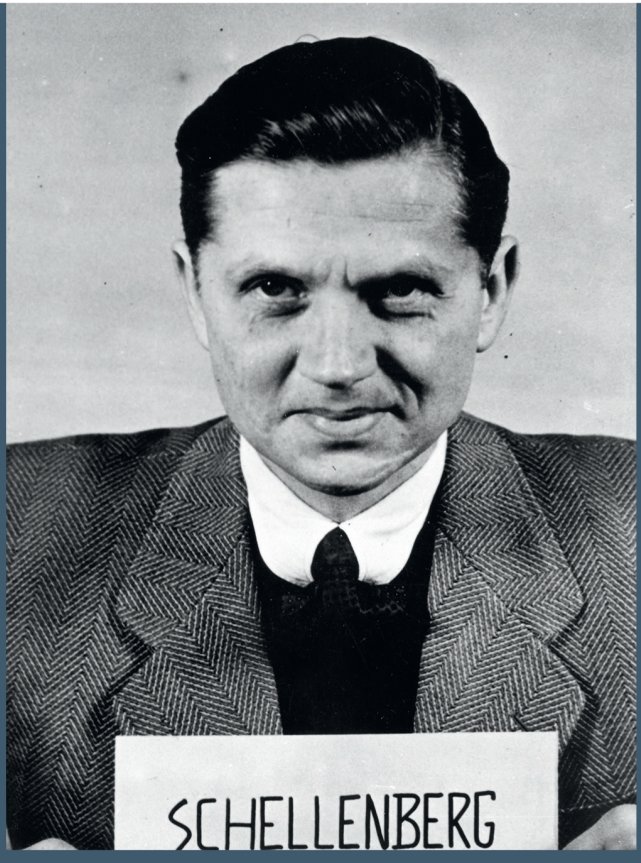
The Third Reich's Intelligence Services

The Career of Walter Schellenberg

Katrin Paehler



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This is the first-ever analytical study of Nazi Germany's political foreign intelligence service, Office VI of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt and its head, Walter Schellenberg. Katrin Paehler tells the story of Schellenberg's career in policing and intelligence, charts the development and activities of the service he eventually headed, and discusses his attempts to place it at the center of Nazi foreign intelligence and foreign policy. The book locates the service in its proper pedigree of the SS as well as in relation to its two main rivals – the Abwehr and the Auswärtige Amt. It also considers the role Nazi ideology played in the conceptualization and execution of foreign intelligence, revealing how this ideological prism fractured and distorted Office VI's view of the world. The book is based on contemporary and postwar documents – many recently declassified – from archives in the United States, Germany, and Russia.

KATRIN PAEHLER is Associate Professor at Illinois State University. She was a member of the "Independent Historians' Commission on the German Foreign Office and Nazism and its Aftermath." She is co-editor of *A Nazi Past: Recasting German Identity in Postwar Europe* (2015).

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Für Vater und Mutter

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When, years ago, I met David Kahn, author of *Hitler's Spies*, I told him that I was writing about Office VI of the Reich Security Main Office. Without missing a beat he blurted out, grinning, "I am so sorry." I have thought about this comment frequently and it always made me chuckle. This has been a long process, and it is with great pleasure and enormous gratitude that I write these sentences acknowledging the many who have supported me over the years.

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though, that it was not easy on them when I moved halfway across the world, but they took this much like they took on life in general: with great humor and grace. I guess my father never quite understood what his eldest child was doing when she was researching this or why it took so long. My mother, for her part, was just flabbergasted how much time one could spend on revisions. I would sometimes try to explain it to her and she would listen carefully, nod her head in seemingly complete understanding, only to say, "That makes sense. Now get it done already." When I close my eyes, I can see them: father's half-smile and a spark in his eyes, saying "finally" with exasperated pride. And mother rolling her eyes (she had a great eye roll!), muttering, "I told you so." So here it is, and it is for my parents.

Katrin Paehler
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Archives

Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, Germany (BAL)
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Introduction

> Schellenberg's name was known to have received a certain prominence in the World Press, not only because of the important position in the G.I.S. [German Intelligence Service], that he held during the greater part of the war, but also on account of the leading part he had played in certain peace negotiations.
>
> Final Report on the Case of Walter Schellenberg[1]

Intelligence combines information and understanding. In spring 1952, an unexpected piece of information rippled through the international postwar intelligence community: Walter Schellenberg, the head of Nazi Germany's political foreign intelligence service, *Amt* VI of Heinrich Himmler's *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA) – Office VI of the Reich Security Main Office – and advisor to and confidant of Himmler had died in Italy. A flurry of intelligence activity took place, meant to confirm a death that despite the man's longstanding ailments came as a surprise. An understanding and appreciation of the facts settled in soon. There would be no further need by the various intelligence services to concern themselves with the former spymaster.[2]

Walter Schellenberg's career had been illustrious. Born in 1910, he was fresh out of law school when Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor on January 30, 1933. Quickly aligning himself with the new government, Schellenberg joined the NSDAP and SS, *Schutzstaffel* – Protective Squads – and was shortly thereafter recruited into the SD,

[1] Final Report on the Case of Walter Schellenberg, NA, RG 319, IRR, XE 001725, Walter Schellenberg, Folders 7 and 8. Until recently, this report was among the lesser-known documents about Walter Schellenberg and could only be found in RG 319. The declassification effort at the National Archives in Washington, DC, has uncovered the same document in both the CIA and FBI files. Reinhard Doerries has published the report, including its twenty-three appendices, introduced by a biographical sketch, as *Hitler's Last Chief of Foreign Intelligence: Allied Interrogations of Walter Schellenberg* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

[2] Chief of Station, Frankfurt to Chief WE, Specific—Dr. Walter Schellenberg, May 6, 1952, NA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-18, Box 112, File: Schellenberg, Walter, vol. 2, 2 of 2.

Sicherheitsdienst – Security and Intelligence Service – of the SS. Over the course of the next decade, Schellenberg, taking all opportunities given to him and creating additional ones along the way, made a stellar career that brought him close to the head of the SD, Reinhard Heydrich and Himmler. In the summer of 1941, Walter Schellenberg was appointed to lead Office VI, the political foreign intelligence service, of Heinrich Himmler's main instrument of power and terror, the RSHA. Having headed the Gestapo's counterintelligence department in the two years prior to this, Schellenberg was no stranger to intelligence matters. He had written on it, tried to define it in its new, Nazified context, and played a prominent role in broadly defined counterespionage matters, notably in the abduction of two British intelligence officers across the Dutch border in November 1939. Until the end of the war, Schellenberg strove to create in Office VI what he deemed a unified, objective, and infallible foreign intelligence service for all of Germany. Along the way, Schellenberg's upstart agency swallowed Germany's seemingly well-entrenched military intelligence service, the *Abwehr* – literally: the Defense – in February 1944 and battled the *Auswärtige Amt* – Foreign Office – under Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. Prominently involved in Himmler's last-ditch efforts to negotiate ith the Western Allies in the spring of 1945, Schellenberg managed to extract himself from the fate that befell many of his SS and SD peers. The end of the war found him in Sweden and he subsequently managed to parlay his short-term stint as Himmler's peace emissary, his perception of himself as a reasonable politician, and his knowledge about the inner workings of Nazi Germany into the role of a friendly witness for the Western Allies. Put on trial during the so-called subsequent Nuremberg proceedings, Schellenberg found himself on the docket with members of the Foreign Office. The erstwhile spymaster had morphed into a diplomat. At Nuremberg, he received a lenient sentence of six years but was released on a medical pardon in 1950. Schellenberg spent the last months of his life near Lake Como in Italy, furtively writing and editing his memoirs, which were published after his death, and regaling visitors with his wartime exploits. A myth of Schellenberg's making gained currency.

Walter Schellenberg has remained an enigma and so has the organization he headed. Who was this man? What did he and his organization stand for? What did Office VI do? How did Office VI collect intelligence and how did it use it? How Nazified, how ideological was Office VI? Where was Office VI's locus in Nazi Germany's intelligence universe? Should Office VI be considered an intelligence service in the first place? Schellenberg's own answers to these broad questions – given in interrogations and in his memoir – are as straightforward as they are predictable:

he was not a Nazi but a German patriot doing his selfless best in trying times; Office VI was an ordinary intelligence service intent on collecting up-to-date and relevant information needed for Germany's leadership to make informed decisions; and Nazi ideology and its adherents played a perfunctory and marginal role in the intelligence service, unless Hitler, Himmler, or Heydrich ordered the opposite.

This book is the first analytical study of Nazi Germany's political foreign intelligence service and the man who led it. It addresses two broad historiographical needs at once. As a biographical treatment – not a full biography – it follows Schellenberg's career, paying due attention to his many activities, largely at Heydrich's behest, as an administrator of the *Sicherheitsdienst*, who tried to define policing and intelligence in the context of the National Socialist state, and as the head of the Gestapo's counterintelligence department before his 1941. It then discusses Schellenberg's role and activities at the helm of Office VI. It is also an institutional history of Office VI and its forerunner, the *SD-Ausland* – literally: SD-Abroad – even though it does not account for all its activities. Taking this institutional-biographical approach, the book tells the story of Schellenberg and the service he eventually headed. It locates the service in its proper pedigree of the SS; investigates the office's activities; discusses Office VI and its activities in relation to its two main rivals – the Abwehr and the Auswärtige Amt; considers the role Nazi ideology played in the activities of the office's leading personnel and in their conceptualization and execution of foreign intelligence; and shows that Schellenberg attempted to make Office VI into an Alternative Foreign Office, based solidly in Himmler's universe.

In the early 1930s, when Heinrich Himmler's recently founded SD was consolidating, "foreign intelligence" was already a crowded field in Germany. Civilian and military entities collected foreign intelligence, focusing on information at the core of their respective mandates. The most important civilian, ministerial organization collecting information was the diplomatic service.[3] It was – and is – at the core of a diplomat's brief to gather political intelligence but diplomats' positions and roles are clearly circumscribed: per longstanding international customs, they are not to engage in espionage or run agents. Rather, they collect political information from open sources such as the media or by using general

[3] Other ministries kept information-gathering entities as well, see: Michael Geyer, "National Socialist Germany: The Politics of Information," in Ernest R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemy: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 322–325; David Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1978; reprint, Cambridge, MA: DaCapo Press, 2000), 55.

contacts established in their host countries.[4] Their primary customer is their minister and other foreign policy decision makers in their home countries. International diplomatic customs also provide an above-board venue for the collection of military information: the military attaché. His job is to keep tabs on the military developments in the host country and to liaise with its military personnel. He is a snoop rather than a spy and in a perfect, theoretical world the exchange of military attachés should safeguard countries from surprises. A military attaché's customers are the foreign minister and decision makers in the military. The Auswärtige Amt of the early 1930s adhered to established international norms; it was, argues Michael Geyer, "static" and had largely withdrawn "from military matters."[5]

Straight military intelligence – for operational and tactical purposes – was collected and evaluated by the services' separate intelligence entities.[6] In this context, the army's intelligence service is the most relevant one. Its evaluation section, the *Nachrichtenabteilung*, Intelligence Branch, originated with the Prussian Great General Staff during the wars of 1866 and 1870/71 but was always drawn down at the end of the military campaigns. Intelligence held a low priority in the Prussian – and later the German – military and was also not considered a place in which ambitious military men could make great careers. Indeed, for the longest time intelligence gathering was not regarded as a separate activity and designated intelligence officers did not exist at the lower levels. This changed during the Great War and in June 1917, the evaluation section, the Intelligence Branch of the General Staff was renamed *Abteilung Fremde Heere*, Foreign Armies Branch. After the war and in violation of the Versailles Treaty, the General Staff remained in a disguised existence as the *Truppenamt*, Troops Department, and so did Foreign Armies, reemerging in the open with the remilitarization of Germany in 1935. Foreign Armies focused on operational and tactical matters – this is what interested its leadership most – but was not averse to bringing into its analyses nonmilitary issues and thus an "aura of completeness." Part of the *Oberkommando des Heeres*, High Command of the Army, Foreign Armies was divided into *Fremde Heere West*, Foreign Armies West, and *Fremde Heere Ost*, Foreign Armies East, in 1939. With this, the former "nerve center of the army's foreign intelligence mutated into a system of theater-intelligence forces,"

[4] "Political Intelligence," in Bruce W. Watson, Susan M. Watson, and Gerald W. Hopple, eds., *United States Intelligence: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 447–449.
[5] Geyer, "Politics of Information," 312; Kahn, *Spies*, 55.
[6] "Military Intelligence," in *United States Intelligence: An Encyclopedia*, 353–354.

yet it is worth keeping in mind that the so-called nerve center largely restricted itself to operational military foreign intelligence.[7]

What came to be known in the 1920s as the Abwehr also originated with the General Staff of the Prussian Army during the German War of 1866 when General Helmuth von Moltke created the *Nachrichtenbüro*, the Intelligence Bureau, to gather covertly foreign intelligence with a focus on, but not restricted to, military matters and strategic military intelligence. It took some time before this entity found a permanent institutional locus in the General Staff but it was eventually designated O.Q. III b, Oberquartiermeister III B and by the turn of the century, its funds and staffing levels were rising. By 1901, III b employed some 120 officers, running agents from War Intelligence Posts abroad. Yet there existed a great schism between the acquisition of foreign intelligence and espionage, handled by III b, and its evaluation, which took place in the Intelligence Branch of the General Staff.[8] Before the Great War, then, the acquisition of foreign intelligence had become largely the military's responsibility; foreign intelligence was understood primarily as intelligence related to military matters; there was no centralized evaluation of all intelligence; there was little communication between military and civilian entities; and the military as a whole continued to underappreciate intelligence as a field. And there was little interest or patience for "politics, psychology, economics, social problems, and other intangibles," as these were unlikely to influence the military's immediate – tactical – decision-making process.[9] If anyone dealt with these intangibles, it was the Auswärtige Amt. Certainly not the best set-up, it was workable still and in a society as dominated by the military as Wilhelmine Germany, it is not surprising that the military – and not civilian entities – dominated the collection and evaluation of foreign intelligence or that foreign intelligence was conceived as military intelligence.

After the Great War, during which III b, then headed by Walther Nicolai, saw both success and lackluster performances, the entity came to the Troops Department as well.[10] Renamed *Abwehr Gruppe*, Abwehr

[7] Kahn, *Spies*, 30–31, 35, 50; Geyer, "Politics of Information," 319, 330–335.

[8] Kahn, *Spies*, 32. Different in Gert Buchheit, *Der Deutsche Geheimdienst: Die Geschichte der militärischen Abwehr* (München: List Verlag, 1966), 19–20. See also Tom Polgar, "The Intelligence Services of West Germany," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 1, no. 4 (1986), 82–83.

[9] Heinz Höhne, *Der Krieg im Dunkeln: Macht und Einfluß der deutschen und russischen Geheimdienste* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1985; reprint Berlin: Ullstein, 1988), 48.

[10] On the Great War, see: Kahn, *Spies*, 34–41; Polgar, "The Intelligence Services," 83–84; Buchheit, *Geheimdienst*, 20–31; also Walter Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte: Internationale Spionage und ihre Bekämpfung im Weltkrieg und Heute* (Leipzig: K.F. Köhler, 1923).

Group – to put adequate emphasis on its supposedly defensive nature, and as Kahn stresses to "camouflage [its] espionage functions" – it was a small entity with big tasks: the collection of intelligence, espionage, and counterintelligence and counterespionage. The late 1920s saw an attempt to centralize foreign intelligence. In 1928, defense minister Wilhelm Groener pulled the Abwehr out of the Troops Department and the naval intelligence out of the Naval Command. Combining it with the Cipher Service, it became the *Abwehr-Abteilung*, the Abwehr Branch. It was eventually integrated into the *Ministeramt*, Ministry Office and declared its sole intelligence-gathering unit. The Abwehr was to focus on strategic and military-political information for the minister, its main customer, and his office "as the military-political nerve center of the state." The plan did not work out, as there was a lack of cooperation and no consensus on national strategies, the precondition, as Geyer emphasizes, for any centralization of German intelligence efforts to work out.[11] In 1932, the Abwehr was placed under naval Captain Konrad Patzig and another navy man, Wilhelm Canaris, replaced Patzig in January 1935. Patzig's appointment can be read as indicative of the Abwehr's limited relevance in the eyes of career army personnel, yet naval officers had a leg-up on their army colleagues: they tended to have more foreign experience. This was certainly true in the case of Wilhelm Canaris.[12] Put differently, directing the Abwehr was not the most coveted assignment but there was also the growing realization that some foreign experience was a useful precondition for it. Geyer argues that at the time of Canaris' appointment in 1935, the Abwehr was on a downward slope. Some of the changes of the late 1920s had been undone: communication intelligence had been returned to the respective services and some of the more ambitious cipher personnel had joined Hermann Göring's *Forschungsamt*, Research Office. Canaris then focused his office's work on something in which nobody else wanted to engage: espionage, counterespionage, and sabotage.[13] And he did well. In 1938, after the dismissal of the War Minister Werner von Blomberg

[11] Kahn, *Spies*, 224; Geyer, "Politics of Information," 316–317; Thomas Menzel, "Organisationsgeschichte des Amtes Ausland/Abwehr im Spiegel der Aktenüberlieferung im Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg i. Br.," *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 67/1 (2008), 105–115.

[12] Normal Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, *Spy Book: The Encyclopedia of Espionage* (New York, NY: Random House, 1997), 4. On Canaris, see: André Brissaud, *Canaris: The Biography of Admiral Canaris, Chief of German Military Intelligence in the Second World War*, trans. Ian Colvin (New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974); Ian Goodhope Colvin, *Master Spy: The Incredible Story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Who, While Hitler's Chief of Intelligence, Was a Secret Ally of the British* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951); Heinz Höhne, *Canaris*, trans. by J. Maxwell Brownjohn (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1979), and Kahn, *Spies*, 226–230.

[13] Geyer, "Politics of Information," 317–318.

and the abolishment of the ministry, the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), High Command of the Armed Forces, was created; it inherited the Abwehr from the ministry and created, in essence, a new entity, as of October 1939 called *Amt Auslandsnachrichten und Abwehr*, Office for Foreign Information and Counterintelligence. Its Foreign Information section collected and disseminated foreign political material, sometimes likened to "news update[s] in a good newspaper," but its key activities happened in the three branches of the Abwehr. Abwehr I focused on military espionage; Abwehr II on sabotage and covert operations; and Abwehr III on counterespionage. The Office provided both the OKW and OKH – and anyone else who showed interest – with situation reports that also included some rudimentary evaluation.[14] The dislocations of the early 1930s notwithstanding, domestically and abroad the Abwehr was understood as Germany's foreign intelligence service and it was considered successful.

The German case was unusual, then, in that the entity that had the greatest potential and the strongest claim to become a centralized organization for the collection and evaluation of military and political foreign intelligence, the Abwehr, was part of the military. Yet the military held intelligence in low estimation and was primarily interested in operational and tactical and not in strategic intelligence, which went beyond its immediate interests. In Great Britain, in contrast, the services' intelligence units addressed the respective intelligence needs of the services while MI 6, a centralized, clandestine collection agency, answered primarily to the Foreign Office, where most evaluation took place. MI 6 also enjoyed reasonable relations to MI 5, which dealt with counterintelligence in Britain and the colonies, except India, where counterintelligence fell under the responsibility of the Government of India. No integrated service existed, on the other hand, in the United States in the 1930s. Indeed, there – as well as in France – the division between military and political information was more clearly defined and seemingly more workable.[15] Put differently,

[14] Kahn, *Spies*, 47; Geyer, "Politics of Information," 336–337. Menzel, "Organisationsgeschichte," 118–121.

[15] Philip H.J. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States: A Comparative Perspective. Vol I: Evolution of the US Intelligence Community* (St. Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 167–172; Keith Jeffery, *MI 6: The History of Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), IX–XII; 725–747; Robert J. Young, "French Military Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1938–1939," in Ernest R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemy: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 272–279; Cameron Watt, "British Intelligence and the Coming of the Second World War in Europe," in Ernest R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemy: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 242–244; Wesley Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 20–22.

while not free of conflict, Western intelligence universes, notably the admired British one, had developed reasonable and workable structures. The German intelligence universe, on the other hand, remained in flux, especially after 1933 and its soft spots – fragmentation, decentralization, lack of evaluation, and the unresolved tension between military and political information, tactical and strategic intelligence, domestic and foreign issues – obvious. It was a potential opening for ambitious men and organizations that believed themselves to be the state's elite and to have – qua ideology – the correct answers to questions and problems that had vexed many before them.

There is no shortage of publications about Nazi foreign intelligence efforts, ranging from the sensational to the scholarly with the former outnumbering the latter. Most studies focus on the military intelligence service, the Abwehr.[16] All of them, although for different reasons, declare German foreign intelligence efforts a failure. David Kahn's seminal study *Hitler's Spies*, which focuses on the Abwehr but mentions Office VI, proposes convincing and nuanced explanations for this failure. Unjustifiably arrogant, Germany lost touch with reality; waging an aggressive war, Germany ignored the need for good intelligence until the tide of the war turned against it; many high ranking officers were hostile to the very concept of foreign intelligence; the authority structure of Nazi Germany and the inefficiency of the party state led by a charismatic *Führer* impaired the collection of foreign intelligence; and anti-Semitism deprived the German intelligence community of many scholars who could have benefitted it. Most importantly, Hitler's and Himmler's ideological irrationalism impeded foreign intelligence, "Hitler's charisma devastated German intelligence."[17] In short: already in dire straits due to German hubris, arrogance, and hostility toward the concept of foreign intelligence, Nazi Germany's ideology, structure, and Hitler's personality administered the death blow to German foreign intelligence efforts. Rebecca Ratcliff, on the other hand, focuses more on German traditions than on Nazism. She argues that the German failure to realize that Enigma, the German code-system, had been broken is to be found in German military, intelligence, and cultural traditions. Ratcliff highlights the German penchant for decentralization and specialization; the lack of cooperation; the permanent rivalries for funds and personnel;

[16] Kahn, *Spies*; Lauran Paine, *The Abwehr: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (London: Robert Hale, 1984); Richard Breitman et al., eds., *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis* (Washington, DC: National Archives Trust Fund for the Nazi War Crimes and Imperial Japanese Records Interagency Working Group, 2004).

[17] Kahn, *Spies*, 524–536.

the wish to hire the "right people," as defined by race, class, and military loyalty; and the low priority of intelligence work in the thinking of the military leadership with its concomitant focus on the instant gratification of tactical intelligence. The latter was of particular importance for the practitioners of intelligence; not considered real military men, their need for tangible, quick successes was tantamount – as was their desire to give their work a particular intellectual sheen. Ratcliff posits that many of these traits suited Hitler and the Nazi leadership but came courtesy of German traditions. Nazi rule exacerbated the existing systemic and cultural issues – and associated blind spots – of the German military.[18] How did these issues play out in Office VI, a foreign intelligence outfit that originated with the SS, Nazi Germany's ideological elite? The answer – oftentimes a resounding "it depends" – adds additional nuance to the question and talks broadly to matters of foreign intelligence in the German context.

Most serious studies of German intelligence efforts are written outside of Germany. In the same way that intelligence held low priority among military planners, the study of intelligence has held low priority among historians in Germany – a situation that is slowly changing. There is scant information on intelligence in the official, multivolume, (West-) German study of World War II, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*.[19] And the few German-language books on German intelligence efforts are dated and were frequently penned by authors who had been involved in the activities they describe.[20] While both the Abwehr as well as army intelligence efforts find mention in any number of studies on World War II, broad scholarly studies on foreign intelligence efforts, thematic or synthetic, as they are common in the United States or Great Britain, do not exist in the German case.[21] As a consequence, it is, for example, surprisingly difficult to piece together something as basic as the structure and institutional affiliations of the component parts of Germany's

[18] Rebecca A. Ratcliff, *Delusions of Intelligence: Enigma, Ultra, and the End of Secure Ciphers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[19] Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsinstitut, ed., *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*.

[20] For example: Buchheit, *Geheimdienst*.

[21] For example: Davies, *Vol. I: Evolution of the US Intelligence Community*; Philip H.J. Davies, *Intelligence and the Government in Britain and the United States. Vol. II: Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012); Barry M. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Service 1942–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Jeffery, *MI 6: The History of Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949*; Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy*. For a recent organizational history of German intelligence: Menzel, "Organisationsgeschichte," 105–136.

intelligence universe – military and civilian – before and after 1933, their relationships with each other, and their respective customers.[22] Much work still needs to be done.

These general problems come into even starker relief in the few works on Office VI and its forerunner, the SD-Ausland. Memoirs and thinly disguised memoirs, problematic primary sources at best but rarely treated as such, make up much of the field.[23] Sensationalist journalistic accounts, relying heavily on the aforementioned memoirs and other problematic accounts, round out these offerings.[24] These works hold that Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich thwarted good intelligence work for ideological reasons. Different from what Kahn argues when it comes to Hitler's role, here these statements are meant to exculpate. That said, like many other politicians, Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich were, indeed, allergic to intelligence they did not like and which did not conform to perceptions; an extensive literature on the role of perceptions among intelligence customers and its contribution to intelligence failures speaks to this.[25] Yet the leadership's dislike of some of Office VI's findings does not make it good intelligence. However, the focus on the leadership's distaste for certain information, carefully selected parts of Kahn's book, and exculpatory explanations peddled by former Office VI men came to define the understanding of Office VI. Differentiations between the Abwehr, the military foreign intelligence service, and Office VI, the political foreign intelligence service, disappeared or conclusions initially germane – if not necessarily accurate – to studies of the Abwehr were furthermore transferred to Office VI. In addition, scholars and journalists alike did not seem to know what to make of Office VI and its head Schellenberg. There is a palpable uneasiness with an entity that does not conform to what one

[22] Still most useful but focusing on 1933 to 1941: Geyer, "Politics of Information," 310–346.

[23] Walter Schellenberg, *The Labyrinth: Memoirs of Walter Schellenberg, Hitler's Chief of Counterintelligence*, intr. Allan Bullock, trans. Louis Hagen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956; reprint, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000); Wilhelm Höttl, *Die Geheime Front: Organisation, Personen und Aktionen des deutschen Geheimdienstes* (Linz and Vienna: Nibelungen, 1950); Wilhelm Höttl, *Unternehmen Bernhard: Ein historischer Tatsachenbericht über die größte Geldfälschaktion aller Zeiten* (Wels: Westermühl, 1955); Wilhelm Höttl, *Im Einsatz für das Reich: Im Auslandsgeheimdienst des Dritten Reiches* (Koblenz: Verlag S. Bublies, 1997). Abwehr personnel also wrote exculpatory memoirs.

[24] For example: Andre Brissaud, *The Nazi Secret Service*, trans. Milton Waldman (New York: Norton & Company, 1974); Edmond L. Blandford, *SS Intelligence: The Nazi Secret Service* (Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife Publishing Ltd., 2000).

[25] Richard K. Betts, "Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable," *World Politics. A Quarterly Journal of International Relations* 31 (1978/1979), 61–89; Michael I. Handel, *War, Strategy, and Intelligence* (London: Frank Cass, 1989), Chapter 4.

would expect of an intelligence service. There are, for example, few missions one can describe, let alone successful ones. Yet the question of intelligence failure is the least of the researcher's problems. There are no clear customers beyond, if at all, Himmler. The office's structure seems in perpetual upheaval and Schellenberg – by his own accounts – focused his attention on peculiar and far-fetched foreign political endeavors. Yet Office VI has always been treated as an intelligence service, maybe a slightly strange one. This book makes the case that this explanatory model falls short and proposes the additional reading of Office VI as a nascent Alternative Foreign Office.

Leaving aside these interpretative questions for the moment, the strong reliance on a few key texts, interrogations, and interviews has proven harmful to scholarly and journalistic endeavors alike – even if it cannot be avoided. Schellenberg's memoirs, for example, can become a liability to historians, but at least his writings can be considered "set," as the author has been dead for decades. Oral histories, interviews, and evolving interpretations by former officials, such as Wilhelm Hoettl, the highest-ranking member of Office VI to live a long life, constitute a greater problem.[26] A prolific postwar information peddler and a member of Austrian and South German neo-Nazi circles, Hoettl, who held a postwar doctorate in history, fashioned himself as the historian of Office VI. Aside from his own publications, he spent his long postwar life talking to historians and journalists, disseminating much dubious information along the way. Many journalistic and scholarly accounts are poorer for their reliance on interviews of Hoettl and others, their descriptive nature, and their lack of analytical rigor.[27] Yet, it is impossible to write about Office VI without using Schellenberg's apologetic memoirs or without paying attention to Hoettl's musings. Schellenberg, for one, impresses less with his ability to tell a tall tale made from whole cloth than by his talent to mix fact with fiction, lie with truth, half lie with full truth, and full lie with half-truth with fiction. Within one sentence, one story, one can find it all. And sometimes Schellenberg is as truthful as a man can be, even though he rarely appears to be without an endgame. Schellenberg was as much a liar as he was a master dissembler, and it is the latter that makes dealing with his statements so difficult. I found that keeping in mind what he possibly wanted to achieve with a certain account provides for a decent window into its likely truthfulness. Like any historical source – maybe even more so – statements by Schellenberg and the

[26] Hoettl, who died in 1999, was of immense interest to US intelligence services after the war. See his voluminous CIA records. NA, RG 263, Entries ZZ-16 and ZZ-18.

[27] For example: Thorsten J. Querg "Spionage und Terror: das Amt VI des RSHA, 1939–1945" (Ph. D. diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1997).

like have to be evaluated and contextualized carefully, and, if possible, confirmed and reconfirmed independently. Yet still, dealing with Schellenberg's statements is akin to a master class in sources analysis and there is ample room for misinterpretation, as the historian never sees the entire picture but frequently follows a trail someone else has laid for particular reasons. All one can do is to try one's best and keep in mind the sources' possible shortcomings.

Writing intelligence history is a tricky business. In a perfect world one would write a book like this exclusively from contemporaneous records, but this is impossible. In many cases no written record was ever created; existing documents were destroyed or dispersed at the end of the war; or the evidence is fragmentary. I have tried my best to piece together stories from disparate sources held at archives in the United States, Germany, and Russia. There exists no distinct, separate record group for Office VI, let alone its component parts. A great many documents dealing with Office VI can be found among the records of the RSHA and those of Himmler but combining them into a reliable institutional history remains difficult. The matter is made even more difficult by the fact that copies of this record group – organized differently and not always containing the same materials – can be found in different archives in the United States and Germany.[28] The disjointed nature of these sometimes overlapping and sometimes complementary collections makes the work in these records both cumbersome and exciting while records from other German authorities – for example the Auswärtige Amt, held at the *Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts*, Political Archives of the Foreign Office, in Berlin – help to complement and to illuminate further the fractured historical record of Office VI.

A short but intensive research trip to Moscow – during the boiling hot summer of 2006 – yielded additional finds of the contemporaneous sort. *Fond*, record group, 500 of the *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Archiv*, RGVA, Russian State War Archive, in Moscow holds documents from the various RSHA offices and its predecessors. Before their transfer to

[28] At the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC, the documents of the *Reichsführer* SS Heinrich Himmler are in RG 242, T-175. The same collection of documents, plus additional documents acquired by the German Federal Archives after the return of the so-called Captured German documents, can be found as Record Group 58 [BAL, R 58] in the Bundesarchiv. The Americans catalogued the documents the way they received them at war's end; the West German archivists attempted to recreate the documents' original structure. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum holds a copy of the Bundesarchiv's version of this record group [USHMM 14.016 M]; however, this collection does not include documents the Bundesarchiv gained after Germany's reunification from GDR holdings or copies of documents acquired in Poland later.

the RGVA, these materials were held in Moscow's famed KGB archive, known by its shorthand *osobyi* ("special"). Over the years bits and pieces of this record group found their way abroad and former East German archives held some materials dealing with foreign intelligence matters. It appears that the German Democratic Republic acquired these materials in the 1960s, presumably as ammunition in the German-German propaganda wars. These materials are now part of the German *Bundesarchiv*, Federal Archive, in Berlin. And in the early 1990s, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, USHMM, in Washington, DC, obtained microfiche copies of documents from fond 500 that deal with the Holocaust.[29] Parts of fond 500 can thus be accessed in the West – and I have seen some documents there – but the majority of documents dealing with foreign intelligence can be used only in Moscow, where I found most of the fond 500 documents I have used in this book. This substantial collection of SD-Ausland/Office VI materials deals with the intelligence service's structure and day-to-day operations in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe and is untouched by archivists' ordering hands. The documents were filmed, to the best of my knowledge with the financial support of the USHMM, but its order is as it must have been at the end of the war when the files were shipped to Moscow. Working with those files has improved tremendously my understanding of the organization, its personnel, and its operations. There is, however, much more to be had in those records, especially when it comes to piecing together operations in various countries. I hope that soon another enterprising historian will delve into these sources.

This book is also among the first to make extensive use of the declassification effort at the National Archives in Washington DC, for I began my investigation of Schellenberg and his office at a fortuitous point in time.[30] There was always material available on Schellenberg and

[29] Bundesarchiv-Zwischenarchiv Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten (BA-DH); RSHA Film A to G. When I used these films in Berlin in 2001, they were not yet catalogued and had no official signature or designation. The designation above is my own design, reflecting the information available then. At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), the collection is labeled "11.001 M, *Osobyi* Archive Moscow." The Bundesarchiv, Berlin Lichterfelde owns a German translation of the Russian finding aid; Western historians also created finding aids to *fond* 500. George C. Browder, "Captured German and Other Nations' Documents in the Osoby (Special) Archive, Moscow," *CEH* 24 (1991), 424–445; George C. Browder, "Update on Captured German Documents in the Former Osoby Archive, Moscow," *CEH* 26 (1993), 335–342.

[30] Other scholars have used these newly declassified materials as well. Stephen Tyas, "Allied Intelligence Agencies and the Holocaust: Information Acquired from German Priosners of War," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22 (Spring 2008), 1–24; Kerstin von Lingen, "Conspiracy of Silence: How the 'Old Boys' Network of American Intelligence Shielded SS General Karl Wolff from Prosecution," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22

on Nazi Germany's foreign intelligence efforts at the National Archives – Captured German Documents as well as documents originating with the Office of Strategic Services, OSS, the Army Staff, or created and pulled together during and for postwar trials, many of them interrogations – but President Clinton's Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act of 1998 opened the historian's equivalent of Pandora's Box. It declassified documents dealing with Nazi Germany and the CIA, the US Army, and the FBI's postwar recruitment efforts among Nazi officials that had been held back during earlier declassification efforts and eventually – in fits and starts and with delays owed to different administrations' definitions of national security – released almost nine million pages.[31] Among these were unknown interrogations of Schellenberg and other members of Office VI, decodes of Office VI communications, Allied analyses of German intelligence efforts and their practitioners, and a myriad of other documents relevant to my area of interest. These documents complement, expand, and sometimes call into question the existing historical record.

These recently declassified documents are not without problems either. There is, of course, the issue of interrogations and memoirs, which I already touched upon. It is only greater now that there are more of them. But as no declassification effort in the United States will make up for contemporaneous German documents lost, destroyed, or never created, the historian has to rely on interrogations and testimonies in which people – caught red-handed – are trying to put their best foot forward. After the war most of the men involved in German foreign intelligence efforts talked like waterfalls. That does not mean that their statements are reliable. Office VI was an agency permanently in flux; what some of them believed to be true and permanent – from policies to job assignments – was oftentimes but a snapshot. Office VI was also a secretive organization; policies, let alone intentions were not communicated widely. Consequently, some postwar testimonies, even those given with the best intentions, amount to little more than glorified office gossip. Thirdly, Office VI was defined by intense rivalries between individuals and fiefdoms; these rivalries color interrogations vividly. Fourthly, everyone had activities to hide and activities to highlight; for many, their interrogations were akin to step dancing on a tightrope. It is also worth recalling

(Spring 2008), 74–109; Hilary Earl, *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial: Atrocity, Law, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Kerstin von Lingen, *SS and Secret Service. "Verschwörung des Schweigens": Die Akte Karl Wolff* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010).

31 Breitman et al., eds., *U.S. Intelligence*, 4; *Nazi War Crimes & Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group. Final Report to the United States Congress*. April 2007. http://www.archives.gov/iwg/reports/final-report-2007.html, accessed May 25, 2015.

that interrogation reports, even stenographic versions, rarely allow for the true voice of the interrogated to be heard – and that is without even considering issues of translation. Lastly, the quality of an interrogation is contingent on an interrogator's level of knowledge at a certain point in time and space. In short: interrogations are the things of which historians' nightmares are made. I have attempted to navigate their pitfalls in a way similar to which I have treated Schellenberg's memoir. I assume the worst and always keep in mind the potential endgame of the interrogated.

Also prominent among these recently declassified documents are Allied analyses of events, organizations, and people. Some of these reports, especially those based on interrogations – well intended and in all likelihood put to together with the greatest possible care – perpetuate the mistakes, misunderstandings, misinformation, and sometimes plain old lies discussed above. Other intelligence briefs, pulled together from anything available then appear brilliantly perceptive, but the historian is well advised to keep in mind the dangers of falling for a short-circuited argument: analysts back then and researchers right now are looking at much of the same materials. Seen in that light, then, allied perceptiveness loses some of its luster. Only additional documents not available at the time of the initial analysis – or not taken into account then – have the potential to break this cycle. It is worth keeping this dynamic in mind. Yet despite all of this, these documents presented me with an unsurpassed opportunity and they will do the same for others. Put differently, I have collected documents here and abroad; I have had the opportunity to work with documents few, if any, other historians have seen; and all my sources – prewar, wartime, and postwar – are fraught with problems. It is a truism of the worst kind that all historical sources have to be evaluated carefully. Yet, it is a particularly true truism when it comes to the topic and the sources at hand here, for they present a perfect archival storm. That said, all history remains estimation; the hope and the goal is to make it as precise, coherent, and waterproof as possible. History is a debate, but in it, we understand the past a bit better.

Even the most comprehensive research remains just that. No single historian can see all documents pertaining to the issue of interest. And the (archival) law of diminishing returns remains a potent reminder that it might not be worth it. Yet there still remains the inkling that some files remain just outside the reach of even the most committed researcher. Richard Breitman notes that "[t]here are strong indications that additional information resides in unreleased British files," drawing attention to a peeved FBI agent who observed that a certain Mr. Johnson, a special interrogator of the War Office in London, had a leg-up on him: "Johnson is a man who has made a study of Schellenberg for the last five years

and has had a penetration Agent in close contact with the man for some time. In fact he knows Schellenberg almost as well as he knows himself." The possibilities as to who his penetration agent might have been, if s/he indeed existed, are as endless as they are intriguing, as is speculation about the materials that might remain classified in British archives – dealing with Office VI or with Walter Schellenberg. Similarly, Adrian O'Sullivan makes a strong case that Roman Gamotha of Office VI was turned by the Soviets while on assignment in Persia; here, too, there is no knowing what files might be hidden in Moscow collections and what they might reveal.[32] Yet there is plenty of material available.

No book-length biography exists on Walter Schellenberg – in much the same way that there is no true institutional history of Office VI and its forerunner. Aside from shorter biographical treatments, Reinhard Doerries' most recent book, which also provides a good overview of some of office's activities and is based on an amazing array of documents, comes closest to it.[33] This lacuna is even more surprising if one considers Schellenberg's exculpatory memoir, which is still in wide circulation and a perennial favorite of World War II buffs. Yet it might well be that this, and Schellenberg's talent as a master dissembler, is exactly the reason why. Schellenberg is hard to pin down. On the other hand, there is no private Schellenberg to be found in the sources. The man and private individual remain an enigma and the few glimpses one does get, for example in his divorce proceeding, are unpleasant. The upshot is that the historian is unlikely to get too close to the object of her research or to develop empathy – a concern of many who write biographies of Nazi officials. It is worth noting, though, that slightly different versions of Schellenberg's memoirs are in circulation and there is an indication that his widow held on to "several suit cases [sic] additional material."[34] Whatever those suitcases might have held and wherever they might be today, a scholarly edition of Schellenberg's memoir – as well as an analysis of the changes imposed on it over the years – would

[32] Richard Breitman, "Nazi Espionage: The Abwehr and the SD Foreign Intelligence," in Richard Breitman et al., eds., *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis* (Washington, DC: National Trust Fund for the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group, 2004), 114; Adrian O'Sullivan, *Nazi Secret Warfare in Persia (Iran): The Failure of the German Intelligence Services, 1939–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 136–141, 204–205, 248.

[33] Reinhard R. Doerries, *Hitler's Intelligence Chief Walter Schellenberg: The Man Who Kept Germany's Secrets* (New York: Enigma Books, 2009); Doerries, *Hitler's Last Chief of Foreign Intelligence*; George C. Browder "Walter Schellenberg: Eine Geheimdienst-Phantasie," in Ronald Smelser and Enrico Syring, eds., *Die SS: Elite unter dem Totenkopf. 30 Lebensläufe* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), 418–430.

[34] Berlin to Director, July 2, 1957, NA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-18, Box 112, File: Schellenberg, vol. 2, 2 of 2.

be beneficial to any debate about Nazi Germany and about postwar apologetic tendencies and their influences on (West) German society and beyond.[35]

For many years the biographical approach to writing history, especially biographies of so-called lesser Nazis – a flexible term, indeed – was unfashionable among historians. Structures trumped individuals.[36] This trend turned in the aftermath of Ulrich Herbert's masterful study on Werner Best and recent years have seen several fine biographies of Nazi officials – and an excellent collective biography of the "unbound generation" at the helm of the RSHA – that have paid due attention to structural issues and considered questions of individual ideological steadfastness and convictions.[37] This book does tackle these same issues in discussing Schellenberg's life, career, and politics, but does not claim biographical comprehensiveness. And attentive readers will notice that Reinhard Doerries and I disagree quite frequently on the evaluation and interpretation of Schellenberg's activities, for he is more willing to follow Schellenberg's lead than I am. Reasonable people can disagree and I remain indebted to Doerries, who pushed me to reconsider – if rarely to revise – my assessments.

This book, then, based on a broad document base, combines a biographical treatment of Walter Schellenberg with the institutional history

[35] Schellenberg, *Labyrinth*. For an overview on its genesis, see Allan Bullock's introduction. The memoirs have seen numerous editions; Browder, "Schellenberg," 418–430. The original manuscript is held at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ) in Munich: IfZ, ED 90/1–5. I use the reprint of the original English-language edition for its readily available translations. The newer edition of the original German version is slightly more detailed but not more truthful. Many historians dealing with the waning months of the Third Reich, for which Schellenberg's memoirs provide one of the few detailed accounts, have relied too heavily on him. Peter Padfield, *Himmler: Reichsführer SS* (New York: Holt, 1991) and Yehuda Bauer, *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[36] Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 342–344.

[37] Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903–1989*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Dietz, 1996). See also, for example: Lutz Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher: Die Karriere des SS-Führers Franz Alfred Six* (München: Beck, 1998); Claudia Steur, *Theodor Dannecker: Ein Funktionär der "Endlösung"* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1997); Andreas Seeger, *"Gestapo-Müller": Die Karriere eines Schreibtischtäters* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1996); Epstein, *Model Nazi;* Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Reinhard Heydrich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, trans. by Jeremy Noakes and Lesley Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). An exception to this trend was Peter Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). See also: Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten: Das Führungkorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002) [published in English as *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2010).]

of the SD-Ausland/Office VI. It consists of nine chapters and revolves around three thematic complexes: Walter Schellenberg's biography and career; Nazi conceptualizations of foreign intelligence; and the development and activities of what came to be known as Office VI of the Reich Security Main Office. Despite the three thematic complexes, this book is visualized best as a braid of two strands – one biographical and the other institutional. These two themes weave in and out and, especially in the first half of the book, seem to exist alongside each other. This changes in the second half of the book when they join together. After the war, US intelligence analysts stated that Schellenberg's personality defined the foreign intelligence service he led, and there is a great deal of truth to that assessment.[38] This was, after all, a state organized by the *Führerprinzip*, leadership principle. Thus, both the organization and its leader need to be investigated, as only then does either one come into view.

Chapter 1 deals with Schellenberg's political socialization, the slow but steady rise of the SD, and Schellenberg's early career within it. It depicts an organization and a man defining and then filling a need, more frequently than not by using ideological precepts. Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to Schellenberg's rapid rise and surreptitious, yet palpable importance and influence in the Reich Security Main Office and with its leaders. These chapters also consider Schellenberg's role as the head of the Gestapo's counterintelligence department and his attempts to remake it – and intelligence in general – according to Nazi ideology. Chapter 3 draws particular attention to and analyzes several of Schellenberg's ideologized initiatives, which broke new, Nazified ground, and his intimate involvement in many of Nazi Germany's core racist and genocidal policies. Chapter 4 takes a step back from Schellenberg and investigates the activities of Office VI and its forerunner under Heinz Jost and then considers Schellenberg's attempts to remake the office into an ideologized intelligence service upon his appointment to its leadership. Chapter 5 investigates the conflict between the military intelligence efforts and Office VI, focusing, as an example, on Office VI's attempts at mass espionage in the Soviet Union that, in the minds of its instigators, highlighted the office's ideological firmness. The chapter concludes with the absorption of the better part of the Abwehr into Schellenberg's service. Chapter 6 constitutes a case study of Office VI intelligence efforts in Italy and conflict and competition with other German entities there, showcasing an ideologically and racially homogenous intelligence agency

[38] The German Intelligence Service and the War, December 1, 1945, NA, RG 319, Entry 134 A, Box 5, XE 003641, German Intelligence Service, 3 of 3.

that deprived itself of any reach beyond Italian Fascists with pro-Nazi leanings. It also delineates various other activities, such as lootings and deportations, in which Office VI engaged under the guise of foreign intelligence. Chapter 7 focuses on the strained relationship between Himmler, Schellenberg, and Office VI on the one hand and Joachim von Ribbentrop and the Auswärtige Amt on the other. It highlights Office VI's attempts to dispose of Ribbentrop – some of them camouflaged as foreign intelligence, some outright bureaucratic attacks on the man and his ministry – and to create what I have termed an "alternative foreign office" at Himmler's disposal. Taken together, Chapters 5–7 argue that even conflicts that appeared functional and driven by bureaucratic or organizational considerations were fought with ideological means and with a keen eye toward ideological considerations. The penultimate chapter (Chapter 8) discusses the last-minute peace feelers of this nascent alternative foreign office, which used concentration camp inmates as pawns in an attempt to either break up the anti-Hitler alliance outright or to reach a separate agreement with the Western Allies, which would have broken up the alliance by default. The chapter contends that these efforts were not the aberration but rather consistent with basic tenets of Nazi ideology – most notably the existence of "Jewish World Conspiracy" – and with the foreign political role that Schellenberg and Himmler envisioned for Office VI. The last chapter (Chapter 9) focuses on Schellenberg in Allied captivity and discusses his and his captors' use of his knowledge in the postwar period; it details Schellenberg's fate and considers questions of postwar justice and myth making. I draw together the study's findings in the Concluding Thoughts.

My study proposes several revisions to the understanding of Office VI and its forerunner. For one, it shows that Nazi Germany's political foreign intelligence service can be understood only through its pedigree. Office VI was not simply yet another, if somewhat peculiar, German intelligence service but needs to be placed in its concrete institutional and ideological context, and this context was the SS and the SD. The service habitually used ideology to conceptualize foreign intelligence; ideology was the defining feature and lodestar of Office VI. It determined the mandate of Office VI and expanded its role vis-à-vis other entities and thereby advanced the functional radicalization of Nazi Germany and its bureaucracy. Ideology was fundamental in winning bureaucratic conflicts and in breeding, preserving, and extending power; it determined personal advancement and institutional success. Always present, the importance of ideology was, however, not static. Within certain parameters, ideology was adjustable to the pragmatic needs of the day, especially when it came to conflicts with other party and state

authorities. And Schellenberg was a master at finding the appropriate mixture between ideology and pragmatism.

Ideology – racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Bolshevism – was Office VI's key ingredient but it was not brought to bear on the service from without, as many claimed after the war. Instead, the policies and activities of the service were shaped by ideological leanings coming from inside the office. Ideology was the prism through which the personnel of the service conceived, executed, and evaluated their work, and this ideological prism seriously – and on every level – fractured and distorted their view of the world and its realities. It was not Hitler's (or Himmler's or Heydrich's) ideologically slanted judgments, imposed from above, that damaged foreign intelligence. Rather, ideological convictions coming from within the service, its homogenous nature, and the groupthink these conditions created made for poor intelligence.

Conflicts between the component part of a country's intelligence universe, intensive intramural fights for dominance, preconceptions guiding the collection and evaluation of intelligence, and spectacular intelligence failures are, however, by no means a specialty of Office VI or Nazi Germany. What, if anything, makes this different then? Much of the answer can be found in Nazi ideology and its wish for totality. Information was a "passkey to power," for it could provide access to Hitler; was a lever in the "struggle for power;" expanded power bases; and gave access to additional resources.[39] But intramural fights went beyond anything that seems reasonable, yet it is worth recalling that the stakes were high. The losing party – oftentimes irreconcilably tainted as ideologically lacking – would find it difficult to recover its standing and influence. Other parts of the answer can be found in the state's structure, for the point of intelligence was not to have ample information to guide a decision. Rather, it was to have the right information. Intelligence meant to divine what customers, Himmler and most notably Hitler, were about to decide: to "work toward the Führer" (Ian Kershaw) and to create a situation or to collect the information that would make this decision appear correct. It was intelligence as activism. Intelligence collection and its evaluation, if the latter happened, was also, and on every level, conducted by men who shared their leaders' ideological make-up. This congruence of ideological convictions also existed when reports did not hit the mark with the customers, for sometimes they divined wrongly or erred on the side of ideological pragmatism when their customers were not inclined to do so. It is also worth noting that these men were amateurs who shared similar generational and social experiences and lacked the familiarity with the

[39] Geyer, "Politics of Information," 329, 339.

countries in which they were supposed to collect information; they were, indeed, a group of homogenous provincials. However, they were certain that National Socialist ideology transcended these shortcomings and allowed them to understand the world correctly, for "[w]hat outsiders saw as ideology, Nazis experienced as truth."[40] Put differently: the state's structure, its ideology, and its servants transformed a common problem of intelligence services into an inherently unsolvable mess.

I also show that, although conceived and branded as a foreign intelligence service and studied as such, Office VI was – simultaneously – both less and more. Schellenberg was readying Office VI to function as an alternative Foreign Office at Himmler's disposal, as evidenced, for example, in Office VI's conflict with Ribbentrop's Auswärtige Amt and its forays into negotiations with the Western Allies.[41] It remains patently unclear what exactly Schellenberg envisioned for the future, but he clearly held that he and Himmler would do better than Ribbentrop. Here, too, an ideological view of the world, leavened by a dose of pragmatism, determined Schellenberg's and the office's activities. Focusing on what Schellenberg and Office VI did – as opposed to what they were supposed to do according to their names and titles – interesting new vistas open up: Office VI was anything but an intelligence service and its forays into foreign policy were not aberrations but at the core of what Schellenberg's envisioned his office to be – the center of foreign intelligence and foreign policy efforts. Put differently, I set forth a more sophisticated and nuanced interpretation of Nazi Germany's political foreign intelligence service and its main proponents that removes it from the "oddity" column and takes seriously an entity that, despite its spectacular intelligence failures, wielded tremendous influence and strove to conduct foreign policy. The ramifications of this approach – for the understanding of the Nazi state, intelligence matters, and the course of World War II – are far-reaching and apparent. In recent years, the investigation of foreign intelligence efforts and its role in the political decision making process has garnered more attention among historians.[42] Here I show that for Germany's Office VI, ideology, the fight for additional resources and power, wrested from entities deemed ideologically unsound, and the vision of itself as an ideologically sound but still pragmatic foreign policy center, not only mattered but was

[40] Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.

[41] Richard Breitman, among others, alludes to Schellenberg's foreign policy efforts; Breitman, "Nazi Espionage, "106.

[42] David Bankier, ed., *Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust: Collected Essays from the Colloquium at the City University of New York, Graduate Center* (New York and Jerusalem: Enigma Books and Yad Vashem, 2006); Breitman et al., eds., *U. S. Intelligence*.

fundamental. And it spelled failure on each and every level with ideology taking the pride of place.

The investigation of Office VI also enhances the understanding of the SD, the Reich Security Main Office, and Nazi Germany's functional elites. Studies of the SD oftentimes focus on its formative years and do not address Office VI and its forerunner in any detail.[43] This study begins to plug this hole, which is of particular import as a number of recent studies have focused on particular branches of the SD or on SD investigations of certain *Lebensgebiete*, areas of life.[44] Office VI constitutes a missing piece in this historiography and this study allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the SD and the RSHA, achievements like Michael Wildt's magisterial study of the "unbound generation," which led these entities, notwithstanding. Lastly, the book adds to the study of those men who are at the core of a key debate about Nazi Germany's nature: what made it function the way it did? Investigating Walter Schellenberg and Office VI is one step in answering this question.

[43] Shlomo Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von Gestapo und SD* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1971); George C. Browder, "Sipo and SD, 1931–1940: Formation of an Instrument of Power" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1968); George C. Browder, "Die Anfänge des SD: Dokumente aus der Organisationsgeschichte des Sicherheitsdienstes des Reichsführers SS," *VfZ* 27 (1979), 299–32; George C. Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990); George C. Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); George C. Browder, "Die frühe Entwicklung des SD. Zur Entstehung multipler institutioneller Identitäten," in Michael Wildt, ed., *Nachrichtendienst, Politische Elite und Mordeinheit: Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 38–56. See also: Michael Wildt, "Einleitung," in Michael Wildt, ed., *Nachrichtendienst, Politische Elite und Mordeinheit. Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 7–37. For an East German treatment of the SD, based on sources maintained by the East German Stasi (State Security Service), see: Ramme, *Sicherheitsdienst.* For a discussion of the leadership corps of Sipo and SD, see: Jens Banach, *Heydrichs Elite: Das Führerkorps der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1936–1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998). On the SS with a good discussion of Office VI, see: Höhne, *Orden*.

[44] Wolfgang Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger: Der Sicherheitsdienst des SD und seine Religionspolitik 1933–1941* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002) and Michael Wildt, *Die Judenpolitik des SD 1935–1938: Eine Dokumentation* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1995); Carsten Schreiber, *Elite im Verborgenen: Ideologie und regionale Herrschaftspraxis der Sicherheitsdienstes der SS und seines Netzwerkes am Beispiel Sachsens* (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2008); Michael Wildt, ed., *Nachrichtendienst, Politische Elite and Mordeinheit: Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsfuhrers SS* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003).

1 Gaining a Foothold

Friends and foes alike agreed upon his intellectual abilities and his work ethic, attributes that helped his career. Alternately described as charming and personable or as evasive and cunning, Walter Friedrich Schellenberg was barely over thirty when, after an almost meteoric ascent through the ranks of the SD, he was appointed to head the foreign intelligence section of Heinrich Himmler's Reich Security Main Office in the summer of 1941. He thus became one of the six (sometimes seven) RSHA department heads and moved in the highest circles of Nazi Germany's elites. Who was this man? Where did Schellenberg come from?

In his postwar memoir, a self-promotional and exculpatory spymaster's tale as well as in testimonies given in allied captivity, Schellenberg told a simple story that must have resonated with many of his German contemporaries. It also captured the imagination of his allied interrogators. The youngest of seven children, Schellenberg was born in Saarbrücken in 1910. His father was a piano manufacturer whose business fell on hard times in the aftermath of the Great War and the French occupation of the Saar territory. The family eventually relocated to Luxembourg; Schellenberg stated that his interest in foreign policy began then. Schellenberg's mother was a homemaker, and – postwar – he credited her with his "Christian upbringing." His father's "liberal philosophy and outlook," he claimed to have felt later in his youth.[1] After graduating from the *Realgymnasium*, high school, Schellenberg began his studies in the summer term of 1929. He allegedly matriculated in medicine but switched to law for economic considerations, passing his first judicial state exam at the University of Bonn in early 1933. He joined the NSDAP and the SS the same spring.[2]

Schellenberg proffered various postwar explanations for his decision to join the party and the SS: when he attempted to secure a state grant for

[1] Walter Schellenberg, *The Labyrinth: Memoirs of Walter Schellenberg, Hitler's Chief of Counterintelligence*, intr. Allan Bullock, trans. Louis Hagen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956; reprint, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000), 2.

[2] Schellenberg, *Labyrinth*, 1–2.

his mandatory traineeship in law, the judge who reviewed Schellenberg's application "suggested that my chances of securing a grant would increase *appreciably* [emphasis added] if I were a member of the Nazi Party and one of its formations, the SA or the SS." Schellenberg did not hesitate taking this advice.[3] While his immediate reason to join the Nazis was, then, mercenary, in his memoir Schellenberg justified his decision to join the NSDAP in generalized political terms:

> It was obvious that a more vigorous program was needed which would overcome the social injustices of the Weimar Republic and bring about some equal status for Germany among the nations, as well as a revision of the Versailles Treaty. It seemed to me only just that Germany should strive for those rights which every sovereign nation, and especially France, had fought to secure for itself. [. . .] I was certain, as was the majority of these people [rushing to join the Nazi party], that Hitler was a political realist and that having gained power he would now drop the more extreme and unreasonable aspects of his program – such as the measures against the Jews. These might have been useful to gain adherents in the past, but they certainly could not serve as principles on which to run a modern state.[4]

Schellenberg also joined the SS, Nazi Germany's ideological elite. His postwar explanation is a peculiar combination of social ambition and protestations of naïveté:

> All young men who joined the Party had to join one of its formations as well. The SS was already considered an 'élite' organization. The black uniform of the Fuehrer's special guard was dashing and elegant, and quite a few of my fellow-students had joined. In the SS one found the 'better type of people' and membership in it brought considerable prestige and social advantages, while the beer-hall rowdies of the SA were beyond the pale.[5]

Schellenberg's initial experience with the SS was typical, tiresome, and much less glamorous than he had anticipated. However, within short order he secured a task he deemed more "suitable" than monotonous

[3] Schellenberg, *Labyrinth*, 3. There is some confusion as to when Schellenberg joined the party and SS. According to his handwritten *Lebenslauf*, he joined the SS in March 1933 and the party in April. His SS *Stammkarte*, on the other hand, notes that he joined the SS on April 1, 1933 and the party on May 1, 1933. See Schellenberg's SS file, NA, RG 242, BDC, A 3343, SSO, Reel 074B. A 1944 promotion request states that Schellenberg joined both party the and SS on April 1, 1933, see IfZ, FA 74, 11–12. His party membership card records May 1, 1933 as Schellenberg's entry into the party; see NA, RG 242, BDC, A 3343, MFKL, Reel 0047. Another document suggests that Schellenberg's initial party membership did not go through, as his initial application for membership lacked his signature; NSDAP Gauleitung, Köln-Aachen, Ortsgruppe Bonn-Süd to Walter Schellenberg, December 12, 1933, NARA, RG 469, Entry 11, Folder Schellenberg 40F8. This might explain the difference. The secondary literature relies on his *Stammkarte*.

[4] Schellenberg, *Labyrinth*, 3.

[5] Schellenberg, *Labyrinth*, 3.

military drills, for he was tasked to deliver indoctrination talks at the university. Most of his talks and lectures allegedly dealt with historical matters, such as the development of Germanic law or consisted of attacks on the Catholic Church. These speeches facilitated Schellenberg's initial contact with the SD, the *Sicherheitsdienst*, security and intelligence service of the SS.

Two professors, both honorary, unsalaried members of the SD, asked Schellenberg to join Himmler's intelligence service. They also introduced him to the entity's function: gathering "information that could help the government to form policy or to evaluate the results of policy decisions already taken." Indicating that Schellenberg might be able to parlay his interest in foreign policy into a career with the SD's foreign section, they suggested that he should continue his legal career and become an honorary member of the SD. This piqued Schellenberg's interest, but he was also pleased that as an SD member he would be relieved of all regular SS duties.[6]

Subsequently, Schellenberg continued his legal training. He initially worked at the Police Headquarters in Frankfurt/Main where, according to his memoir, he was always assigned to the most interesting cases against *Gauleiter*, party district leaders. He twice went to Berlin to report to the Interior Minister and eventually met with Heinrich Müller, the head of the political police, who told him that Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the SD, had taken an interest in him. The next day Schellenberg had an appointment at the *Sicherheitshauptamt*, SD Main Office, where he was assigned to the administrative department, working under the supervision of SS Oberführer Herbert Mehlhorn. While Schellenberg stated that Mehlhorn "built up for Heydrich the machinery with which he could secretly survey every sphere of German life," Schellenberg does

[6] Schellenberg, *Labyrinth*, 4–5. Schellenberg was then still a member of the Catholic Church. He stated that his first lecture with "an outspoken anti-Catholic bias" captured the interest of Reinhard Heydrich. His later colleagues were keenly aware that Schellenberg's career commenced with teaching *Weltanschauung*; see SS Sturmbannfuehrer Dr. Wilhem Hoettl, A Character Sketch of Schellenberg: Chief of Germany's Espionage Service, July 12, 1945, NA, RG 226, Entry 199A, Box 55, Folder 1602 [hereafter: Hoettl/Character Schellenberg]. Schellenberg names one of the professors: Prof. Ne(h)lis, a philologist; Final Report on the Case of Walter Schellenberg, NA, RG 319, IRR, XE 001725, Walter Schellenberg, Folder 7 and 8 [hereafter: Final Report]. Nelis joined the NSDAP in 1933 and was active in the NS-*Dozentenbund*. He was an instructor at the Teachers' Seminary in Bonn in 1934/35; appointed professor in Berlin in 1935. Hochschullehrerkartei, BAL R 4901/13272. I owe this information to Hans-Joachim Langhans, Berlin. In his memoir, Schellenberg notes that he performed SS guard duties for the last time when the Nazi leadership met at Hotel Dreesen in Bad Godesberg to decide the fate of Ernst Röhm and his SA, providing a vivid description of seeing a discussion among Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, and others through a window while in the midst of a thunderstorm.