bureau (French Army intelligence), for example, thought of its activities as a form of resistance from the very beginning of the German occupation. But resistance against whom and in favor of whom? Kitson shows that French intelligence officers had as their main objective the defense of Vichy France against anyone they considered a foreign or domestic enemy–the Nazis, the British, the Americans, communists, and Gaullists.

Memoirs of Vichy intelligence officers tend to emphasize that the British, the Americans, and the Gaullists were often treated better than the Nazi spies if captured. Kitson's findings corroborate some of these assertions, suggesting that Allied spies and British intelligence were often fed information that portrayed the Vichy regime in a good light. Germany, not Britain, had simply been the traditional enemy of France since 1871. In the case of the Americans, Vichy France was already gambling with the idea of possible economic assistance after the war. The only grudge held toward the Americans had its origins in the United States' delayed entry into the war.

Despite these qualifications, Kitson makes clear that complete collaboration often occurred. When the collaborationist newspaper *Le Petit Parisien* accused officers of the DeuxiÃ¨me Bureau of working toward the defeat of Germany, the paper was clearly committing treason according to Article 76 of the French penal code. The law was never enforced. Here, too, Kitson's book moves far beyond the simplified rhetoric of collaboration. The Vichy intelligence services had pragmatic reasons to be pro-German, although not necessarily pro-Nazi. What if the Germans won the war? What would remain of the French Empire? Those willing to take this chance had other reasons to oppose Allied intelligence efforts: Vichy considered British intelligence unsophisticated and often incompetent. Its functionaries feared British blunders might jeopardize Vichy's anti-German activities. It was also known that the Nazis had infiltrated the Gaullists. So friendly relations with the latter were dangerous, too. Perhaps most revealing of Vichy's strategic attitude is the fact that its intelligence services only intervened in Allied efforts directed against Vichy. They did not interfere if they had been able to establish that Allied spies were active in France for the sole purpose of defeating Germany. For much the same reason Vichy spies were often hostile to Gaullists but not necessarily British or Americans. The bottom line was to preserve the Vichy state against all enemies.

This goal is revealed again in the final chapter of Kitson's book, where discoveries about Vichy counter-espionage allow him to reevaluate PÃ©tain's government and its relationship with the intelligence services. The largely autonomous nature of the intelligence services has enabled its veterans to portray their work as a form of "true" resistance–an activity of which the Vichy leadership was largely unaware. Kitson's findings do not confirm this claim. Indeed, the Vichy government tried to control the intelligence community as part of its efforts to centralize collaboration to ensure that nobody was collaborating "too much" or "too little." Documents survive signed by PÃ©tain and his vice-premier, Admiral FranÃ§ois Darlan, authorizing execution of captured German spies, which makes it difficult to argue that PÃ©tain and Darlan did not know who caught them. Even Pierre Laval, Darlan's pro-German successor, declared his willingness to authorize such executions. While this information clarifies relations between the regime and its intelligence services, one may of course argue that the aforementioned Vichy leaders were at the very least willing to execute Germans. Yet Laval's role in the deportation of Jews from France, his creation of the Millice (secret police) to spy on French citizens and finally, his willingness to send French citizens to forced labor camps, do not make him a patriot, even if he was willing to execute German spies. Unlike Laval, General Maxime Weygand, Vichy's Minister of National Defense for three months and then Delegate-General to the North African colonies, was unfalteringly anti-German and accepted collaboration only as a necessary evil. The appointment to such an important post of someone as anti-German as Weygand proves that Vichy was in some respects certainly anti-German. Yet Wey-

gand, too, was a devoted reactionary and a great believer in PÃ©tain's National Revolution.

The primary objective of PÃ©tain and his regime was to maintain territorial sovereignty in the non-occupied zone and in the colonies by any means necessary. Darlan and Laval gladly and fully collaborated with the Germans to achieve this goal. If the power of PÃ©tain and his followers or the territorial integrity of the Vichy state were in jeopardy, the Vichy government was willing to sacrifice its intelligence services. The fact also remains that Vichy shared many of Nazi Germany's ideological views, such as anti-Semitism and opposition to freemasonry, parliamentary democracy, and communism. This ideological proximity placed Vichy squarely in the anti-democratic camp and influenced its policies right down to the decisions taken by counter-intelligence officers in the field. From 1940 to 1942 Vichy arrested about 2,000 German spies; many more were never arrested and those who were caught were not always executed. Some of Vichy's intelligence officers certainly thought of themselves as sincere resisters and many joined Gaullist and communist resistance movements after all of France was occupied in 1942. But even at that point, many of Vichy's spies were reluctant to work with their former Gaullist or communist opponents; there truly were more than "two Frances"[4] competing with each other during the "Dark Years." Kitson's excellent study of counter-espionage makes this state of affairs more painfully clear than studies of other aspects of Vichy are likely to do. One hopes that *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis* will spawn more research of its kind.

Notes

[1]. For a discussion of the Action FranÃ§aise see Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). For details about the PPF see Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[2]. On the indigenous nature of fascism in France see Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche: L'idÃ©ologie fasciste en France* (Paris: Ãditions du Seuil, 1983).

[3]. Quoted in Julian Jackson, *France, The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 23.

[4]. Jackson, p. 24.