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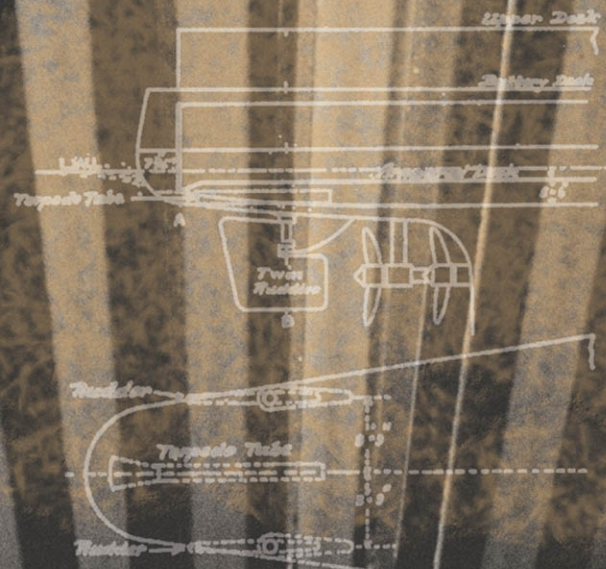
SPIES IN UNIFORM

British Military & Naval Intelligence on the Eve of the First World War



MATTHEW S. SELIGMANN

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British Military and Naval Intelligence on the Eve of the First World War

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This book is dedicated to my family:
Maja and David Seligmann, Cherry Chang, and Alex Li Seligmann

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Preface

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Contents

Abbreviations

BD	G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, 11 vols. (London, 1926–38).
DDF	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Documents diplomatiques Français* 41 vols. (Paris, 1929–59).
FDSF	Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (Oxford, 1961).
GP	J. Lepsius *et al., Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914*, 40 vols. (Berlin, 1922–7).

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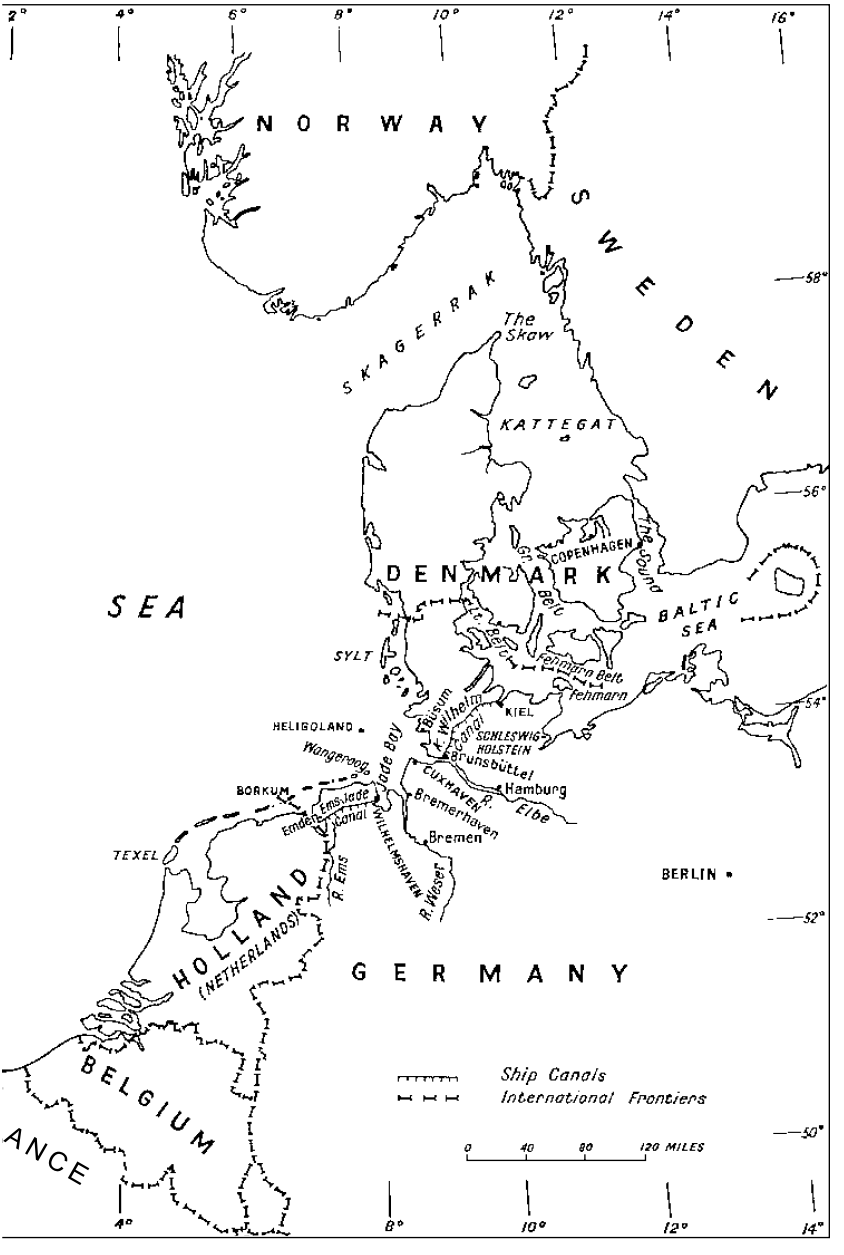
Map of British and German North Sea Bases—1914

Source: Arthur Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, (1961); by permission of Oxford University Press.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Introduction

THE DIPLOMATIC AND STRATEGIC BACKGROUND: THE REALIGNMENT OF BRITISH FOREIGN, DEFENCE, AND INTELLIGENCE POLICY

Although there is some debate as to exactly when and why it occurred, during the first years of the twentieth century Britain radically re-orientated its foreign policy. Whereas in the previous two decades British statesmen had regarded France and Russia as their most dangerous global rivals and had looked to Germany as a possible collaborator in containing the Franco-Russian menace, they now viewed Germany as the source of danger and it was to France and then Russia that they turned to help contain the German threat.

This new threat perception transformed British defence policy. While previously the principal determinant of British naval planning had been the need to defeat the combined Franco-Russian fleets, countering the German navy now became the paramount concern. Fleet dispositions were altered accordingly. Slowly at first, but with gathering momentum, British naval forces were pulled back from distant waters and stationed in and around the North Sea. Simultaneously, plans were drawn up for a possible maritime conflict with Germany. In a similar vein, the army's previous plans for a possible deployment on the north-west frontier of India to defend against an incursion by the Russians switched to contingency arrangements for operations in continental Europe alongside the forces of France. Once again, the foe envisaged was Germany.[1]

This radical re-orientation of Britain's defence policy produced a comparable realignment of the country's intelligence needs. When the expected enemies had been France and Russia, the priority had naturally been the acquisition of data about the capabilities and intentions of these two nations. Now that Germany was considered Britain's most likely future protagonist, detailed information was required on this country instead. Accordingly, the British General Staff sought intelligence on the organization of the German army, the nature of German military strategy, the tactical precepts behind German fighting methods, the levels of training of German soldiers, the specifications and performance levels of German equipment and a host of other sensitive matters. In a comparable fashion, the Admiralty desired intelligence on the aims of German naval policy, the strategic

[1] John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900–1916* (London, 1974), 180–1.

thinking of Germany's naval planners, the tactical training of her officers and crews, the design and construction details of her warships and the technical developments of the German fleet. Both the General Staff and the Admiralty also wanted as much information as possible on the German leadership's desire, preparedness, and ability to wage war, particularly a war against Britain.

Of course, desiring information and acquiring it are not the same thing. In order to obtain such detailed and sensitive material, the War Office and Admiralty required access to a range of high-quality sources from within the Reich. What channels of information on Germany did they have at their disposal?

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

Very few examples of the raw intelligence received by the War Office survive today and even references to such items are scarce. However, historians know a great deal about the manner in which British military intelligence obtained their information because, very helpfully, in a series of lectures given to prospective general staff officers between 1907 and 1909, several senior figures in the organization described, albeit in general terms, their methods and sources.[2] Also, in 1907 the War Office printed and distributed a memorandum entitled 'Notes with regard to the Collection of Intelligence in Peace Time', which, as its title suggests, outlined, in some detail, the recommended methods for gathering information.[3] Fortunately, copies of this print still exist, as do versions of the above-mentioned staff lectures. Collectively, they reveal four of the main sources of information that British military intelligence had at hand.

First were the reports of British officers travelling overseas. As a matter of course, the army encouraged its officers to take an interest in the latest military developments around the globe. Accordingly, it regularly sent official observers to foreign manœuvres, provided staff officers in training with opportunities to visit famous battle sites and granted leave for those studying languages to improve their linguistic skills by temporary residence in the appropriate countries. While abroad, these individuals were expected to pick up information about their host nation and report such details back to military intelligence. That they could do so is evident from the example of Lieutenant-Colonel James Edmonds, head of the special duties section of the DMO, who was a guest at the German manœuvres near Coblenz in 1908. As he recorded, while there, he obtained the answers to several important questions merely through polite conversation with General Hans von Beseler.[4]

[2] e.g., 'Intelligence in European Warfare', lecture by Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Edmonds, Jan. 1908, WO 106/6149.

[3] Several copies of this memorandum survive: two in the National Archives, at WO 279/503 and WO 106/6337, and one at the Intelligence Corps Museum, at acc. no. 2082.

[4] The information comes from Edmonds's unpublished memoirs, ch. 20, pp. 19–21. LHCMA: Edmonds Papers, III/5.

A second important reservoir of military intelligence came from the study of open source materials, such as 'gazettes, newspapers and magazines'. Potentially, a great deal of information on the German army could come from these publications. In part, this was due to the high-quality of German military writing, but it was also a reflection of the volume of pieces that appeared in the Reich on military history and theory. Several German newspapers, for instance, employed retired officers as dedicated military correspondents and their articles often contained useful snippets about contemporary military developments. Germany was also the home of several first-class military journals, including such world-renowned publications as the *Militärwochenblatt* and the *Deutsche Heereszeitung*. Careful scrutiny of their pages could often reveal the latest trends in German military thought. On top of this, some of Germany's leading military authorities occasionally penned works for more general public consumption. The book *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (Germany and the Next War) by the retired general and well-known military author Friedrich von Bernhardi was a prime example. Published in 1912, in the wake of the second Moroccan crisis, it gave real clues about the mentality prevailing in the Reich's highest military circles. Not surprisingly, the intelligence establishment in Britain obtained a copy and examined it for possible insights.[5]

A third fount of material was the reports sent to them by other departments of government. The British Empire had representatives scattered all over the world. These diplomatic, consular, and colonial officials often produced reports that touched on military matters and these were invariably shared with the War Office. For example, when the Germans seized the Chinese port of Qingdao, much of the information available to the Military Intelligence Division on the developments in China came from the dispatches of the ambassador in Berlin.[6]

Finally, there was always espionage. That the army did, at times, undertake such 'secret work' was clear from the evidence given to the committee presided over by Lord Hardwicke in 1903 to look into the future of the Military Intelligence Division. As Lieutenant-General Sir William Nicholson, then Director General of Mobilization and Intelligence, acknowledged to the committee: 'When necessary we could, and did, employ officers and civilians in this way.'[7] Owing to the distinct lack of surviving records, just what results emerged from the efforts Nicholson describes is unknown. What is known is that the War Office possessed a special duties section responsible for coordinating such activities and that in 1908 efforts were made to run agents in Germany.[8] Moreover, in October 1909, with the establishment of the Secret Service Bureau, the role of conducting covert operations on

[5] 'Extracts from *Germany and the Next War* Regarding the Strength of the British Army', WO 106/45/E2/28.

[6] Copies of reports by Lascelles and Gough are in WO 106/17.

[7] Report of the Hardwicke Committee, p. 22. T 1/10966.

[8] Nicholas P. Hiley, 'The Failure of British Espionage against Germany, 1907–1914', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 872–3.

the continent was put into the hands of a dedicated espionage organization. As the files for the secret intelligence service are still closed, the precise nature of the product that emerged from this new establishment remains a mystery. However, from the work of one author, who has been given special access to the papers of Sir Mansfield Cumming, the first head of the service, certain facts are now available. One of these is that, by January 1910, the new Secret Service had already procured information about German armaments production, in particular about 'a very large howitzer, 29.3 cm firing a projectile weighing 300 kilos' that Krupp were manufacturing.[9] While it is not clear if this item is representative of the Bureau's output, it does confirm that some military intelligence was obtained clandestinely.

In addition to the four conduits of information mentioned above, it is evident that the military intelligence establishment also acquired material from two other sources. At the top of the list were British businessmen. For good financial reasons, Britain's major commercial concerns kept a close eye on what their competitors on the continent were doing and, in the process of carrying out such routine industrial intelligence, they often acquired information of military value. This was normally funnelled to the appropriate authority in the War Office. Thus, in 1906, H. H. Mulliner, the managing director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, wrote to General Hadden, the Director of Artillery, to let him know about a recent discovery he had made in relation to the Krupp's armament factory in Essen, namely that Krupp had invested £3 million in new plant for producing heavy gun mountings.[10]

Britain's entente partners, the French, were another significant source of information about which the staff lectures and printed memoranda were discreetly silent. This belied their importance. French military intelligence was extraordinarily successful in obtaining confidential material about the German army. In late 1903 and early 1904, for example, they acquired the so-called 'Vengeur' documents, copies of planning papers that, if taken at face value, revealed some of the details and tactical assumptions behind the German plan to attack France through Belgium. This was not the only German document that French agents were able to acquire. Over the years, a number of comparable papers were secured. While not every intelligence coup was sent across the Channel, French assessments of some of the information acquired by their agents were passed on to the British General Staff.[11]

In short, it seems that the War Office possessed six major routes for securing intelligence on Germany. While the available evidence makes it difficult to gauge the relative importance of these sources, it is clear that all of them contributed to the intelligence picture of Germany constructed by the British government's Military Operations Directorate.

[9] Alan Judd, *The Quest for C: Mansfield Cumming and the Founding of the Secret Service* (London, 1999), 136.

[10] Mulliner to Hadden, 11 May 1906, ADM 116/3340.

[11] Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904–1914* (London, 1990), 53.

NAVAL INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

Unfortunately, unlike Britain's military intelligence staff, the officials of the Naval Intelligence Division (NID) did not produce any printed memoranda or lectures detailing their intelligence-gathering methods. However, they did retain a surprisingly large number of their files, including some that include examples of raw intelligence information. From this the historian can piece together a reasonably full picture of how they operated. The sources available to the NID were in many respects similar to those used by the army.

The reports of British naval officers overseas were an important source for the NID. The Royal Navy regularly dispatched vessels around the world to show the flag, to visit distant naval stations, and to familiarize crews with service in foreign waters. Some of these ships entered German ports, encountered German warships, or treated with German officers and dignitaries, all of which provided the basis for useful reports. Thus, for example, a trip by Admiral Warrender's Second Battle Squadron to Kiel to take part in the festivities marking the widening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal generated copious quantities of technical intelligence covering everything from German gunnery equipment to the masthead heights of German warships.[12]

The officers of the NID also acquired a great deal of information by scrutinizing open sources, a large number of which existed in the Reich. The Germans, for example, published several extremely important professional naval journals, of which *Nauticus* and the *Marine Rundschau* were the best known. A careful reading of these periodicals, which often contained articles by leading German naval officers and tactical thinkers, could provide valuable clues to the latest trends of thought inside the German navy. Similarly, by monitoring the articles published in the trade papers of the German shipbuilding and maritime engineering industries, of which *Schiffbau* was one of the leading exponents, it was possible to gather data about the latest technical developments in the German nautical world. Finally, there was also valuable material to be mined from Germany's many daily newspapers, several of which took considerable interest in naval affairs and even employed dedicated naval correspondents. While the Naval Intelligence Division obviously could not subscribe to every one of Germany's hundreds of daily newspapers, a 1909 memorandum shows that they did purchase the leading papers of the principal German naval ports.[13]

Other departments of the British government, especially the Foreign Office, were another important source for the NID. As mentioned, the British government maintained an extensive network of diplomatic representatives. These diplomats were especially thick on the ground in Germany, where the British

[12] X3001, 5 Aug. 1914, 'Intelligence Information obtained at Kiel', ADM 137/1013.
[13] X1554/09, 'Appointment of Intelligence Officers to Home Fleet', ADM 1/8042.

government was forced to maintain not just an embassy in the Reich capital, Berlin, but also legations accredited to the courts of the major federated states. Resident ministers or chargés d'affaires were present in Munich and Stuttgart as well as Darmstadt and Carlsruhe and Dresden and Coburg to represent British interests in Bavaria, Württemberg, Hesse, Baden, Saxony, and Saxe-Coburg. The sizeable pool of experienced diplomats based in Germany represented a substantial corpus of expertise for the Admiralty to tap. British diplomats routinely produced reports on issues of naval interest, such as the climate of public opinion in Germany with respect to the naval armaments race. Naturally, this information was forwarded to the Admiralty, where it was scrutinized in detail. When in August 1909, for example, Sir Edward Goschen, the British ambassador in Berlin, submitted a dispatch asserting that the evident British determination to maintain her naval supremacy was having a sobering effect in Germany, the Admiralty took note. The DNI, for one, expressed his interest in Goschen's claim that 'the enormous increase of the cost of battleships of the newest type . . . is beginning to be regarded with some unease by the German tax-payer'.[14]

Even more useful was the Foreign Office's establishment of consular officials. One of their principal roles was to look after British commercial interests in Germany. As a result, many consulates were located in the country's leading trading ports, from where they could most easily monitor the flow of Anglo-German trade. However, as many trading ports were also centres of naval power, Britain's consular officers were often ideally placed to report on German naval developments. Accordingly, the Admiralty requested that they send in information on maritime topics, including shipbuilding, harbour installations, and the movements of warships. A typical report was provided in December 1912 by Mr Lucas-Shadwell, the vice-consul in Emden, who had observed the arrival of the small protected cruiser SMS *Arkona*. 'It is the first time,' he added, 'that a war-ship has been stationed at Emden. It seems to be the general opinion in the town . . . that other war-ships will eventually be stationed in that port when the harbour development, which is at present being undertaken, is completed.'[15] If the experience of the First World War is any guide, this was an accurate judgement.

British businessmen provided another important resource. The nation's leading commercial concerns, no less than the Admiralty, had good reason for wishing to know as much as possible about one of their most formidable competitors. Accordingly, they kept an eye on commercial and industrial developments inside Germany, including the progress of the German shipbuilding and armaments concerns. The information that they obtained, they were often willing to share.

[14] Goschen to Grey, 25 Aug. 1909. Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (Oxford, 1961), i. 182. Hereafter *FDSF*.

[15] Hearn to Grey, 3 Dec. 1912, in 'German Naval Vessels (Large) I', NHB: T20812.

In 1906, the Shell Transport and Trading Co. wrote to the Admiralty to inform them of a business proposition that they had just received from the German naval authorities:

> We have just received through our Hamburg representative copy of an application from the German Navy for an agreement to supply them with liquid fuel in the event of mobilisation.
>
> Thinking that this may be of interest to you, we enclose herewith copy of a translation of same.[16]

Included with the letter were copies of the proposed contract, from which it was evident that the German navy expected to require 13,400 tons of liquid fuel for the first ninety days of mobilization. As the Admiralty had very great difficulty in obtaining fuel consumption statistics for the German navy, this data was doubtless very welcome.

Data was also obtained from espionage. Needless to say, the information available on British covert operations in Germany is extremely limited, but there are plenty of signs that the Admiralty obtained a certain amount of their detailed knowledge of the German navy from spying. Some of this information came from an agent, codenamed 'WK', that the Secret Service Bureau was running in Germany. WK obviously had good access to German naval facilities. In January 1910 he submitted a report covering the building of a new harbour on the island of Heligoland, the work being undertaken at the Imperial Dockyard at Wilhelmshaven, the speed of the latest German battleships, and the state of the German submarine programme.[17] This was all sensitive information that could only have been obtained by an inside source and would surely have been of much interest to the Admiralty.

WK was probably not the Admiralty's only source of secret information. Evidence suggests that the navy had other clandestine operatives, possibly including some that they were running themselves. In 1911, the DNI referred to the First Sea Lord and the Admiralty Secretary a nineteen-page report containing construction diagrams and full particulars of the design and layout of the battleships *Thüringen* and *Ersatz Heimdall* (the battleship launched as *Friedrich der Grosse*). Also included were details of the cruisers of the *Breslau* class and speculation about the German 1911 programme battleships. This report, the docket for which was marked 'VERY IMPORTANT' by Sir Vincent Baddeley in 1919, sadly does not disclose particulars about the supplier of this material. All we are told is that 'the information on which this report is based has been obtained from a trustworthy source'.[18] However, as such data could only be obtained from within the German dockyards, an agent inside Germany is the only likely origin.

[16] The Shell Transport and Trading Co. Ltd. to the Secretary to the Admiralty, 26 July 1906, in 'Miscellaneous I', NHB: T20898.

[17] 'WK's Report for December 1909', submitted 12 Jan. 1910. Judd, *Quest for C*, 137–9.

[18] Admiralty 8 February 1911, 'Germany. Report on Ships under Construction', in 'Design, Construction and Fittings of German Warships', NHB: T20896.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE MAIN MILITARY AND NAVAL INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

As shown above, Britain's military and naval intelligence establishments had a number of valuable conduits of information available to them, including reports from officers travelling overseas, open sources, the reports of other government departments, information supplied by businessmen and industrialists, and, of course, the intelligence products of espionage. In the case of the army, there was also material supplied by their entente partners, the French. This was a diverse collection of sources, from which a considerable quantity of information might reasonably be expected to emanate. Nevertheless, there were considerable limitations to what these sources could supply.

In the case of officers sent to Germany, there were some obvious restrictions on what they could achieve, especially if they were sent to the Reich in an official capacity. In such circumstances, the German authorities would, by definition, be aware of their presence and could take steps to ensure that their 'guests' only saw what they wanted them to see. For example, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe visited Kiel in the summer of 1910, ostensibly to attend the Kieler Woche, Germany's premier yachting regatta. To the German naval authorities this rationale seemed dubious. Captain Wilhelm Widenmann, the German naval attaché in London, spoke for many when he suggested that other motives seemed more likely. 'Since Sir John is not a yachtsman,' he amplified, 'and does not even own a yacht, it may well be accepted that it is not a purely sporting interest that brings him to Kiel. I rather think that he is driven here by a curiosity to learn something in an unobtrusive way about the newest German ships.'[19] His instincts were correct. As Jellicoe revealed in his unpublished autobiography: 'I was anxious to see something of the German Navy, which I knew would be present in strength during the regatta'.[20] Accordingly, Widenmann recommended, especially since other British officers were also likely to turn up, that the newest ships be detached from the squadron at Kiel. The Kaiser dissented. Not only did he think it unfair to the officers and men of these ships, but he also saw it as unnecessary. Other measures could be taken. As he scribbled in the margins of Widenmann's report: 'The detectives on their heels, who permanently observe them and never let them out of their sight, day and night, can report to the station what these people do'. Thereby, the Kaiser thought, security transgressions could be avoided.[21]

Yet, if it was easy for the German authorities to hamper intelligence gathering by officers sent officially to the Reich, it was also perilous attempting to acquire secrets as an 'unofficial' visitor. Two British officers who discovered this were

[19] Widenmann to Tirpitz, 14 Apr. 1910, NHB: GFM 26/92.
[20] A. Temple Patterson, *The Jellicoe Papers* (London, 1966), i. 15.
[21] The Kaiser's marginal comment on Widenmann to Tirpitz, 14 Apr. 1910, NHB: GFM 26/92.

Lieutenant Vivian Brandon RN and Captain Bernard Frederic Trench RMLI. In the summer of 1909, they went to Germany with the training cruiser HMS *Cornwall*. While there, they were able to observe a number of naval installations, producing valuable reports on 'Brunsbüttel, Tonning and the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal', as well as on the 'Coast Defences at Kiel'.[22] Probably due to these successes, they were sent back to Germany in 1910, posing as tourists, to gather more information, this time on the Friesian Islands. Unfortunately, on this occasion they were less successful. Their attempts to gain access to a restricted area on the island of Borkum aroused suspicion and they were apprehended and taken into custody. Tried and convicted of espionage, they were imprisoned until 1913. The whole incident was deeply embarrassing to the British government and, although in public the Admiralty (falsely) denied any connection with Trench and Brandon's activities, the First Sea Lord felt that there was a lesson to be learnt from the affair. Ruefully, he admitted to Trench upon his return, 'this must teach us that we mustn't send officers abroad on these sort of jobs'.[23]

Yet, even without hindrance from the German authorities there would have been limits to what individual officers sent to the Reich could have achieved. A serviceman sent abroad on a specific short-term mission acquired only a fleeting view of Germany. Though useful, the military and naval authorities in London really required systematic observation over an extended period of time. Only an officer familiar with Germany and the German armed forces through his continuous presence in the country would be able to comment on the gradual development of the Reich's capabilities and intentions. Equally, only such an officer would be sensitive to sudden changes of mood or routine. The occasional travelling soldier or sailor might provide a useful supplement for such a source but could never be a substitute.

Likewise, using open sources had its pitfalls. The principal problem was that the German government had several means at its disposal for managing the press and thereby controlling the information that appeared there. At the coercive end of the spectrum, the laws on the publication of official secrets were extremely tight, with prison sentences of at least two years being imposed on those who divulged sensitive confidential information. With such severe penalties imposed for any transgression, newspaper editors were, naturally, very wary of publishing anything that might breach the law and tended not to print any military or naval information that was not authorized by the authorities. As a result of this self-censorship, in making use of press reports, the British intelligence community was, in effect, seeing material that had been vetted in advance. Although it was quite possible for useful information to fall through

[22] Digest entry for Cap H157, 30 Aug. 1909, ADM 12/1466. The original report has been weeded.

[23] Donald F. Bittner, 'Royal Marine Spy 1910–1913: Captain Bernard Frederic Trench, Royal Marines Light Infantry', in Royal Marines Historical Society, *Royal Marine Spies of the World War One Era* (Portsmouth, 1993), 45.

the net, open sources mostly contained only what the German authorities were willing for outsiders to know.

The German government also influenced the content of open sources by the careful cultivation of the news media. Many of the main government offices employed press departments to put their spin into the public domain. Particularly successful in this respect was the navy's Nachrichtenbüro (News Bureau), an organization that has been described as 'a practical if not nominal Propaganda Ministry almost thirty-five years before Joseph Goebbels'.[24] Run by serving officers of the Reich Navy Office, it was a full-time publicity and misinformation agency, spreading news stories favourable to the development of the navy. These stories were usually released with the domestic political agenda in mind. The Nachrichtenbüro was particularly active, for example, in creating copy designed to persuade the Reichstag to vote ever-larger sums in the naval budget. However, nothing prevented it from acting like the Foreign Office's news bureau and using its influence over the press to plant stories with a foreign readership in mind and the evidence suggests that it regularly did so.[25] The prospect of such misinformation appearing in open sources meant that the provenance and reliability of all open source reports had to be carefully evaluated before any use could be made of them.

Information supplied to the War Office and Admiralty by other departments of government also suffered from pitfalls. The most regular and consistent suppliers of such material were the Foreign Office, which often forwarded reports by British diplomats and consular officers. Though useful, these dispatches could only satisfy a small portion of the services' intelligence needs. In part, this was a question of expertise. Beginning with the diplomats, these men were on the whole dedicated and professional observers, who provided their superiors with invaluable impressions of the political, social, and even economic conditions that prevailed in their resident countries. They were, however, rarely trained in military and naval affairs. Thus, when it came to reporting on technicalities, such as the performance of German soldiers and sailors, the quality of their weapons, developments in their training, and other such specialist concerns, they were not really equipped to provide the necessary information.

Many consular officers laboured under the same impediment. They lacked the specialist knowledge to produce reports on highly technical military and naval issues. Two further factors restricted the value of these individuals as intelligence-gatherers. First, the consular service was not a fully professional organization. Largely for reason of cost, while the Foreign Office maintained a core of *consuls de carrière* (career consuls), many of the people who manned Britain's consular and vice-consular offices were local people, who did the job on a part-time basis, often for only limited remuneration. These 'trading consuls' were, of course, perfectly

[24] Holger Herwig, *The Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning, 1889–1941* (Boston, 1976), 41.

[25] Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (London, 1980), 257.

adequate for the task of collecting trade statistics, aiding British subjects overseas and performing the other routine duties of a consul. They were, however, unlikely to be willing to obtain sensitive information about their own countries and pass it on to a potential future adversary.

The solution, from an intelligence-gathering point of view, was obviously to station full-time, salaried consuls of British nationality anywhere that sensitive or confidential information was wanted. Unfortunately, the sudden appointment of a dozen or so *consuls de carrière* would have been very expensive and, even if permitted by the Germans, would have certainly been recognized for what it was, an intelligence driven exercise. The Reich authorities had also made it perfectly clear that there were certain places where they would not allow such a posting. As Edward Inglefield, secretary to the Lloyd's maritime insurance market, told the Admiralty: 'The Germans are very thorough in everything they do, and at their Arsenals and other important places they will not, I understand, allow an Englishman to hold the Office of British Consul'.[26] This, in effect, ended the matter.

The second factor that restricted the value of Britain's consuls as a source of intelligence was the unwillingness of the Foreign Office to allow its employees to engage in any activity that might endanger the department's reputation for probity. Consequently, when in 1909 the Admiralty wrote to the Foreign Office to suggest the creation of a permanent and regular system for obtaining secret information through the consulates in Germany, the diplomats demurred in the strongest terms. They were quite happy for consuls to walk around their districts with eyes open, but anything further was expressly prohibited.[27] Little wonder then, according to one senior naval intelligence officer, that the opinion existed in the Admiralty that 'the F.O. hated their Consular Officers helping us'.[28]

The intelligence obtained from British business sources was also subject to some caveats. For one thing, although a lot of information of value to the military and naval intelligence establishment circulated in commercial circles, there was also a lot of material to which they were simply unable to obtain access. As the secretary to Lloyd's of London pointed out to the Admiralty, while he would like to help the government obtain early warning of German fleet movements, the Germans simply would not allow him 'to employ an Englishman as Lloyd's Agent at either end of the canal'.[29] Even when industrialists could provide the authorities with data, this was sometimes considered suspect. The information supplied by H. H. Mulliner, the managing director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, is a case in point. On several occasions between 1906 and 1909, he briefed both the War Office and the Admiralty about the increase in German armaments production capability. His earlier warnings were, however, ignored, while his later alarms, although taken seriously, were only acted upon once they had been

[26] Inglefield to Baddeley, 19 Oct. 1909, ADM 116/940B.
[27] Hiley, 'Failure of British Espionage', 875–6.
[28] 'Recollections of Rear Adm. R. D. Oliver', NMM: OLV/12.
[29] Inglefield to Baddeley, 19 Oct. 1909, ADM 116/940B.

corroborated by other sources. Meanwhile, Admiral Fisher dismissed Mulliner as a 'shady company promoter' and the suspicion existed in many quarters—probably unfairly—that his claims about German activities were motivated as much by the hope of receiving orders for his struggling firm as by his sense of patriotism. Unjust though this may have been, there was no doubt that many industrialists were not neutral bystanders to the armaments race but had a direct pecuniary interest in it. For this reason, 'contractor's gossip', as Lloyd George once called it, was often treated suspiciously.

There were also difficulties in relying upon information from espionage. For one thing, Sir William Nicholson's claims notwithstanding, for much of the pre-war period, Britain lacked even the most rudimentary system for the collection of covert intelligence. In part, this was because many officers shunned such work, regarding it, to use the words of Lieutenant-Colonel Edmonds, as 'abhorrent to the British character to use underhand means'.[30] Consequently, in the first years of the twentieth century, both the army and navy turned down offers to purchase intelligence secrets from possible agents.[31] While undoubtedly a noble course of action, it was not very satisfactory from the intelligence-gathering point of view.

Despite such scruples, recent military experience had led some soldiers to regard covert operations with growing seriousness. Particularly significant in this respect was the Boer War. This was a conflict in which intelligence failures had proven both disastrous and embarrassing, while good intelligence had been shown to be invaluable to ultimate success. In the conflict's aftermath, efforts were made to codify British intelligence doctrine and, to this end, manuals such as the War Office's *Regulations for Intelligence Duties in the Field* began to be disseminated.[32] As part of this codification, some of these publications sought to systematize espionage. The incorporation of a section entitled 'Acquisition of Information—Secret Service' in David Henderson's work on field intelligence is a case in point.[33]

Unfortunately, this all took time. Thus, in February 1908, Colonel Gleichen, head of the War Office's European Section, was forced to admit to the Committee of Imperial Defence that the 'arrangements for obtaining secret intelligence from Germany' were far from satisfactory:

> One can practically say that until last month or so we have had nothing in the way of a secret intelligence agent there at all, and we have not got any there yet, but we are in the process of getting one, and I hope that during the next three or four months we may get some more.[34]

[30] John Ferris, 'Before "Room 40": The British Empire and Signals Intelligence 1891–1914', *JSS* 12 (1989), 431.

[31] Hiley, 'Failure of British Espionage', 868 and 873.

[32] War Office, *Regulations for Intelligence Duties in the Field* (London, 1904).

[33] David Henderson, *Field Intelligence: Its Principles and Practices* (London, 1904).

[34] Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of Invasion Sub-Committee of the CID, 4 Feb. 1908, CAB 16/3A, fos. 133–4.

The diary of Captain Slade confirms that the navy was no better provided with agents. Having sent an officer over to Germany in January 1908 to make a first-hand report on the state of Britain's espionage capability, he reported that 'nothing is done as yet', to which observation Slade optimistically appended 'but I hope that we may get a man over there before long'.[35] On this basis, one could hardly rely upon receiving much information.

It was only with the establishment of the Secret Service Bureau in October 1909 that real progress was made in setting up a professional covert operations organization. However, before the new body could produce tangible results, it would be necessary to create a viable intelligence infrastructure centred on real intelligence assets, namely reliable and well-placed agents. It would be unfair to say that, by the time war broke out in 1914, no progress had been made in this direction, but as the last days of peace disappeared there was undoubtedly still a long way to go. In effect, Britain had entered the espionage game too late to take full advantage of its possibilities before the start of conflict.

The effectiveness of Britain's espionage efforts was also hampered by one other factor. Under the rules set up in 1909 to define the duties and objectives of the Secret Service Bureau, a strict demarcation of responsibilities was established between the various overseas agencies of what one might collectively describe as Britain's Foreign Service. Thus, while the nascent intelligence organization was set up to seek factual information, it was forbidden from engaging in political reporting, which duty remained the preserve of the diplomatic corps. Accordingly, the Secret Service Bureau could be used to find out the details and characteristics of German weapons, but not if they intended to use them. This prohibition in considering German intentions severely limited the practical value of espionage.[36]

Finally, with regard to the information received from the French, there was a question of reliability. Although the Deuxième Bureau was astonishingly successful in gaining access to confidential German documents of the highest importance, the evaluations of these sources by the General Staff were not always quite so up to the mark. The French army filtered the findings of their remarkable clandestine coups through the screen of their 'preconceived notions' of German behaviour; their assessments of the raw intelligence often contained what they wanted to hear rather than what the data necessarily suggested.[37] Passing such summaries on to the British was, therefore, potentially an avenue to misleading their future ally. Sometimes such deceptions were less inadvertent. In 1909, the French gave the British a document purporting to be a German plan for the invasion of the British Isles. The Germans had no such plan and the document was a forgery, passed on to make the British authorities 'more forthcoming in the Anglo-French staff talks'.[38]

[35] Slade Diary, 25 Jan. 1908, NMM: MRF/39/3.

[36] Judd, *Quest for C*, 104–11 and 225–6.

[37] Douglas Porch, *The French Secret Services: From the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War* (Basingstoke, 1995), 58–9.

[38] Ibid. 532.

THE SERVICE ATTACHÉS

As a consequence of the limitations discussed above, the effectiveness of both the military and naval intelligence establishments suffered. The unpublished biography of Vernon Kell, a future head of MI5, who in 1902 was serving as a captain in the German section of the War Office, shows the depths to which this department had sunk at the beginning of the twentieth century. So unremarkable was the in-coming information that, as his wife and biographer, Lady Kell, lamented, 'though his work in the German section was connected with intelligence work, it was at this time not particularly interesting'.[39] Naval officers connected with the NID felt similarly about the senior service's intelligence agency. 'The NID wants reforming badly,' commented Commander Barry Domville, 'the system is most haphazard—you can do as much or as little as you like and all the work is sadly adrift.'[40] Captain Herbert Richmond, who would later become one of Britain's most eminent naval authors, was still more scathing:

> The Intelligence Department has no executive functions: The Commanders sitting in the foreign branch, for instance, spend their time cutting extracts out of foreign papers, or marking paragraphs which have what they imagine to be interesting matter with blue pencil, or adding up navy estimates—i.e. fine, clerk's work.[41]

Yet, the inadequacies of these intelligence agencies represented a considerable problem. Given the growing perception of a German threat, the importance of obtaining high-grade, accurate, and reliable data on the Reich's armed forces was constantly increasing. Accordingly, both services recognized the need for additional channels of information, over and above those already enumerated.

Fortunately for the General Staff, they did not have to look far for an alternative source of material on the German army. Since 1860, Britain had posted a military attaché to Berlin to act as a professional observer of the Reich's military affairs. Owing to Germany's status as the pre-eminent military power on the continent, this had always been an important position. The attaché, as the liaison to the best army in the world, was expected to provide insights into how this model military establishment was run and developed. For much of the nineteenth century, a period when Britain and Germany maintained friendly relations, there was no real urgency to this task. More of a priority was garnering German information on the military capabilities of Russia and France. These were the countries that the British authorities feared that they might one day have to fight and about which Germany possessed excellent and detailed knowledge. Accessing this knowledge was, thus, the liaison work of choice for many attachés in Berlin in the nineteenth century.

[39] Unpublished biography of Vernon Kell written by his wife, IWM: PP/MCR/120.
[40] Domville Diary, 23 Jan. 1912, NMM: DOM/19.
[41] Richmond Diary, 6 Apr. 1907, NMM: RIC/1/7.

However, this was all to change, when, at the start of the twentieth century, the army's re-evaluation of Britain's strategic priorities led to increased demand for intelligence on Germany. All of a sudden, the attaché's position as a constant British presence in the heart of Britain's most likely opponent made the post a vital one. As a War Office memorandum proclaimed, 'the most valuable' of all sources was 'a regular correspondent on the spot, who in studying and in reporting upon the various matters that come under his notice, can be depended upon to furnish reliable and continuous information of the nature required'.[42] The military attaché in Berlin, a serving British officer permanently stationed in the German capital, was just such a person.

If the army had stationed an attaché in Berlin for some years, the same could not be said for the navy. In 1897 there was no permanent British naval attaché in Berlin. This omission reflected the manner in which the navy organized its representation abroad. Like the War Office, the Admiralty had started posting officers to Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, the very first British naval attaché being sent to Paris in 1860. Thereafter the experiences of the two services diverged markedly. While the army adopted the practice of appointing attachés to particular capitals, gradually increasing the number of such postings until a network of British officers covered all of Europe, the navy took a curiously different approach. In 1871, at the suggestion of the Foreign Office, the Admiralty abolished the post of naval attaché in Paris—its sole permanent diplomatic position—and replaced it with a new appointment, the so-called 'travelling attaché'.[43] As the original memorandum advocating this change explained: 'instead of a single officer permanently residing in a single country, there would be an officer whose duty it would be to visit all the countries in Europe possessing naval arsenals'.[44] This system, albeit with two itinerant attachés sharing the workload, still functioned a quarter of a century later. As a result, at the onset of the Anglo-German Antagonism, the Royal Navy found itself without a permanent representative in the German capital. Change was obviously required.

In July 1897, the month after Tirpitz was appointed State Secretary of the Imperial Naval Office, the Admiralty embarked upon their first re-examination of the arrangements for employing naval attachés. It was a rather cursory review. Despite admitting that the existing scheme allowed German maritime facilities to be inspected only 'once every eighteen months', Captain Beaumont and Admiral Richards, the DNI and Senior Naval Lord, professed themselves as satisfied with the efficacy of the current process. The First Lord was less sanguine. 'Intimacy with people acquired by continuous residence', he wrote in a penetrating minute, 'is a very effective means of extracting information. The present system does not permit the Naval Attachés to collect much original information on such countries

[42] General Staff, 'Notes with Regard to the Collection of Intelligence in Peace Time', 5.

[43] M Branch to the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, n.d. [but May or June 1907], ADM 1/7966.

[44] Treasury 10 October 1871, 'Abolition of the Post of Naval Attaché at Paris and Appointment of Captain Goodenough R.N. as Travelling Attaché to Maritime Courts of Europe', ADM 1/6209.

as France, Russia and Germany.' Nevertheless, in the face of the contrasting views of his professional advisers, he opted to set aside the question of changes.[45]

It turned out to be but a short postponement. In August 1899, Captain Custance, the new DNI, recognized that, with America and Japan emerging as important naval powers, attention would have to be paid to their maritime development. Since the two existing attachés could not realistically accomplish this on top of their other duties, a third officer was evidently needed to cover these countries. This appointment proved to be a more general catalyst for changes. To begin with, it gave one attaché specific and exclusive responsibility for two named countries and, thus, re-established the principle of a geographical division of responsibilities among the attachés. Satisfied that this represented a more rational ordering of affairs, Custance suggested that the work of the two existing appointees also be divided on a similar basis. Instead of two roaming attachés who would be sent wherever they were needed, he proposed that one was 'to be attached to the Embassies in France, Italy, Spain, Austria and Holland; the other to those in Russia, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Turkey'.[46] With this, the era of the 'travelling attaché' was at an end. It was now only a matter of time before Germany's growing naval importance led to the appointment of a dedicated officer for the Reich.

The first step in this direction came in June 1900. In the very month in which the Reichstag passed the second German Navy Law, the Admiralty sought and was granted Treasury sanction for a fourth attaché. The creation of this post gave the naval authorities the scope to reallocate the countries for which each officer was responsible. Hence, when in October Captain Williams finished his term as 'Naval Attaché to the Courts of the Maritime Powers generally', they seized the opportunity to give new and more specific instructions to his successor. Commander Arthur Ewart was told 'to proceed to Germany making that country his headquarters'.[47] With his arrival in Berlin in November 1900, the Royal Navy finally had a permanent man on the spot in the Reich.

The presence of permanent British military and naval attachés in Berlin was a huge asset from an intelligence-gathering perspective. For one thing, they suffered from few of the limitations that so affected the government's other channels of information. Unlike travelling officers, they were long-term residents in Germany and could observe developments in the German armed forces over time, reporting gradual changes that would have been undetectable to a more casual and infrequent visitor. Equally, unlike British diplomats, they possessed the necessary expertise to make informed reports about specialist or technical matters. Yet, in

[45] Admiralty 23 July 1897, 'Practice of Appointing Naval Attachés to Embassies at Maritime Courts of Europe instead of to particular Embassies', ADM 1/7552B.

[46] Foreign Office 15 August 1899, 'Naval Attachés—Redistribution of Duties . . .', ADM 1/7424.

[47] Foreign Office, 6 Oct. 1900, 'Appointment of Commander A. W. Ewart to Succeed Captain Williams as Naval Attaché to the Courts of the Maritime Powers Generally', ADM 1/7474.

contrast to British businessmen, there would be no suspicion of any ulterior or pecuniary motives to their doing so. Finally, unlike the sources for the Secret Service Bureau, the service attachés, being members of the embassy, could compile reports that touched on political matters. The intent to resort to arms, not just the technical specifications of German weapons, was a legitimate area for them to cover.

This set of circumstances ensured that there was widespread recognition of the importance of the attachés to both services. In the army, the first indication of this came in 1901, when a full review of all the military attaché appointments was carried out by the War Office at the request of the new Secretary of State, St John Brodrick, who, ironically, had doubts about their usefulness.[48] The exact wording of the resultant report must be a matter of speculation, as the file on this inquiry no longer exists. However, from the actions subsequently taken by the War Office, its conclusions seem clear. The system of employing military attachés was not only retained, but, in 1902, was strengthened by the issuing, for the first time, of specific instructions to the appointees, instructions that stressed the types of information required.[49] Then, in 1903, the senior members of the army were given the opportunity to express their views on the role and value of the military attachés to the committee set up under Lord Hardwicke to examine the status and organization of the military intelligence division. Their evidence pointed overwhelmingly to the centrality of the military attachés to intelligence work. Lieutenant-Colonel William Robertson, the future field marshal, then head of the Foreign Section of the War Office, was succinct:

> a good military attaché was of the greatest value to the Intelligence Division. . . . Their value consisted less in secrets which they occasionally discovered, than in the fact that they were in a position to keep in constant touch with the military thought, the army, and the military organization of the Power to which they were accredited. No study of Foreign periodicals or other documents could supply the place of information thus obtained by attachés.[50]

Other witnesses reiterated this point in similar language. Such unanimity leaves no doubt as to the consensus in the General Staff: military attachés were an important intelligence asset. The new Secretary of State, Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster, agreed, informing the Treasury: 'the work done by Attachés for the Intelligence Department, with whom they are in regular correspondence, is important and increasing, and their reports are essential to the efficiency of the Sections dealing with the countries to which they are accredited'.[51] In response to enquiries from the Exchequer, the War Office reiterated in 1908: 'the Army Council have no

[48] Summary of War Office File 6708/Brussels/22, OBS 1/1432/1.
[49] See file 6708/1053 in WO 32/6408.
[50] *Report of Lord Hardwicke's Committee* (Mar. 1903), 39, T 1/10966.
[51] Marzials to the Secretary of the Treasury, 14 Oct. 1903, T 1/10966.

hesitation in assuring Their Lordships that Military Attachés are indispensable . . . The Services rendered and the information supplied fully justify the maintenance of all the present appointments.'[52]

There was also no question as to the very great significance of the information provided by the naval attachés to the NID. Testimony to the importance of their work came from a variety of sources, including, astonishingly, the Treasury. In 1903, the Admiralty proposed, in light of 'the increased Naval activity of Foreign Powers and the difficulty of obtaining information through the Press or otherwise', to increase the number of naval attachés.[53] The Treasury, a department known more for its congenital parsimony than for its willingness to dole out funds, actually greeted this particular bid for additional expenditure with a willingness to comply that almost bordered on enthusiasm. The minutes show that the reason for this positive reaction was the high esteem in which naval attachés were held in the Exchequer. Robert Chalmers, one of the principal clerks at the Treasury, who had recently been immersed in the study of intelligence work as a member of the Hardwicke committee, led the praise: 'Most of the Naval data &c concerning foreign powers comes from the Naval Attachés, whose services are of the highest value.'[54] A clearer endorsement of their work from a more unexpected source would be hard to imagine.

Less surprisingly, the officers and officials at the Admiralty also thought that the naval attachés had a central role to play in naval intelligence. One of the clearest indications of this comes from the papers dealing with the 1912 reorganization of the Admiralty. In late 1911, Winston Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty with the specific remit of creating a Naval War Staff. As part of his preparations for this controversial reform, he and his officials drafted a memorandum outlining the duties of the different branches of the Admiralty administration. The description given to the Naval Intelligence Division reveals the significance of the work undertaken by the attachés:

> To obtain by means of the Naval Attachés abroad . . . and by every other possible means, complete and accurate knowledge of the naval resources of the Foreign Maritime States, their preparedness for war, their ability to maintain a naval war, the trend of their naval policy and of public opinion on naval affairs.[55]

As we can see, of the resources enumerated for discharging the NID's duties, only one was singled out for specific mention, namely 'the Naval Attachés abroad'. No other intelligence source was named. If the isolation of the specific from the general is any guide to inherent significance, then this was a clear indication of the paramount importance of the naval attachés to the NID's work.

[52] Brade to the Secretary of the Treasury, 26 May 1908, ibid.
[53] Macgregor to the Secretary of the Treasury, 13 May 1903, T 1/9993B.
[54] Undated minutes on docket to Treasury file 8804, ibid.
[55] Memorandum, 'Duties of Branches' [n.d., probably Jan. 1912], CAB 1/31, fo. 327.

SERVICE ATTACHÉS, THE ARCHIVES, AND THE HISTORIAN

Given the evident importance of the service attachés to the intelligence-gathering of both services, surprisingly little has been written about their activities, with only two historians attempting in-depth studies of their work. The first of these is Lothar Hilbert, whose doctoral dissertation on 'The Role of Military and Naval Attachés in the British and German Service with Particular Reference to those in Berlin and London and their Effect on Anglo-German Relations, 1871–1914' was completed in 1954.[56] Though Hilbert's thesis is undoubtedly a scholarly endeavour, through no fault of his own, he was unable to deliver the comprehensive study that the title of his thesis implies. Denied access to unpublished official papers for the period after 1902, he had little choice but to concentrate his original research on the preceding years. Consequently, his coverage of the crucial decade from 1903 onwards, which is based solely on printed documents and published memoirs, is brief and restricted. Alfred Vagts's book, *The Military Attaché*, also does not do justice to the activities of the British service attachés in Berlin largely because of the sheer scope of the volume. Vagts set himself the ambitious target of writing a broad survey of the work of military attachés from several countries from their first inception to the time of his writing. While this ensured a work of great breadth and enormous comparative scope, it also meant that the level of detail applied to the role of British attachés in particular years was necessarily very limited. A mere twenty pages were devoted to 'William II and the Foreign Attachés'.[57] In the context of such brevity, there were inevitably limits to Vagts's treatment of the subject.

Yet, if Hilbert and Vagts do not fully explore the role of the British service attachés in Berlin in the run-up to the First World War, nobody else has made a closer study of this problem than they have. Indeed, many historians examining this period do little more than gloss over the work of the attachés.[58] Most do not mention them at all. The reason for this is essentially archival; the dearth of attaché reports to be found in the British military and naval archives discouraged research. Indeed, it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that so few attaché reports from this period still exist among the papers of the War Office and the Admiralty that the casual visitor to the National Archives might be forgiven for thinking that these officers never existed. Quite how it came to be that the attachés were so comprehensively airbrushed out of the records needs some explanation.

[56] Lothar Hilbert, 'The Role of Military and Naval Attachés in the British and German Service with Particular Reference to those in Berlin and London and their Effect on Anglo-German Relations, 1871–1914' (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge Univ., 1954).

[57] Alfred Vagts, *The Military Attaché* (Princeton, 1967), 300–19.

[58] In one essay, Paul Kennedy dismissed their reports, after a couple of paragraphs, as 'humdrum' and 'superficial'. Paul M. Kennedy, 'Great Britain before 1914', in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, 1984), 179–80.

The researcher wishing to find out more about the dispatches of the French or German service attachés faces a relatively straightforward task. Despite certain gaps in the records—caused in the latter case by Allied bombing in the Second World War—these reports were generally retained by the departments that produced them and often exist today in a consolidated run. By contrast, no comparable collection exists any more in Britain. The cause of this resides in the document preservation policies devised and implemented by Britain's naval and military records offices. In contrast to the French naval archives, where, as one gleeful historian has noted, they 'never discarded a single piece of paper', the British armed forces tended to destroy documents en masse.[59] From one Admiralty document it is evident that over 120 tons of unwanted papers were 'weeded', as the process was euphemistically termed, in 1951 alone.[60]

The main reason for this policy of mass culling was the sheer volume of documents created by the service ministries. An estimate from 1902 calculated that the Admiralty produced about 195,000 registered files in 1901 alone. Given that this figure did not take into account 'returns or unimportant papers not registered' and did not include the 'most important and confidential work [which] originates in the Admiralty and generally escapes registration', the true figure for the annual accumulation of paper was probably considerably greater.[61] Yet, they were not alone. In a similar vein, a War Office appraisal suggested that in 1902, their registry was receiving on average slightly over 20,000 registered and unregistered documents every week. This amounted to over a million papers a year![62]

Clearly, if one department could produce some 200,000 files a year by itself and another over a million, it was never going to be possible to retain the entire documentary record of the British armed forces. The costs of storage alone would have been prohibitive. Furthermore, with waste paper netting the government about £30 a ton, there was actually money to be made from document disposal.[63] Neither of these facts went unnoticed by the Treasury, which devised ever more ingenious arguments in favour of slimming down the number of state papers deposited in the archives. In 1935, for example, the Treasury suggested to the Admiralty that they were rendering the work of future researchers impossible by the number of documents they insisted on retaining:

> It appears to Their Lordships that a severe limitation of official papers selected for permanent preservation is desirable . . . with a view to preventing the mass of paper records becoming unmanageable. It is necessary to bear in mind that the papers hitherto deposited

[59] Paul G. Halpern, *The Mediterranean Naval Situation, 1908–1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 381–4.

[60] 'Record Office: Report of an Inspection by CEI Inspection Team', 13 Aug. 1952, ADM 1/23325.

[61] Admiralty 30 August 1902, 'Official Documents: Care of, in Admiralty', ADM 1/7599.

[62] Danreuther to Assistant Under-Secretary, 29 Sept. 1902, WO 32/15892.

[63] 'Record Office: Report of an Inspection by CEI Inspection Team', 13 Aug. 1952, ADM 1/23325.

in the Public Record Office have been, in the main, papers relating to the 19th and earlier centuries. When the papers relating to the present century, during which government activities have greatly increased, come to be deposited at the Public Record Office there is a risk, apart from consideration of the expense involved, that their volume will be so great as to render effective consultation difficult and to discourage research.[64]

Although this particular plea for restraint was clearly erroneous—researchers would always prefer too many records to too few—and was probably disingenuous as well, the basic point was still valid. Keeping every scrap of paper was not an option.

Yet, if a general consensus existed that it was not possible to retain every file ever created by government and that some documents inevitably had to be destroyed, it was also unanimously accepted that, for historical and other reasons, it was vital that important papers be preserved for posterity. Accordingly, rules were devised to ensure that only 'valueless' documents were ever destroyed. Under the various Public Record Office Acts, all departments had to produce schedules for Parliament indicating how they proposed to treat their archives and clarifying which classes of documents were to be retained and which were to be earmarked for disposal. The schedules produced by the services seemed, on the face of it, exceptionally solicitous to the historical record. The Admiralty, for example, explained in its sixth schedule that whole categories of records were to be considered for retention:

> Documents containing precedents or decisions on questions of major policy, decisions by the Board of Admiralty, Law Officers' opinions and Treasury rulings, and documents containing amendments or additions to King's Regulations, together with any documents likely to be of historical, diplomatic or legal value, are segregated with a view to permanent preservation . . .

Additionally, numerous safeguards were built in to the evaluation process to ensure that no document was ever destroyed by mistake. Thus, it was maintained that no document would ever be weeded without being 'carefully scrutinised by a competent member of the Admiralty Record Office'.[65] On top of this, the Admiralty's own internal instructions placed great emphasis on document preservation. 'The greatest care', stated one memorandum, 'must be taken to preserve all records of historical, diplomatic or legal value . . . any doubt which may arise being always given in favour of preservation rather than in favour of destruction.'[66] The War Office enumerated equally strict procedures in its departmental schedules and its internal 'Instructions to Weeding Staff' were likewise absolute models of correctitude. Noting that original documents 'may often be irreplaceable', it enjoined weeding staff to exercise 'judgement and intelligence in the selection of files for destruction and retention'. Above all, it stated: '*In cases of doubt, it is better to preserve than to destroy*.'[67]

[64] Treasury to Admiralty, 22 Oct. 1935, ADM 1/11359.
[65] PRO 17/15.
[66] ADM 7/1003, p. 73.
[67] War Office, 'Instructions to Weeding Staff' (revised Jan. 1932), WO 32/17606, emphasis in the original.

If this was the theory, the practice was quite another matter. As the head of the Admiralty Record Office revealed in 1950, the normal process of archival management was for the Admiralty to destroy some 93 per cent of its files fifteen years after their creation and to review the remaining 7 per cent after a further spell of twenty-five years. At this point, it was customary for the number of surviving documents to be reduced to a mere 2 per cent of the original total.[68] This mutilated corpus of papers was then made available to researchers through deposit in the Public Record Office.

Such extensive weeding of the departmental files ensured that, the fine words of the navy's archival preservation policy notwithstanding, many historically significant documents were destroyed. Quite simply, with so large a percentage of papers being dispensed with, it was literally impossible for 'all records of historical, legal or diplomatic value' to be preserved. Equally, with so much pulping taking place, there was no real likelihood, despite the statements to the contrary, that every borderline judgement about retention or disposal would 'be given in favour of preservation'. Much more probable, if retention were in doubt, was that the documents in question would be disposed of.

Sadly, this is what seems to have transpired. In the late 1950s when the staff at the Admiralty Record Office came to review the surviving papers of the pre-First World War period, substantial numbers of important and irreplaceable documents were simply thrown away. In these circumstances, it was almost inevitable that some naval attaché reports would be among the files eliminated. The best that could have been hoped for was that, as significant intelligence documents, they would have suffered no more as a class than any other type of papers. Unfortunately, it seems that the dispatches of the naval attachés and, indeed, reports on Germany in general, were actually particularly vulnerable to the 'weeding' of the late 1950s. Evidence for this comes from the works of Professor Arthur Marder. First in August 1938 and then again in July 1956—both occasions that were prior to the final sorting of the pre-First World War naval papers—this up-and-coming American naval historian was given special access to the holdings of the Admiralty Record Office. Although many of the documents he saw still survive today, a great number do not and, revealingly, among those files now missing, a disproportionately high number are papers on Germany. The reason that these particular documents—which include war plans, consular letters, and, of course, naval attaché reports—should have been singled out for destruction in the late 1950s is anybody's guess. That they were seen by Marder and have since disappeared is, however, an unfortunate fact. This highlights the tragedy of Admiralty policy. Documents that were clearly of interest to historians in 1956, a circumstance evident from Professor Marder's eager inspection of them, and which should, therefore, have been retained as papers of undoubted historical interest, had been destroyed as valueless by the early 1960s. The result is that the Admiralty papers today are almost entirely bereft of naval attaché reports.

[68] Telephone conversation with H. Ellmers, 6 Feb. 1950, PRO 17/15.

Much the same could be said in respect of the military records. Although the War Office's archival policies and practices are not as well documented as the Admiralty's, it seems that the army was no more diligent than the navy when it came to document preservation. Indeed, so heavy handed was the weeding process in the 1920s that it actually aroused complaints from within the War Office establishment. The official responsible for organizing the coronation of George V, for example, composed a vitriolic minute in July 1934 upon discovering that 90 per cent of the documentary record he had so carefully created for posterity had been destroyed. As he explained: 'I do not want my name to be received with curses by our successors for the way in which our records have been handled.' He then concluded, 'If this is a sample of what the weeders have done, I can only call it a deplorable exhibition of incompetence and disregard of instruction.'[69] Sadly, this observation came too late. As another minute reveals, 79 per cent of the pre-war and wartime documents reviewed up to this time had already been destroyed.[70] More would be disposed of later. In the case of the War Office, as with the Admiralty, the final sorting of the remaining Edwardian papers entailed the destruction of enormous numbers of military intelligence and war planning documents.

The result was that when the transfer to the Public Record Office of pre-First World War military and naval records was completed, the deposited corpus of papers was almost entirely devoid of military and naval attaché reports. This dearth of evidence has had a significant impact on those historians who have sought to analyse the British intelligence picture of Germany. As one leading historian, mindful of the gaps in the papers, only recently asserted: 'the quality of military intelligence on Germany before 1914 remains impossible for us to assess'.[71] On the basis of the mutilated state of the principal War Office and Admiralty record series, this is more than a valid judgement; it actually rates as an understatement.

SURVIVING EVIDENCE

Yet this is not the end of the story. Although both the army and the navy's files may have been gutted in the name of record management, the historian interested in British military and naval intelligence is, fortunately, not entirely dependent upon the War Office and Admiralty papers for evidence. There were, in fact, several other ministries interested in German affairs and, consequently, over the years, considerable inter-departmental correspondence took place on all matters touching Anglo-German relations. Significantly, as part of this process, relevant

[69] Minute by H.G.C., 31 July 1934, WO 32/17606.
[70] Minute by Widdows, 16 Aug. 1934, ibid.
[71] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), 75.

intelligence on Germany was often shared between appropriate government departments. The result of this is that it is often possible to locate copies of documents missing from the Admiralty or War Office records by searching the files of other government agencies. This is particularly true in respect of the reports of the British military and naval attachés. In their case, overly complex bureaucratic procedures have ensured the survival of a good many of their dispatches. To illuminate why this should be so, a brief summary of how attaché reports were sent, delivered, and distributed is instructive.

Owing to the unique and rather unusual status of their authors—active duty officers posted to an embassy—every report sent home by a military or naval attaché generated a surprisingly elaborate paper trail. To begin with, according to their instructions, service attachés were required to address all their formal reports to the head of mission—the ambassador, minister, or chargé d'affaires—of the embassy or legation to which they were accredited. He would read the report and forward it, sometimes with his own observations, to the Foreign Office in Whitehall. Upon receipt there, the report would be placed in an official docket, given a registry number, and circulated to the appropriate individuals and departments for their comments and responses. Only once this process had been completed and everyone who needed to see the dispatch had done so, would it finally be transmitted to the War Office or Admiralty for their consideration.

Not surprisingly, this rather circuitous route from attaché to service ministry could delay the delivery of the document to its ultimate destination by several weeks. Accordingly, service attachés were instructed by their own departments to send 'advanced copies' of their reports direct to the relevant branch of the military or naval intelligence division. As a result, all the official dispatches of the military and naval attachés reached the War Office and Admiralty twice, albeit via different routes. At the same time, these reports also passed through a number of other hands. They started life with the attaché himself, who naturally kept a copy of each report for his files. They were also seen by the ambassador, who might well request a copy for the chancery archive, and they passed through the Foreign Office, whose officials were also at liberty to make or demand a copy. On top of this, there were occasions when service attaché reports were reproduced for other departments. For example, the Board of Trade at times received attaché reports touching on commercial matters; dispatches on the German African protectorates were frequently transmitted to the Colonial Office; while those letters and memoranda bearing on broader security issues were often passed to the Committee of Imperial Defence. Additionally, the Foreign Office regularly turned important documents, including the dispatches of service attachés, into confidential prints for distribution to other embassies and even to the Cabinet. Similarly, there were occasions when the Admiralty also selected attaché reports for printing and wider distribution.

Given the variety of different agencies through which each attaché report might pass, it seems likely that every dispatch once existed in at least five copies.

In the case of those selected for printing, the number would have been much higher. The runs of Admiralty prints normally exceeded twenty-five copies; while the more widely circulated Foreign Office confidential prints probably existed in even greater numbers. As a result of the extensive duplication and widespread distribution of these papers, the destruction of the original version of any given military or naval attaché report in the War Office or Admiralty archives, while still a great loss, did not necessarily mean that the report itself was gone forever. There was always a chance that copies might have been sent to one or more other government departments. Since many of these departments were more generous when it came to document preservation than either the War Office or Admiralty, such duplicates are often still extant. In particular, dispatches by the military and naval attachés can be found in the Foreign office political files, the records of the Berlin embassy, the Colonial Office papers, the archives of the Committee of Imperial Defence and the documents of the Air Ministry and Air Historical Branch. Consequently, through the examination of these collections, it is possible to assemble a substantial corpus of service attaché reports. Indeed, for many of the pre-war years, this process can be used to recreate substantial parts of the sequential run of dispatches that existed prior to the War Office and Admiralty weeding processes. Needless to say, these documents reveal a considerable amount of information about the role and reporting of the service attachés.

If a great many more military and naval attaché reports still exist than was previously believed to be the case, they are not the only sources of information to have emerged that cast light on the world of the service attachés. Most important are the few known attaché diaries. Sadly, it was only a minority of the officers posted to Berlin who kept a personal record of their activities. This is certainly a great loss to the historian and retrospectively was sometimes even regretted by the individuals in question themselves. Alick Russell, for example, military attaché in Berlin from 1910 to 1914, amplified on this very point in his memoirs: 'During my time in Germany and Sweden as Military Attaché I, stupidly and reprehensibly, never kept a diary, though I have done so for many later years when it was no longer of the least interest to anyone.'[72] He was not alone. Colonel Gleichen, who served in Berlin from 1903 to 1906, had kept a diary during the Boer War, but as he later admitted and deplored, 'it soon petered out'.[73]

However, at least two of the British attachés did go to the trouble of keeping a consistent daily record. One of these was Captain Reginald Allenby, naval attaché in Berlin from 1903 to 1906. Allenby's diary is a useful document, from which one can determine the full extent of his travels as well as other minor details of his work. Sadly, while its author was quite diligent at recording the quality of his meals and is at times also quite informative about Berlin

[72] Russell manuscript, p. 61.
[73] Lord Edward Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories: A Book of Recollections* (Edinburgh, 1932), p. v.

restaurants, he was generally all too brief when it came to writing about people and conversations, a fact that limits the value of his diary. Brevity on official matters was not, however, a reproach that could be levelled against the other principal attaché-diarist, Allenby's successor, Philip Dumas. By any standard, Dumas was an exceptionally conscientious diarist, recording all aspects of his daily life, including his work, in intricate detail. Moreover, he obviously enjoyed the freedom his diary gave him to express candid opinions about people and events and, as a result, his journal provides an utterly uninhibited commentary on the Berlin scene. This combination of great detail and exceptional frankness makes the diary a unique source. From it emerge particulars about the British Embassy, the Foreign Office, the Naval Intelligence Division, and life in Berlin as an attaché that not only would not otherwise exist, but which are not even hinted at elsewhere.

While none of the other attachés are known to have written diaries, several of them did produce memoirs. Indeed, one of them, Colonel Waters, whose service in Berlin covered the years from 1900 to 1903, spent his retirement as a prolific author of reminiscences. Beginning in 1926, he released a total of three volumes dealing with his work as a military attaché.[74] As none of Waters's private papers appear to have survived, these books, though anything but impartial, are an invaluable source for the colonel's time in Germany. Equally useful is the one volume of memoirs produced by Waters's successor Count Gleichen, who also left no papers. In Gleichen's case this was a deliberate act. As he explained, with regard to the letters that he received, he made it a policy to 'throw [them] into the wastepaper-basket as soon as I decently can'.[75] As a result, his book is an important supplement to the official record, providing insights on Gleichen's time in Berlin that can be found nowhere else.

Also illuminating are the two sets of reminiscences written by Colonel Alick Russell. The first of these is an article that appeared in 1924 in the military journal, *The Fighting Forces*.[76] Brief but informative, it contains a lot of information about his time in Berlin. More important, however, is the autobiography that Russell wrote after the Second World War, but which he never actually published. Filled with personal information and stories that would never have been included in his official reports, it amplifies considerably on the tale told in his previous article, providing a great deal of important information about the world of the military attaché.[77]

[74] W. H. H. Waters, *Secret and Confidential: The Experiences of a Military Attaché* (London, 1926); idem, *Private and Personal: Further Experiences of a Military Attaché* (London, 1928); idem, *Potsdam and Doorn* (London, 1935).

[75] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p. vi.

[76] A. V. F. V. Russell, 'Reminiscences of the German Court', *The Fighting Forces*, 1 (1924).

[77] This untitled manuscript is in the possession of the Russell family. I am grateful to John and Maureen Russell for making it available to me.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MILITARY AND NAVAL ATTACHÉ REPORTS

Collectively, the surviving attaché reports, the diaries, and the published and unpublished memoirs represent a body of documentary evidence about the role and duties of the service attachés of a kind previously thought not to exist. While this is obviously a positive development from the heritage point of view in that it restores a documentary collection that was previously thought to be lost, the broader question might still be asked: why does this matter historically?

The answer is straightforward. If, as the evidence suggests, the attachés were one of the main sources of specialist information for the British government on the German armed forces, then these papers will allow the very evaluation of British military and naval intelligence that had previously been deemed impossible. Much would then flow from this. In the narrow sense, we would be able to say precisely what material the British government and its military and naval advisers received about their prospective and future adversary. Moreover, we would also be able to assess the accuracy and completeness of the British intelligence picture of the German army and navy. This is no small matter. As was recently demonstrated by the Second Gulf War against Iraq, intelligence concerning an enemy's capabilities can be very influential in determining policy, even if, as was the case in Iraq, this information turns out to be wrong. Was the same true in pre-First World War Britain when it came to managing relations with Germany? If, as seems likely, the answer is that intelligence was as important then as it is now, then the question of whether the British government was in the dark or misinformed about Germany's true abilities or whether they possessed a reasonable understanding about their ultimate opponent is significant. It allows the historian to ask whether the British government framed a policy out of ignorance and suspicion or whether they forged a rational and informed response on the basis of credible and reliable data.

The answers to these questions will inevitably bring broader issues to the fore. In particular, there is the matter of whether intelligence can persuade governments to go to war. Once again, the crux of this topic was vividly illustrated in the case of the conflict against Ba'athist Iraq. The 2003 Gulf War demonstrated how intelligence information can be significant in generating and sustaining a sense of threat and how this threat perception, once created, can then play a powerful part in provoking and justifying conflict. Did what applied in 2003 also apply in 1914? Did the British government genuinely believe in a German threat and act accordingly? If they did so, was this because of information received largely or partly from their principal intelligence source, the service attachés?

In 1998, it was strongly argued by Niall Ferguson in his rich and thought-provoking book *The Pity of War*, that pre-First World War British policy towards

Germany took the form it did not in response to in-coming information about a German threat, but actually in opposition to the available intelligence. 'Yet it is a striking fact,' he wrote, 'that the alarmist claims of a German Napoleonic design were at odds with much of the intelligence which was actually being received from Germany.' Believing this, he posed the question: 'Why then did Grey and the most senior officials in the Foreign Office and the General Staff conjure up a German design for Napoleonic power, posing a threat to Britain?' Answering: 'The possibility arises that they were exaggerating—if not fabricating—such a threat . . .' In coming to this conclusion, Ferguson was unable to take into account the product supplied by military intelligence, arguing, as we have seen, that this was 'impossible for us to assess'.[78] However, such information is now available and can be assessed. Will Ferguson's judgement stand up to scrutiny in the face of what the attachés reported or will the attaché reports show that the government was receiving intelligence about an aggressive, even Napoleonic, German design? This, too, is a question that can be posed now that the documentary evidence of the service attachés is available.

In summary, the new information on service attachés raises several important questions. These centre on the role of threat perception in defence policy and the role of intelligence in generating and sustaining this. If attachés did supply much of the military and naval information on Germany, was it accurate? Did the attachés show Germany as a threat? And, if so, does this explain why the British government followed the policies that they did? In short, knowing what information about Germany was supplied to the government, whether it was accurate and whether it affected policy, does this explain why Britain went to war in 1914?

PLAN OF THIS STUDY

To address the issues presented above, as well as other matters concerning the role, function, and performance of the service attachés, this book will be divided into five chapters. The first will look at the role of the attachés in general. Their 'job description' included a variety of duties ranging from ceremonial appearances at court through to procuring vital intelligence information. By considering the complete range of the attachés' tasks—from the decorative to the essential—as well as the qualifications needed for the job, the characteristics of those appointed, and the training and instructions they received, the full context of the service attachés' position will be ascertained and delineated.

Once it has been established what an attaché does and where intelligence fits into this profile, the second chapter will examine how service attachés gathered intelligence for their superiors. The range of sources available to the

[78] Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 75.

attachés—many of which are only known to us because of diary entries and personal papers—will be revealed, as will the limitations of these sources and some of the pitfalls of gathering intelligence in Germany.

The third chapter will take the question of the attachés' intelligence function further, by exploring the reporting received from Berlin on the technical progress of the German armed forces. The focus of the discussion will be on the details uncovered of German weapons development, illustrated by attaché reports on, for example, aviation, motor vehicles, and submarines. Consideration will be also given to what the attachés reported about the personalities and policies of the German leaders. The extent to which the attachés were able to acquire material about such sensitive matters will thereby be explored, as will the question of the accuracy of their information.

The fourth chapter will continue this investigation of intelligence-gathering, but will move from the narrow level of technical details to the broader question of political and strategic information about German intentions. In particular, it will consider whether the attachés thought that Germany was a peaceful or aggressive nation, whether they believed that a war launched by Germany was imminent, and whether they believed that, in such a war, Germany planned to invade the British Isles. In short, did Britain's military and naval observers in Berlin play a part in engendering the British perception that Germany represented a threat to British security?

The final chapter will explore the influence the attachés were able to exert on British policy-making. It will focus on what happened to their reports when they reached London, who read them, and what actions, if any, were taken as a result of them.

By the end of this investigation certain facts will be clear. First, that the British service attachés in Berlin were an important source of information on the German armed forces. They provided details about German weapons, tactics, opinions, and leaders that could not easily have been obtained in any other way. In addition, they provided military-political intelligence on the intentions, war-like and otherwise, of the German leadership that contributed to the sense of a German menace that existed in the corridors of the Foreign Office, War Office, and Admiralty. Finally, they had a marked effect on policy-makers in London, influencing decisions at all levels. In short, it is the contention that military and naval attachés played a dynamic and under-rated role in moulding Britain's diplomatic and strategic behaviour that goes some way to explaining how and why Anglo-German relations developed along the lines they did prior to the cataclysm in August 1914.

1

Court and Social: The Role of the Service Attaché

An entry in the diary of Captain Reginald Allenby, Britain's naval attaché in Berlin from 1903 to 1906, sums up succinctly how many of his contemporaries would have perceived the routine of the service attaché. 'Court Ball', he wrote, '. . . I had a long chat with the Kaiser.'[1] Although it is a cliché, such leisurely and genteel mixing in high society was definitely a fixture of the attaché's world. But how great a fixture was it? What purpose did such activities serve? And what other undertakings formed part of the attaché's duties? These issues, which go to the heart of what a service attaché was for, will be the central focus of this chapter. As we shall see, the position and status of the service attaché was an unusual one. Questions existed then, as now, about whether attachés were principally soldiers or diplomats, whether they were ornamental or useful. It is with these questions, the answers to which are essential to any understanding of how the service attachés functioned, that the chapter will begin.

THE STATUS OF THE SERVICE ATTACHÉ

At one level the purpose and position of a service attaché was a straightforward one. As the nineteenth century progressed and the business of warfare became increasingly complex and technical, so it became ever more apparent that civilian diplomats lacked the necessary expertise to provide informed reports on the military and naval developments of the nations to which they were accredited. To remedy this deficiency, serving officers from the army and navy were dispatched overseas to give advice to Britain's representatives abroad on the intricacies of martial and maritime matters. To all intents and purposes, therefore, military and naval attachés were simply professional advisers to the heads of the various British diplomatic missions. As such, they were, in one sense, analogous to the other specialist attachés who served in the diplomatic realm. Just as, for example, commercial attachés were appointed to act as aids to ambassadors and

[1] Allenby Diary, 15 Feb. 1905.

ministers in regard to the complex fields of international trade and commerce, so service attachés provided expert assistance on issues related to the armed forces and conflict.

There was, however, one significant difference between service attachés and other specialist diplomatic appointments, such as commercial attachés. The individuals posted to the latter position were normally bona-fide career officials of either the diplomatic or consular service. As such, they were accustomed to diplomatic usage and international affairs. By contrast, military and naval attachés were not intrinsically part of this realm. Appointed from among the officer corps of the army and navy, they were inherently used to the life and rules of their service, but had little reason to be knowledgeable about either the ways of diplomacy or the structure and norms of embassy life. Despite this, for the duration of their tenure as attachés they were required to detach themselves from the familiar ground of their service and adapt to the wholly different environment of the Foreign Service. This was a significant change and it is little wonder if they did not always find it an easy transition. As one naval attaché fresh into his appointment recorded: 'The great difficulty is that while I am in it I am not of it and I see I must pay some awkward deference to diplomacy.'[2]

The problem was more than one of simply acclimatizing to a new and alien working environment. There was also a question about where and how service attachés fitted into the administrative hierarchy of the British government. In theory, for the period of their posting, military and naval attachés were regarded as members of the diplomatic staff of the embassy to which they were accredited, answerable to a civilian ambassador to whom they were temporarily subordinate. This circumstance was made clear at the time of their initial selection. As the Foreign Office Letter of Appointment succinctly and unambiguously stated: 'during your stay in the several countries which you may have occasion to visit . . . you will consider yourself under the orders of His Majesty's Representative there'.[3]

The practical side of this subordination to civilian, diplomatic control was formalized in a variety of ways. To begin with, the attaché was instructed to clear his movements with the appropriate authorities. Thus, when abroad, he had to inform the ambassador of 'his arrival and departure as well as his future destination'. Similarly, when returning to Britain, he was, in the first instance, 'directed to call at the Foreign Office'.[4]

Then there was the question of the attaché's correspondence. So far as Britain's diplomats were concerned, it was 'quite incompatible with the existence of a Foreign Office' that 'communications of importance which may . . . have to be referred to and made use of in diplomatic negotiations' should pass through any

[2] Dumas Diary, 8 Feb. 1906.

[3] Taken from Dumas's 'Letter of Appointment as Naval Attaché', 21 Jan. 1906, FO 371/75. The rubric for military attachés was very similar. See Trench's 'Letter of Appointment as Military Attaché', Feb. 1906, ibid.

[4] File on the Appointment of Watson, June 1910, FO 371/1036.

other channel than their own hands.[5] Accordingly, they believed it was essential that they should have ultimate control over both the attaché's correspondence with London and his diplomatic relations with the German authorities. As a result, the Foreign Office demanded that this desideratum be expressed clearly in all the instructions that the attachés received. On the face of it, they were successful. As an Admiralty memorandum of guidance enunciated, naval attachés were required 'when on service abroad . . . [to] make their reports through His Majesty's Diplomatic Representative'.[6] Similar instructions were given to military attachés. 'All official reports', they were told, 'will be addressed to the Head of the Mission to which the officer is attached.'[7]

As we can see, the formal position of the service attachés was bluntly stated in several memoranda and instructions. They were subordinate to the ambassador, required at all times to gain approval for their movements, and obliged to send their reports through the embassy to the Foreign Office. To some extent, these rules, combined with the attachés' constant immersion in the life and affairs of the embassy, were always likely to turn these men from active officers into serving diplomats. This was not a prospect that greatly appealed to the services. 'An attaché appointed to a particular embassy must naturally settle into the position of a member of the staff of such embassy', wrote Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, 'but what we want is an officer who is the "eyes of the Admiralty" so to speak.'[8] Yet this shift was a real danger. A revealing entry from the diary of Commander Dumas, a mere ten months into his posting, shows how quickly someone in his position could embrace the esprit de corps of the Foreign Service:

> Everyone in a huge state of excitement because Drummond, our ambassador in the US, has unexpectedly returned and all are speculating on his successor. . . . It is curious to notice that I am already beginning to interest myself in these diplomatic affairs and feel it almost a personal matter that they should not go outside the diplomatic corps for these high appointments.[9]

Yet, however beguiling embassy life might have been and however unambiguous the guidelines and stipulations issued to the service attachés must have appeared, the position of these officers was in many respects not clear-cut.

This was certainly the case in regard to the chain of command under which the attachés served. One reason for this was that, although the service attachés might formally be appointed by the Foreign Office and might temporarily be subordinate to the ambassador, who, for the duration of their appointment, wrote their annual appraisal, they were nevertheless selected and paid by their own departments.

[5] Minute by Crowe, 12 Sept. 1910, FO 371/901.

[6] Admiralty memorandum, 25 May 1908, 'Naval Attachés. Position in Connection with Admiralty—Mode of Communication with, &c.', ADM 7/1003.

[7] 'Memorandum for Guidance of Military Attachés', FO 371/75.

[8] Minute by Richards, 24 July 1897, on Admiralty 23 July 1897, ADM 1/7337.

[9] Dumas Diary, 15 Nov. 1906.

A naval attaché's salary, for example, was charged to Navy Vote 12 as part of the budget for the Naval Intelligence Department; military attachés were paid from sums voted to the army for miscellaneous effective services. Moreover, the long-term career prospects and future assignments of these officers remained firmly in the hands of the War Office and Admiralty. Inevitably, therefore, the crucial relationship for service attachés was not with the Foreign Office, but with their own particular service ministry and, naturally, this fact influenced their actions. It is entirely understandable, for instance, that, although addressing their dispatches to their head of mission and transmitting them through the Foreign Office, they nevertheless wrote them for the ultimate benefit of neither of these august agencies, but for their own departments. Nobody was under any illusion about this. Among diplomats, it was widely recognized that 'although serving under the Foreign Office . . . [the] Naval Attaché reports primarily for the benefit of the Admiralty'.[10] In a similar fashion, Admiral Sir John Fisher succinctly expressed the view of the navy on this matter when he told the Committee of Imperial Defence that, although a naval attaché report 'is addressed to the Ambassador, . . . it is really meant for the Admiralty'.[11]

This situation, whereby the attaché's *de jure* subordination to the ambassador was balanced by his *de facto* dependence on his own service ministry, placed the military and naval attachés in the anomalous situation, irrespective of what the rules might have said, of effectively serving two masters simultaneously. This could cause complications, as Hugh Watson was to discover upon taking up the post of naval attaché in Berlin in August 1910. According to his own account, the new attaché was sent to the Reich with specific instructions from the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Director of Naval Intelligence to improve relations between the navies of the two countries. To this end, he was to open negotiations with the German authorities over an agreement to exchange naval information.[12] Accordingly, in his first month as attaché, Watson met with Admiral von Tirpitz, the Kaiser, Admiral von Müller, and Admiral von Holtzendorff. On each occasion, he raised the proposals for a naval information agreement and, when opportune, also discussed other means of improving naval relations, such as meetings between British and German fleets.[13]

While these friendly overtures were well received by the Germans, the Foreign Office in London was far from pleased by Watson's actions. The officials there were beside themselves at not having been 'informed beforehand that Captain Watson had been authorized to speak'.[14] Consequently, they instructed the

[10] Minute by Langley on Dumas, NA 34/08, 30 July 1908, FO 371/461.

[11] Transcript of the Tenth meeting of the Invasion Sub-Committee of the CID, 26 Mar. 1908, CAB 16/3A.

[12] Watson, 'Naval Attaché Memo: *Not* Sent', [n.d., but Oct. 1910], FO 244/746.

[13] Foreign Office 7 Sept. 1910, 'Exchange of Naval Information between British and German Governments', ADM 1/8195.

[14] Minute by Langley on Watson NA 31/10, 25 Aug. 1910, FO 371/901.

ambassador 'to inform Captain Watson that his proceedings are strongly disapproved of by the Secretary of State and that Sir E. Grey takes decided objection to the Naval Attaché making proposals of this kind without his authority'.[15] At the same time, they took the matter up forcibly with the Admiralty, who promptly disavowed Watson's 'indiscretions'.[16]

The Admiralty file on this incident does not contain any record of Watson's original orders, so it is impossible to check the honesty of their repudiation of him. Suffice it to say that, while the naval authorities declared that Watson 'did not act in accordance with any instructions',[17] the naval attaché always maintained otherwise. Sir Edward Goschen reported: '[Watson] says that he is very sorry to have incurred Sir E. Grey's justified displeasure, but he considers that the Admiralty has not treated him well. His argument is that while he regrets extremely having made proposals without Sir E. Grey's authority, he did so under personal instructions from the First Lord . . .'[18] However, for the purposes of the matter at issue, whether Watson actually received these instructions or not is beside the point. The essential fact is that he believed that he had received them and in acting upon them he was attempting to satisfy the demands, as he saw them, of the Admiralty. It is equally clear that in attempting to do this and thereby please the Admiralty, he seriously displeased the Foreign Office; and in displeasing the Foreign Office, he compromised his position with the Admiralty. It was an unenviable position to be in, but not an unusual one for a service attaché. With two masters, it was always possible that one might be pulled two ways.

If subordination to two different departments was potentially problematic for the individual attaché, who might find himself on occasion being pulled in different directions, it was even more confusing for the people that the attachés served. As a brief exchange recorded in the minutes of the Committee of Imperial Defence makes clear, many of the country's leading decision-makers found the subtleties of the service attaché's position altogether rather baffling:

Mr Asquith [the Chancellor]: What is the exact status of a Military or Naval Attaché? Is a Military Attaché, for instance, under the War Office, or is he immediately under the Foreign Office?
Sir Edward Grey [the Foreign Secretary]: I think his reports come to the Foreign Office.
Mr Asquith: They come to you first?
Sir Edward Grey: Yes.
Mr Asquith: And then you hand them on?
Sir Edward Grey: Yes.
Mr Asquith: Then he is your Servant?
Sir Edward Grey: I am not quite sure how he is appointed.

[15] Minute by Crowe, 17 Oct. 1910, FO 371/901.
[16] McKenna to Grey, 22 Oct. 1910, FO 800/87.
[17] Greene to the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, 30 Sept. 1910, FO 371/901.
[18] Goschen to Tyrell, 29 Oct. 1910, FO 800/62.

Sir William Nicholson [the Quartermaster-General]: I presume the Admiralty and the War Office send their instructions to the Attachés about the sort of information they require.
Mr Asquith: That I should imagine.[19]

That the Chancellor, the Foreign Secretary, and one of the army's most senior officers, the Quartermaster-General, could not collectively reconcile the service attachés' many contradictory ties and loyalties and produce a clear statement of their status goes a long way towards demonstrating just how anomalous their position actually was. Certainly, the fact that their instructions placed them under the authority of the ambassador was neither definitive in theory nor unambiguous in practice.

What was true in respect of the chain of command—namely that the instructions stated one thing, but that the reality was more complex—was also true with regard to civilian control over the attachés' correspondence. Once again, on the face of it, the guidance to attachés could not have been clearer: all official reports had to go through the ambassador. While the officers sent to Berlin, on the whole, scrupulously obeyed this stipulation, there was one problem. The attachés did not only write official reports; they also communicated with the military and naval authorities in London by other means. Aside from private letters, the extent and frequency of which is impossible to gauge, the principal alternative channel was the so-called 'semi-official' correspondence: Reference Sheets in the case of naval attachés and Memoranda in the case of military attachés. The ostensible purpose of these semi-official communications was one of convenience. They relieved the ambassador of the need to read endless dispatches of a routine or technical nature that he probably would not have understood anyway and, by bypassing the ambassador and the Foreign Office, they ensured that these reports reached the Admiralty and War Office more quickly than would otherwise have been the case.

The existence of this semi-official correspondence was known to the Foreign Office, whose officials accepted, in principle, both the War Office rationale that it applied solely to 'smaller items of information' and the navy's justification that it was used exclusively for 'information which is of interest only to the Admiralty'.[20] The practice, as it developed, was, however, quite another matter and on several occasions the Foreign Office clashed with the attachés over their interpretation of these regulations. Two incidents relating to semi-official reports written by Captain Heath illustrate this clearly.

The first occurred in the summer of 1909, when the Naval Intelligence Department wrote directly to Heath asking him to obtain from the Reich Naval Office certain pieces of information that they needed for correcting their internal

[19] Transcript of the Third Meeting of the Invasion Sub-Committee of the CID, 12 Dec. 1907, CAB 16/3A.

[20] 'Memorandum for Guidance of Military Attachés', FO 371/75. Also, *NID Notes for Guidance of Naval Attachés*, ADM 1/8204.

publications. The information in question was the 'official dates of laying down the later ships of the German shipbuilding programme', 'the meaning of "Wacht Kommando" ', and the 'duties and relative rank of Fregatten Kapitän'.[21] Heath made his enquiries on 6 July, received an answer on 12 July and duly forwarded this reply straight to the Admiralty, presumably thinking that this information, composed largely of dates and definitions, would be of little interest to the Foreign Office.

Unfortunately, circumstances conspired to ensure that he was wrong. In early August, the German ambassador in London, Paul von Wolff-Metternich, had an interview with the British Foreign Secretary during which he raised the example of the German reply to Heath's enquiries as proof of his government's openness and good faith in respect to naval matters. An embarrassed Grey had to admit that to the best of his knowledge he knew nothing of this particular communication.[22] His officials were not amused by their chief's discomfort. Eyre Crowe, the senior clerk, minuted:

> This shows how important it is that the reports should be sent through this office in accordance with the rules. If Sir E. Grey had had the information contained in the naval attaché's report, he would have been in a more favourable position when discussing the question . . . with Count Metternich on August 4th.[23]

A remonstrative letter along these lines was sent to the attaché and the Admiralty.[24]

Five months later, a similar situation arose. In February 1910, the officials at the Foreign office read with considerable indignation an article in *The Times* newspaper in which it was claimed that Admiral von Tirpitz had told the Budget Committee of the Reichstag that the British Admiralty gave false data in the naval estimates.[25] Such was their irritation at this statement that they instructed the embassy in Berlin, first, to seek official clarification of the Admiral's words and, secondly, to produce a report on the matter. The former of these instructions was easily complied with and produced from the German government a corrected version of the statement that did not impute any deceit to the British authorities. While this was a matter of satisfaction to the Foreign office, the reply they received to their second instruction, which was that Heath, who regarded this as a technical question, had already sent a report on this topic direct to the Admiralty, produced further annoyance. In a sharp rebuke, Walter Langley wrote:

> I have on a previous occasion . . . had to point out the inconvenience arising from the disregard of the general instructions governing the method of conducting the correspondence of the Naval Attaché on official matters, and I request that you . . . ask him in future strictly

[21] Greene to Hardinge, 16 Sept. 1909, FO 371/675. [22] Note by Grey, 4 Aug. 1909, ibid.
[23] Minute by Crowe, 17 Sept. 1909, ibid. [24] Langley No. 223, 21 Sept. 1909, ibid.
[25] Cutting from *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1910, and minutes on same by various Foreign Office officials, FO 371/901.

to comply with the rule requiring all his reports to be addressed to the Ambassador for transmission to this office.[26]

As the above examples show, just as ambassadorial authority over the attachés was tempered by the pre-existing ties of these officers to their own services, so the Foreign Office's control over the attachés' correspondence was impaired by the existence of semi-official lines of communications to the War Office and Admiralty. Naturally, the diplomats attempted to do something about this. In October 1910, the Foreign Office decided, with the concurrence of the Admiralty, to tighten the regulations governing the behaviour of naval attachés. 'In view of the serious troubles which we have had with the past and present naval attachés in Berlin', wrote Crowe, 'it seems desirable to take this opportunity of more precisely laying down the exact status and position of a naval attaché and the conditions under which his duties must be discharged.'[27] Accordingly, he proposed significant changes to the instructions issued to naval attachés on their appointment. This included a stipulation that all 'matters of principle . . . must be dealt with by the head of mission'.[28]

Yet, if the instructions were changed, the results were evidently not the desired ones, for November 1912 once again saw the Foreign Office proposing a major rewrite of the regulations. This time, their aim, if not to eliminate semi-official correspondence altogether, was certainly to restrict it to only the very smallest items of minor importance. This was something that the Admiralty could not accept and, in response to the Foreign Office proposal, they raised a number of serious objections. To begin with, there was the practical question of precisely what constituted a routine or insignificant issue. Getting straight to the heart of the matter, the Secretary to the Admiralty pointed out that 'in technical matters, it would be almost impossible to define what is a small item or a matter of minor importance'. This difficulty alone could render the Foreign Office proposal unworkable. However, there were also issues of principle. As the Admiralty letter pointed out, the attaché was both an agent of diplomacy and of the navy. As it stated: 'while concurring with the view of the Foreign Office that the Naval Attaché should be treated as a member of the diplomatic staff of the embassy to which he is accredited . . . yet the Naval Attaché has always had a definite relationship to the Admiralty'. This was particularly true, it went on, in regard to 'technical matters' where the naval attaché 'has corresponded semi-officially direct with the Admiralty'. Were this to be curtailed, 'departmental intercommunication which is very essential to Admiralty work . . . would be much impaired'. For this reason, all the Admiralty was prepared to countenance was an additional statement to the effect 'that if technical questions should in any way involve matters of policy the Minister is to be consulted'.[29] In the want of any alternative, the

[26] Langley to Goschen, 19 Feb. 1910, FO 244/746.
[27] Minute by Crowe, 23 Oct. 1910, FO 371/907.
[28] Revised 'Letter of Appointment for Naval Attachés', ibid.
[29] Greene to Crowe, 28 Nov. 1912, FO 371/1562.

Foreign Office accepted this compromise, which, in effect, left the matter clearer but still unresolved.

As a result, on the eve of the First World War, the instructions to service attachés, for all their apparent clarity, continued to incorporate some serious anomalies. Attachés were under the formal authority of the ambassador, but still had a 'definite relationship' with their own service. They were required to send their official reports through diplomatic channels, but could still, with some restrictions, which they policed themselves, communicate direct with their own departmental officials. The existence of these anomalies made one set of questions more pertinent than ever. What were military and naval attachés? Were they officers or were they diplomats?

From all the actions that they took to resolve this conundrum, it is evident how the Foreign Office wanted this question to be answered. The officials there regarded the attachés first and foremost as diplomats. They may once have been servicemen and would, most likely, be servicemen again, but for the term of their appointment they wished to see them under strict ambassadorial control. As we have seen, however, in the armed forces themselves there was some dissent to so cut-and-dried a definition. While there were few officers who would have gone as far as the correspondent who described naval attachés as members of 'the Diplomatic branch of the Navy',[30] there were plenty of soldiers and sailors who believed that the attachés existed principally for the benefit of their own service.

Inevitably, the reality was a compromise of the both/and pattern. Service attachés could not choose between being officers or diplomats; they were diplomats and servicemen at the same time. Ironically, it was a Foreign Office official, Crowe, who best encapsulated the reality of the situation. Describing the role of Dumas, he observed: 'Captain Dumas is not only a naval officer speaking for the Admiralty, but also the naval attaché to the embassy, which represents the King and H.M.G; and these two characters cannot be kept altogether distinct.'[31] Yet, if this rather anomalous and unsatisfactory position represented the best definition of the status of the service attaché, there was still the not insignificant question of what they were for. As we shall see, to some extent, this, too, was controversial.

THE SOCIAL DUTIES OF THE SERVICE ATTACHÉ

In what was doubtless intended as a stinging criticism of the military attachés the Treasury described their role as a largely 'ornamental' and 'ceremonial' one.[32]

[30] *The Times*, 20 Mar. 1920, p. 8.

[31] Minute by Crowe, 14 Jan. 1907, on Dumas NA 2/07, 9 Jan. 1907. G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, 11 vols. (London, 1926–38), vi. 3. Hereafter *BD*.

[32] See minutes to Treasury files 8804 of 14 May 1903 and 17236 of 15 Oct. 1903, T 1/9993B and T1/10966.

While these comments were expressed in the context of a decision not to increase their salary and might, therefore, be judged as tainted by an ulterior motive, there was nevertheless an element of truth in the Treasury judgement. In the performance of their duties, the military attachés did, indeed, perform many ceremonial functions.

Foremost amongst these was attendance at the Emperor's court. As Professor John Röhl, the pre-eminent authority on the Kaiser, has conclusively demonstrated, Wilhelm II, in his desire to leave no doubt about 'the splendour of the Crown', maintained an elaborate, expensive, and overblown regal establishment. Numerous banquets, balls, luncheons, galas, and levees were held, at which considerable pomp and ceremony were expended in the pursuit of monarchical grandeur. This 'efflorescence of a sumptuous neo-absolutist court culture',[33] as Röhl has described it, had major implications for the British military attachés stationed in Berlin, because they were expected to contribute to it. Decked out in their full dress tunics, medals, and braid, their presence at court was seen by the Kaiser as an important element in the princely mise-en-scène that he wished to construct. As a result, they were invariably requested to attend the major and also several of the lesser occasions in the court calendar. There were many such events. One attaché noted:

> The number of parades, military functions, gala operas, etc., to which we were invited was larger, I am convinced, than at any other court, and on nearly all these occasions the foreign Military Attachés were, if I may be allowed to use a conventional phrase, 'made a fuss of' by the Emperor.[34]

In this context, it is hardly surprising if military attachés in Germany regularly found themselves in the opulent surroundings of the Weisse Saal of the imperial palace. However, their presence alone was not sufficient: they were there to aid the Kaiser create a particular spectacle. As everyone was aware, failure to play the requisite part in the Kaiser's grand pantomime was a solecism not quickly forgiven by the Emperor. It is this that explains why those attachés who did not conform to the rigid court protocols were subject to near ostracism. The case of Colonel Gleichen, who attended a private dinner in honour of Prince Arthur of Connaught wearing mess dress, is instructive. By his own admission 'he got into terribly hot water with the Emperor' over this.[35] One of his successors amplified on the incident:

> Great importance was attached to correct dress in Court circles in Berlin and of course in the German Army, so when one of my predecessors, who should have known better, appeared at some important function in mess dress, when he should have worn a full dress tunic, the German Emperor was furious, and, as His Imperial Majesty told me, nearly kicked him out of the Palace![36]

[33] John C. G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court*, (Cambridge, 1996), 70.
[34] A. V. F. V. Russell, 'Reminiscences of the German Court', *The Fighting Forces*, 1 (1924), 58.
[35] Edward Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, (London, 1932), 261.
[36] Russell manuscript, p. 59.

The importance the Kaiser placed in the attachés appearing at court and helping to create the desired spectacle could not have been clearer.

In addition to attendance at court, the military attaché had a series of other major ceremonial duties to perform. One of these was representing the British monarch at military events. The existence of this duty stemmed from the fact that, although the ambassador was officially the King's sole envoy and plenipotentiary for the German Empire, it was recognized that as a civilian he was not always an appropriate substitute for the sovereign at martial gatherings. Accordingly, in this context, the military attaché, a serving officer on the General Staff, often assumed this duty in the ambassador's place.[37]

The fact that the King held the position of colonel-in-chief of the Fürst Blücher Hussars ensured that there were many occasions when this proved necessary, for, while regular royal inspections of this regiment were not a practical proposition, visits by the military attaché on His Majesty's behalf were always possible. Consequently, they seem to have been reasonably frequent occurrences. Sometimes, these trips were made for relatively routine matters. Thus, in April 1910, Colonel Russell made the journey to the regimental headquarters in Pomerania in part to present to Oberleutnant Pretzel the insignia of the Royal Victorian Order, the membership of which the King had bestowed upon him.[38] On top of such regular visits, there were also grander occasions associated with the King's colonelcy of the regiment. February 1908, for example, saw both the 150th anniversary of the raising of the regiment as well as the 25th anniversary of the King's relationship with it. Therefore, a series of festivities was arranged to mark the occasion. Spread over two days and involving a mounted display, a church service, the unveiling of a monument, some presentations, a banquet, a formal ball, and a soldiers' ball, it was a programme organized in the grand style. Once again, the person of the monarch was represented by the military attaché, in this case Colonel Trench.[39]

While it was customary for the military attaché to represent the person of the monarch at military events, on civil occasions that duty was reserved for the ambassador. Nevertheless, since the monarch would normally have received a military escort at such functions, it was essential that the ambassador, when standing in his sovereign's place, should likewise be accompanied. Not surprisingly, given that the military attaché was the only soldier at the embassy, the job inevitably fell to him. As a result, there were numerous important functions at which the military attaché was present in the capacity as military escort to the ambassador. For instance, when, in early September 1906, it was necessary to send a delegation from the embassy to attend the christening of the Crown Prince's son, Trench was

[37] The Foreign Office took a different view, but did not see much point in complaining officially. Barrington to Lascelles, 11 Jan. 1904, FO 800/12.

[38] The report on this trip, MA 16/10, 29 Apr. 1910, is missing. However, details of what was planned are in Russell to Ponsonby, 23 Apr. 1910, RA VIC/X 23/31.

[39] Trench to Knollys, 20 Feb. 1908, RA VIC/W53/6.

included in the party.[40] For similar reasons, when towards the end of the same month the ambassador travelled to Coburg for the christening of the new hereditary duke, Trench was once again present.[41]

Visits by members of the royal family to Germany were another ceremonial occasion that invariably necessitated the presence of the military attaché. The attaché's involvement in such events was twofold: he assisted in the arrangements, especially liaising with the German authorities, and provided an escort for the visitors when they arrived. Thus, when the Prince of Wales decided to come to Cologne to inspect his regiment, the 8th (Von Gesseler) Cuirassiers, Trench was involved from the outset. Recalled to London in February, he had a meeting at Marlborough House with the Prince to go over the plans.[42] Then, when the visit actually took place, he was in constant attendance. He was the first person to meet the Prince when the latter arrived at the German frontier station of Herbesthal on the evening of 25 March and was still with him when he departed for Darmstadt two days later.[43]

Just as military attachés were involved in visits by members of the British royal family, so they were also closely involved in other important royal events, especially visits by German dignitaries to Britain. Thus, when it was decided that the German regiments with which King George V was associated should be invited to send deputations to his coronation, it was Russell who undertook the liaison with them.[44] In common with the other British military attachés, he was also 'recalled previous to the coronation in order that [he] may be in attendance upon Royal and other Representative Guests who will visit this country for the Ceremony'.[45]

Similarly, when it was decided to invite the Kaiser over to the unveiling of the memorial to Queen Victoria in the Mall, Russell once again liaised with the German authorities over the details of the German delegation.[46] He was, also, once again recalled to London 'so that he [could] be attached to the Deputation from the 1st Dragoon Guards'.[47]

Many of the ceremonial functions undertaken by the military attachés were duplicated in the case of the naval attachés. They, too, attended numerous court functions. As the Dumas diary demonstrates, these often occurred in close succession: one day might be spent at the palace at a parade, a few days later there might be an inspection to attend, a few weeks later there might be a gala dinner, and

[40] Trench's report on this, MA 14, 3 Sept. 1906, is missing. Some details are available from the rest of the file, FO 371/79.

[41] Trench's report is missing, but the file contains details about what occurred, FO 372/15.

[42] RA, Diary of George, Prince of Wales, 19 Feb. 1908.

[43] Ibid., 25 and 27 Mar. 1908. Further information is contained in the itinerary for the visit. RA F&V/R.F/VIS/OV/1908/Germany.

[44] Russell, MA 6/11, 8 Mar. 1911, MA 11/11, 3 May 1911, and MA 14/11, 22 May 1911, FO 372/323 and FO 372/324.

[45] Dawson to Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, 6 Mar. 1911, FO 372/321.

[46] Russell to Ponsonby, 21 Apr. 1911, RA PS/GV/PS 2791/8.

[47] Bigge to Tyrell, 20 Mar. 1911, RA PS/GV/PS 2476/17.

so on.[48] In a similar fashion, naval attachés sometimes represented the crown on state occasions. Hence, when the government desired to give commemorative cups to the mayors of the cities at which the British Channel fleet had anchored during their Baltic cruise of 1905, it was the naval attaché, Allenby, who undertook the journey and made the presentations.[49] Also, just as military attachés were often used to escort members of the royal family when they visited Germany, so this honour was sometimes bestowed on the naval attaché. Accordingly, Allenby was attached to the suite of the duke of Connaught during the latter's visit to Berlin for the marriage of the Kaiser's eldest son, the Crown Prince. Equally, naval attachés also liaised with the German authorities over the sending of delegations to Britain. Thus, when George V decided to invite a deputation from the German navy to attend his coronation, it was the naval attaché, Watson, who corresponded with the Reichsmarineamt (Imperial Naval Office) and made the appropriate arrangements.[50]

Finally, given the propensity for monarchs to travel by sea, naval attachés were often involved in conveying the maritime details of royal travel arrangements. For example, when the Kaiser decided to visit Britain in 1907, Dumas was closely involved in the liaison duties, conveying particulars of the Kaiser's travel plans to the British government.[51] While this was normally a fairly routine job, such tasks did not always turn out as might have been expected, as an occurrence from 1906 illustrates. Asked in late March by the ambassador for a programme of King Edward's summer trip to the Mediterranean, Dumas wrote to London for the details. He received his reply in early April: 'H.M. said no such programme was to be given as he didn't intend being chased around the Mediterranean by a lot of d—d Germans!'[52]

Thus, as we can see, the Treasury's attempt to label the military attachés as largely 'ornamental' functionaries was not without an element of truth. The military and naval attachés both performed numerous ceremonial duties. However, while the Treasury regarded this as a means by which to stigmatize the attachés and denigrate their value, the service ministries saw matters differently. Both the Admiralty and the War Office regarded the attachés' ceremonial role as an important one and, accordingly, sought to enhance their ability to perform such duties by taking active steps to elevate their status in the eyes of the world.

One means of achieving this was by the largely cosmetic step of altering the dress regulations for service attachés. As both the naval and military authorities clearly recognized, in the martial milieu of nineteenth-century Europe, an officer's uniform conveyed a great deal of information about the standing of its wearer. According to widely understood rules, visible indicators of brass and braid could

[48] Dumas Diary, 31 May, 4 June, and 25 June 1906.
[49] Allenby, NA 19/05, 11 Dec. 1905, FO 64/1624.
[50] Watson to the Reichsmarineamt, 7 Mar. 1911, FO 372/322.
[51] D641/1907, 'Visit of German Emperor and Empress to England', ADM 1/7925.
[52] Dumas Diary, 4 Apr. 1906.

elevate an officer's status, while their absence could serve to lower it. In this environment, it is hardly surprising if the service ministries carefully scrutinized the uniform regulations to see if any such alterations could be made that would be to the attachés' advantage. First off the mark in this respect was the navy. In 1903, Prince Louis of Battenberg, the DNI, noted that British naval attachés were not among the officers entitled to don aiguilettes, the coloured shoulder cords used to indicate that the wearer was an aide to a senior officer. This, he felt, was a mistake:

> Abroad Aiguillettes play a much greater part than in this country, where they are regarded as an innovation of doubtful value. Abroad the Aiguillettes are the outward and visible sign that the wearer is really closely connected with the innermost official circle and hence his importance is enhanced.[53]

Given his desire for naval attachés to be perceived as important and well-connected officers, he recommended a change in the regulations. This was done, a circular being issued to the effect 'that the Aiguillette of blue and gold cord, as approved for members of an Admiral's staff, shall be similarly worn by Naval Attachés on all occasions when in uniform'.[54]

What the navy attempted to do with aiguilettes, the army attempted to achieve through its greatcoat. According to the regulations, military attachés were supposed to wear the universal pattern drab mixture greatcoat prescribed for a colonel on the staff. However, as was pointed out by a prospective military attaché, this was a service garment rather than a ceremonial one and made the British military attachés look ordinary—if not actually colourless—on state occasions. Fortunately, an alternative existed in the Atholl grey greatcoat worn by the King, the military members of the Royal Household, field marshals, and military members of the Army Council. This blue grey garment, it was pointed out, 'would harmonise better with the gala uniforms of the other foreign military attachés than the serviceable but homely drab great coat' and, thus, 'would be more suitable to wear at foreign courts'. Consequently, in August 1904, the regulations were amended.[55] Military attachés, like naval attachés, it was felt, should be kitted out in the garb most likely to enhance their status.

Another means of ensuring the status of the service attachés was through rank. In the case of military attachés at the major European capitals this meant selecting only those officers who had attained sufficient seniority to at least merit a brevet lieutenant colonelcy, even if they were not formally gazetted as such. This put them on a par with the other foreign officers stationed in Berlin and was thus considered sufficient standing to maintain their dignity, which was in any case bolstered by the fact that they were members of the General Staff. In the case of naval attachés, the situation was more complex. Although the Admiralty chose its

[53] Battenberg to Kerr, 24 June 1903, ADM 1/7661.
[54] Circular Letter No.185, 31 Oct. 1903, ibid.
[55] Bonham to the War Office, 29 June 1904, and Q.M.G.7 to King Edward VII, 29 July 1904, WO 32/8957.

attachés from amongst the available captains and commanders—the equivalent of a full or lieutenant colonel—there was some doubt as to whether this gave them adequate standing, especially as some of the other nations employed officers on the flag list as naval attachés. This created an impetus to change the situation and, at the very least, do away with the practice of appointing commanders to such posts. As one diplomat put it when appraising the situation: 'about the question of commanders . . . I don't think that the greatest naval power should be represented by an officer of inferior rank to that of the representatives of powers with secondary fleets'.[56] Accordingly, there was an inflationary tendency in the seniority of officers appointed as naval attaché. Hence, although both Ewart and Dumas had been commanders when first appointed to Berlin, the rule after 1907, the year in which Dumas was promoted, was not to send such junior officers to the German capital. Thus, Dumas's immediate successors were all captains of reasonable seniority. Furthermore, in 1913 there was even talk of sending a flag officer to Berlin. As Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, explained to his Cabinet colleague, Sir Edward Grey: 'The prime importance of the naval relations which we have with Germany . . . seem to justify an exceptional appointment. It would be taken as a compliment in Berlin if an officer of high rank were selected . . .'[57] Accordingly, he suggested Rear-Admiral the Hon. Somerset Gough-Calthorpe for the post. The Foreign Secretary was not convinced of the merits of such an appointment. Would not France and Russia, he asked, demand 'a similar compliment'? Would Germany not expect all subsequent naval attachés to be of flag rank?[58] In the face of these objections the idea was shelved. Nevertheless, it showed the direction in which things were moving in the efforts to enhance the status of the attachés in Berlin.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ATTACHÉS' 'CEREMONIAL' FUNCTION

The fact that both the Admiralty and War Office made efforts to enhance the standing of the attachés and, thus, increase their ability to fulfil their ceremonial functions begs the question: why did they consider this so important?

The principal reason for this related to the position and character of the Kaiser. In the political structure of the German Empire, the monarch played a very significant role. He stood at the apex of the constitution and was, accordingly, the final arbiter of all major matters of state. For the Empire's first two sovereigns, Wilhelm I and Frederick III, this responsibility was sufficient; they left the everyday running of affairs to the chancellor. However, their successor, Wilhelm II, wished to

[56] Rodd to Battenberg, 3 Aug. 1912, IWM: DS/MISC/20, item 141.
[57] Minute by Churchill, 6 May 1913, CCAC: CHAR 13/22A/63-4.
[58] Grey to Churchill, 16 May 1913, FO 800/87.

rule as well as reign. As a result, he was not content just to have the final word, but also saw himself as having every right to participate in the minutiae of policy and administration. While a low boredom threshold and a certain natural indolence ensured that he often refrained from doing so, in those areas that especially interested him, such as foreign affairs and the armed forces, he frequently exercised his prerogative to have his say.

In such a situation where the monarch could have so direct an impact on diplomatic, military, and naval matters, knowing and understanding his views was naturally very important for those nations, Great Britain included, that maintained relations with Germany. But how were his thoughts and opinions to be ascertained? While there were undoubtedly many ways of acquiring this knowledge, one of the most promising means was through the service attachés. Ironically, given the Treasury's caustic swipe at 'ornamental' duties, it was this very aspect of the attachés' role that fitted them for this task. For the Kaiser's fondness for ceremonial occasions, events at which both he and the service attachés were invariably present, created numerous opportunities for them to meet him and listen to his views. As one attaché explained, the various gatherings and parades he attended 'were invariably followed by banquets either the same evening or immediately afterwards. At the conclusion of these the Emperor held a "circle", and one had many opportunities of conversing with His Majesty.'[59] The attachés' easy access to the Kaiser did not go unnoticed by Britain's diplomats in Berlin. Sir Frank Lascelles, for example, was well aware of the frequency with which the attachés met the Kaiser. As he pointed out in his 1908 annual appraisal of Trench: 'I am personally grateful to Colonel Trench for keeping me fully informed of his conversations with the German Emperor on the frequent occasions on which his military duties give him the opportunity of meeting His Imperial Majesty.'[60] Lascelles's successor, Sir Edward Goschen, was equally conscious of the attachés' route to the Kaiser and of the manner in which it could be superior to his own. A description in his diary of the Kaiser's conversation at the March 1910 ambassadorial dinner illustrates the point clearly: 'H.M. did not talk politics to me—only music. But to Heath he did.'[61] Similarly, in a revealing private letter to Sir Charles Hardinge, the undersecretary at the Foreign Office, Goschen explained that at certain times of the year the Emperor's pattern of engagements, while preventing the ambassador from having regular contacts with the Kaiser, placed the military attaché in constant touch with him. 'The season', he wrote, 'is against the latter [Wilhelm II] talking to Ambassadors—but I fear most when he is *espiègle* with the Military Attachés and this is their season.'[62] Finally, the officials of the German Foreign Office were also aware of the Kaiser's propensity to talk to the attachés. As Baron

[59] Russell manuscript, p. 64. [60] Lascelles to Grey, 22 Oct. 1908, FO 371/462.

[61] Goschen Diary, 4 Mar. 1910. Quoted in Christopher H. D. Howard (ed.), *The Diary of Edward Goschen, 1900–1914* (London, 1980), 200.

[62] Goschen to Hardinge, 4 Sept. 1909, CUL: Hardinge Papers, vol. 15.

von Richthofen, the German Foreign Secretary, remarked to Colonel Waters a couple of days after the latter had had one of his many long discussions with the Kaiser: 'I hear that when our Imperial Majesty wishes to discuss political affairs he now chooses you as his confidant!'[63]

Even more significant than the frequency of such conversations was the freedom with which the Kaiser spoke on those occasions. As several of the attachés noted, the Emperor could be extremely frank when talking with them. Waters, for example, observed that Wilhelm II 'was rather fond of saying things to a military attaché . . . which, if said to an ambassador, . . . might sometimes have had very far-reaching consequences'.[64] One occasion, Waters remembered, was when the Emperor 'characterized the British Government as a "pack of unmitigated noodles!" '[65] Waters was not alone in recalling this sort of candour. Russell wrote similarly in his unpublished autobiography: 'His Majesty . . . often spoke to me at great length. His talks with me were often of considerable political import. His conversation was invariably arresting. He commenced at once on interesting subjects. He was occasionally extremely indiscreet.'[66]

There were obvious advantages to the Kaiser's openness with the attachés—not the least of these being the increased likelihood of discovering his true feelings. However, there were times when he was so frank that it actually caused procedural difficulties for the Foreign Office. The reason for this was one of etiquette. Although official dispatches were confidential documents, they were also state papers. As such, upon arrival in Whitehall, they had to be numbered and classified, as well as recorded in the registry. In the process, they would inevitably be seen by numerous junior officials, even if, in the end, it was decided that they should not be widely circulated. Yet, as Goschen observed, reports of rude or abusive comments by the Kaiser about British statesmen 'were not of a nature to be circulated to everybody' in this way.[67] Thus, when the Kaiser really 'let himself go' in his choice of language, it was not considered desirable that details of his remarks should be sent back to London in the form of an official dispatch. Instead, alternative means had to be found. One example of this occurred in May 1913, when Wilhelm used the occasion of his being presented with a copy of the *Navy List* to speak his mind on a number of matters. Among a torrent of views, he informed Watson that Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin was a 'fiasco', that he thought Churchill was 'a man who could not be trusted' as well as someone who had the unwelcome habit of turning up uninvited to German army manœuvres.[68] The ambassador could hardly believe it: 'But what a strange creature the Emperor is. Fancy choosing the Naval Attaché for delivering this political discourse to! Especially that part of it which deals with Watson's chief. It would be scarcely credible if one were

[63] Waters, *Potsdam and Doorn* (London, 1935), 42–3.
[64] Waters, '*Secret and Confidential*', (London, 1926), 252–3.
[65] Waters, *Potsdam and Doorn*, 37.
[66] Russell manuscript, p. 65.
[67] Goschen to Nicolson, 11 Oct. 1913, *BD*, x2. 707.
[68] Watson to Goschen, 12 May 1913, ibid. 699–702.

not familiar with the Emperor's ways.'[69] Accordingly, Watson's account of the interview was put in a private letter, the official dispatch merely recording that 'I presented His Majesty the Emperor with the British Navy List for 1913 today at Potsdam. His Majesty, in receiving the Navy List, held some conversation with me . . .'.[70] A similar situation occurred five months later during Watson's farewell audience. Once again the Kaiser spoke in 'lurid' terms about members of the British government, a fact that prompted Goschen to instruct Watson to circulate the details privately. 'It passes belief', Goschen added, 'that he should have selected Watson as a proper recipient of his grievances.'[71] Yet, as we have seen, it was anything but unusual for him to have done so.

Quite why the Kaiser was so willing to speak openly to service attachés is open to question.[72] One possible answer is that it reflected the Kaiser's known predilection for the military. As numerous well-informed contemporary commentators observed both during and after his reign, when it came to assessing the relative merits of officers and civilians the Kaiser regularly expressed his partiality for servicemen. Outward signs of this abounded. It is surely no coincidence, for instance, that the Kaiser's own retinue was packed with men seconded from the army and navy. It seems evident that the same biases that informed the Kaiser's judgement about his own entourage also affected his behaviour towards foreign dignitaries. Simply put, he preferred the company of military and naval attachés to that of regular diplomats and tended to speak to the latter group with a candour and openness that he would not have displayed to the former.

Yet there was undoubtedly more to the Kaiser's behaviour than the simple preference for the company of service personnel. Wilhelm, as the head of a military monarchy, was accustomed to using officers as intermediaries in his relations with his own civilian ministers and officials. Adapting his own experience of domestic administration to diplomatic affairs, he tended to see Britain's military and naval attachés in Berlin as viable conduits for expressing his views to the British government. This was not, of course, a view held by the Foreign Office. Crowe, for one, railed bitterly against 'the well-known idiosyncrasies of the German Emperor and his preference for naval and military persons'.[73] It made no difference. As the biographer of one military attaché has observed, Wilhelm saw these officers as 'the channel through which . . . [he] communicated his unofficial views to the British Foreign Office'.[74] He was unlikely to change his ways simply because the Foreign Office disapproved. On the contrary, throughout his reign, the Kaiser continually

[69] Goschen to Nicolson, 16 May 1913, FO 800/366.

[70] Watson, NA 25/13, 12 May 1913, Admiralty Library: Ca2053.

[71] Goschen to Nicolson, 11 Oct. 1913. *BD* x2. 707–8.

[72] On this issue see Matthew S. Seligmann, 'Military Diplomacy in a Military Monarchy? Wilhelm II's Relations with the British Service Attachés in Berlin, 1903–1914', in Annika Mombauer and Wilhelm Deist (eds.), *The Kaiser: New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, 2003), 176–94.

[73] Minute by Crowe, 12 Sept. 1910, FO 371/901.

[74] D. S. Macdiarmid, *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London, 1923), 116.

used the attachés as an avenue for his diplomatic discourse with the British government. While his communications through the attachés could cover almost any topic and almost any aspect of Anglo-German relations, there were four areas in particular where the Kaiser seemed to favour conducting this dialogue through the attachés.

One issue that the Kaiser seems frequently to have brought up with the service attachés was the question of Britain's position relative to the continental powers. This was a topic that had exercised the Kaiser from early on in his reign and which he famously broached with Colonel Swaine on two occasions in late 1895.[75] While the Kaiser's conversations with Swaine have become something of a staple of diplomatic histories, it is less frequently recorded that he also brought up this topic with other service attachés at various points in his reign. Thus, in May 1902, the Kaiser raised the question of Britain's isolation with Waters:

> His Majesty then said: 'Your policy of isolation will no longer do; you will no longer be able to stir up strife amongst the nations on the Continent. . . . the Continental nations mean to work in peace and you will not be able to prevent us doing so. You will have to join one side or the other.'[76]

Had Wilhelm known that when Britain did finally make her choice it would not be for Germany, he might have pushed the matter less frequently. However, the effect of Britain's siding with France and Russia was not to stop him from raising this issue with the attachés, but rather to alter the nature of his approach. Rather than calling on Britain to choose sides, he now wanted her to change sides or, at the very least, return to isolation. Thus, in 1911, he spoke to Russell of his desires for a 'proper political understanding' with Britain:

> Everyone knows that the alliance between Russia and France is merely to fight Germany and now you have gone and joined them. You had the choice of joining with us or with Russia and France and you chose the latter. England and Germany would together ensure the peace of the world. We do not want to fight you. If we did fight you, who would reap the benefit? Undoubtedly the nations which had not taken part in the war.[77]

Similarly, in 1913 he told Watson:

> Sir Edward Grey is always harping on 'Balance of Power'. The real matter is that the balance of power was upset in Europe when you ranged yourself on the side of Russia and France. . . . Since that these Nations have traded on the fact that they have England backing them up. Now I have to put every man and bit of steel into readiness that I can. If England had stayed out of it, the balance of power would have been preserved, her joining has upset it.[78]

[75] Norman Rich, *Friedrich von Holstein, Politics and Diplomacy in the Era of Bismarck and Wilhelm II*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1965), 458, 465, and 498–9.
[76] Waters, MA 16/01, 29 May 1901, FO 64/1521.
[77] Russell, MA 4/11, 3 Mar. 1911, *BD* vi. 594.
[78] Watson to Goschen, 12 May 1913, *BD* x2. 701.

On none of the occasions on which Wilhelm launched into his diatribes with the service attachés did he succeed in altering the opinion of the authorities in London. Nevertheless, he kept trying.

If the Kaiser used the attachés as intermediaries for promoting his alliance plans, he also employed them when he wished to head off policy initiatives from Great Britain. A typical example of this comes from June 1913 when word reached the Kaiser that Churchill intended to give a speech in which he would raise once again his idea of Britain and Germany taking a one-year break from battleship construction. This 'naval holiday' proposal was extremely unwelcome to the Kaiser, who summoned the naval attaché to see him in order to 'get his views *privately* and *quietly* represented in the right quarters at once' and thus forestall the speech:

> His Majesty continued to the effect that if Mr. Churchill did make a further suggestion of a naval holiday he could not answer for the state of opinion in Germany.... [He] remarked that Mr Churchill's efforts seemed to be directed towards cutting into the German fleet law (i.e. invalidating it), that this he would never allow...[79]

It was an unambiguous message and Watson immediately forwarded it.

Another way in which the Kaiser used the attachés was as a vehicle for expressing his disapproval of the British media. Wilhelm had a rather turbulent relationship with the British press, whose reports he frequently read and with which he often violently disagreed, especially when they concerned himself. As Allenby reported after hearing one of the Kaiser's diatribes against 'the iniquities of the press', 'His Majesty... appeared to keenly feel and resent the imputations in the press... under which he has suffered.'[80] However, almost more vexing to the Kaiser than the attacks against his person were the criticisms that appeared periodically in the British newspapers concerning the Prussian army. When this happened, he invariably took up the matter with the British military attaché. One such occasion occurred during the imperial manœuvres in September 1901, when the correspondent of the *Daily Express*, A. G. Hales, pointed out in a reasoned article that the dark-blue German infantry uniforms were a dangerous anachronism in an age of smokeless powder and long-range rifle fire. It was a fair point, but the Kaiser, who read this alongside various mildly critical pieces by other journalists, was outraged. As he informed Waters: 'They have written most offensive strictures about [the manœuvres] and have insulted the German Army; also they have ridiculed our uniforms. I won't have it, and they shall be kicked out if it happens again.' Luckily for Waters, on this occasion, he was able to deflect the Kaiser's wrath by pointing to some particularly tasteless German media pieces on Queen Victoria.[81]

[79] Watson to Goschen, 30 June 1913, FO 800/112.

[80] Allenby, NA 2/06, 29 Jan. 1906, ADM 1/7902.

[81] Waters, *Potsdam and Doorn*, 51–65. See also Waters, MA 19/01, 30 Sept. 1901, and MA 25/01, 25 Oct. 1901, FO 64/1522.

Not all of Waters's successors were so fortunate. In May 1912, Russell found himself on the receiving end of a long harangue from the Kaiser about the reporting of Charles à Court Repington, the military correspondent of *The Times*:

> the Emperor took me by the arm and led me out of earshot of any bystanders. His Majesty then commenced a violent diatribe against press correspondents in general and Colonel Repington in particular. His Majesty said that the military correspondent of *The Times* had written the most horrible things about the German army . . . The Emperor then continued to describe the indignation of his officers . . . and added: 'Write and tell your War Office that I will not stand these correspondents.'[82]

Unfortunately for Russell, there seemed to be nothing he could say that would pacify the Kaiser. All he could do was report the incident.

Finally, the service attachés were also used as a medium through which the Kaiser could express his displeasure with the British government, particularly in relation to military and naval matters. The manner in which this occurred is richly illustrated by the example of the '*Sleipner* incident'. On 15 May 1908, the dispatch boat, SMS *Sleipner*, steamed into the inner harbour at Portsmouth without having first been boarded by the officer of the guard at Spithead or having obtained permission to enter what was, after all, a military harbour. The excuse proffered for this extraordinary action by the commanding officer, Kapitänleutnant von Paleske, was that he had an officer aboard in need of immediate medical treatment. The response of the British naval authorities was to allow the *Sleipner* to remain, to provide medicine for the sick officer's 'slight sore throat', and to protest forcibly to Paleske the next day about his 'breach of international etiquette'.[83] Representations were also made to the German government in Berlin.

The response of the Reich authorities at being held to account over the actions of the *Sleipner*—which holding to account they regarded as a studied slight—was to display an even more studied coldness to the British naval attaché during the Kiel regatta. While several frosty moments took place, the occasions when this chill was most marked took place during the ceremonies to present the British *Navy List* to the Kaiser and his brother Prince Henry of Prussia. Dumas's official report on these audiences is a model of diplomacy. Leaving out almost everything that occurred, he simply related:

> I have presented the specially bound copies of the Navy List to H.I.M. the German Emperor and H.R.H. Prince Henry of Prussia. Both His Imperial Majesty and His Royal Highness were most graciously pleased to accept the books and directed me to express their thanks to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.[84]

[82] Russell, MA 23/12, 27 May 1912, FO 371/1376.
[83] Fanshawe to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 16 May 1908, FO 371/460.
[84] Dumas, NA 29/08, 3 July 1908, FO 372/140.

Behind this formulaic account lay another story. As Dumas confided in his diary, his meeting with the Kaiser was anything but friendly:

> Dined on board the *Hohenzollern*, having to present a Navy List before dinner, as did D'Andrezel [the French naval attaché], and the frigidity of our reception was astonishing, the Emperor just taking the book with bare thanks and hoping that our vessels had been treated with every courtesy during their late visit to Friedrichsort and while waiting for the Royal Yacht.[85]

Yet, this was as nothing compared to the reception he received from Prince Henry. As Dumas related, he went with the other foreign naval attachés to make the presentation. 'We had', he wrote, 'the most extraordinary reception, being at once informed that but for us he might be out enjoying himself yacht racing.' This uncommonly impolite greeting, delivered according to Dumas 'in the most outrageous manner', was followed by a few barbed comments about the British monarch. Expressing his pleasure at having recently met King Edward, Prince Henry remarked on 'how well H.M. was looking and then went "you know he's given up practically all alcoholic drinks & that makes all the difference." ' Having thus disposed of the suggestion that the King had a drink problem, Prince Henry followed this up with some acidic remarks about the visit of the British fleet to Denmark, a comment about the Invalides in Paris designed to anger the French naval attaché, and a few discourtesies levelled at the Russian. All in all, it was an astonishing display of rudeness and Dumas could only conclude that 'an impression of this sort must last for years'.[86]

The behaviour of the Kaiser and his brother did, however, clearly underline the German anger over the *Sleipner* affair. The first secretary at the British Embassy reported:

> Dumas is just back from Kiel. He says that the Emperor and Prince Henry were very friendly . . . effusive to the Russian ships which came and even more so to some Norwegians . . . almost every officer of the latter being decorated . . . but that he was treated with a marked coldness, a great deal of ill-humour being shown over the *Sleipner* incident.[87]

Dumas's experience in relation to the *Sleipner* incident was not atypical. As Russell remembered, the attitude of the German authorities towards Britain was invariably evident in the treatment he received. 'If the Emperor were displeased with Great Britain for any reason', he wrote, 'the Imperial disfavour appeared almost instantaneously. . .'. By contrast, 'the sun of Imperial favour when it shone forth, seemed similarly to be reflected at once from all sides'.[88] Service attachés, it would seem, were also weathervanes for the Kaiser's attitude to Britain.

In conclusion, the presence of the service attachés at the Kaiser's court may well have been a 'ceremonial' role, but it was not, given the Kaiser's predilection for the armed forces, an unimportant one. The German Empire, as Paul Kennedy has thoughtfully remarked, was 'a military monarchy'. The Kaiser invariably dressed in

[85] Dumas Diary, 27 June 1908. [86] Ibid., 26 June 1908.
[87] De Salis to Hardinge, 3 July 1908, CUL: Hardinge Papers, vol. 12. The omission marks are in the original. [88] Russell, 'Reminiscences', 58.

uniform, a high proportion of his retinue were active members of the army and navy, and it was a principle of his regime that the senior generals and admirals all possessed the right to a personal audience with him. Given this fact, it was almost inevitable that the British service attachés in Berlin—as privileged entrants into this military court culture—would have access to important sources of information, particularly about the Kaiser himself. This was recognized at the time. As Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Hamilton informed the Hardwicke Committee, the body set up to advise on the future of the military intelligence division, 'on the continent, society was so military in tone that no one but a military officer could find his way into the places were [*sic*] information was to be had'.[89] Historians have also recognized this phenomenon. 'The Kaiser's well-known infatuation with all things military', writes Raymond Jones, 'presented Britain's military attachés in Berlin with a golden opportunity to establish informal contacts at the very highest level.'[90] As Paul Kennedy has concluded, this fact alone gave service attachés 'an importance quite distinct from their roles as *rapporteurs* of the affairs of the German army'.[91]

CHARACTERISTICS NECESSARY FOR THIS SOCIAL ROLE

As we have seen above, the position of a service attaché was a complex one. Appointees were expected to fulfil a wide range of diverse duties that encompassed both extensive ceremonial appearances at court, as well as numerous other social functions. Additionally, all of these tasks had to be undertaken in the alien environment of a foreign land while serving under unfamiliar civilian authority. Clearly, given the unusual and multifaceted nature of the job, the post of service attaché was not an appointment that would have suited everyone. So, just what sort of person was appointed to this position? According to the limited surviving records, because of the societal dimensions to the role, the Admiralty, Foreign Office, and War Office sought three principal traits in prospective service attachés.

The first of these was what was rather nebulously referred to as 'social qualities'. At one level, as Sir Ian Hamilton explained, this simply meant the possession of sufficient 'common sense, agreeable manners [and] social standing'[92] to ensure that the attachés knew how to conduct themselves appropriately in European society. This was important because, as the War Office's private instructions to military attachés made clear, proper behaviour was a matter viewed with the utmost seriousness on the continent. 'As regards manner and mode of living',

[89] *Report of Lord Hardwicke's Committee*, Mar. 1903, p. 49. T 1/10966.
[90] Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service 1815–1914* (Gerrard's Cross, 1983), 220–1.
[91] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism* (London, 1980), 136.
[92] Evidence of Lieutenant-General Hamilton. *Report of Lord Hardwicke's Committee*, Mar. 1903, p. 49. T 1/10966.

the text explained,

> [the military attaché] . . . should remember that in practically all foreign countries a great deal more importance is attached to the punctilio of ordinary life than is the case in England. That bane of foreign capitals—calling and card leaving—must be attended to with exactitude, and in most places much emphasis is laid on the M[ilitary] A[ttaché] introducing himself, or preferably getting himself introduced, to anyone of the smallest local importance, whether interesting or not, and very often leaving cards on him or her afterwards.[93]

Yet, if understanding the societal conventions of the continent was an important prerequisite for being a service attaché, it was not in itself enough. Other attributes that were required were savoir-faire, polish, and sophistication. The prospective attaché had to be 'man of the world enough when dealing with foreigners', as General Swaine, himself a former attaché, eloquently put it.[94] He had also to possess that social qualification most applicable to diplomacy, namely tact. As the Foreign Office clerk, Ronald Campbell put it, on this occasion in relation to naval attachés:

> Naval Attachés are, I imagine, carefully selected for their special qualifications (of which tact is presumably one of the most important). . . . A Naval Attaché is probably not able to obtain much information which the authorities wish to withhold and the most successful are therefore surely those who by their tact and frankness establish confidence and are given for that reason many scraps of information which would other wise be kept from them.[95]

At the most basic level, therefore, the required 'social qualities' for a service attaché were those attributes—good manners, a sense of continental social conventions, and discretion—that allowed him to mix freely in the company of other officers and officials. Inevitably, there was more to the job than just that. Germany, as has been mentioned already, was a military monarchy, with the result that it was absolutely essential that anyone acting as a service attaché should be acceptable to the Kaiser and his entourage, a status the Germans termed *hoffähig*. The British authorities were well aware of this. As Major-General Sir John Ardagh explained to the Hardwicke Committee, an attaché had 'in the first instance, to be a persona grata with the Embassy and the Court'.[96]

Given the obvious necessity for the attaché to fit in at court, it is not surprising that every effort was made to ensure that only the most suitable officers were appointed. Several of the attachés, for example, were descended from distinguished noble families, a background that was likely to help them fit into the aristocratic atmosphere of the German court. Wallscourt Hely-Hutchinson Waters, for instance, was a direct descendant on his mother's side of the earl of Donoughmore. Even more illustrious was the lineage of the Hon. Alick Russell. The son of a baron

[93] *Instructions for Military Attachés*, WO 279/647.
[94] Swaine to Davidson, 21 May 1903, RA VIC/X 1/2.
[95] Minute by Campbell [n.d., but probably July 1909], FO 371/801.
[96] Evidence of Major General Ardagh. *Report of Lord Hardwicke's Committee*, Mar. 1903, p. 55, T 1/10966.

and the grandson of the duke of Bedford, he came from a family that had produced politicians and statesmen in Britain for hundreds of years. He was, moreover, also a godson of both Queen Victoria and of the Kaiser's own father, the Emperor Frederick. He was, thus, able to fit with ease into Berlin society, so much so that the Kaiser once jokingly reproved him for being 'a damned courtier!'[97]

One step further up the ladder was Count Gleichen, who, as the son of Prince Victor of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, was not just of blue blood, but technically at least, was a member of a German princely house. He was also a cousin of both the Kaiser and King Edward, who was, in addition, his godfather. His court connections were, thus, impeccable. Having served as an equerry to the Prince of Wales and an extra equerry to Queen Victoria, so, too, was his court experience.

Other attachés, while not necessarily of such prominent lineage, nevertheless still came from important and ancient families. Thus, Arthur Wartensleben Ewart, the very first British naval attaché in Berlin, was the son of General Sir John Alexander Ewart, a veteran of both the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, and the grandson of Lieutenant-General John Frederick Ewart, who had fought in the Peninsular War. Moreover, he also had German connections. His great grandfather, Joseph Ewart, had been the British minister in Berlin in the late 1780s. While there he had married a daughter of the Graf von Wartensleben, a scion of an important Prussian noble house. This genealogy so intrigued the Kaiser that he professed to regard Ewart as 'partially German' and at his first audience welcomed him warmly to his court as belonging 'to a family which had performed distinguished services for the German Empire'.[98] The surviving papers for Ewart's appointment give no indication as to the reason for his selection. It is not impossible, however, that this German heritage, which predictably caught the attention of the Kaiser, who was fond of such coincidences, and made him favourably disposed to the attaché, played some part.

While no effort was spared to appoint attachés who would gain the trust and friendship of the Kaiser and instantly become *hoffähig*, the British government was not always successful in this respect. There were two officers—one a military attaché, the other a naval attaché—who not only failed to forge the desired working relationship with the Kaiser, but actually managed to end up persona non grata at the German court.

The first attaché to fall foul of the Kaiser was Gleichen. In his memoirs, he professed not to know why it was that the Kaiser did not like him, but put it down to the fact that 'I twice ventured to suggest that I did not agree with him'.[99] While these incidents undoubtedly did not help, the real cause of the Kaiser's anger was based on more substantive grounds. Remarkable though it might sound, Wilhelm held Gleichen personally responsible first for sabotaging one of his initiatives for

[97] Russell manuscript, p. 66.
[98] Arthur Ewart to Sir John Alexander Ewart, 9 Dec. 1900, Ewart Papers, folder 29.
[99] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 262–3.

improving Anglo-German relations and secondly for attempting to undermine the cohesion of the military structure of his empire.

The first of these accusations emerged quite unexpectedly out of a routine action on the part of the attaché. In early 1904, a young officer in the Königin Elisabeth Garde-Grenadier Regiment, Oberleutnant von Jecklin, published a book called *The Military Interpreter*.[100] On the face of it, the volume was little more than a collection of translation exercises designed to aid those officers preparing for the German army's English-language examination. To this end, short English documents covering military topics were included alongside good German translations. Unfortunately, behind this innocent façade, the book hid a violently anglophobic message, for the translation pieces included extracts accusing the British army of all kinds of heinous acts such as using illegal munitions in the Boer War and murdering prisoners of war and innocent civilians. Not surprisingly, given the nature of the book, some of the British officers whose names appeared in it were extremely angry. One of them, Lieutenant-Colonel Shute, asked Gleichen to contact Jecklin officially and demand that his name be removed from the publication.[101] This Gleichen did. As was his duty, he also sent a copy of the book to the War Office in London as an example of German military literature. Nothing more would ever have been heard of the book were it not for the fact that the copy was passed by the Secretary of State for War to the King. The latter, less in seriousness than in jest, took it with him on his state visit to Germany and, whilst at Kiel showed it to the Kaiser, exclaiming: 'This is a nice sort of thing that your officers publish—and you pretend that your country wants to be so friendly with England. What humbugs you must be!'[102] Regrettably, the Kaiser did not see the funny side. Rather, he regarded the entire royal visit, which he had intended to use to improve Anglo-German relations, as having been undermined. In his fury, he had Jecklin dismissed from the Guards and sent to a distant garrison. However, his real ire he reserved for Gleichen, who he believed, in forwarding the book to London, 'had deliberately attempted to sow dissension' between Britain and Germany.[103] Although every effort was made to smooth over the affair, with the ambassador explaining personally to the German chancellor that Gleichen had acted 'with perfect propriety' in sending Jecklin's book home, it is evident that the Kaiser saw matters differently. As subsequent events would show, he never really forgave him.

This became apparent a year later when Gleichen inadvertently became embroiled in another contretemps with the German authorities. The problem started when he decided to visit the three other German kingdoms—Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg—which maintained their own armies. Rather than simply travelling in his capacity as the British military attaché in Berlin, Gleichen

[100] Oberleutnant von Jecklin, *The Military Interpreter: Sammlung von englischen Übungsstücken mit Lösungen zur Vorberietung auf die militärische Dolmetscherprufüng* (Berlin, 1904).

[101] Gleichen to Jecklin, 20 June 1904, FO 800/11.

[102] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 264.

[103] Lascelles to Bülow, 30 June 1904, FO 800/11.

attempted to put his visit on a more formal footing. Accordingly he enquired if his appointment to the British Embassy at Berlin covered the British diplomatic missions in Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart as well and, if not, requested that it should.[104] The Foreign Office concurred. 'The King', they telegraphed, 'has signified his pleasure that C[oun]t Gleichen should be attached to HM's missions in Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg.'[105] With this declaration under his belt, he visited Munich in his new capacity as military attaché to the legation there and was warmly welcomed as such by the Bavarian authorities.[106] However, it soon became apparent that Gleichen's new status had broader ramifications. The first signs of this came towards the end of the month when the Saxon government declined to sanction the appointment of Gleichen to their court on the grounds that such an action would undoubtedly be badly received in Berlin.[107] They were correct. When the Reich authorities learnt of Gleichen's attempt to become accredited to the British legations in Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart they immediately lodged a vigorous protest through the German ambassador in London:

> Count Metternich said that as the armies of Bavaria, Dresden [*sic*] and Wurtemberg [*sic*] were integral parts of the German army, it was most undesirable that any officer should be appointed as Military Attaché to the Courts of those states; the Emperor would certainly resent any such arrangement were it brought to his knowledge, and regard it as an attack upon the military unity of the German Empire.

While various attempts were made to persuade the German government and the Kaiser that there existed no such intention, it soon became evident that Gleichen's position in Berlin was now untenable, a point the German ambassador made abundantly clear to the Foreign Secretary. 'Count Gleichen', he proclaimed, 'had not proved in all respects acceptable to the German Government.' Moreover, as he went on to observe, 'Prince Bülow considered that Count Gleichen had shown a want of tact, and suggested it might be desirable to replace him by some officer whose conduct would not give rise to difficulties of the kind which had occurred upon this and other occasions.' This was, in effect, a demand for his recall.

The German protest infuriated King Edward. 'A most *unjust* remark on the part of Pr[ince] Bülow', he wrote in the margins.[108] Unjust or not, however, it was obvious that Gleichen's usefulness in Berlin was at an end. Following a suitable interval, the Germans were told, he would be transferred to another post.[109] In January 1906 he was sent to Washington, DC.

The other service attaché to run into trouble with the German authorities was Captain Heath, who replaced Dumas in Berlin in August 1908. This was an

[104] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 2 June 1905, FO 83/2098.
[105] Foreign Office to Lascelles, 5 June 1905, ibid.
[106] Tower to Lansdowne, 10 June 1905, ibid.
[107] Gough to Lansdowne, 27 June 1905, ibid.
[108] Lansdowne to Whitehead, 5 July 1905, ibid.
[109] Metternich to Bülow, 22 July 1905. J. Lepsius *et al., Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914*, 40 vols. (Berlin, 1922–7), xx2. 646–7. Hereafter *GP*.

appointment of which great things might reasonably have been expected. Heath was a senior officer who, having served as assistant director of the NID, had plenty of experience of naval intelligence. Moreover, although he had his detractors—Herbert Richmond thought him 'incompetent', 'ignorant', and possessing 'a pumpkin on his shoulders' rather than a head[110]—he was a well-regarded high flyer, destined to rise to the position of Second Sea Lord. Furthermore, according to Dumas, he was a 'sociable' character, who might as a result be expected to mix in well in naval circles and Berlin society.[111]

Unfortunately, Heath's arrival in Germany coincided with the outbreak of the so-called 'acceleration scare', a diplomatic spat that erupted in 1909 over British fears that Germany intended secretly to increase the tempo of its battleship construction programme and surreptitiously out-build the Royal Navy. The details of this rather undignified naval panic will be covered in a later chapter. Suffice it for now to say that, whereas the published German building programme stated that the Reich would have twelve dreadnoughts ready for service by the autumn of 1912, it was claimed by those who feared a German 'acceleration' that she would actually have seventeen battleships, if not in fact twenty-one. This accusation, which was levelled against the Germans repeatedly in the British press as well as in Parliament, was vigorously denied by the Germans. The responsible Reich officials regularly stated in private to their British counterparts that no secret building could take place under German law, as all expenditure required the sanction of the Reichstag. Accordingly, the much proclaimed acceleration, even if it were desired—and the Germans insisted that no such desire existed—could not happen. Tirpitz also made public statements to this effect in the Reichstag. It was all to no avail. The British government decided that 'the really important point . . . is not what the Germans say they have done in the way of shipbuilding or what they intend to do, but what they *can* do when need arises'.[112] As an acceleration building programme was technically within their capability, the Royal Navy had to assume that the possible might happen and that Germany would have seventeen or more battleships ready by 1912. Consequently, the British naval programme was structured to meet this potential threat and statements to this effect were made in Parliament.

The British refusal to take at face value the German government's many declarations about their shipbuilding programme caused outrage in Berlin, a fact that was recognized by the British authorities. '[T]he German Emperor', wrote the Foreign Secretary, 'had been much hurt by our failure to accept the assurances given by his government with regard to the number of ships which Germany would have by the end of 1912.'[113] Similarly, the ambassador in Berlin reported that 'Admiral Tirpitz is much upset at the idea that his word respecting acceleration

[110] Arthur Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond* (London, 1952), 316, 340, and 362.

[111] Dumas Diary, 8 Aug. 1908.

[112] Minute by Spicer, 29 Mar. 1910, FO 371/901.

[113] Grey to Goschen, 9 June 1909, FO 800/61.

has been doubted by responsible Ministers in Parliament.'[114] If the British were, thus, clearly aware of the German anger, what the German government wanted to know was how it had come to pass that they had not been believed in London. Unfortunately, the spotlight fell upon Heath. So far as the Kaiser was concerned, the whole acceleration scare was the product of the attaché's inaccurate and mischievous reporting. 'Heath had', Wilhelm scribbled in the margins of one report, 'spread lies, written rubbish and agitated [against Germany].'[115] Tirpitz and the officials of the Reichsmarineamt felt likewise. They blamed Heath for providing the British Admiralty with false information on the German building programme, even though they had regularly supplied him with the correct details.[116] Very quickly, it became axiomatic in Berlin that the British 'rejection of the assurances given by the Imperial Govt with regard to naval construction was due to erroneous information supplied by Captain Heath'.[117]

The consequence of this perception was Heath's gradual ostracism first from the Imperial Naval Office and then from the Kaiser's court. In respect of the Imperial Naval Office, the process was one of slow strangulation. Tirpitz first reduced the attaché's access to German naval facilities; then he instructed that no information was to be provided to him concerning the particulars of the German shipbuilding programme; after this he declined to receive him for interviews or, if he did see him, received him only briefly; finally he gave instructions that no information of any kind, even if it were of the most trivial nature, was to be given to him. That Heath's treatment was related to his perceived role in the acceleration crisis was made very clear by the German authorities. Thus, when he was refused particulars about the German shipbuilding programme, he was told that this was because he had been given information before without it affecting the statements of the British government. No new details would be supplied, 'since it is to be feared that the misunderstandings which have hitherto arisen from the communication and use made of such declarations will not be removed by the renewal of them'.[118] Similarly, when an interview with Tirpitz consisted of little more than the Secretary of State wishing him 'good morning, remarking that there were many people waiting to see him', Heath was told by the adjutant that this was because Tirpitz was 'very angry' at a British statement that the battleship *Nassau* had been completed ahead of schedule.[119] Finally, when all access to official information was closed to him, Heath was told unambiguously that the acceleration issue was the cause. As the British ambassador reported:

on Heath's calling at the Ministry of Marine the other day to ask some trifling question, he was told that their orders were to give him no information whatever on any subject! One of

[114] Telegram from Goschen to the Foreign Office, 29 Mar. 1909, FO 371/670.
[115] Marginal comment by Wilhelm II on Widenmann to Tirpitz, 29 Apr. 1910. *GP* xxviii. 317.
[116] Widenmann, *Marine-Attaché*, 167 and 173; Goschen to Grey, 8 Aug. 1910, FO 371/906.
[117] Goschen to Nicolson, 28 May 1910, FO 371/900.
[118] Rheinbaben to Heath, 7 Oct. 1910, *BD* vi. 293.
[119] Heath, NA 11/10, 22 Mar. 1910, FO 371/901.

Tirpitz's grievances is apparently that Mr McKenna had stated that the dates given in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* could not be regarded as official and Heath was told that he ought to know by this time that everything that appeared in that paper *was* official.[120]

The effect of all these measures was to make Heath's position extremely uncomfortable. According to the memoirs of Captain Wilhelm Widenmann, then German naval attaché in London, this was the intention, as Tirpitz wanted to bring about Heath's recall.[121] While Widenmann maintains that the German naval authorities were ultimately successful in this regard, there is no evidence in the British records to suggest that the government in London ever contemplated bringing Heath home early. However, it does appear that in early 1910 Heath himself got tired of the open hostility of the Reichsmarineamt. Rather than face the continued incivility of Tirpitz and his officers for another year, he decided it would be better to leave Berlin early. Accordingly, he put in a request through the ambassador for a transfer back to a shipboard command, giving as his reason a desire to obtain sufficient sea time to qualify for flag rank. The Foreign Office, while understanding his position, was not eager to see him go. 'I received your letter about the Naval Attaché this morning', replied Sir Charles Hardinge,

> and I will convey your remarks to the Admiralty. It really seems to me that two years is hardly long enough for a Naval Attaché to get a really good grip of a situation at a place like Berlin; but one can readily understand his dislike, if he is a rising officer, of being absent longer from the sea.[122]

This correspondence effectively disposes of Widenmann's claim that Heath was recalled at German insistence. Yet its wording leaves open the strong possibility that Heath's inclination to abandon the German capital was due less to the allure of a sea-going command than it was to his having been worn down by the growing rudeness and increasing obstructiveness of the Imperial Naval Office. Their attitude made it clear that his usefulness as an attaché had come to an end. Rather than remain in post for a further year as an ineffective observer, denied access to the sites he needed to see and the people he needed to meet, it is likely that he decided to go. If this were his judgement, then the manner of his departure and the insult that the Kaiser subjected him to when he left would undoubtedly have confirmed the correctness of his decision to return home.

As we have seen from his marginalia, the Kaiser, no less than Admiral Tirpitz, held Heath to blame for the acceleration crisis. This was a point that he chose to make clear when Heath's appointment came to an end. On such occasions, it was customary for the departing officer to ask for and receive a farewell audience with the Emperor. Accordingly, on 23 July, Goschen wrote to the German government 'requesting that the pleasure of the Emperor might be taken as to the granting of a

[120] Goschen to Hardinge, 14 Apr. 1910, FO 371/900.
[121] Widenmann, *Marine-Attaché*, 167 and 173–4.
[122] Hardinge to Goschen, 2 Mar. 1910, CUL: Hardinge Papers, vol. 21. The letter from Goschen to which Hardinge refers could not be located.

farewell audience to Captain Heath on the termination of his appointment as Naval Attaché to this Embassy'.[123] The reply was received two weeks later. The Kaiser, the German note stated, 'who has left Berlin today, sincerely regrets . . . that He will not be able to receive Captain Heath, Naval Attaché to His Majesty's Embassy, before the departure of the latter from Germany, as the time of His Majesty is wholly occupied with other duties'.[124] This unheard of response, which would have been deemed uncivil at the best of times, was received especially badly because it did not ring true. For one thing, as Walter Langley, the assistant under-secretary, observed: 'the Embassy had given three weeks notice of Captain Heath's departure'.[125] Moreover, as the ambassador indignantly noted, 'between the time when my application was made and the answer to it was received, the Emperor had spent several days in Berlin and had received many people (including the Chinese)'.[126] Clearly, had he so desired, he could also have received Heath and, consequently, as Goschen concluded in his diary, his refusal to do so was 'evidently a "parti pris" '.[127] To Grey's private secretary, Sir William Tyrell, Goschen was even more forthright. The Kaiser, he wrote, having been 'poisoned' against Heath, 'who was held responsible here for what they consider misstatements on the part of Mr. Asquith and the First Lord with regard to German naval construction', deliberately concocted an 'ostentatious breach of ordinary custom' as an 'apparent slight'.[128] This was certainly the prevalent view among the officials of the Foreign Office in London, many of whom expressed outrage at the Kaiser's behaviour. One entry in the departmental minutes records that 'the refusal of the Emperor to receive Heath when he asked for an audience was a distinct snub'.[129] The Admiralty agreed wholeheartedly; as the First Lord put it, the treatment accorded to Heath was 'a piece of rudeness without precedent'.[130] Its sole purpose seemed to be to underline the message, already evident from Tirpitz's behaviour towards him, that Heath was no longer persona grata at the Kaiser's court. Although an attempt was made to ameliorate the bad feeling this had caused by inviting Heath back for an audience after he had already left Berlin—a token gesture that the British let pass by—the real views of the German government were more than evident. However, in case there were any doubts, Tirpitz continued to disparage Heath for some time to come. In January 1911, for example, eight months after his departure, the British ambassador in Berlin gave a dinner party at the embassy 'at which Tirpitz sat next to Lady Goschen . . . [and] occupied the greater part of the time with abuse of McKenna and of Captain Heath'.[131]

[123] Goschen to Grey, 6 Aug. 1910, FO 371/906.
[124] Kiderlen-Wächter to Goschen, 5 Aug. 1910. Enclosed ibid.
[125] Minute by Langley, [n.d, but Aug. 1910], FO 371/906.
[126] Goschen to Tyrell, 10 Aug. 1910, ibid.
[127] Goschen Diary, 6 Aug. 1910. Howard, *Diary of Edward Goschen*, 216.
[128] Goschen to Tyrell, 10 Aug. 1910, FO 371/906.
[129] Minute by Drummond (?), 15 Aug. 1910, ibid.
[130] Minute by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 18 Aug. 1910, ibid.
[131] Nicolson to Hardinge, 2 Mar. 1911, FO 800/347.

The experiences of Gleichen and Heath produced two reactions in London. The first of these was to make it clear to the officers in question that no blame was attached to them by the British government for the treatment they received at the hands of the Kaiser and his ministers. In the case of Gleichen, this was achieved through the bestowal of the CB, a token, as the colonel recorded, 'that my work in Germany was . . . not looked upon as entirely unsuccessful at home'.[132] A similar procedure was adopted in respect of Heath. Invited up to the royal residence at Balmoral for an audience with the King, he was accorded the honour of being confirmed as one of the naval ADCs to the monarch.[133]

More significantly, however, there were lessons to be learnt from Gleichen and Heath's experiences. In particular, as the usefulness of a service attaché depended upon his ability to maintain good relations with the Kaiser and the German authorities, the acrimonious departure of these officers from Berlin provided a vivid reminder of the necessity for attachés to remain persona grata for the full term of their appointment. This fact was not lost on the Admiralty and War Office when it came to nominating replacements for Gleichen and Heath. Thus, Heath's successor, Hugh Watson, journeyed to Berlin determined both to 'promote good feeling between the navies of the two countries' and to avoid any undertaking that would lead him 'to share the lot of Heath'.[134] In both these respects, he was largely successful. A man of considerable bonhomie, whose 'unfailing lightheartedness and good spirits made him an excellent companion', he managed to develop a close rapport with the German authorities.[135]

The War Office dealt with the issue of superseding Gleichen in a somewhat different manner. They ensured their new attaché would be persona grata by appointing the man that the Kaiser wanted for the post, Frederic Trench. The Kaiser had first met Trench in Gibraltar, probably in 1903, when the former was on one of his many Mediterranean cruises and the latter was there to receive the warrant and insignia of the Distinguished Service Order.[136] Trench obviously impressed the Kaiser, because in 1904 Wilhelm invited him to be his guest at the imperial manœuvres. Then, in 1905, when the Army Council in London requested that the Reich government allow a British officer to be attached to the German forces operating against the Herero in South-West Africa, the Kaiser agreed so long as it was Trench who was selected.[137] Finally, he was transferred to Berlin. The surviving records are largely silent on the reasons for his appointment, but a 1908 letter from Sir Charles Hardinge suggests that the choice was made at

[132] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 281.

[133] A copy of the letter proposing Heath as ADC is in the collection of correspondence with the Monarch kept in the Naval Historical Branch. A reference to the King's confirmation of this appointment is in the Admiralty catalogue of the McKenna papers, CCAC: MCKN 3/1.

[134] Watson, NA 31/10, 25 Aug. 1910, *BD* vi. 515–18. Watson to Goschen, 30 June 1913, FO 800/112.

[135] Goschen to Nicolson, 11 Oct. 1913, *BD* x2. 707–8.

[136] Metternich to Bülow, 22 July 1905, *GP* xx2. 647; O'Moore Creagh and Edith M. Humphris, *The V.C. and D.S.O.*, 3 vols. (London, 1921), ii. 261.

[137] Unknown official to Lansdowne, 29 Mar. 1905, FO 64/1646.

Wilhelm's request. '[W]hen Trench arrived in Berlin', Hardinge wrote, 'he was a pro-German and a friend of the Emperor—in fact the Emperor's own selection.'[138] If so, it was hardly surprising that Trench was very much persona grata at the Kaiser's court. What is extraordinary is that the British government should appoint someone to an important overseas posting at the behest of a foreign monarch. On the other hand, this only goes to underline how important the 'social quality' of being *hoffähig* or acceptable at court actually was. No service attaché in Berlin could function otherwise. In the aftermath of Gleichen's recall, any measure to re-establish the position of the military attaché was clearly worth trying.

Another qualification of some importance was the possession of the appropriate language skills. This, apparently, had not always been the case for military attachés. According to his memoirs, when Lieutenant-Colonel William Robertson was appointed head of the Foreign and Indian Subdivision of the Intelligence Division in October 1901, he arrived determined to devise 'a better method of appointing military attachés'. In particular, he wished to end the practice of selecting officers who 'had no knowledge of the language of the country to which they were sent, or of any other except their own'.[139] Just how widespread this problem was, Robertson does not spell out. However, it was not an issue in the case of the attaché in Berlin. Waters, the officer *in situ*, had been at school in Berlin and spoke excellent German. Whether through Robertson's efforts or otherwise, so, too, would all of his successors. Thus, Gleichen, who replaced Waters in 1903, was proficient in the language, being both the direct descendant of a German princely family—the house of Hohenlohe-Langenburg—and having travelled extensively on the continent in his youth. Likewise, his successor, Trench, as a former student of Geneva University, was also, as his obituary put it, a man of 'unusual linguistic attainments'.[140] Finally, there was Alick Russell. The fourth son of Lord Odo Russell, the British ambassador in Germany, he had grown up in Berlin and had picked up the language as a boy. Subsequent studies had made him fluent and he qualified as an interpreter in German in April 1905.[141] In short, throughout this period, from the philological point of view, Britain's military attachés in Berlin were a highly qualified bunch.

Robertson's view that linguistic skills were an essential prerequisite for appointment to an overseas embassy was echoed by the Admiralty. As Churchill observed in 1913, there were 'two conditions . . . deemed indispensable' for service in Berlin and one of these was 'a knowledge of German'.[142] As if to prove this, shortly thereafter, he selected Wilfred Henderson as naval attaché in Berlin, an officer whose linguist aptitude ran to French, Italian, and German.[143] However, while this may

[138] Hardinge to Goschen, 7 Dec. 1908, CUL: Hardinge Papers, vol. 13.
[139] William Robertson, *From Private to Field-Marshal* (London, 1921), 130–1.
[140] See Trench's obituary. *The Times*, 15 Apr. 1942, p. 7.
[141] War Office, *The Official Army List*.
[142] Minute by Churchill, 6 May 1913, CCAC: CHAR 13/22A/63-4.
[143] See Henderson's service record, ADM 196/43.

well have been a requirement in 1913, it does not appear to have been the case that the Admiralty always insisted upon prospective attachés knowing German already, merely that they be willing to learn it. Thus, while Ewart, the first British naval attaché in Berlin, did, in fact, speak good German, it is evident from their diaries that both of his successors, Allenby and Dumas, were by no means fluent in the language prior to their appointment. Both of them had to begin German instruction on being informed that they were going to Berlin. Of course, studying a language and mastering it are two different things. Thus, while it seems that the lessons that Allenby undertook—'¾ of an hour daily before breakfast'[144]—stood him in good stead, Dumas, who spoke excellent French and Spanish, found German harder to acquire. Despite engaging 'a dreadful little creature, a Fräulein Gregor, to come and read German with me every forenoon for an hour', he was still bemoaning his difficulties with the language up to a year into his posting.[145] The readers of his reports also evidently had some complaints about his linguistic abilities. One Foreign Office official noted after receiving Dumas's translation of a speech by Tirpitz: 'This has been in the papers in a more readable form: the "translation" is very bad.'[146] To compensate for this problem, Dumas took the sensible step of employing an elderly English woman, Mrs Gray, as an assistant. She read the papers for him, translating any articles of naval interest. His replacement, Heath, 'not yet being quite "au fait" with the German language', kept her on.[147] In spite of Churchill's comment, it was, therefore, only with the appointment in 1910 of Watson that there arrived in Berlin, for the first time since Ewart, a British naval attaché who already possessed 'a sound knowledge of German'.[148] Indeed, the irony in the case of Watson was that it was not the proficiency of his German so much as the quality of his English that was the source of complaint among those who read his reports. The Foreign Office minutes are littered with critical comments about his use of his mother tongue. 'I wonder the Admiralty allows officers to send their reports in this unmethodical and ungrammatical style', penned Crowe in September 1910 in what was to prove a typical example of the chief clerk's displeasure.[149] Others included this acidic remark from mid-1911: 'Captain Watson's somewhat cryptical explanations almost rival the obscurities of the Naval Law itself.'[150] Similarly caustic was a minute from early 1912 appended to an eleven-page report: 'Captain Watson might have said all he has to say on one page, if he could only write clearly and to the point.'[151] Others were more charitable. 'If he sends valuable information', remarked the Assistant Under-Secretary

144 Allenby Diary, 6 Apr. 1903.
145 Dumas Diary, 2 Mar. 1906, 9 July 1906, and 27 Feb. 1907.
146 Minute of 12 Mar. 1906 on Dumas NA 11/06, 9 Mar. 1906, FO 371/75.
147 The comment about Heath's linguistic skills comes from Grant to Greene, 8 Feb. 1909, ADM 137/3859. For Heath's employment of Mrs Gray, see Dumas Diary, 26 Oct. 1908.
148 Admiralty to Foreign Office, 30 June 1910, FO 371/1036.
149 Minute by Crowe, 12 Sept. 1910, on Watson, NA 34/10, 9 Sept. 1910, FO 371/901.
150 Minute by Crowe, 12 June 1911, on Watson, NA 21/11, 3 June 1911, FO371/1123.
151 Minute by Crowe, 26 Feb. 1912, on Watson, NA 6/12, 21 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1372.

Walter Langley, 'the Admiralty will not care much how ungrammatical he is.'[152] The ambassador in Berlin felt likewise. '[T]hough his dispatches are diffuse and not without their comic side—he has done excellent work . . .'[153] Doubtless the fact that he spoke good German helped greatly in the latter respect and militated against the complaints about his English.

Another essential qualification for acting as a service attaché in Berlin was the possession of a significant private income. There were two reasons for this. The first of these was that the job of the attaché was necessarily an expensive one. As Captain Slade, the Director of Naval Intelligence, pointed out, being a member of the Kaiser's court, an attaché was 'obliged to live in society'.[154] This meant not only bearing the costs of entertaining German officers and officials on a regular basis, but also maintaining a residence suitable for receptions and soirées. This was no small matter. As the Admiralty recognized: 'An Attaché's establishment must be in a respectable district, and on a scale that he can return the hospitality offered him in a modest manner but in a way befitting the representative of H.M. Navy . . .'[155] As a matter of course, accommodation of this type did not come cheap. To be able to live and entertain in the necessary style, both Heath and Watson, for example, resided in the Bendlerstraße—'almost the Park Lane of Berlin' wrote Alick Russell who also lived there[156]—while Dumas maintained a spacious apartment in the Regentenstraße, an equally desirable part of town. 'The address', he later recalled, '[was] an excellent one', but it was also expensive.[157] As he noted when the first bill arrived: 'Paid my rent. It is so much . . . for anyone in my position that I feel almost proud of paying it.'[158]

Compounding the magnitude of the required outlay was the inadequacy of the service attaché's salary, which came nowhere near to providing sufficient funds for this purpose. Successive Directors of Naval Intelligence were clear on this point. Admiral Bethell, for example, was adamant that 'the present pay of a Naval Attaché is not sufficient to enable him to meet the expenses to which he is necessarily put'.[159] The army thought likewise. As General Sir Henry Brackenbury informed the Hardwicke Committee, a military attaché 'must mix in the society of, and must entertain, foreign officers. He could not attempt to do this on his pay . . .'[160]

This incompatibility between an attaché's duties and the salary he was afforded had one inevitable outcome. As Churchill noted, 'private means' was an indispensable condition for appointment as naval attaché to Berlin. Once again, this position was echoed by the Secretary of State for War. Military attachés, the War

[152] Minute by Langley [n.d.] on Watson NA 3/11, 15 Feb. 1911, FO 371/1124.
[153] Goschen to Nicolson, 11 Oct. 1913, *BD* x2.707–8.
[154] Minute by Slade, 2 Mar. 1909, ADM 1/8204.
[155] Minute by Bethell, 19 Aug. 1909, ibid.
[156] Russell manuscript, p. 58.
[157] Dumas autobiography, p. 31, IWM: 65/23/1.
[158] Dumas Diary, 3 Apr. 1906.
[159] Minute by Bethell, 14 Feb. 1910, ADM 1/8204.
[160] *Report of Lord Hardwicke's Committee*, Mar. 1903, pp. 44–5, T 1/10966.

Office maintained, could only be selected from amongst 'those whose private incomes are sufficient to enable them to bear the heavy expenses of living in foreign capitals and meeting the necessary charges of their special positions'.[161]

The fact that only those with considerable 'private means' could be considered for appointment as attachés was a source of some disquiet in the two service ministries, where it was realized that this restriction prevented suitable candidates without personal wealth from being appointed. A vivid example of this came in May 1903, when thought was given to appointing Major Edward Agar as military attaché in Berlin. Agar, an officer of the Royal Engineers who had passed through the Staff College and served in military intelligence, was, by all accounts, a suitable appointee on several grounds. In addition to his military attainments, he was 'a very cheery little fellow' who had 'quite nice manners' and possessed 'the necessary tact and discretion' for so sensitive a post. Unfortunately, his financial status was quite another matter. As Major General Swaine reported:

> My only anxiety about Major Agar is money. Berlin is by no means a cheap place to live in, and as Sir Alfred Horsford [Military Secretary to the Commander in Chief] cautioned me thus on my first appointment to St Petersburg: 'Remember that His Royal Highness does not approve of his Military Attaché living at an hotel and pigging it in the slums.' I think Major Agar should be distinctly asked whether he can afford it. He is too nice a little man to place in a false position.[162]

Evidently, Agar lacked the means, for no more was heard of his appointment. It is little wonder in the face of such proceedings that the Secretary of State for War noted in his diary later that year: 'it will be far better if we can pay our attachés much higher. At present, officers cannot take the post unless they are rich men. This limits our choice unduly.'[163]

Both services attempted to do something about this. The War Office started the ball rolling when, in June 1903, they requested an increase in pay for military attachés. Noting—truthfully[164]—that 'representations have . . . been frequently made as to the inadequacy of the fixed rate of pay (£800) at present assigned to the post', the financial secretary to the War Office pointed out to the Treasury that this had 'the effect of unduly restricting the choice of officers'. Accordingly he asked that military attachés receive an additional daily living allowance of £1 a day.[165] The Treasury, however, was not impressed. Thus, although the War Office pressed the point, returning to this subject on no less than three further occasions in 1903 alone—in August, October, and December—they met an unwavering blanket refusal each and every time. At the heart of the Treasury's refusal lay the

[161] Marzials to the Secretary of the Treasury, 6 Aug. 1903, ibid.
[162] Swaine to Davidson, 8 May 1903, RA VIC/X 1/1.
[163] Arnold-Forster Diary, 28 Dec. 1903, BL: Add.50355.
[164] The military attaché in Berlin complained about this in Aug. 1900. Waters to Lascelles, 23 Aug. 1900, FO 64/1494.
[165] Marzials to the Secretary of the Treasury, 3 June 1903, T 1/10966.

low opinion of its officials of the value of military attachés. As one Treasury mandarin noted in a private internal minute:

> [military attachés] are an ornamental (but necessary) appendage only. On Lord Hardwicke's C[ommitt]ee I urged (without success) that the Military Attaché should get £1200 a year, but only on condition that he displaced London men and wrote up the intelligence book respecting the country to which he is accredited. I see no reason, as things stand, for giving a penny more.[166]

With this attitude prevalent, it was clear that the military authorities were not going to get anywhere with their representations. Reluctantly, they temporarily allowed the matter to drop.

When it was reopened in April 1908, the War Office adopted a new approach. True, they reiterated their case. 'So long . . . as the present pay conditions prevail', wrote Reginald Brade, the permanent secretary, 'the selection of officers for these responsible posts is seriously hampered by its necessarily being confined to those who are prepared to make considerable sacrifices from their private resources in the interests of the public service.'[167] However, in addition to restating a point that had already failed to convince the Treasury on several previous occasions, the War Office also offered the inducement of compensatory savings from elsewhere in their budget. This, of course, caught the Treasury's attention. Indeed, as the minutes reveal, it was this that clinched the matter. 'The important part of this letter', so a Treasury official noted, 'is the penultimate paragraph which promises reductions in the cost of the Directorate of Military Operations . . . of over £3000 to meet the cost (£3285) of giving the selected Military Attachés their extra £1 a day.'[168] In these circumstances and after some negotiations over the details, the Treasury finally agreed to the proposals on 20 January 1909.

The success of the War Office did not go unnoticed by the Admiralty. They, too, had received representations from their attachés as to the inadequacy of the salary they received, the most recent being dated 15 January 1909.[169] Accordingly, they were spurred to act. 'For some time', Slade, the DNI, wrote,

> it has been under consideration in this department to submit a report respecting the inadequacy of the emoluments of Naval Attachés. Representations have been made . . . that the pay and allowances of the posts do not by a long way meet the necessary expenses to which they are put, and that in consequence they are compelled to draw largely on their private means.[170]

Accordingly, he recommended that the Admiralty apply for the same financial benefits recently accorded to military attachés. As the letter to the Treasury put it: 'It will thus be evident that the Naval rates of pay and allowances are very inadequate,

[166] Minute by Chalmers, n.d [but Oct. 1903], T 1/10966.
[167] Brade to the Secretary of the Treasury, 22 Apr. 1908, ibid.
[168] Undated Treasury minute, ibid.
[169] Smith, Russia NA 1/09, 15 Jan. 1909, ADM 1/8204.
[170] Minute by Slade, 2 Mar. 1909, ibid.

and after full consideration my Lords are convinced that the time has arrived when the conditions of the appointments should be assimilated to those obtaining in the sister service.'[171] Just as the Treasury had refused the initial approaches of the War Office, so they declined the first representations by the Admiralty. Although conceding early the principle that 'the net advantages of these naval and military appointments should, so far as possible, be equalised',[172] it was not until November 1913 that they actually accepted this in practice.[173] At this point, ten months before the outbreak of the First World War, both the military and naval attachés finally found themselves with a consolidated salary of £1,165 a year plus allowances.

In effect, therefore, it was not until January 1909 and November 1913 respectively that military and naval attachés were paid a salary that stood a realistic chance of meeting their expenses. Consequently, for much of the period under consideration, it was, indeed, essential, as both the War Office and the Admiralty maintained, that attachés possessed a private income. Inevitably, the records are not very complete on the personal finances of the officers sent to Berlin, but what little we know suggests that the military and naval attachés in Berlin had personal resources of some kind. Thus, Dumas, as a partner and shareholder in the firm of Dumas and Wylie, disposed of a private income of over £300 a year from his stake in the company.[174] However, as he later estimated that the post cost him '£750 a year beyond the pay',[175] this not insubstantial individual resource was evidently not enough. One of his successors, Watson, was in a somewhat better position. Having married Janie Amina Pearson, the sister of the industrialist and oil magnate Lord Cowdray, he was, according to the Admiralty 'very well off'.[176] As we have seen, to hold the post of naval attaché in Berlin, he needed to be.

Thus, it is clear that to fulfil their court duties prospective service attachés needed to possess appropriate 'social qualities', some knowledge of German, and deep pockets. These were not, however, the only characteristics required of military and naval attachés, because in addition to their duties at court, these officers had another vital role.

THE ATTACHÉS' INTELLIGENCE FUNCTION

Although the service attachés could and did perform useful services in their 'ornamental' capacity as members of the Kaiser's court, this was not their only, let alone their principal task. As the War Office informed the Treasury, although 'the ceremonial functions attaching to their office, and the likelihood of their rendering themselves acceptable at the Courts to which they are accredited, have not been

[171] Admiralty to the Secretary to the Treasury, 5 July 1909, ibid.
[172] Murray to the Secretary to the Admiralty, 16 July 1909, ibid.
[173] Bradbury to the Secretary to the Admiralty, 20 Nov. 1913, T 5/40.
[174] Dumas Diary, 6 Oct. 1905. [175] Ibid., 3 Jan. 1912.
[176] Admiralty to the Foreign Office, 30 June 1910, FO 371/1036.

lost sight of, the main consideration [for the attachés] has recently been their military duties assigned to them'.[177] What this meant in practice was that military and naval attachés were sent to Berlin in order to look after and represent the interests of the army and navy in Germany.

To some extent this was a very tedious role that involved the attachés in some quite mundane activities. For example, when British officers wished to attend German army manœuvres in an official capacity, it was the job of the military attaché to make all the necessary arrangements. Similarly, the military attaché was responsible for liaising with the German authorities when it came to exchanging examples of arms and ammunition.[178] The naval attaché performed comparable tasks, Dumas, for instance, being the agent through which the Admiralty obtained a sample of the German sailors' biscuit ration.[179]

However, in addition to such routine tasks, in the performance of their duties as the representatives of the army and navy in Germany, the service attachés had a much more substantive role to fulfil. That role was to gather intelligence on the German armed forces. This requirement was enunciated clearly in the instructions that they received from the Foreign Office on their appointment. Military attachés, for example, were told to 'keep themselves in the closest possible touch with the armies of the countries to which they are accredited' and to 'send special despatches dealing with any circumstances which, from a military point of view, merit consideration'.[180] Just what this rather general instruction meant in practice was spelt out in somewhat greater detail in the comprehensive supplementary instructions that military attachés were issued by their own department. Among a wealth of other information and instructions, this document contained a list of twenty-nine topics to which the military attaché was told 'he should pay special attention'. Ranging from the 'personal qualities of generals and officers likely to be in, or already in, high commands or staff appointments' to the 'state of discipline; power of endurance, physical and moral; resolution in adverse circumstances; strength or weakness of the fighting spirit' and culminating in 'information regarding prevailing ideas concerning our own Army', it amounted to an instruction to find out everything possible about the German army.[181]

In a comparable manner, naval attachés had their duties defined in terms of the subjects on which they were expected to report. These included naval policy and administration, particulars of war vessels, ordnance, torpedoes, dockyards, factories, and coast defences, as well as 'the latest and most reliable information as to the intended disposition and movements of foreign ships or squadrons'.[182] In

[177] Manzials to the Secretary of the Treasury, 7 Dec. 1903, T 1/10966.
[178] Russell MA 22/10, 29 June 1910, FO 371/1035.
[179] Dumas Diary, 12 Nov. 1906.
[180] 'Memorandum for Guidance of Military Attachés'. FO 371/75.
[181] *Instructions for Military Attachés*, WO 279/647.
[182] Memorandum accompanying the Foreign Office letter of appointment for naval attachés, FO 371/75.

short, they, too, were supposed to find out everything that they possibly could about the German navy.

THE QUALITIES NEEDED FOR INTELLIGENCE WORK

The attributes that ensured that a service attaché was suitable for the Kaiser's court were all useful when it came to acting in an intelligence capacity. However, they were not in themselves sufficient. To be an effective intelligence-gatherer, as well as a good courtier, required the attaché to possess suitable professional qualities as well. But what were these professional qualities? In the case of military attachés, the necessary attributes were a matter that had been examined by the committee chaired by Lord Hardwicke to advise on the creation of a unified mobilization and intelligence division at the War Office. Set up in the aftermath of the numerous intelligence failures that had marked the early stages of the Boer War, the committee had concluded that intelligence work could no longer be left to amateurs. Accordingly, it was declared desirable that intelligence officers should either have passed the Staff College or served on the Headquarters Staff, receiving appropriate training in the Intelligence Division. As part of their negotiations for improving the pay of military attachés, the Treasury attempted to make such experience obligatory for these posts. The War Office demurred. 'As a rule', Reginald Brade wrote to the Treasury, 'it will be possible to comply with their Lordships' wish that a Military Attaché designate should have passed the Staff College, or have served in the Intelligence Division, but there are occasions when a compliance therewith would not be in the best interests of the state.'[183] Accordingly the Army Council demanded and received the right to select the best officer for the job irrespective of formal qualifications.

Despite this wrangling, the officers appointed to the post of military attaché in Berlin were, in fact, in all cases highly qualified, possessing both distinguished service records and experience of intelligence work. Thus, before being appointed to Berlin at the end of 1900, Waters, a graduate of the Staff College in 1887, had served two terms in the Intelligence Division and had been military attaché in St Petersburg for five years. He therefore possessed both practical experience as an attaché, as well as an understanding of the needs of headquarters in London.

His successor, Gleichen, was similarly qualified. He, too, had also served two terms in the Intelligence Division and had, furthermore, been a field intelligence officer in the Boer War and then Director of Intelligence in Cairo. Such was his experience of intelligence work that, following his period as an attaché, he returned to London to head the European Section of the Directorate of Military Operations at the War Office.

Despite the fact that Gleichen's successor, Trench, was, as we have seen, largely chosen because of his long-standing friendship with the Kaiser, he was nevertheless

[183] Brade to the Secretary to the Treasury, 7 Jan. 1909, T 1/10966.

eminently suitable on military grounds for the post of attaché. Not only did he meet the formal prerequisite for the position by virtue of having passed the Staff College, but he also possessed a distinguished record encompassing service in both the Zulu and Boer Wars. More significantly, of course, he had also served in South-West Africa alongside the German forces there. He, thus, had experience of observing German units in the field and had friends and contacts in the German army. He was also a well-known military author. While his article on 'fire discipline' in the 1892 volume of the Royal Artillery regimental magazine was probably not widely read, *Manœuvre Orders*, his 71-page guide to drafting orders in the field, went through eleven editions and was much used in the British army.[184] Finally, although he had never been posted in the Intelligence Division, he had served on the staff of army headquarters in the later stages of the Boer War in the capacity of press censor, a job that often had intelligence implications.

The last military attaché in Berlin before the First World War was Alick Russell. His father, Lord Odo Russell (later Lord Ampthill) had been the first British ambassador to Germany and, partly due to this, it had long been Russell's ambition to 'return to Germany as Military Attaché'.[185] To this end, as early as 1903, when Waters's term as attaché ended, Russell had campaigned to be sent to the German capital. However, although his well-connected mother, the dowager Lady Ampthill, wrote to the Foreign Office on his behalf, as the youngest major in the army, he was considered too inexperienced for the post.[186] Yet, that did not mean that preparations could not be put in train to make Russell ready for the position at some future date. Accordingly, he was first sent to the Staff College and then immediately thereafter employed in the German Section of the Intelligence Division at the War Office. As Russell records in his autobiography: 'The reason I was posted to the German section was that the authorities wanted me to learn as much as possible about the German Army and the military resources of the German Empire, before being sent as Military Attaché to Berlin.'[187] To this end, the military hierarchy also took every opportunity to introduce Russell to visiting German dignitaries. For example, when in 1907 the German government sent over a military deputation to attend the unveiling of a statue of the duke of Cambridge, Russell was specially attached to the German officers' party. The young major was thereby afforded the opportunity to spend time with a German field marshal and his staff, a circumstance his rank and position would not normally have merited. As a result of such opportunities, by the time he arrived in Berlin in 1910, Russell was as well trained on matters German as it was possible for a British officer to be.

As we can see, from a professional standpoint, the British military attachés in Berlin were all highly qualified officers. Some had attended the Staff College, others

[184] The first edition was F. Trench, *Manœuvre Orders: Notes on Writing Orders at Field Days, Staff Rides, War Games and Examinations* (London, 1898).
[185] Russell, 'Reminiscences of the German Court', 58.
[186] Swaine to Davidson, 21 May 1903, RA VIC/X1/2.
[187] Russell manuscript, pp. 54–5.

had gained considerable experience of intelligence work either in the field or at headquarters, many had done both. There was, therefore, certainly no want of ability or training in their ranks. The same could be said of the naval officers who were sent to Berlin as naval attachés.

Unlike the army, which fought a running battle with the Treasury to avoid institutionalizing a system whereby military attachés had to be either graduates of the Staff College or long-serving members of the General Staff, the navy actually had a scheme in place for training its prospective attachés. An Admiralty memorandum explained:

> An officer when selected for appointment as Naval Attaché will be attached to the Department of the Director of Naval Intelligence for a short period before taking up his appointment, so that he may become acquainted with the information in office concerning the country or countries to which it is proposed to accredit him.

Furthermore, it was also Admiralty policy that, prior to taking up their appointments, prospective attachés should visit the home dockyards, the gunnery training school, the torpedo school, and a selection of private ordnance and shipbuilding firms in order to acquaint them with the latest technologies and manufacturing techniques.[188] As two of the naval attachés have left accounts of their travels, it is possible to reconstruct their exact training and inspection programme. Thus, in early June 1903, the month before he left for Berlin, Allenby visited the Armstrong Works, John Brown Shipbuilders, the Vickers plant at Barrow, and the Woolwich Arsenal.[189] Similarly, in late January 1906, Dumas looked over Portsmouth dockyard, Woolwich, Barrow, the Cammel Laird shipyard, and the Parsons turbine factory. He was also one of the very few people to be shown over the revolutionary new battleship HMS *Dreadnought*.[190] As a result of their mandatory period working in the NID and their visits around British maritime establishments, no naval attaché went to his post unprepared. At the very least, they had a period of basic instruction to fall back upon.

In addition to the training they received, many of the naval attachés had existing experience of intelligence work. Ewart, for example, joined the NID on 27 September 1899 and thus had a full year's work in the division before his departure for Berlin. His successor, Allenby, was even more familiar with the NID, having served nearly two and a half years there prior to his appointment as attaché. While the records are not detailed enough to outline precisely what work he did, one surviving memorandum in the Arnold-Forster papers suggests that the German navy lay within Allenby's remit at that time.[191] His transfer to Berlin, thus, most likely followed two years' close study of German affairs. Allenby was not alone in this. Another attaché with considerable intelligence experience was

[188] ADM 7/1003. [189] Allenby Diary, 3–6 June 1903.
[190] Dumas Diary, 22 Jan. 1906.
[191] 'German Naval Estimates: Memorandum from Commander R. A. Allenby', 24 Feb. 1902, BL: Add Mss 50294.

Heath, who spent two of his three years in the NID serving as assistant director of naval intelligence and head of the War Division. Among his areas of expertise was wireless telegraphy, his 'very complete knowledge' of which ensured his selection for the British delegation sent to the International Conference on Wireless Telegraphy held at Berlin in 1903.[192] Thus, prior to his appointment as naval attaché, he had not only worked extensively in naval intelligence, but also had experience of international affairs, as well as of the diplomatic environment in Berlin.

While the remaining naval attachés did not have this extensive period of service in the NID, they each, nevertheless, brought particular professional qualities to the position. The officer for whom this might most categorically be stated was Wilfred Henderson, whose appointment was cut short after only ten months owing to the outbreak of the First World War. Henderson has the misfortune for being best known as the commodore in charge of the poorly equipped and ill-trained naval contingent that was hastily sent over by Churchill to defend Antwerp in early October 1914. Overwhelmed by superior German artillery, Antwerp quickly succumbed and Henderson was forced to lead 1,500 men into internment in Holland. Though not heroic, it was the correct decision—although many at the time thought otherwise—but it effectively ended Henderson's career. However, prior to this incident, Henderson, who was generally known in the service as 'Wilf', had been one of the Royal Navy's most promising officers and was especially regarded for his intellectual acumen. Fisher described him as 'one of the five best brains in the navy below the rank of Admiral'.[193] This was well deserved. The author of the Admiralty's *Manual of Seamanship*, he had served as the secretary to the committee that had been responsible for the design of the *Dreadnought*. Subsequent to that, he was employed for two years at the Royal Navy War College, which prior to the formation of a naval staff in 1912 was seen as the surrogate for such an organization. As one of the most able and best-informed officers of his day, he was an ideal choice for the difficult job of representing the Royal Navy in Berlin. As the ambassador noted, 'a most excellent selection'.[194]

More eclectic, at least in so far as they recommended their holders for service as naval attachés, were the professional attainments of Dumas and Watson. Dumas was a torpedo specialist by training. As a young lieutenant, he had been an instructor in the Devonport torpedo school ship, HMS *Defiance*; during much of the First World War, he was employed in the Admiralty as assistant director of torpedoes. However, prior to being selected for Berlin, he had never served in naval intelligence and, if his service record is any guide, had no particular expertise in German affairs. He was also unmarried and a teetotaller, two characteristics that did not obviously facilitate the

[192] Post Office 13 May 1903, 'International Conference on Wireless Telegraphy at Berlin', ADM 1/7703.

[193] Fisher to Selborne, 19 Oct. 1904. Quoted in A. J. Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, (London, 1952–9), i. 330.

[194] Goschen to Grey, 31 Aug. 1913, FO 800/62.

necessary entry into society, which was so vital for a successful attaché. Nevertheless, he flourished in Berlin, and soon came to be seen as something of an authority on Germany. Churchill contemplated sending him back to Berlin in 1912, a project that only failed because Dumas, now married, could no longer afford the expense. Instead, his expertise was used to spread knowledge on German affairs among naval officers at home. First, he was seconded to the Admiralty to write a new edition of their manual on German naval administration and personnel.[195] Then, he was asked to lecture at the Royal Navy War College on German sea power. Evidently, his words had an effect, for copious notes were taken by at least two officers of future prominence who considered them worth retaining for posterity.[196]

Watson's particular area of expertise also did not make him an obvious choice for a posting as naval attaché. A keen sportsman with a singular passion for cricket, he had been appointed in 1905 as superintendent of physical training at Portsmouth, charged with devising a new scheme for promoting fitness among ships' crews. Surprisingly, this posting seems to have marked him out as an acute observer of foreign navies who was able to make useful reports on happenings overseas. Required by his position to visit the continent in order to see first hand how physical training was carried out in other countries, he wrote a memorandum on the Swedish system of gymnastic instruction that had far-reaching effects.[197] As the Admiralty recorded: 'As a result of his initiatives, the Swedish system of drill has been adopted throughout the naval service, and also to a large extent in the Army, and by the Board of Education.'[198] Given that he had also served on the China station and been commended there for 'showing courtesy, consideration, tact and discretion' in his dealings with the Chinese, it seemed that he had the observational and diplomatic qualities to make a good attaché, irrespective of his lack of training in intelligence work.[199] This certainly proved the case. Upon his departure from Berlin, the ambassador wrote about him in glowing terms.[200] So, too, did the First Lord of the Admiralty, who asked the Foreign Secretary to put him forward for a CMG.[201] Grey, who had declined a similar request in relation to Trench in 1909, evidently demurred in this instance as well, for this particular honour was never bestowed.[202] However, Watson's services did not go unrecognized. On 1 January 1914 he was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath (civil division), a fitting reward for his distinguished service in Berlin.

As we can see, from a professional standpoint, the officers selected to serve as naval attachés in Berlin were an eclectic bunch, with different specialisms and

[195] See Dumas's service record, ADM 196/42.

[196] 'Rise of German Sea Power. Capt. Dumas', CCAC: DRAX 1/43. 'Lecture on Growth of German Navy given by Captain Dumas R.N.', RN Submarine Museum: Duff Dunbar Papers.

[197] Watson, 'Notes on a Visit to Stockholm', Feb. 1906, Admiralty Library: P.647.

[198] Admiralty to Tyrell, 30 June 1910, FO 371/1306.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Goschen to Grey, 31 Aug. 1913, FO 800/62.

[201] Churchill to Grey, 21 Oct. 1913. Quoted in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill Companion Volume*, ii3, (London, 1969), 1791–2.

[202] Grey to Knollys, 23 June 1909, RA: W55/34.

attainments. They did, however, have a number of things in common. To begin with, they all received a basic training in intelligence work before their departure for Germany. While, for some of them, prior experience rendered this unnecessary, it did ensure that they all had a familiarity with the procedures and expectations of the NID. On top of this, all the officers chosen for the Berlin post had excellent service records and were highly regarded by their superiors. Ewart, for example, was rated as 'very zealous and keen'; Dumas was described as being 'an excellent executive officer' who showed 'great zeal, tact and ability'; while Watson was characterized as a 'first class leader', 'v. zealous, excellent judgement, able and tactful'.[203] Not surprisingly, given these attainments, many of them went on to have distinguished careers: Heath attaining the position of Second Sea Lord, Watson rising to Vice-Admiral in command of the Reserve Fleet. All of them retired on the flag list as admirals or vice-admirals. In short, as with the soldiers sent to Germany as military attachés, there was no want of professional ability among the sailors chosen for service in Berlin. There was every reason to suppose that they would be able to discharge their intelligence duties with success.

In conclusion, the existence of the service attaché was filled with anomalies. Although active members of the armed forces, they were temporarily under civilian control and were expected to act as diplomats. While charged with representing Britain, they were, nevertheless, appointed to the Kaiser's court and played a part in German ceremonial life. Although officers by training and diplomats by assignment, as attachés they had important social duties and were expected to cultivate contacts in the leading circles of the German military. Yet, as we have seen, they were also expected to gather intelligence information for their superiors. It is this latter role, the intelligence-gathering function, which will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

[203] Ewart's and Dumas's service records are in ADM 196/42; Watson's is in ADM 196/43.

2

Spies in Uniform: British Service Attachés as Intelligence-Gatherers

As we have seen in the previous chapter, despite their social role, the service attachés were principally employed as intelligence-gatherers. This begs certain questions: How and from where did the attachés gain their information? What sources were available to them?

SOURCES

The origins of the information sent back by the British service attachés in Berlin is difficult to gauge because most attachés did not reveal their sources in their dispatches. This was in spite of clear instructions to do so. The *NID Notes for Guidance of Naval Attachés*, for example, unambiguously stated: 'Except in cases in which it was considered undesirable to do so for any reason, the source of information . . . should be added to reports and reference sheets, in order that the value of the information may be judged.'[1] However, it seems that either the attachés regularly regarded it as undesirable to reveal their sources in their dispatches or they simply ignored this instruction, for the vast majority of reports are bereft of such details. In place of clear statements outlining the provenance of their information, most attachés, where they said anything at all on the matter, simply appended vague generalizations. Thus, Colonel Russell, writing to inform his superiors about 'indications of warlike preparations' in Germany—no small matter—merely stated that the information came from 'a highly credible source'.[2] Naval attachés were apt to adopt a similar formula. Captain Watson, for example, forwarding a report on 'the tactical exercises done by the German Fleet during the summer of 1911', simply stated: 'I can guarantee the source of my information as being reliable.'[3] As no name was provided, readers would have had to take this statement of reliability on trust.

[1] *NID Notes for Guidance of Naval Attachés*, ADM 1/8204.
[2] Russell, MA 16/12, 19 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1373.
[3] Watson, NA 38/12, 4 May 1912, FO 371/1375.

The absence of such information, which was often vital if the true importance of a report was to be assessed accurately, was a matter of some exasperation to the officials in Whitehall, who regularly made caustic remarks in the minutes about their need to see sources properly disclosed. A typical example of this concerns Captain Dumas's final dispatch, in which the attaché explained at great length—but without once explaining from whence he obtained his information—the depth, extremity, and likely future consequences of German anglophobia. After reading it, Graham Greene, the assistant secretary at the Admiralty, commented that 'the paper would have been more interesting, had Dumas mentioned the sources from which he derived his impressions'.[4] Similar criticism awaited one of Captain Heath's dispatches concerning the remarks of 'a German officer who is believed to be in close touch with the naval authorities'. Upon its arrival at the Foreign Office, it was given short shrift by the assistant clerk, Gerald Spicer, who acidly noted that 'these remarks might have some interest if we knew the position of the author of them'.[5] This information was something that Heath had conspicuously neglected to mention.

Nevertheless, despite such criticisms, the practice of the attachés did not change. Right up till the departure of the British Embassy staff from Berlin in August 1914, the formal dispatches of the military and naval attachés remained unremittingly terse regarding their sources. Fortunately, despite this consistent and infuriating brevity, a few records do survive that allow one to piece together some answers concerning the question of where the attachés got their information. These include memoirs of former attachés, in which the question of sources is occasionally touched upon, sometimes in detail; private letters, which were often less discreet than their formal reports; and, where they exist, attaché diaries. As ever, especially important in this regard is the one consistently detailed and continuous source for the work of the service attaché in this period, the Dumas Diary. From its pages come facts about sources of information that exist nowhere else. By putting all of these records together a picture of how the British service attachés operated and obtained intelligence material can be obtained.

ESPIONAGE

Although many means of acquiring information were open to military and naval attachés, there was one form of intelligence-collection that was definitely out of bounds: espionage. Before the First World War, the British government expressly forbade its service attachés from undertaking covert operations, such as spying,

[4] Sadly, the docket on which Greene recorded this minute has been weeded. Fortunately, it was seen in 1956 by Arthur Marder, who preserved this summary of Greene's opinions. Marder, *FDSF*, i. 148.

[5] Minute by Spicer, 14 Feb. 1910, on Heath, NA 2/10, 7 Feb. 1910, FO 371/901.

theft, and bribery.[6] The reason for this prohibition, which on the face of it runs counter to the image of the attaché, was the fear of the embarrassing situation that would arise if a fully accredited and publicly acknowledged representative of the crown were caught carrying out an improper, underhand, or even illegal act. Although diplomatic immunity would prevent prosecution, the attaché would most likely be declared persona non grata and expelled in humiliating fashion, causing a scandal that would tarnish the reputation of the British government. The desire to prevent this was, naturally enough, most deeply felt in the department that most prized its standing overseas, namely the Foreign Office. The officials there shared the view of Lord Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary from 1902 to 1905, that 'the less we use our military and naval attachés as secret agents the better for all concerned'. Like him, they worried that the attachés would 'tumble into the first trap laid for them'.[7] Accordingly, they regularly warned them against acting as spies. 'It is not . . . the view of the Foreign Office', a circular from 1909 observed, 'that Naval and Military Attachés should be encouraged or allowed to take any action which might compromise them or the Embassy to which they are attached and it is essential that their Ambassadors should have full cognizance of their actions'.[8] The Admiralty and War Office reinforced this message. The Director of Naval Intelligence, for example, informed the naval attaché in Berlin that at all times his movements 'must be above suspicion'.[9] The army expressed the same view. 'We always lay down the rule', explained the head of the European Section of the DMO to the Committee of Imperial Defence, 'that a Military Attaché, on principle, ought not to do spying work of any sort.'[10]

Experience was to show that there were good reasons for maintaining this cautious stance. For one thing, most British attachés quickly came to realize that the German authorities had them carefully watched. The Kaiser even boasted to one attaché: 'I know all your movements.'[11] The surveillance, while not often obtrusive, was not always very subtle either, as the Dumas Diary shows. His first inkling that there were detectives on his trail came in September 1906, when, shortly after a trip to Emden, he received 'a plaintive letter' from the British consul there informing him that the police were making enquiries about his visit and asking after his 'respectability'. 'Have you been doing anything?' the anxious consul wanted to know.[12] While Dumas did not take this especially seriously, three months later, when he was meeting with a visiting American, Admiral Manney, there occurred an incident that focused his mind more fully on the question of his

[6] David French, 'Failure of Intelligence', in Michael Dockrill and David French (eds.), *Strategy and Intelligence: British Policy during the First World War* (London, 1996), 73; T.G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence*, (London, 1984), 212.

[7] Lansdowne to Selborne, 7 June 1902, BL: Lansdowne Papers.

[8] 'Memorandum on the Relations between British Consular Officers and the Admiralty', 19 May 1909, FO 371/673.

[9] Dumas Diary, 5 June 1907.

[10] Minutes of the Fifth Meeting, 4 Feb. 1908, of the Invasion Sub-Committee of the CID, CAB 16/3A.

[11] Heath, NA 16/09, 1 June 1909, Admiralty Library: Ca2053.

[12] Dumas Diary, 19 Sept. 1906.

surveillance: 'Dined at the Bristol . . . Rather a curious episode happened. I drew a little sketch of our modern conning tower for him on the back of a menu and almost directly afterwards it vanished as did two Germans who were sitting at the next table. It doesn't matter, but it was instructive.'[13] Indeed, the lesson could not have been clearer. Not only might any secrets he should communicate be overheard, but, given that the Germans were evidently watching, espionage would have been a decidedly risky proposition.

Surveillance was far from being the only danger to face a British attaché who was foolish enough to contemplate clandestine action. There was also the risk of being caught out in a sting operation. One attaché who faced such a test was Colonel Gleichen. Shortly before setting off to Berlin to take up his appointment he was warned by a German officer not to obtain any 'information by spying, or bribery, or anything of that sort, for the General Staff will be sure to hear of it'. Quite how they would hear about it was not explained, but all was revealed when, on his arrival, he received a mysterious letter from a German subject offering to sell him the plans of various coastal fortifications. Certain it was a 'put up job', designed to determine whether he had understood the warning given to him in London, he emphatically declined the invitation.[14] He was not the only British attaché to face this situation. Three years later it was to be the turn of the newly appointed Dumas. After his arrival an unknown German reserve officer called unexpectedly at his apartment. 'I went and shook hands with him,' Dumas recounted, 'and was disgusted to find that he was a spy with plans of fortresses for sale, so I kicked him out.'[15] Clearly, Lansdowne's dictum about service attachés tumbling 'into the first trap laid for them' did not apply to Gleichen and Dumas, both of whom were savvy enough to decline apparently tempting offers of secret information.

The obvious perils associated with using service attachés to obtain information by clandestine means had two important consequences. At one level, it led to the establishment in 1909 of a Secret Service Bureau, the avowed purpose of which was to ensure that 'our naval and military attachés . . . would . . . be freed from the necessity of dealing with spies'.[16] Even before then, however, it ensured that there was a widespread recognition in the British government that service attachés had to gather intelligence by more legitimate means. How did they do this?

APPLICATION TO THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES

One way of obtaining information—indeed, from the diplomatic point of view, the most correct way—was to apply for it from the German authorities themselves. This was certainly the route that the Germans encouraged the British

[13] Dumas Diary, 29 Nov. 1906.
[14] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories* (London, 1932), 252–3.
[15] Dumas Diary, 11 Dec. 1906.
[16] Phillip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession* (London, 1986), 24.

attachés to take. Thus, the very same German officer who advised Gleichen against spying also told him: 'Whatever military information you want, ask for it from the General Staff. If they can give it to you they will; and if they can't they will tell you they can't.'[17] This was, at one level, good advice and there were, indeed, certain occasions when applying to the German authorities for information was entirely appropriate. Hence, when the British Admiralty wanted to know about the status of post captains in the German Navy[18] or about the duties and relative rank of the Fregatten Kapitän,[19] the naval attaché Heath had no compunction about turning to the German authorities for the information. However, the common denominator to both these requests was that the details desired were of a harmless and trivial nature. For intelligence that was more sensitive, applying to the German authorities had numerous drawbacks.

Foremost amongst these was the obvious point that a British application for information from the Germans could, by definition, not be secret. Rather it would immediately alert the Reich authorities to the specific area or areas on which the British desired elucidation, thus giving them an insight into the extent of Britain's knowledge of the German armed forces. As this was something that the British most decidedly did not want to reveal, it rendered applying for information out of the question in many eventualities.

Another obvious problem was that any requests for information by British attachés would, if granted, be more than likely to lead to reciprocal requests from the German attachés in London. This was something the British authorities were also keen to avoid. As a result, attachés were instructed not to ask for information from the Germans, unless specifically told to do so. Indeed, the standing orders issued by the Admiralty to naval attachés were unequivocal on this point: 'It must be understood that official applications for *confidential* information will probably lead to request for reciprocal information. Unless, therefore, it is definitely stated . . . that official application is to be made, Naval Attachés are to endeavour to obtain the information unofficially.'[20]

Additionally, it was not always clear that applications for data were treated in an open and honest fashion. Indeed, it was suspected by several British attachés that, without actually refusing requests point blank, the German authorities attempted to make it as difficult as possible to gather intelligence in this manner. Their method was, first, to add numerous and time-consuming layers of bureaucracy to the process and, then, to select a suitably obtuse and uncooperative officer to deal with those foreign attachés who persevered regardless. Gleichen described the hurdles:

> Official correspondence with the German General Staff was always a trouble, for although I knew German well, one's letters had to be couched in a stiff official style, dating, I should

[17] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 252.
[18] Heath to Goschen, 3 Dec. 1908, FO 372/111.
[19] Greene to Hardinge, 16 Sept. 1909, FO 371/675.
[20] *NID Notes for Guidance of Naval Attachés*, ADM 1/8204.

think, from Frederick the Great. . . . And one could not just 'drop in' on the General Staff . . . and settle complicated questions by a few minutes' talk. No, personal interviews were discouraged, and if one insisted, one had to make an appointment by letter; and even then it was not very satisfactory, for the officer one interviewed was always on his stiffest and most official behaviour, and one got little out of him.[21]

One of the British naval attachés put the matter more bluntly. Describing the person who processed his applications for information, a frustrated Dumas noted that 'he is a stupid man. So stupid that he is admirably suited for the position he holds in interviewing those like myself who want and try to obtain information.'[22]

Yet, overcoming these hurdles still did not guarantee that the attaché would receive any information. The German authorities could simply deny all knowledge of the subject at issue. This was a tactic that was used on Colonel Russell when he attempted to obtain details about aircraft trials that he had heard were taking place on 19 and 20 October 1910. Informed by the Prussian War Office that they knew of no such trials, Russell went away empty handed. Not surprisingly, he was just a little peeved when a few days later he read a German newspaper report about the now completed trials. Upon returning to the Prussian War Office, the officials there admitted that, contrary to their previous assurances, the trials had indeed taken place and they expressed regret that, not having been informed about them themselves, they had inadvertently given a false impression. A sceptical Russell commented: 'I naturally accepted the General's explanation without further question, though I must admit that I was surprised that the Minister for War and the Director of the Central Department at the War Office should have been in ignorance of a matter of this nature.'[23]

Ultimately, if all else failed, the German authorities could always turn down unwanted requests for data. This was not an irregular occurrence, particularly when application was made for sensitive information, and attachés generally took this in their stride. However, the denial of more commonplace information was often a source of irritation for the attaché who then had to obtain it by less convenient means. Refused the dates on which German battleships had been laid down—something he could and would find out by visiting the shipyards—Dumas vented his frustration in his diary: 'It is really equally petty and annoying, as now I shall have to go and look and the sole result is to cost my country some small sum in cash.'[24]

Finally, even if the German authorities did agree to supply the information requested, it did not automatically follow that the answer given would be honest or accurate. Much to the exasperation of the British, the German authorities often attempted to use official requests for data as a means of providing misleading

[21] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 259–60.
[22] Dumas Diary, 14 Apr. 1906.
[23] Russell, MA 23/10, 21 Oct. 1910, FO 371/907.
[24] Dumas Diary, 25 May 1907.

information or even misinformation to their British counterparts. Sometimes, this came as no surprise to the British attachés, who knew, for instance, when asking about such sensitive matters as weapons under development that they were not likely to get a straight answer. Thus, when Dumas applied to the Reichsmarineamt for details of a new 50 cm torpedo that he had heard they were testing, he was hardly flabbergasted when 'told the usual pleasant lie about it being a model made in wood'.[25] Yet, if this was far from unexpected, less easily explicable was the desire exhibited six months later to mislead the attaché about the much more anodyne matter of the date of publication of the German naval estimates. Yet, as Dumas was to discover, obtaining this routine piece of trivia was not as straightforward as it should have been. On 12 November 1907, he applied formally to the naval authorities. Seven days later, he received an official letter informing him that details of the estimates would not be released for at least another four days. As the details had, in fact, already been given out to the press the day before, the letter was patently and verifiably untrue. Dumas was stunned. 'Truly, the ways of German officials are amazing', he recorded, noting later that staff at the Imperial Navy Office 'are all liars and I don't believe them for a moment'.[26] That being the case, it is hardly surprising that Britain's service attachés were reluctant to apply officially for information and sought other avenues for obtaining intelligence. Broadly speaking, there were three possible sources: human intelligence, visual reconnaissance, and open source intelligence, namely the careful scrutiny of German publications.

HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

Of these, the most important was human intelligence (humint), that is to say, contacts forged with people who were in a position, knowingly or otherwise, to provide information. Accordingly, service attachés went to great lengths to cultivate useful personal relations. While the records are far from complete on this matter, it seems that the types of human intelligence sources that they used can be broken down into seven separate categories.

The first of these was a group of people already employed by the British government, namely the nation's sizeable cohort of consular representatives. The Foreign Office maintained a large network of consular representatives in the Reich's main trading ports, commercial cities, and industrial centres, whence they were expected to glean important economic information. They were also potentially an invaluable source for Britain's service attachés. Moreover, given that in their travels through Germany it was only natural that the attachés should regularly meet with these consular officers, they were a source that the attachés might legitimately hope to tap on a constant basis.

[25] Ibid., 17 June 1907. [26] Ibid., 12 and 19 Nov. 1907.

However, there were problems in using the consuls in this capacity. For one thing, just as the Foreign Office had serious objections to consuls working directly for the Admiralty, so they also had major reservations about them acting as agents for the service attachés. Accordingly, they attempted to limit possible cooperation between the two. A Foreign Office circular from 1909 defined the consular role: 'while endeavouring at all times to render every assistance to the Naval Attaché, [consuls should] be careful to limit [their] activity to what may be regarded as legitimate action, and to do nothing to incur suspicion or to provoke complaint from the local authorities'.[27] Unequivocal though these instructions may have been, they were also evidently unsuccessful, for in April 1912 the Foreign Office was still complaining about undesirable contacts between consuls and attachés and calling on its heads of mission to rein in these unruly officials. '[T]here have been indications', a confidential letter proclaimed, 'that . . . some of the Naval Attachés have continued to set our instructions at defiance, and have urged certain consular officers to enter into private communications with them. . . .' This was unacceptable:

> If any naval or military information comes [the consuls'] way, their business is to report it to their superintending officer, as part of their ordinary duties and not to the Naval or Military Attachés. The mere fact of correspondence passing through the post between Consuls and Naval and Military Attachés excites undesirable suspicion.[28]

Explicit though this was, it does not seem that the situation had been fully resolved before the outbreak of war. Consuls remained a source, albeit a controversial and circumscribed one, for attachés right up to 1914.

Of course, neither the fact of consuls being a source for attachés nor the vigour of the controversy that this provoked proves that consuls were actually effective in this intelligence-providing capacity. Indeed, at least one attaché had serious reservations as to their utility in this role. The attaché in question was Dumas and his uncertainty regarding the value of consuls to him stemmed from the observations he made while undertaking a series of visits to the major German coastal ports during the latter half of 1906. While on his travels he discovered a great deal about the consular service that caused him considerable disquiet.

The first point was the fact that many of them, including several of those resident in major naval ports, were not British but German nationals. Thus, proceeding to Emden, he went 'to call on our Consul, one Dr Conrad Zorn, a German and an editor of the local newspaper and altogether a good fellow, but quite the wrong man to be our Consul in a place of such future importance as this'.[29] Similarly, on visiting Swinemünde, he met the long-serving vice-consul, Edward Rose. 'He is', Dumas recorded, 'like most of our Consuls a German and so useless to me.'[30] Then there was Vice-Consul Heinrich Leo Behnke at Lübeck, who,

[27] 'British Consular Officers Respecting Certain Information on Naval Matters', 25 Oct. 1909, ADM 137/4175.
[28] Crowe to Granville, 24 Apr. 1912, FO 244/803.
[29] Dumas Diary, 8 Sept. 1906.
[30] Ibid., 23 July 1906.

Dumas noted, was doubly useless being both German as well as '85 and past all work'.[31]

Dumas's objection to the employment of German citizens as British consuls was not an irrational prejudice, but a practical concern. Dumas, after all, needed sensitive naval information. On patriotic grounds alone, it was more than doubtful that these German-born gentlemen would be willing to pass on such material to the representative of a foreign government. However, if they did not, and if the naval attaché could not obtain the information by other means, Britain would be seriously disadvantaged. As a result, Dumas felt obliged to point out to the Foreign Office that 'for the possible safety of England, paid [that is British] Vice-Consuls should be appointed to these very important sea-ports'.[32]

In addition, Dumas was also worried about how much he could say to them. In an ideal world, when touring their districts, the naval attaché would have wanted to converse with the consuls about naval matters and local conditions. With British-born consuls this was not a problem. However, when the consul was a German national, the possibility of having an open discussion was more limited. An incident from 1907 illustrates Dumas's problem:

> Went to Swinemünde by steamer passing up the river to the town to see Rose, who was very anxious that I should stay to lunch. I repulsed him and to my great annoyance he insisted on walking back with me to the pier and so taking me far from the harbour's mouth, which I wished to see and the worst of it was that I could hardly explain to a German that I wished to go by the other way.[33]

However, if Dumas was worried that many of the consuls were German, he became even more anxious when he met the few British-born consuls stationed in Germany. While their loyalty might not be in doubt, their competence and suitability for the work, so far as Dumas was concerned, were seriously questionable. His first inkling of this came when he travelled to Danzig to meet Colonel Arthur Brookfield, who had been the consul there for three years. It was to be an enlightening experience, providing unexpected insights into the bizarre, unorthodox, and eccentric manner in which some British consulates functioned.

The revelations started early. Having written in advance to warn Brookfield of his impending visit, Dumas had received a letter telling him that there would be 'a sort of ADC' to meet him at the railway station upon his arrival. Dumas's diary records what happened next:

> The usual uncomfortable night in the train and arrived at Danzig at 6:30. Here I was looking about for the 'sort of an ADC' when a little long legged girl of about 12 came up to me and said 'Are you Capt. Dumas? I am Baby Brookfield.' This, it appeared was the ADC and this wonderful and capable child secured my luggage, got me a cab and in five minutes we were driving off together the very best of friends. . . .[34]

[31] Ibid., 4 Aug. 1906. [32] Dumas, NA 61/06, 25 Nov. 1906, FO 371/80.
[33] Dumas Diary, 8 July 1907. [34] Ibid., 6 July 1906.

Over the next four days, while Camelia 'Baby' Brookfield repeatedly demonstrated her centrality to the running of the consulate, Colonel Brookfield proved that he was no less unusual, but a good deal less effectual than his 'sort of an ADC'. A former officer in the Hussars and then the Member of Parliament for East Sussex for eighteen years, he had lost his fortune just after the turn of the century. By his own admission, his appointment to the consular service was the government's way of ensuring that this bluff if not especially notable member of the establishment, who had served with distinction in the Boer War, should avoid destitution. Unfortunately, none of this experience, wide-ranging though it might have been, necessarily suited him for the work of a consul and, after an amusing stay with the Brookfield family—'I am really sorry to leave these people,' Dumas confided—the naval attaché reluctantly came to three conclusions. First, that 'Brookfield is useless as a consul'; second, that 'any news he sends of real interest emanates from his 12 year old daughter'; and, third, that he did not think he could find it in his heart to say so officially.[35]

He would, however, be less charitable to Ralph Bernal, the consul at Stettin. Like Brookfield, Bernal had an interesting past. In the 1890s, as a career consul, he had been posted to the vital southern African port of Lourenço Marques. Unfortunately, he had been a total failure there and, as a result, when it became evident that Anglo-Boer relations were deteriorating and that his consular district would soon become an important hot spot in the impending conflagration, he was speedily shifted. Eventually, he was sent to Stettin, where his knowledge of German, if nothing else, was considered advantageous. Yet, to the general amazement of the Foreign Office, where his 'incapacity' was renowned and where it was once noted of one of his reports that 'a more irrational letter has rarely been written by a consul',[36] he seemed to flourish in his new posting. As with Brookfield, Dumas was to discover that Bernal's apparent success was not all it seemed:

> I wrote a few days ago to Bernal, our consul at Stettin, asking him to arrange for me to see over the Vulkan yard. Today I heard from Mrs Bernal that her husband is away but that she has made all arrangements. . . . It is often said that Bernal was sent to Stettin in disgrace, but has proved an unexpected success. It is pretty clear to me that it is his wife who is a success.[37]

Meeting Bernal was to confirm this impression. Unlike his wife, who the attaché described as a 'fat, cheery, clever and capable woman', Bernal seemed a 'soured, disappointed man, full of grievances'. Although he acknowledged that, as consul in Danzig, Bernal had 'a tiresome billet among the most anti-English of all the German races', Dumas nevertheless contrasted the consul's unwillingness to rise above this and make useful social contacts with his wife's abundant amiability and 'troops of friends'.[38] In fact, so disappointed was Dumas in Bernal that he actually

[35] Dumas Diary, 6 and 10 July 1906.
[36] Minute of 16 July 1895 relating to Bernal's reports 8 and 9 of 11 and 14 June 1895, FO 63/1297.
[37] Dumas Diary, 14 July 1906.
[38] Ibid., 6 July 1907.

recommended to the Foreign Office that they should relieve the consul of his post.[39]

Of course, not all of the consuls that Dumas initially dismissed as valueless turned out to be quite as inept as his earliest impressions might have led him to believe. On their first meeting, for example, Dumas regarded Sir William Ward, the consul-general in Hamburg, as 'a dear old man of the safe and trusted type who knew nothing and seemed . . . to care less about his duties as a forewarner of the British Government as regards military preparations in his district'. As he complained: 'I brought him a list of 28 questions and could get no answers at all.'[40] However, as Dumas was to discover this was not because Sir William was indifferent, but rather because he was deliberate. On their next meeting, the long-serving consul-general produced a series of considered responses to the attaché's earlier questions. An 'astonished' Dumas realized a re-evaluation of Ward was evidently necessary.[41]

In addition, it must be acknowledged that there were also consular officials who impressed from the very start. One of these was Cecil Hertslet, the consul-general in Antwerp, a city that, although outside of Germany, was of considerable interest to the naval attaché in Berlin because of its strategically significant location at the mouth of the Rhine. After a long conversation with Hertslet, Dumas could hardly contain his enthusiasm: 'Really delighted to find a consul general for once a real observer of what occurs in his district.'[42] Sir Francis Oppenheimer, the consul-general in Frankfurt, who was later raised to the rank of commercial attaché in recognition of his extraordinary ability, created similarly positive impressions from the very outset.

As a source of human intelligence, consular officials were clearly a mixed bag: some were held in high regard; others were not. In any event, it is apparent from the surviving records that service attachés regularly passed on information provided to them by consuls. Hence, Dumas, despite some severe criticisms of the service, forwarded information from the consul in Frederica direct to the Admiralty[43] and even embodied a letter from the German-born consul in Kiel in one of his reports.[44] His successors followed suit. Heath, for example, persuaded Oppenheimer to compile a detailed summary of the political slant and general reliability of the major German newspapers, sending it straight to the Director of Naval Intelligence.[45] In a similar vein, Russell and Watson used the very same consul, who had been having some frank conversations with a German officer of his acquaintance, as a source on German airships.[46] Indeed, it seems evident from one surviving letter from 1913 that such was Watson's faith in Oppenheimer that

[39] Ibid., 16 Nov. 1907. [40] Ibid., 27 Mar. 1906.
[41] Ibid., 4 Aug. 1906. [42] Ibid., 4 June 1908.
[43] Information from the Admiralty Digest about Cap D51, 29 June 1907. ADM 12/1442, Cut 52. The original has been weeded. [44] Dumas, NA 59/06, 13 Nov. 1906, FO 371/80.
[45] Heath, NARS 117/09, 23 Nov. 1909, ADM 137/3868.
[46] Watson and Russell, NA46/12, MA 20/12, 20 May 1912, AIR 1/2311/221/3.

he regularly handed Admiralty enquiries straight to him.[47] He likewise made good use of Dr Francis Koenig, the consul-general in Düsseldorf, in whose district the main factories of the armaments firm of Ehrhardts were located.[48] Clearly, despite vocal Foreign Office objections and even, in the case of Dumas, their own personal reservations, consular officials were a source that the attachés simply could not afford to ignore.

The second source of humint was the newspapermen of the Berlin press corps. Journalists, like service attachés, were, by trade, interested in acquiring information and often had highly developed means for doing so. Sometimes they were willing to share their knowledge with the British military and naval attachés either for patriotic reasons or, more often than not, on a quid pro quo basis. As a result, close contacts between the attachés and certain journalists did, at times, develop. Sadly, the documentary evidence on this relationship is not all it might be. Snippets of information can be found here and there—revealing, for instance, that Watson occasionally received information from the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Mail*[49]—but as a rule these disclose only tantalizing glimpses of what went on. Fortunately, there is one source that covers attaché–reporter contacts in detail over an extended period, namely the Dumas Diary. Recorded among its pages are accounts of meetings between the attaché and several important media figures. These included: Elmer Roberts, Berlin correspondent of the *Navy*; John St Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*; Austin Harrison, the former Reuter's agent in Berlin, who had become the drama critic of the *Observer*—a remit that did not prevent him writing either about politics or the navy—and Frederic William Wile, the highly paid and sensationalist correspondent of the *Daily Mail*. In these meetings, opinions were always aired and information was occasionally exchanged. However, these reporters were but occasional sources. By far the most important of Dumas's journalistic contacts, because they were regular and sustained over a long period, were George Saunders of *The Times* and John Laidlay Bashford, a former correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* turned freelance reporter, who contributed articles to a wide range of newspapers and periodicals. Both received stories from Dumas and, in return, supplied material to him.

The extent of the exchange that existed between Dumas and Saunders was not negligible. Dumas, for instance, was more than happy to hand over confidential papers to the journalist. Thus, in February 1908, Dumas recorded that 'Saunders [came] to talk over the meaning of the fleet bill and the feeling in Holland and Denmark'. In order 'to save trouble, I eventually handed him my report on the Dutch Navy for the year'.[50] Needless to say, this was not done out of charity. In return, Dumas expected hard information, something which he received

[47] Oppenheimer to Goschen, 25 Sept. 1913, FO 244/817.

[48] See Watson, NA 46/11, 28 Dec. 1911, enclosed in which is Francis Koenig's report on Ehrhardts of 18 Nov. 1911, FO 371/1370.

[49] Watson, NA 43/10, 4 Nov. 1910, FO 371/901.

[50] Dumas Diary, 6 Feb. 1908.

on a regular basis. 'Saunders of *The Times* came to see me', Dumas noted on 14 July 1906,

> and tells me that the visit of the German torpedo boats to Crefeld is indefinitely postponed. This can only mean that Holland has refused permission for them to pass through the Rhine and as such, in showing a stiffening of the relations between the two countries, is of first rate importance. . . . I see I must write formal letters.[51]

And he did. Within two days this information had been embodied wholesale in Naval Attaché Report 34/06.[52]

An equivalent level of cooperation existed between Dumas and Bashford. Once again Dumas willingly supplied Bashford with material for his articles—for instance, a full copy of his dispatch on the German naval estimates of 1907[53]—expecting in return hard intelligence. Bashford obliged. He informed Dumas of trials to increase the power of German 11-inch guns, of plans to increase the calibre of German naval guns, and provided him with details as to whether or not German battleships had been laid down and commenced.[54] As with the news provided by Saunders, this information was incorporated by Dumas in his reports.[55]

In addition, there was another level to the relationship between Dumas and Bashford. At times, the former employed the latter to act as his eyes at venues that were closed to him. For instance, when Dumas heard that the American naval attaché, Lieutenant-Commander Reginald Belknap, had been refused permission to attend the launch of the battleship *Nassau*, from which he deduced that he would face a similar refusal, he asked Bashford to apply and go in his place.[56] Consequently, although Dumas was not at the launch, he received a first-hand report on the proceedings.

Needless to say, there were problems associated with using journalists as an intelligence source. One of these was bias. Many of the British journalists sent to Berlin held very decided views on Anglo-German relations; there was always a danger that these preconceptions would colour any information they obtained, as well as slanting their presentation of it to the British service attachés. George Saunders, for example, was notorious for being bitterly hostile to the regime of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Partial in the other direction was Bashford. Nicknamed 'beastly' by the germanophobes in Fleet Street, many of whom held him to be little better than a traitor, Bashford was a personal friend of Admiral Tirpitz and was even awarded a decoration, the Order of the Red Eagle Fourth Class, by the Reich authorities. Not surprisingly, under these circumstances, the under secretary at the Foreign Office considered him 'a creature of the German Gov[ernmen]t'.[57]

[51] Ibid., 14 July 1906.
[52] Dumas, NA 34/06, 16 July 1906, FO 371/78.
[53] Dumas lent Bashford a copy of NA1/07 of 10 Jan. 1907. Dumas Diary, 10 Jan. 1907.
[54] Ibid., 10 May 1906, 30 June 1906, and 14 June 1907.
[55] See e.g. Dumas, NA 20/06, 10 May 1906. FO 371/77, which embodies Bashford's information of the same date.
[56] Dumas Diary, 5 Mar. 1908.
[57] Minute by Hardinge on Dumas, NA 28/07, 14 June 1907, FO 371/261.

Dumas was aware of the personal predispositions of both of his main journalistic sources. Referring in private to Saunders, he complained about 'the jaundiced eyes with which he regards everything that is German' and speculated that, as a result, 'he must really do a great deal of harm here'.[58] Similarly, when asked whether Bashford should be allowed to receive a German decoration (as a British subject, he required the King's permission), he opined: 'Personally, I think Bashford is an actual agent of the German Government and so thoroughly entitled to an order but one can hardly put that forward as a reason for an Englishman receiving one . . .'.[59] Obviously, this knowledge of the two journalists' partialities acted as an important contextual element in evaluating the information they supplied.

Another potential problem concerned the quality of the information they provided. Basically, much of the material they unearthed depended upon their own powers of observation. There were many occasions on which Dumas wondered just how extensive these powers were. Bashford, for example, of whom Dumas once wrote, after a particularly frustrating meeting, 'a thicker-headed man never lived',[60] regularly disappointed the naval attaché in this respect. For instance, having paid for the journalist to attend the launch of one of Germany's dreadnoughts, Dumas bemoaned the fact that Bashford 'managed to see marvellously little of the *Nassau* and really is the stupidest of men, but he had picked up a few facts that were worth knowing'.[61]

Paramount, however, was the issue of reliability. Was the information that the journalists supplied actually right? Most of the time Dumas did not see reason to question it, but there were exceptions. 'Bashford in to see me,' he recounted on 26 October 1906, 'with some details regarding the new German battleships, but I doubt they are correct.' Dumas's reason for disbelieving him was that Bashford's details clashed with the information the attaché had received when touring the Krupp Works at Essen the month before.[62]

Six months later there would be a more serious case that would do much more to reveal the limits of reliance on journalistic enterprise. On 18 May 1907, Bashford was asked by the German Admiralty to 'write an article, in reply to one in the *North American Review*, pointing out that the aims of Germany were not offensive or provocative in so far as the construction of their fleet went'. When he informed Dumas of this, the latter advised him 'that any such article would be useless unless he was first provided with some official facts among which should be the actual present state of their building programme'.[63] Bashford took up this suggestion and a month later passed on to Dumas the 'official facts' that he had been given:

I had a long talk with Admiral Tirpitz and . . . asked him about the date of the laying down of the Battleships of last year's programme. He told me he would tell Scheer (his Naval

[58] Dumas Diary, 15 Mar. 1906. [59] Ibid., 8 Jan. 1908. [60] Ibid., 22 Oct. 1907.
[61] Ibid., 8 Mar. 1908. [62] Ibid., 26 Oct. 1906.
[63] Dumas, NA 28/07, 14 June 1907, FO 371/261.

Secretary) to give me precise information. He . . . has since written to me to the following effect.

'They have—unfortunately—not yet been laid down . . . either in Wilhelmshaven, in the Imperial Yard or at the Weser Yard in Bremen. . . .'[64]

Dumas was ecstatic. 'I would submit', he opined, 'that the above is as nearly official information on the subject as could be desired.' However, within two days this initial enthusiasm had worn off. By that time, Bashford had returned to tell Dumas that he feared that he had been deliberately misinformed by the German authorities. A trip by the attaché round the German shipyards the following week, during which he was able to appraise for himself the state of German shipbuilding, confirmed this absolutely. As he reported matter-of-factly in his official dispatch, 'the evidence of my own eyes [makes] it plain that the information given to Mr Bashford, as reported in my 28/07 was untrue'.[65] In his diary he recorded the matter more pointedly:

It now appears that the official statement given to Bashford re the building programme and signed by Scheer, a post captain and official secretary to Tirpitz, is a lie. I have sympathy with that sort of thing if it won't be discovered and if it is necessary, but as here it is a case where it wasn't necessary and must be found out, what can one think[?][66]

The obvious answer was that it was always necessary to recognize that official information given to journalists was no more apt to be reliable than that given to attachés and needed to be treated with equal circumspection. It was an important lesson. Nevertheless, it is also evident that journalists remained an important source of human intelligence for the attachés, albeit one that needed to be handled carefully and treated with appropriate scepticism.

The members of the British community in Germany constituted a third wellspring of intelligence. Owing to the considerable business, professional, and personal contacts that existed between the two nations, there were several thousand British subjects permanently resident in Germany. Many of these, while loving their adopted land, were, none the less, desirous of helping their mother country in any way that they could, including providing information to the British service attachés. Records on these people—where the records exist at all—are, at best, scanty. Hence, while it is clear from Dumas's diary that he made contact with a number of British language instructors in the hope that they could supply him with material, it is not always apparent if they ever actually did so. Two examples illustrate this. In June 1906, Dumas encountered 'a semi-disreputable looking Englishman who it appears teaches English to the officers here. He doesn't play [golf] badly which was a good excuse for taking him on and he may prove useful in certain eventualities.'[67] In a similar vein, an entry for June 1907 records: 'I travelled with an Englishman named Mr Mullen who is learning German in

[64] Bashford to Dumas, 8 June 1907, ibid.
[65] Dumas, NA 34/07, 29 June 1907, FO 371/361.
[66] Dumas Diary, 16 June 1907.
[67] Ibid., 23 June 1906.

Bremen and supporting himself at the same time by giving lessons in English. He promised to write to me if he heard anything interesting, which as he gives lessons to men employed in the Weser Yard seems likely.'[68] Unfortunately, if either of these contacts ever lived up to their initial promise and provided useful data, it is not evident from the diary. However, there are two instances where sufficient details survive in the diary and elsewhere for a more extensive evaluation of the role of British residents in Germany to be made.

The first of these was a Mrs Gray, 'an old Englishwoman' of limited means, who was engaged first by Dumas and then Heath to delve through the German newspapers and translate any interesting articles. Dumas thought highly of her. She was, he wrote, 'clever and intelligent and knows an amazing amount about everything German, including the navy'.[69] Moreover, as a resident of fifteen years in Germany, who had German friends and moved effortlessly in German social circles, she was also able to provide information about what was being said in town. While much of this was just gossip, she was also able to keep the attaché informed about the mood in bourgeois society in Berlin, something that Dumas, an officer and a diplomat, who moved in more rarefied circles, could not easily discern himself. Her views on the strong current of anglophobia that existed there certainly made for stark reading:

> War with England is a perfect craze here in all ranks and classes—'England must be made small', 'England must be ours', 'Our Emperor is the rightful heir to the throne', 'When we have our own fleet of balloons she will no longer be an island', &c., &c. can be heard every day. . . . Anyway believe me the hatred is increasing. . . .[70]

Dumas, who noted that 'all of this is totally opposed to the voice of the press or the knowledge of diplomacy',[71] was sufficiently impressed to ensure that the letter was forwarded to the Foreign Office.

Frank Dunsby was another member of the British community in Germany who supplied information to the attachés. A resident of the coastal town of Neufahrwasser, where he ran the Seaman's Institute, a charity for sailors, Dumas described him upon first meeting as 'one of those quiet and unadvertising heroes who lives a noble life and does the work of 20 and goes to the grave unheard of'. This would probably have been the only mention he ever received were it not for one important fact. As the attaché's diary records, Dunsby 'gave me a good deal of valuable information'.[72] Just what that information might have been, Dumas sadly neglects to mention. Fortunately, a few surviving oddments from the Danzig consulate records provide an insight into this matter, as well as into Dunsby's role in Heath's (but not, alas, Dumas's) intelligence system. At one level, the details he

[68] Dumas Diary, 28 June 1907.

[69] Dumas to Thursfield, 24 Jan. 1907, NIA: TT/NAVAL/JRT/2/67.

[70] Mrs Gray to Dumas enclosed in Dumas to de Salis, 1 July 1907, FO 371/257. In the letter to de Salis, Dumas only describes the letter as coming from 'an observant friend of mine', but it is clear from his diary that this is Mrs Gray. Dumas Diary, 2 July 1907.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Dumas Diary, 8 July 1906.

sent were fairly basic, consisting of news of which ships were in port and which had left, whether or not they were being refitted, as well as some details of the work in hand.[73] However, he was also asked to procure more salient intelligence, as one of his letters to Colonel Brookfield demonstrates: 'will you be good enough', he requested,

> to forward my answer to yours also to Capt. Heath because he wrote to me on the same *subject*?
>
> Q. I. *U3* is the latest Submarine I have seen pass here. But when some months ago, I went through the Kaiserliche Werft [Imperial Dockyard], I understand that they were building *four* in four boarded off squares!
>
> In reference to Question II, the Submarine Dock does not yet appear finished. There are *two entrances* and over each have been erected *corrugated iron* covered sheds and those would lead one to think the Submarines are meant to be lifted and not remain in docks (water) with the danger of being frozen in.
>
> I will endeavour to ascertain the facts.[74]

Clearly, Dunsby was being used as an agent, in which capacity he was providing some useful information.

The usual pitfalls applied in using British residents in Germany. Once again, one of these was bias. There was always a good chance that a Briton living in Germany was likely to be either highly acclimatized and, hence, overly prone to see things from the German point of view or overly conscious of his or her own nationality and, thus, acutely sensitive to any signs of hostility. There are some reasons to believe that the latter scenario applied to both Mrs Gray and Mr Dunsby. The former, for example, who, as we have seen, wrote to Dumas about the extremity of German anglophobia, acknowledged in her letter that she did so, in part at least, because 'one feels something must be done to snub these maniacs'.[75] The sentiment was clear. It did not, of course, mean that Mrs Gray was wrong in what she reported, but it was certainly a factor to be considered when evaluating the reliability of her evidence.

A similar point could be made in respect of Frank Dunsby. Colonel Brookfield, who regarded Dunsby as 'a transparently honest, amiable and well-meaning man' was nevertheless constrained to agree that he was 'of a rather aggressively patriotic temperament'.[76] Dumas thought likewise. Dunsby, he noted, was 'full of belief in the devilish designs of the Germans to encompass the ruin of England'. While this made him 'a very useful person' because it encouraged him to supply information, Dumas did wonder how 'he reconciles it with his pleasant and clever little German wife and the unceasing evidence of hospitality he receives from Germans'.[77] Although he had no answer to this, he was certainly sceptical enough

[73] Dunsby to Brookfield, 1 July 1908 and 2 Jan. 1909, FO 634/10.
[74] Dunsby to Brookfield, 19 Jan. 1910. Ibid.
[75] Mrs Gray to Dumas enclosed in Dumas to de Salis, 1 July 1907, FO 371/257.
[76] Minute by Brookfield, 16 June 1910, FO 634/14.
[77] Dumas Diary, 17 July 1907.

of Dunsby's judgement to dismiss a letter from him characterizing the Germans as 'all ready' as simply 'alarmist'.[78] Nevertheless, if his strategic opinions were not to be taken seriously, that did not necessarily invalidate the technical data he supplied and Dunsby continued to supply such material until the autumn of 1910.[79]

However, Dunsby's usefulness would soon come to an end. In June 1910, probably on the sole grounds of his nationality, he was denied access to the launch of the new dreadnought the *Oldenburg* at Schichau's Yard in Danzig. Foolishly, he made something of a fuss about this.[80] Whether or not this drew attention to him and led the authorities to look into his activities is unclear, but, in June 1912, he became subject to an espionage enquiry. Brookfield's replacement as consul, Allan Maclean, who evidently knew nothing about Dunsby's former activities, was staggered:

> I cannot understand how it happens that Mr Dunsby has fallen under suspicion after a residence of fifteen years during which period his life has been open and devoid of any mystery. He is a zealot for his work for our seamen and their institute. . . . His wife is German and his children attend local schools. He is well known to many Germans and his character and attainments preclude the possibility of his conveying useful or even intelligent information concerning any matter outside his own work; he is in my opinion the last person in the world to whom anyone would address a question that could not be published.[81]

These, of course, were, in one sense, the very attributes that made Dunsby ideal for the role of intelligence-gatherer—he was implausible in the part and, thus, unlikely to be detected. They also probably explain why, despite the investigation, he was not prosecuted.[82] At the same time, if the consul was right about Dunsby's attainments, they also highlight the pitfalls of using British residents in Germany as intelligence sources. Circumstances might put people in the right place, but their outlook, partiality, and abilities might not be so appropriate.

The military and naval attachés of the other powers provided a fourth source of human intelligence for the British service attachés. That the various foreign officers sent to serve in a particular capital should work together was far from surprising. After all, as they were all in the same boat and facing the same obstacles, there was much to be gained by acting together. Nor was it uncommon that they should do so. As the British Admiralty observed of the foreign attachés stationed in London, as a general rule they behaved as a community, making 'common property of their information'.[83] A similar situation prevailed in the German capital, where the various attachés regularly forged close bonds, often acted in concert to

[78] Dumas Diary, 14 Aug. 1907.

[79] According to Watson, the autumn of 1910 was the last occasion on which Dunsby was asked for information. Granville to Nicolson, 12 July 1912, FO 800/357.

[80] Dunsby to Carlson, 14 June 1910, FO 634/15.

[81] Maclean to Goschen, 6 July 1912, ibid.

[82] Goschen to Grey, 25 Nov. 1912, FO 369/475.

[83] Thomas to the Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, 23 May 1910, FO 244/746.

gain information, and regularly pooled the results of their endeavours—what one British naval attaché called 'the mutual scratching of backs system'.[84] Hence, we find that, during the two and a half years in which their appointments overlapped, Russell, the British military attaché, and Colonel Maurice Pellé, his French counterpart, were regular collaborators in the intelligence business. Russell handed over to Pellé various snippets of information, including materials sent to him by the Director of Military Operations, General Sir Henry Wilson,[85] and, in return Pellé provided Russell with French intelligence on Germany, such as details of the detraining stations built and building on the Reich's western and eastern frontiers.[86] Russell's report on the 'Expenditure in Germany on Military Motor Transport' was also written, as he acknowledged in his covering letter, with 'the assistance of my French colleague, Colonel Pellé'.[87] Similarly, Gleichen was more than happy to acknowledge the role played by his own 'cher collègues' in gathering intelligence. Although he had good relations with several of them, particularly important to him was the Japanese military attaché, Colonel Kikutaro Oi. As he recalled: 'If, however, I wanted information about certain things, such as mobilisation and classes, which were not procurable from the General Staff, he would generally tell me what I wanted to know.'[88] Interestingly, Gleichen's experience was in marked contrast to that of Russell, who recorded in his memoirs how difficult he found his 'Japanese colleagues'. As he put it: 'They used to pump one slily [*sic*] and persistently for information, but would never vouchsafe any intelligence whatever in return.'[89] As none of the other British military attachés have left a record of their feelings on this score, it is not clear whether it is Gleichen or Russell whose experience was unusual.

An equivalent level of cooperation to that evident between Russell and Pellé and Gleichen and Oi existed between the various British naval attachés and many of their foreign confrères. Dumas, for instance, was on cordial terms with his Japanese, French, and Russian counterparts, all three of whom exchanged information with him. It was through Rear-Admiral Yashiro, the Japanese naval attaché, that he learnt one day that 'Germany's average in battle practice in 1907 was 37% of hits'.[90] In a comparable fashion, Admiral de Jonquieres, his French confrère, provided him with, amongst other things, information about German experiments with anti-rolling tanks.[91] Likewise, Prince Dolgorouki, the loquacious Russian naval attaché, made himself invaluable on more than one occasion

[84] Dumas Diary, 27 Aug. 1907.

[85] Cambon to Poincaré, 9 Feb. 1912. *DDF*, 3rd Series, ii. 13; Wilson to Russell, 1 Mar. 1911, WO 106/59.

[86] The report on 'Detraining Stations on the Western Frontier of Germany', Russell, MA 15/12, 1 June 1911, no longer survives. However, its provenance as based on a French General Staff document provided to Russell by Colonel Pellé is made clear in the report on 'Detraining Stations on the Eastern Frontier of Germany', which has a similar provenance. Russell, MA 39/12, 22 Nov. 1912, FO 371/1379.

[87] Russell, MA 9/11, 28 Apr. 1911, FO 371/1125.

[88] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 257–9.

[89] Russell manuscript, p. 137.

[90] Dumas Diary, 10 Apr. 1908.

[91] Dumas, NA 9/07, 13 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259.

by sharing choice pieces of news. Particularly helpful was the time he came round to exchange notes over the defences of Pillau. As Dumas pithily noted, Dolgorouki 'gave me his plan of the defences of Pillau, which differs from ours in as much as it shows a great deal more'.[92] He also provided Dumas with a long account of the German fleet manœuvres at Swinemünde held on the occasion of the visit of the Tsar to Germany.[93] Finally, he offered up information about the submarines that were being built for Russia in the Germania Yard—important, because Germany's submarines, about which little was known, were built to a similar design.[94]

However, Dumas's most important professional relationship was with his American colleague, the US naval attaché, Lieutenant-Commander William L. Howard. Howard, who considered that he was 'on confidential terms with the British Naval Attaché', regarded Dumas as a friend.[95] Dumas felt likewise, writing on one occasion: 'I like Howard exceedingly; he is a plain, honest, straightforward sort of old sea dog'.[96] As a result, they were in regular contact, both by mail and in person, and exchanged a great deal of information. Thus, in July 1907, following an inspection of the Vulkan shipyard at Stettin, Howard immediately went to see Dumas in order to share with his British colleague his discoveries about German torpedo boats and the laying down of the *Ersatz Württemberg* (the future SMS *Rheinland*).[97] Howard also briefed Dumas after touring the Germania Yard at Kiel in late March and the Weser Yard in Wilhelmshaven at the end of July.[98] Dumas, naturally, reciprocated. Having gone over the Krupp Works at Essen in August, he promptly dispatched a letter to Howard outlining what he had seen and, more significantly, what he had been prevented from seeing—signs that Krupp were manufacturing something that 'looks very much like 12 inch guns!'[99] He also gave Howard access to his secret papers. When, in December 1907, Howard was in need of material for his final dispatch on the organization of the German navy, he went to Dumas, who lent him a copy of his annual report on the German navy for 1906.[100] Howard's shortened, but otherwise near verbatim copy, delivered under his own name to the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, DC, in March 1908, can still be found in the National Archives.[101]

[92] Dumas Diary, 25 Mar. and 10 Apr. 1907.
[93] Dumas, NA 66/07, 6 Dec. 1907, FO 371/263.
[94] Dumas, NA 9/07, 13 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259.
[95] Howard to Rodgers, 26 Apr. and 14 Sept. 1907. NARA: RG45, M625, roll 4.
[96] Dumas Diary, 13 Feb. 1906. [97] Dumas, NA 40/07, 24 July 1907, FO 371/261.
[98] Dumas NA 11/07, 20 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259; Dumas Diary, 27 July 1907.
[99] Dumas to Howard, 10 Aug. 1907. NARA: RG45, M625, roll 4.
[100] Dumas Diary, 26 Dec. 1907.
[101] Dumas's annual report for 1906 was finished in Dec. 1906 and printed by the Admiralty as 'The Imperial German Navy (Report by the British Naval Attaché at Berlin.)' in Jan. 1907. Because Lascelles did not complete his annual report for Germany until late May 1907, Dumas's report did not reach the Foreign Office until five months after it had been written. The Admiralty print can be found in the Fisher papers, FISR 8/21/4802. Dumas's typescript is in FO 244/683. The finished annual report for Germany is in FO 371/260. See, also, Lieutenant-Commander W. L. Howard, 'The German Navy', Mar. 1908, NARA: RG38, ONI Reports, U-1-e, 08/153.

Watson also forged close relations with the other foreign attachés in Berlin. As with Dumas, he naturally gravitated to the attachés of Britain's friends and allies. Hence, the records reveal that in 1911 Watson had discussions with his Japanese counterpart concerning the prospect of an increase in the German Fleet Law.[102] Likewise, in 1912, he obtained information from his French colleague, Admiral Faramond, about the armour of the new *Kaiser* class battleships.[103] In addition to such conventional contacts, Watson was also able to cultivate a new intelligence furrow, by gaining the confidence of the Chilean naval attaché in Berlin, Commander Lautaro Rosas, who had been sent to Europe in connection with his government's desire to find a supplier for two dreadnoughts. This would prove a fruitful relationship. On 24 May 1911, Watson submitted the first of several 'Secret' letters that he would compose during his tenure as naval attaché. The purpose of this dispatch was to paint a graphic, no-holds-barred picture of the depth of the animus of Admiral Tirpitz towards Great Britain. While many incidents and events were amassed in support of this thesis, at its very heart was a detailed account of an interview given by Tirpitz to Rosas, in which Tirpitz strongly deprecated Chile's friendship with Britain. Needless to say, this account was given to Watson, in secret, by his Chilean counterpart.[104] In another instance, in April 1912, he supplied him with another useful intelligence gem, this time a report concerning tactical exercises carried out by the German Fleet. The latter was in Watson's words 'an extremely valuable contribution to such knowledge as is at present available', for 'information on the German Fleet at work at sea is all too scanty'. Little wonder then that in forwarding it Watson specifically drew the attention of the Admiralty to 'the valuable help Commander Rosas has given me here for the past 15 months'.[105]

Of course, for all the information that the British service attachés received from their colleagues, there were limitations to the intelligence potential of this source. For one thing, the German authorities, whose own attachés benefited from similar arrangements, knew that the service attachés in Berlin tended to act together. They were particularly conscious of the pooling of information between the British and American naval attachés, something they regarded as a real threat. Dumas recalled an occasion when the Kaiser actually alluded to this: 'I was going upstairs with Howard when the Emperor came up behind us on which he stopped, smiled and shook hands and said "Oh, two very dangerous officers to find together. Now what are you discussing: the vexed question of 12″ or 13.5″ guns for the German ships?" '[106] Given the realization that a considerable exchange of information was taking place, it was inevitable that the Germans

[102] Watson, NA 26/11, 27 Sept. 1911, FO 244/770.

[103] 'Remarks by Captain H. D. R. Watson on the Report of Commander L. Rosas, Chilian Naval Attaché in Berlin on the German Fleet Manoeuvres of September 4th 1911', 19 Apr. 1912, ADM 137/3867.

[104] Watson, Germany Secret, 24 May 1911, FO 371/1123.

[105] Watson, NA 30/12, 19 Apr. 1912, ADM 137/3867. While Watson's report has survived, Watson sent the Chilean attaché's submission direct to the Admiralty, where it was eventually weeded.

[106] Dumas Diary, 8 Nov. 1907.

would seek to limit the practice. Successive American naval attachés remarked on the manner in which their close relationship with their British colleagues at times resulted in their being stonewalled by the Reichsmarineamt. Lieutenant-Commander Howard pointed to an occasion when he asked Admiral Tirpitz, 'when the Germans were going to publish details of their new battleships pointing out that America had already done so in respect of hers'. As he noted, Tirpitz replied: 'Yes, that's all very well but if I tell you, you will go straight round and tell the British Naval Attaché and I won't let him know.'[107] In a similar vein, a jocular Lieutenant-Commander Belknap told Dumas on the eve of the latter's departure from Berlin that he was glad that the British attaché was going. The reason, he said, was that the German authorities will 'never tell us anything until you do for they always say, "if we tell you anything you'll tell Dumas." '[108] Though said in jest, its description of the basic condition of things was nevertheless an accurate one.

Another salient feature underlying the mutual exchange of information among attachés was that it depended upon a sense of community among them. This was a potential weakness in that a change in the composition of the group could easily upset this profitable bonhomie. It was, thus, with some trepidation that Watson reported in 1911 that the number of naval attachés stationed in Berlin was increasing. In addition to the four countries that had maintained posts there for some time, namely Britain, France, Russia, and Japan, there were now resident naval attachés from Brazil, Chile, and Turkey. Furthermore, it was known that Austria was also about to appoint an officer to Berlin. 'The feeling of the Naval Attachés in Berlin prior to the appointment of these new Attachés,' Watson wrote, '. . . is that the new Attachés . . . will form somewhat of a German wedge in the Naval Attaché coterie, and make it difficult to continue the friendly exchange of ideas on German Naval development previously existing.'[109] Watson was being overly pessimistic. After all, as we have seen, he directly benefited from the Chilean naval attaché's arrival. It is also the case that his successor, Captain Henderson, was discussing German submarines with his American and French colleagues right up till July 1914, apparently unhindered by the Austrian, Brazilian, and Turkish presence.[110] On the other hand, there is no doubt that the interests of the attachés of Germany's friends and allies were quite distinct from those of her potential rivals and that the presence of a corpus of the former could alter the ethos in Berlin. As Watson reported in September 1913, following the arrival of yet another new naval attaché, in this case one from Italy:

> From my experience in Berlin, though most of my Naval Attaché colleagues would be ready to assist the British Naval Attaché . . . I have not found that it is any use expecting information . . . from the Naval representatives of the Triple Alliance resident in Berlin.

[107] Dumas, NA 9/07, 13 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259.
[108] Dumas Diary, 6 July 1908.
[109] Watson, NA 13/11, 7 Apr. 1911, FO 244/770.
[110] Henderson, NA 1/14, 1 Jan. 1914, FO 371/1985. See, also, Henderson, NARS 79/14, 6 July 1914, BL: KEYES 4/5.

Prior to the appointment of Naval Attachés for Austria and Italy to Berlin, and the growth of the close association of the Turkish and Brazilian Naval Attachés with Messrs Krupp, the Naval Attachés in Berlin formed a reciprocal union for the exchange of information on the German Fleet. This continues in the case of France, Russia, Japan, America and England, but it is not now so efficient owing to the introduction of the element now alluded to.[111]

Be that as it may, the attaché community remained a significant source of human intelligence.

Third-country sources, that is to say people from outside Germany, but with knowledge of the Reich, constituted a fifth source of humint, particularly for the naval attachés. Responsibility for this happy state of affairs can be traced to the form taken by the naval attaché's appointment. For most of the period covered by this book, the British naval attaché in Germany was also responsible for overviewing developments in Denmark and Holland. As a result, although his headquarters were in Berlin, he was also required to travel on a regular, albeit infrequent basis to Copenhagen and the Hague, where he would converse with Danish and Dutch officers, many of whom had information on the German navy that was potentially of considerable interest to the British Admiralty. During one of his visits to Denmark in 1912, Watson ended up having a prolonged discussion with Lieutenant Ipsen, a lecturer at the Naval War School at Copenhagen, who was convinced that, in the event of a war with Britain, the German strategy would be to 'remain in their Home Ports and endeavour to inflict losses on the British Fleet by Destroyer and Submarine attack'.[112] During the same trip, Watson also spoke to a number of other Danish officers, who provided him with detailed technical information on German guns, the German system of fire control, and the layout of spotting stations on the recent German battleships.[113] Material such as this was extremely valuable. Needless to say, it was not handed to the British naval attaché as an act of charity. The Danish authorities were extremely anxious about the intentions of their mighty neighbour to the south and, accordingly, made friendly gestures to British officers and diplomats in the hope of eliciting guarantees of support against German aggression. This ulterior motive aside, the Danes were in a good position to watch German naval movements in the Baltic and Sound and, thus, remained an important source for the British attachés.

Sadly third-country sources were not so easy for the British military attachés in Berlin to obtain. Again, the reason for this can be found in the form of their appointment. Although it was common practice at this time to make individual military attachés responsible for observing affairs in more than one country, the attaché in Berlin was an exception to this rule. He was responsible for Germany alone. This was something that the War Office did endeavour to change. In June 1903, it was suggested, as part of a wider series of reforms, that the military

[111] Watson, NA 40/13, 29 Sept. 1913, FO 371/1653.
[112] Watson, NA Denmark 6/12, 3 June 1912, FO 371/1377.
[113] Watson, NA Denmark 4/12, 30 May 1912, ibid.

attaché in Berlin also be appointed to Copenhagen.[114] Although several preparations for this alteration were undertaken and the process advanced quite considerably, the proposed extension of the attaché's duties was abruptly cancelled in October.[115] As a result, military attachés in Berlin who wanted to acquire third-country information on Germany had to await the arrival of suitable foreign nationals in Germany or travel to neighbouring states on their own time. Only in 1910 did this finally change, when the duties of the attaché in Berlin were extended to include Stockholm as well. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that, for most of this period, the military attachés in Berlin acquired considerably less third-country intelligence than their more itinerant naval colleagues.

Sixth, the professional contacts that developed between the attachés and German officers and officials could also prove a useful form of human intelligence. Although in most instances the people in question had no intention of providing any information, during the routine course of everyday conversation certain items of information might inadvertently slip through the net. Demonstrating this is a conversation that took place between Dumas and Captain Döhring, a German naval staff officer, who made an official visit to the British attaché to request some details about the arrangement of ranks and ratings in the Royal Navy. Dumas promised to get him the desired material. However, he also used their ensuing chat as an 'opportunity to make him talk about his own Admiralty Staff and incidentally tell me a good deal that I wanted to know, while I don't think he realised that he had told me anything at all'.[116]

Given the possibility of acquiring information through this medium, it was fortunate for the British attachés that interviews with officials were a part of their normal routine. In the performance of his ordinary duties, the military attaché could reasonably expect several annual audiences with the Kaiser, the Minister of War, and some members of the Great General Staff. In part, this was a matter of protocol, as many state functions, such as the presentation to the various German military authorities of their specially bound copies of the British *Army List*, required a face-to-face meeting with the appropriate official. On top of this, there were numerous other occasions—manœuvres being an example—at which the attaché was likely to meet the leading German military men. In a similar manner, the naval attaché held regular interviews with the Kaiser, Tirpitz, the leading members of the German Admiralty Staff, and the officers commanding the various dockyards and naval shore establishments. At any of these meetings it was always possible that some useful intelligence might be obtained.

Several of the British military attachés acquired information in this manner. Illustrative of this is an interview between Russell and the Prussian Minister of

[114] Wilson to the Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, 4 June 1903, FO 83/2097.
[115] Wilson to Barrington, 9 Oct. 1903, FO 83/2098. [116] Dumas Diary, 13 Apr. 1908.

War, General Josias von Heeringen. Russell, who attended the meeting eager to learn more about the status of the forthcoming army proposals, but, for obvious reasons, was unwilling to ask directly, nevertheless obtained the information he sought by using small talk. 'I remarked that His Excellency would no doubt be having a very busy time in the Reichstag with the Military Estimates', to which Heeringen replied, 'My scheme for the army . . . is being postponed until the regular estimates are passed.' A jubilant Russell recorded: 'This last statement is interesting as indicating that a new scheme for the increase of the army is definitely prepared and is, so to speak, in the War Minister's pocket.'[117]

What applied to the Prussian Minister of War also applied to Germany's Great General Staff, the members of which, if they could be cajoled into talking, were another potentially rich seam of information. Needless to say, the British military attachés did their utmost to persuade them to be loquacious. Sometimes they succeeded. In 1904, Gleichen was fortunate enough to establish cordial relations with the head of the General Staff's Russian section. His timing was immaculate, for in the very same year, Russia and Japan went to war. As a result, Gleichen was able to hold several interesting discussions on the conflict with one of Germany's principal experts on this area. From these talks, he learnt some of the ways in which the German military hierarchy perceived the war, how they evaluated the capabilities and performances of the two combatants, and what they thought would be its likely impact on the European balance of power.[118] Gleichen was also able to converse with the chief of the General Staff, General Alfred von Schlieffen. Questioning him about the forthcoming combined army and fleet manœuvres, he elicited a number of remarks that left him with the impression that Schlieffen was not an enthusiast for such joint operations.[119]

The experience of the British naval attachés was similar to that of their military colleagues. Interviews with the Secretary of State for the Navy, Admiral Tirpitz, could also be the source of useful intelligence. For example, when Watson went to present the condolences of the British Admiralty following the loss of the German destroyer *S.178*, which sank after a collision with the cruiser *Yorck*, Tirpitz unexpectedly gave the British naval attaché a full verbal account of the accident. From this it was possible to glean several useful details regarding the handling of German destroyers and the types of manœuvres they practised. Naturally, Watson sent a full report to the Admiralty.[120]

While most of the officials the British attachés encountered were tight-lipped, there were some people who, in the course of official dealings with the British attachés, provided material more willingly. Businessmen, eager to forge profitable connections with the British government were a case in point. After all, in order to interest the authorities in London in their product, it was inevitably necessary to

[117] Russell, MA 10/12, 1 Mar. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[118] Gleichen, MA 36/04, 26 Oct. 1904, FO 64/1594. Gleichen, MA 24/05, 31 May 1905, FO 64/1617.
[119] Gleichen MA 27/04, 6 July 1904, FO 64/1594.
[120] Watson, NA 13/13, 8 Mar. 1913, Admiralty Library: Ca2053.

explain its features, especially those that made it new, remarkable, and desirable. Regrettably, although the attachés met numerous inventors, company representatives, and salesmen, the surviving documentation on such matters is somewhat thin. However, there is one instance where sufficient information still exists for some comments to be made. The case in question relates to an engineer from Düsseldorf by the name of Paul Hesse. A former and apparently embittered associate of the firm of Krupp, who believed he had been defrauded by the Essen conglomerate, Hesse entered into negotiations with a number of countries with a view to selling a process he had devised for rolling gun barrels.[121] In February 1910 he approached the British military attaché in Berlin, Trench, and, upon the latter's departure in March, made contact with his successor, Russell. Trench, as an artillery officer, would have had a professional opinion of Hesse's product. Sadly, although it appears that he regarded the engineer as 'a man of somewhat exceptional ability', it is impossible to know exactly what he reported, as his confidential memorandum on the subject no longer exists.[122] By contrast, Russell, a Guardsman, by his own admission, did 'not have the necessary knowledge . . . to express any opinion as to the value of these inventions'. However, for intelligence reasons, he did believe that Hesse was a source worth cultivating. As he reported, the engineer would 'be in a position to give much information if he so desired to do so, with regard to the capacity and secret augmentation of Krupps'.[123] It also seemed to Russell that Hesse was in possession of useful intelligence about the German plans to manufacture a new automatic rifle. When they first met, in April 1910, Hesse informed Russell that this was to take place imminently. Russell was intrigued. He had heard it rumoured a few days previously that Germany was about to sell a large stock of rifles to China. This rumour, Russell concluded, would make considerable sense if these were rifles about to become surplus to requirement because the German government was on the verge of introducing a newer pattern.[124] 'Herr Hesse', Russell remarked, 'might be induced to give further information on this point.'[125] He did. In a subsequent dispatch, Russell reported that Hesse had visited him again with news that the authorities intended to embark on the immediate construction of an automatic rifle for the German army. The attaché was, of course, aware of Hesse's reason for supplying him with this news:

In his desire to propitiate me and also, no doubt, with a view to impressing me as to the importance of his invention, Mr Hesse volunteered this information with regard to automatic rifles and stated that his system of making barrels is to be employed in their

[121] Hesse's dealings with the American military attaché are recorded in file 6189, NARA: RG 165, M1024, reel 59.

[122] The missive is Trench, Memorandum No. 888, 23 Feb. 1910. Our knowledge of it comes from Russell, MA 14/10, 19 Apr. 1910, FO 371/904.

[123] Russell, MA 14/10, 19 Apr. 1910, ibid.

[124] Russell's report on this, Memorandum No. 927, 15 Apr. 1910, is missing. Its contents are summarized in Russell, MA 14/10, 19 Apr. 1910, FO 371/904.

[125] Ibid.

construction. He hinted, moreover, that, once in England, he would be able to tell a great deal more than he could do, whilst still in Berlin.

Russell was, thus, not without some scepticism, especially as he was 'unable to confirm this intelligence from any other source'. Nevertheless, given the identity of the source, he did feel 'some credence may be attached' to Hesse's news.[126] This conundrum, namely of how to respond to a source with a commercial interest in the information, was, of course, one that applied to most of the data supplied by businessmen.

The final form of human intelligence came from the attachés' social contacts with German officers and officials. It has long been a truism in the intelligence world that society often provides excellent opportunities for collecting material. Indicative of this is a story told by Kim Philby, a man who knew a thing or two about obtaining information. During the Second World War, a major leak of high-quality intelligence to the Germans concerning political conditions in Britain came from the Spanish ambassador, the duke of Alba. He was sending back to Madrid excellent reports on the London scene that his superiors in the Spanish government were passing to the German authorities. The problem for the British security services was that there was no means to prevent this from happening because the duke was doing nothing illegal or underhand. His intelligence was not gathered 'improperly'; rather, Philby recalled, 'he simply moved with people in the know and reported what they said, with shrewd commentaries of his own'.[127] It was a classic case of high society being the best source of intelligence.

The value of social contacts was not lost on the British service attachés, all of whom would have expected to garner much valuable information through this route. Indeed, there is evidence that they were specifically advised to concentrate on their social duties. Before his arrival in Berlin, Dumas was briefed twice on this matter: first by his predecessor, who informed him of the need to 'give about half a dozen dinner parties each winter'[128] and then by Ottley, the DNI, who earnestly impressed upon him that 'social life is the really important matter'.[129] This counsel was heeded. Russell, for example, made every effort to host entertainments to which he could invite German officers. Owing to his alluring wife, Marjorie, he had no trouble in enticing guests:

> Marjorie was very popular in all circles . . . Though very young in those days, she was an admirable hostess, and got on like a house on fire, even with the older, rather stuffy German officers! Our little dances, where sitting-out was not only allowed but encouraged by the provision of suitable accommodation, were very popular and beautifully organized by Marjorie. Her wit and 'espieglerie' which came as rather a surprise to the younger German officers, was, however, much appreciated.[130]

[126] Russell, MA 8/11, 14 Apr. 1911, FO 371/1125.
[127] Kim Philby, *My Silent War* (London, 1973), 91.
[128] Dumas Diary, 29 Aug. 1905.
[129] Ibid., 2 Feb. 1906.
[130] Russell manuscript, p. 90.

Whether Russell obtained much information from these events he does not say, but it is evident that other attachés derived a great deal of material from hosting entertainments. In one of his rare surviving private letters, Watson explained to the inspecting captain of airships, Murray F. Sueter, how it was that he was able to obtain information for him. The key feature was culinary entertainment. Dinners, Watson had discovered, are 'always useful here!' Hence it was, he wrote, that 'by virtue of dining some of the chief people', he had arrived at a situation where he was 'in a position to be of some use to you'.[131] Clearly, if Watson was to be believed, German sources responded to being fed, meaning that the route to good intelligence, no less than the proverbial path to a man's heart, was through the stomach.

The various British service attachés obtained not inconsiderable quantities of information through holding or attending receptions and dinner parties. Dumas, for example, sent back reports in March and November 1906, March and April 1907, and February 1908 about snippets he had picked up from several such occasions.[132] Much of it was gossip, but it was no less valuable for that. Among the idle remarks that he reported were comments that gave away the standing of certain senior and up-and-coming flag officers among the naval officer corps in general. These were, of course, of considerable interest to the British naval authorities, as were the rumours that circulated at such gatherings about forthcoming appointments and retirements. Furthermore, amongst the chit-chat, many professional issues came up for discussion, such as the status of German engineers and the opinion of German officers about their short service system of conscripted recruitment. Most intriguing of all were discussions that covered service politics and provided inside information about tensions between the German Admiralty Staff and the Reich Naval Office. Finally, as talk about Britain and the Royal Navy also frequently surfaced during these parties, attending such events also allowed Dumas to comment on the general feelings towards the United Kingdom prevalent in the German navy. Dumas was not alone in making such reports. His immediate successor, Heath, was also, at times, able to get together 'a few scraps of information, picked up in the course of conversation'.[133] So, too, did Watson, who wrote a long dispatch in July 1912 on the basis of several 'small entertainments' he had attended at the Kiel Regatta.[134]

Owing to the anti-Semitism that prevailed in German aristocratic and military circles, a particularly rich vein of information came from events hosted by members of Berlin's Jewish community. As several of the attachés disapprovingly noted, prejudice against Jews was rife in Germany. Russell recollected that the Guards

[131] Watson to Sueter, 9 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/2471.

[132] Dumas, NA 12/06, 15 Mar. 1906, Admiralty Library: *Naval Necessities*, vol. iv; Dumas NA 57/06, 12 Nov. 1906, ADM 116/942; Dumas NA 6/07, 4 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259; Dumas, NA 22/07, 30 Apr. 1907, FO 371/260; Dumas, NA 11/08, 23 Feb. 1908, FO 371/458.

[133] Heath, NA 8/09, 17 Mar. 1909, FO 371/672.

[134] Watson, NA 51/12, 1 July 1912, FO 371/1377.

Officers in Berlin were not allowed to attend entertainments hosted by the capital's leading Jews, a prohibition that he described aptly as 'a loss for them'.[135] Similarly, Gleichen recorded in his memoirs that 'Jews were anathema to the "upper classes" in Berlin' and recalled that, before going to Berlin, he had been warned by the German military attaché in London 'not to make friends with any Jews, and never to accept their invitations'.[136] This was a warning that the British service attachés ignored, attending numerous receptions hosted by German Jews. More enlightened social attitudes undoubtedly played a part in this, as, no doubt, did the sumptuous hospitality on offer, but there were also good intelligence reasons for refusing to follow the dictates of blind prejudice. Berlin's Jewish community contained a number of highly talented and knowledgeable individuals. Ostracized by German officers, they were eager to open their doors to such socially prestigious visitors as foreign diplomats. As a result, the British service attachés found that they enjoyed free and easy access to some of Germany's leading industrialists and financiers. Dumas regularly called at the home of the banker Paul von Schwabach; Russell was often a guest of the shipping magnate Albert Ballin; while Dumas, Russell, and Gleichen were all on intimate terms with the great 'coal king' Friedrich von Friedländer-Fuld. Much of interest could be learnt from conversation with such men, especially if, as in the case of Friedländer, they were 'on very good terms with the Emperor'. As Russell recalled:

> Knowing that Friedländer was much in the confidence of the Emperor, I approached him during the very critical days before the outbreak of war, and asked him what the prospects were. He said: 'Very bad, because for the first time since I have known him, the Emperor is not in the mood to resist the people who want war.'[137]

With inside information such as this available, social contacts of this kind were clearly highly significant.

Given the amount of information that could be obtained from social events, there was an inevitable reticence on the part of senior German military and naval figures to extend invitations to British attachés. This was a source of some regret to the British officers in Berlin. Gleichen lamented the fact that, 'although I knew a large number of officers in the Guards regiments, I was very rarely indeed (only twice I think) asked to a meal with them, and then most of them stood away and left my host and myself alone'.[138] He was not alone in feeling this chill. Heath, whose social exclusion may be put down to the fact that he was heartily disliked by Admiral Tirpitz and the officials of the Reichsmarineamt, also noticed that there was a distinct lack of camaraderie shown to him by the officers of the German navy. As he concluded in his final report, 'my experience is that they are extremely formal, and reticent on Naval matters. It is known without doubt that they have orders not to be intimate with Naval Attachés.'[139] Even the popular Dumas

[135] Russell manuscript, p. 90.
[136] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 276.
[137] Russell manuscript, pp. 90–1.
[138] Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 262.
[139] Heath, NA 27/10, 6 Aug. 1910. *BD* vi, 507.

experienced difficulties in developing friendly relations with the German naval officer fraternity. Illustrative of this is a dinner party he held in April 1907. The evening turned out to be a pleasant one, but not in the manner anticipated. Instead of a crowded gathering at which naval and non-naval personnel could mingle, the party ended up a small and quiet affair mainly composed of friends and family. 'I meant to get some German naval officers', he recorded, 'but they one and all refused, which I believe is due to the fear that they would have to entertain me in return and this they cannot afford.'[140] Dumas was almost certainly correct in believing that they had declined in order not to incur the obligation of sending him a return invitation, but was probably wrong to ascribe that to a fear of the likely cost. More likely, they had been instructed not to accept. This reality ultimately dawned on the naval attaché in his final months in Berlin. His final report ended with an expression of 'perpetual regret' concerning 'the lack of social intercourse afforded me by the German naval officers'.[141] To his friends he was somewhat blunter, complaining to Lieutenant-Commander Belknap about 'just how much hospitality and courtesy I have received here which is practically nil and I don't think it would have been possible to treat me more slightingly'.[142] Clearly, there were limits to the possibilities inherent in social contacts. At the same time, there was also much that could be learnt from them.

Despite the many reservations that must be made about the information obtained from personal contacts, humint remained a vital, in fact the most vital component in the intelligence collection efforts of the British service attachés in Berlin. However, material was also gathered from two other sources: visual reconnaissance and open source intelligence.

VISUAL RECONNAISSANCE

After human intelligence, the next most important source of information for the British service attachés was the evidence of their own eyes and ears. In the performance of their duties, the attachés commonly visited places of strategic significance and attended events of military or naval importance. Whilst doing this, there would normally be opportunities to see and overhear much that was of potential value to them. This kind of intelligence, based upon visual reconnaissance[143] and casual eavesdropping, could take place in a variety of contexts and settings.

For the military attaché, top of the list were the various German army manœuvres. As a matter of custom, the British military attaché was always invited to the

[140] Dumas Diary, 13 Apr. 1907.
[141] Dumas, NA 34/08, 30 July 1908, FO 371/461.
[142] Dumas Diary, 7 July 1908.
[143] Reconnaissance is defined here as 'a mission undertaken to obtain, by visual or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or potential enemy'. MOD, Joint Doctrine Pamphlet 1/02, 'Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance' (Feb. 2002).

annual Kaiser Manœuvres and was also able, on many occasions, to attend smaller imperial manœuvres, as well as certain of the exercises conducted by those federated states that controlled their own military affairs. As it was at these manœuvres that the German General Staff routinely tried out their strategic concepts, put their tactical ideas to the test, and experimented with new equipment and weaponry, there was potentially much to be learnt from attending such events. Accordingly, the instructions issued to the military attachés laid great stress upon their attendance at manœuvres. Indeed, the very first item in the *Memorandum for Guidance of Military Attachés* stipulated that 'they should attend all manoeuvres of any importance to which they are allowed to go'; while an eight-point supplementary appendix specified in some detail the information required.[144]

For exactly the same reason, of course, the German authorities attempted to place barriers in the way of acquiring information at such events. Accordingly, the itineraries of military attachés attending German manœuvres were rigorously controlled. Regarded as guests of the German government, they were provided with an elaborate programme of entertainments and given an escort of staff officers to show them around. Although much courtesy was exhibited, the hospitality was something of a sham. The real purpose of these entertainments was to be time-consuming and restrict the period the attachés could spend on the field of operations. As Russell reported, one entire morning during the 1912 imperial manœuvres was wasted when the attachés were taken round a medieval castle.[145] Interesting from a historical perspective, it was not going to reveal any current intelligence.

Likewise, the escorting staff officers were not so much guides as chaperones. These 'bear leaders', as the attachés termed them, were very efficient at preventing interesting sights from being seen or useful information being acquired. As Trench observed during the 1907 manœuvres, the officer accompanying the military attachés 'apparently interpreted his instructions to mean that he was not to let anyone of them out of his sight or to afford any information except of a trivial kind'.[146] Nor was it any use asking questions. As a frustrated Trench complained: 'In answer to questions our guide afforded us the minimum of information and that given at times gave rise to serious doubts as to its "terminological exactitude".'[147]

Obfuscation was not the only mechanism these 'bear leaders' had for thwarting the military attachés' efforts. As 'guides', they were in a position to lead the visiting officers away from any developments of interest. Again, this tactic did not go unnoticed. Trench reported:

> We were each day taken to some central positions from which a comprehensive but rather distant view of the operations might perhaps be obtained. This occasionally brought us into the

[144] 'Memorandum for Guidance of Military Attachés', FO 371/75.
[145] Russell, MA 35/12, 31 Oct. 1912, FO 371/1376.
[146] Trench, MA 67, 24 Sept. 1907, FO 371/262.
[147] Trench, MA 73, 4 Dec. 1907, FO 371/263.

vicinity of troops, but if they happened to be Staff, or to have any equipment of interest, we were frankly moved away from them, or—if on a road—asked to trot till we had passed.[148]

Sometimes this tactic was taken to extremes. During the 1911 manœuvres Russell was taken 'accidentally, as we were assured, for a ride into the country far from the scene of where the fighting was in progress'.[149] Although he gave the Germans the benefit of the doubt, it seems likely that this wild goose chase was not so accidental as its organizers maintained.

Nevertheless, for all the impediments, manœuvres remained a vital source of intelligence. Attending the 1911 manœuvres, for example, Russell was able to make numerous little observations about the methods and tactics of the German army. Among the issues he focused on in his detailed 17-page report were the German use of *ruses de guerre*, the exceptional spirit displayed by the infantry, the cooperation of the cavalry with other arms, the types and availability of field telegraphy, and the value of aircraft for reconnaissance purposes.[150] All of this would have been valuable for the authorities in London.

Sadly, manœuvres did not present the same opportunities to the naval attachés as they did to their military colleagues. In the case of German fleet exercises, the fact that they were held far out to sea alongside the significant circumstance that the British were not invited, meant that first-hand intelligence was in this instance nearly impossible to obtain. Newspaper reports and off-the-cuff remarks from participants were all that was available. Yet, even had the German naval authorities extended their permission, this would not have opened new intelligence vistas for the British naval attachés, for the Admiralty, wishing to exclude Germans from the British manœuvres, gave their man in Berlin strict instructions 'not to accept any invitation to attend German naval manœuvres, and in no circumstances was he to ask for one'.[151] While this had the desired effect of keeping German observers away from the Royal Navy's own battle practices, such restrictions were naturally reciprocated by the Germans, to the severe detriment of the work of the British naval attaché in Berlin. It is small wonder that one of them later submitted that 'it is extremely difficult to get knowledge of the German Fleet work'.[152]

There were, however, other occasions where the tables were turned and opportunities were available to the naval attaché that were not open to his military colleagues. The most important of these were inspections of German industrial plants and facilities. For a brief period between 1905 and 1907, while entry was denied to the British military attaché, the naval attaché was permitted to tour the Krupp Works and the factories of the firm of Erhardts.[153] Given that Krupp was

[148] Trench, MA 110, 24 Sept. 1908, FO 371/462.
[149] Russell, MA 27/11, 31 Oct. 1911, FO 371/1126. [150] Ibid.
[151] W. H.-H. Waters, '*Private and Personal*', (London, 1928), 110.
[152] Watson, NA 30/12, 19 Apr. 1912, ADM 137/3867.
[153] According to a missing report (MA 17/04, 26 Mar. 1904) the military attaché was allowed into the Krupp Works in 1904, FO 64/1593. Gleichen also mentions such a trip in his memoirs, *A Guardsman's Memories*, 268.

the principal manufacturer of armour plate for the German navy and the sole constructor of heavy gun mountings, the chance to inspect their facilities represented an unprecedented opportunity to acquire important intelligence. From such a tour, one could deduce the true manufacturing capability of the plant, the amount of work in progress, and the nature of the production techniques. Or, put plainly, how many guns they could make, how many they were actually making, and how quickly they could make them. Naturally, this was of enormous interest to the British naval authorities. It was also of interest to the War Office, but they, alas, not receiving an invitation, had to satiate that interest by getting such information as they could out of the Admiralty.[154]

The German authorities, not surprisingly, went to some lengths to control the proceedings and limit the information that could be acquired. In the case of the naval attaché's tour of the Erhardt factory in 1907, an inspection of only limited interest given that the firm did not produce any heavy gun mountings for the German navy, the strategy seemed to be one of distraction, a long midday interlude in an art gallery being a principal feature of the visit.[155] In the case of Krupp a variety of strategies were employed. The most obvious method was to restrict what could be seen. Although Allenby's report on his trip no longer survives, it is evident from a brief entry in his diary that limitations were in place on the day of his visit: 'we then proceeded to go round such works as were permitted to be inspected'. On the other hand, as he witnessed 'the rolling of a solid ingot (25 tons) into a 5″ plate, the pouring of the liquid steel into moulds, making a 17 cm gun',[156] the restrictions imposed upon him do not appear to have been especially severe. By the time of Dumas's 1907 inspection, restrictions had tightened. On the day before he was due to look round the facilities, he 'was informed [by the Krupp representative] that a board meeting had been held that day to consider what could be shown me and that they had regretfully decided . . . that I could not be allowed to enter the heavy gun shops, the armour plate factory or the projectile manufactory'.[157] Dumas was most displeased: 'Under these circumstances I really felt inclined to ask them why the devil did you say you would be happy to afford me the usual facilities and so drag me all this way for nothing.'[158]

Although placing limitations on what could be seen was undoubtedly effective, a more inventive method was tried in 1906. On this occasion, the attaché, far from suffering undue restrictions, was, by his own account, 'shown as much as possible in the time'.[159] Indeed, if anything he was shown too much: 'Started at 9.15 for the works and had quite the most bewildering forenoon I have ever passed and it was evident to me that by showing me multitudinous details they

[154] The entry in the Admiralty Digest for the (weeded) report of Allenby's visit to the Krupp Works in July 1905 records that information was obtained for Military Intelligence, ADM 12/1416, cut 52.
[155] Dumas Diary, 30 July 1907. [156] Allenby Diary, 15 June 1905.
[157] Dumas NA 43/07, 7 Aug. 1907, FO 371/262.
[158] Dumas Diary, 31 July 1907. [159] Dumas NA 45/06, 14 Sept. 1906. ADM 231/47.

wished to prevent me remembering anything. I was moreover not allowed to take notes so it was altogether rather maddening.'[160] The trick, it seems, was to give real access to the factory, but to do everything at great speed and to deny all access to pencil and paper! Despite such efforts, however, Dumas was still able to pick up useful bits of information. Thus, until they were prevented entirely, the inspection of armaments factories remained a valuable source for the naval attaché.

Another important venue for visual reconnaissance were the German shipyards. While the practice of visiting shipbuilders became scarcer in 1909 and fell into abeyance after 1910, when it became the subject of endless, inconclusive Anglo-German diplomatic negotiations, prior to that time it was customary for the British naval attaché to make annual tours of inspection of the major yards. During these visits, there was naturally a lot of information that could be obtained. For one thing a walk around a shipyard could give an observant attaché the opportunity to gauge how modern and extensive the plant was. From this it was possible to estimate the type and size of ships that could be constructed there, the number of them that could be built at any one time, as well as the speed at which this could be achieved. If this were done for every shipyard, then the building capacity of the German navy could be determined. Accordingly, many of the reports compiled by British naval attachés after visits to German harbours and shipbuilders focused on their impressions of the industrial plant there.

Of course, another key reason to visit a shipbuilder was to see precisely what was being built. One of the facets of the Anglo-German naval race—a facet that was to become highly controversial in 1908/9—was that Germany did not always wish to reveal when it had begun construction of its warships. A visit to the shipyard, however, would allow an attaché to evaluate the state of building of a vessel and gauge both when it was commenced and when it was likely to be completed. This was no small matter and explains the ecstatic entry in Dumas's diary on the day of his visit to Kiel in June 1907. It was 'a long and dreary journey' made less pleasant by 'crowds of people in the train'. Nevertheless, as he continued, 'in five minutes I had paid for the cost of my trip by seeing the state of preparedness of *E* & *Ersatz Baden*'.[161]

The same visit might also allow a good view of the vessel, thus revealing technical details and specifications, or even a chance to go on board the vessel, which might reveal even more about the design and layout. The reason such visual reconnaissance could be invaluable is evident from a dispatch sent in by Heath after a visit to the Germania yard at Kiel, where 'a good view of the *Posen* was obtained'. In a matter of minutes, he was able to dispel a piece of misinformation that the German authorities had spread through the previously published photographs of the vessel. As he reported: 'Photographs taken at the time of the launch showed the ship to have a flush side from upper deck to water line, with apparently no

[160] Dumas Diary, 7 Sept. 1906. [161] Ibid., 20 June 1907.

arrangement for a secondary armament. This is now explained, for the false plates with false scuttles &c are now being removed.'[162]

Given that there was so much to be learnt from such inspections, it is hardly surprising if the German authorities imposed restrictions upon them. Ultimately, the most comprehensive way to limit such visits was to prohibit them altogether, as the unfortunate Heath was to discover. In August 1908, he 'was unable to obtain permission to go over Schichau's Yard either here [in Danzig] or at Elbing'.[163] Then, in May 1909, he was refused access to Schichau's yard at Danzig.[164] Finally, in April 1910, although permitted to visit this facility, he was still refused entry into Schichau's works at Elbing on the ground 'that there was some work going on which it was not permissible for him to see'.[165] At almost the same time, his invitation to visit the Vulkan yard at Hamburg was withdrawn.[166]

There were, however, less drastic ways than an outright prohibition for limiting the utility of such visits. The usual mechanism was to allow the attaché entry, subject to the understanding that he would not be shown any work that was being undertaken for the German government. Thus, the invitation extended by the Germania yard in Kiel to Captain Heath stipulated: 'considering however that the work in hand is mostly destined for the Imp[erial] German Navy, we are afraid that we shall not be able to show you more than a limited portion of our Yard'.[167] Nor did they. Heath, although subject to exceptionally severe restrictions because of his poor relationship with the German Naval Office, was not alone in experiencing such barriers. Allenby, for example, noted in regard to a visit to the dockyard at Wilhelmshaven in 1903: 'I was only shown a very little.'[168]

Even when the access was relatively unrestricted, there were still ways of ensuring that less was learnt than the attaché might hope. Dumas's visit to Kiel in June 1906 is a case in point: 'Passed the forenoon being shown over the Imp[eria]l dockyards . . . Half way around we met [Admiral] von Usedom who was most polite and insisted on taking an infinity of trouble to show me something I didn't want to see.'[169] Needless to say, this left considerably less time for the things he did want to look at.

An equally creative ploy was used when Dumas visited Wilhelmshaven a year later. It had been his intention to look round the yard at a slow and deliberate pace over two days. However, on arrival his plans were unexpectedly changed: 'Captain Koch, who was in charge of the dockyard on account of the departure of Admiral Wodrig and before Admiral Breusing arrived, on hearing what I wished to see mapped out a programme for me lasting from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. remarking that

[162] Heath, NA 18/09, 9 July 1909, FO 371/674.
[163] Heath NA 38/08, 13 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[164] Heath, NA 15/09, 24 May 1909, FO 371/674.
[165] Heath NA 17/10, 22 Apr. 1910, FO 371/901.
[166] Heath NA 18/10, 29 Apr. 1910, FO 244/745.
[167] Heath, NA 17/09, 21 June 1909, FO 371/674.
[168] Allenby Diary, 29 Sept. 1903.
[169] Dumas Diary, 26 June 1906.

then I could catch the 4.30 train.' As a result, a leisurely forty-eight-hour visit was reduced to a hurried six-hour run through the yard, followed by a quick exit from town. Dumas lamented, 'I could hardly but fall in with his views. The result was that in the multiplicity of the things seen and necessary rapidity of movement I hardly managed to see or grasp as much as I could have wished.'[170] Undoubtedly, that was the point.

Nevertheless, there were occasions when fortune was on the side of the visitor. Both Dumas and Heath discovered this on their visits to the Vulkan yard at Stettin. Fortuitously, the managing director, Mr Zimmermann, held a great affection for Britain. As Dumas recorded, 'This gentleman has been at various times with Vickers, Maxim, and with Palmers, and so speaks English perfectly. He is, moreover, English, in his sympathies also, for he seemed desirous to show and tell the writer as much as possible.'[171] Consequently, Dumas saw and was able to report a great deal from this visit. Heath's experience of inspecting the Vulkan yard was a similar one. Invited on the understanding that 'no exception could be made . . . to the long established rule that no new construction was to be shown to any Naval Attaché', Heath arrived with limited expectations for his visit. He was pleasantly surprised:

> whether any private instructions were issued or whether there happened to be a more open minded Director present on the day the visit was made is unknown, but in any case the tour of the yard was made under the guidance of a very pleasant official, who without of course going on board any of the vessels building or completing, showed exactly where the men-of-war were, and what new construction was in hand.[172]

Clearly, despite any restrictions the authorities might impose, at times these visits proved unexpectedly productive.

Also of great potential value for gathering technical data was the annual Kiel Yachting Week, the Kieler Woche. As one American naval attaché reported, not only were the foreign naval attachés invited to attend this regatta, but their presence was positively encouraged, almost demanded even by the Kaiser, who regarded their attendance as a visible sign of the event's international significance.[173] As a result, extraordinary steps were taken to bolster the magnitude and pomp of the event, by enrolling (literally) the attachés into as many aspects of the ceremonies as possible. As Heath reported after attending the 1909 festivities: 'In accordance with the usual custom all Naval Attachés were in Kiel during the *Kieler Woche*. Also in accordance with a hint received, all joined the Kiel Yacht Club, and so were able to join in the annual dinner given by the Emperor.'[174]

[170] Dumas NA 51/07, 29 Sept. 1907, FO 371/262.
[171] Dumas NA 38/06, 28 July 1906, ADM 231/47.
[172] Heath, NA 13/09, 4 May 1909, FO 371/673.
[173] Lieutenant-Commander William H. Beehler. Quoted in Vagts, *The Military Attaché* (Princeton, 1967), 305.
[174] Heath NA 18/09, 9 July 1909, FO 371/674.

Though the Kaiser enjoyed the Kiel Yachting Week for its ceremonial aspects, for the attachés the principal attraction was the opportunity to gather intelligence. There were numerous opportunities to do this. For one thing, during the week of the festivities there were always several major warships docked in the port, which gave the attachés the chance to wander around and observe not only the navy's hardware, but also the methods and training of the crews. Advantage was taken of this fact. Thus, although some of the attaché reports on the Kieler Woche do cover the pomp and ceremony, most relate to technical issues. Illustrative of this are some of Watson's observations from 1912. While at Kiel he was able to make notes on some of the warships, watch the movements of submarines, observe a battle cruiser coaling, and undertake an examination of German methods of signalling.[175]

Of course, the very fact that it was possible to observe all these happenings, provided the German naval authorities with a sound reason to curtail, as far as was consistent with the Kaiser's desires for the splendour of the regatta, the attachés' access to ships and facilities. This did not go unnoticed. Heath reported: 'It is unfortunate that the Naval Attaché still seems to be viewed with some suspicion, and is only invited to a few official entertainments on shore, and is rigidly excluded from all ship entertainments.'[176] Be that as it may, however, there was evidently still information to be had at the Kieler Woche.

A source of visual reconnaissance used by both the military and naval attachés were the various exhibitions that were periodically held in Germany. A lot of data could be collected at these events, as Dumas discovered when he attended a shipbuilding exhibition in July 1908. He was able to spend the entire afternoon there 'taking notes of dimensions and ships' models and really collected quite a lot of useful information'.[177] The details have been lost, as his report on the matter has not survived. However, the account produced by Henderson following a visit to the Hamburg Naval Exhibition in 1913 does still exist. In it he records spending his time examining models of destroyers, submarines, aircraft, and munitions, from which he was able to learn about everything from the layout of the bridge on German destroyers to the thickness of the casings of German shrapnel shells.[178]

Not all exhibitions produced such dividends. As in the case of the other intelligence opportunities mentioned above, the German authorities, wary of allowing too much information into the open, attempted to limit the utility of these events to foreign governments. As a result, some of these displays were utterly devoid of interest. In May 1907, for instance, Trench and Dumas went to the Berlin suburb

[175] No complete copy of Watson's report (NID 442, 6 July 1912) survives, but extracts exist in several NID files: ADM 137/3854, ADM 137/3869, ADM 137/3881, and ADM 137/3905.

[176] Heath NA 18/09, 9 July 1909, FO 371/674.

[177] Dumas Diary, 10 July 1908.

[178] Henderson, NARS 76/13, 29 Dec. 1913, NMM: Ships Cover 426.

of Friedenau to visit the Army, Navy and Colonies Exhibition. Dumas did not consider the trip a success. It is, he wrote, 'a very stupid exhibition. Little of interest and less in place.'[179] The Foreign Office officials who read Trench's report evidently agreed. 'It is ridiculous to label this [report] confidential', wrote Eyre Crowe after he had seen the details of the exhibition.[180]

Even when the content of an exhibition had not been sanitized to the point of blandness, it was still possible for the authorities to control proceedings with a view to limiting the intelligence opportunities. One venue where this occurred was the Frankfurt Balloon Exhibition, attended by Trench in September 1909. Consisting of a main hall, five sheds for airships, and a further three sheds for aircraft, this sizeable aeronautical display potentially offered opportunities for the observation or inspection of aviation equipment. However, quite severe restrictions were imposed to ensure that this did not happen. 'The general public', Trench noted, 'is not allowed to approach the aeroplanes or enter into the balloon sheds of which the doors are kept closed except when the sheds are empty or when a flight is about to take place.' Additionally, whenever a shed was opened, as in the case of the unit occupied by the Zeppelin Co., 'six policemen and a rope barrier kept spectators at some little distance and the shed was so dark that at three in the afternoon one could see nothing'. That Trench was able to get anything out of the event at all was due to luck and good contacts. The director of one of the exhibiting companies, Trench rather gleefully reported, was 'an old war-comrade' and willingly showed him around.[181]

Finally, there were times when an attaché could garner information simply by being in the right place at the right time. Visiting Danzig shipyard in 1906, Dumas missed the ferry by which he had intended to return. However, what might have been a cause of irritation turned out to be fortuitous. As he recorded: 'Just missed the boat we meant to return by, so went for a walk and listened to the idle talk of a girl whose lover was the caretaker of a fort and so told us much of interest.'[182] Similarly, coming back from an audience with the Kaiser, Watson also found himself on the right side of fortune: 'When returning in the train from Potsdam I overheard some of the German General officers and the Austrian Military Attaché talking together.'[183] The conversation, which encompassed the role of aircraft in modern war, three years' military service in France, and conscription in Austria, was most informative. However, it did illustrate one of the potential pitfalls of such eavesdropping: Watson wondered if one of the remarks was expressly made for him to hear. Nevertheless, no attaché was going to look a gift horse in the mouth and, thus, with the appropriate caveats, he reported the conversation wholesale.

[179] Dumas Diary, 16 May 1907.
[180] Minutes on Trench MA 58, 17 May 1907 (the report is missing), FO 371/260.
[181] Trench, NA 40/09, 22 Sept. 1909, FO 371/676.
[182] Dumas Diary, 9 July 1906.
[183] Watson to Goschen, 12 May 1913. *BD*. x 2. 701–2.

Once again, therefore, despite certain reservations, visual (and auditory) reconnaissance regularly proved an important component in the intelligence collection efforts of the British service attachés in Berlin. However, there was one further mechanism at the attachés' disposal for gathering data: open source intelligence.

OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE (OSINT)

The British attachés had access to a wide range of German publications. All the newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and books that could be purchased and read by the martially minded German citizen could also be scoured by the British service attachés for possible intelligence.

As it transpired, a multitude of useful material could be obtained in this way. The German newspapers, for example, regularly carried announcements about the latest military and naval appointments, news of legislation in the Reichstag, such as the annual army and navy estimates, as well as the dates and plans for various manœuvres and exercises. In addition to such mundane matters, they also, occasionally, carried desirable data about the latest weapons and equipment. Hence, Russell obtained some of the technical specifications of the Siemens-Schuckert airship from the *Berliner Lokal Anzeiger*.[184] In a comparable fashion, he was able to confirm his figures for the number of Parseval airships in the possession of the authorities from the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*.[185] On top of this, one could also follow trends in German military thinking through published sources. Thus, on the basis of newspaper articles, Trench reported in 1909 on the wide exposure given to some of the more bellicose pronouncements of retired Chief of the General Staff Schlieffen.[186] Similarly, Russell twice sent back comments on the militarist views of the respected military theorist, Friedrich von Bernhardi, once on the basis of a book on infantry problems,[187] subsequently as a result of an essay that had appeared in the pages of the German press.[188] Finally, newspapers and periodicals provided a mass of information about public opinion. When that information touched on matters like the willingness of the Reichstag to sanction increased military and naval appropriations, it was naturally of great interest to the attachés.

Due to the destruction of the relevant documents, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the attachés obtained information from open sources. However, the output of the Admiralty printers, Eyre & Spottiswood, provides a clue. In November and December 1906, at the behest of Admiral Fisher, they transformed

[184] Russell, Memorandum No. 913, 7 Apr. 1910, AIR 2/196.
[185] Russell, Memorandum No. 1081, 1 May 1911, ibid.
[186] Trench MA 4/09, 14 Jan. 1909. FO 371/671.
[187] Russell, MA 13/10, 12 Apr. 1910, FO 371/904.
[188] Russell, MA 44/13, 11 Dec. 1913, FO 371/1654.

several selections from the clippings forwarded by Dumas from Berlin into printed pamphlets. The first of these prints, entitled 'Naval Notes from Germany', consisted of passages from the *Magdeburgische Zeit*, the *Westfalischer Mercur*, the *Frankfurter Zeit*, the *Cuxhaven Zeit*, the *Cuxhavener Zeitung*, and the *Hallesche Zeitung*.[189] 'Further Naval Notes from Germany', containing extracts from the *Staatsburger Zeitung*, the *Cuxhavener Zeit*, the *Munchener Neueste Nachrichten*, and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, followed quickly on its heels.[190] Then came a print of Dumas's dispatch NA60/06. Entitled 'German Views of the Home Fleet', it contained translations of two long articles in the *Täglische Rundschau* and another from the *Hamburger Nachrichten*.[191] After that, there appeared 'Germany—Naval Notes', a set of extracts from the *Cuxhavener Zeit*, the *Neues Tageblatt Stuttgard*, the *Magdeburgische Zeit*, the *Deutsches Tages Zeitung*, the *Vossiche Zeit*, and the *Berliner Tageblatt*.[192] Finally, it was also decided to print, under the caption 'Why the British Home Fleet is a Necessity', the brochure for a book called 'Are our Hansa Towns, Hamburg and Bremen, in Danger?'[193] In short, in the space of two months the Admiralty set in print a total of twenty articles and one brochure, all of which hailed from the naval attaché in Berlin and this, it must be remembered, probably represented only a selection of the published material Dumas sent in. If this is typical, then clearly the attachés were making considerable use of open sources as intelligence material.

There were, of course, question marks over such sources. Most obviously, given the stringent laws to protect military secrets that existed in Germany, it was doubtful if any technical information of any value would ever appear in any of the German newspapers. Thus, in mining these publications for information, there was always a danger that the attachés were only reporting what the German authorities wished or were willing for them to know. Added to that, a case could easily be made that it was unnecessary to send an officer to Berlin at a cost of over £800 per year simply to peruse the German newspapers. After all both the Naval Intelligence Division and the Directorate of Military Operations subscribed to a range of German publications, which they read and translated themselves in London. For the service attachés to do this as well could be described as superfluous. This point was certainly made to at least one of the attachés sent to Berlin. 'Remember,' Ottley told Dumas just before the latter left for Germany, 'that you are not a paid translator of newspapers.'[194] Dumas, probably like every attaché before and after him, headed forth with this instruction at the forefront of his mind. However, on arrival, he would quickly find this directive difficult to

[189] 'Naval Notes from Germany. (By the British Naval Attaché.)', RNM: Ad. Lib. MSS 252/12. Robinson Papers vol. 1.
[190] 'Further Naval Notes from Germany. By the British Naval Attaché', ibid.
[191] 'German Views of the Home Fleet. (Report by the British Naval Attaché at Berlin.)', ibid.
[192] 'Germany—Naval Notes (By the British Naval Attaché at Berlin.)', ibid.
[193] 'Why the British Home Fleet is a Necessity', ibid.
[194] Dumas Diary, 2 Feb. 1906.

reconcile with his duties, for, in reality, there were many good reasons for an attaché to make careful scrutiny of open source publications.

For one thing, there were a great many more of them available in Germany than could ever be purchased by the authorities in London. This was particularly true when it came to newspapers. Given that the press formed the major source of everyday news and information at this time and that there was essentially no form of competition to this medium, the number of newspapers and journals available—national, regional, and local—was simply huge. The newspapers and periodicals subscribed to by the Admiralty and War Office might give the British authorities a feel for the German press, but without a man in Germany scrutinizing obscure papers and journals, it was inevitable that desirable information would be overlooked. Thus, in July 1907, Dumas sent in a nine-page summary of an article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Munich about the Anglo-French treaty with Spain over the future of Morocco. As he explained at the outset of the report, the article was noteworthy because 'it states very clearly what I am convinced nearly every Naval Officer and most other educated people in Germany feel about this treaty while no one seems inclined to say so in so many words'.[195] Despite the significance of the piece—Dumas described it as 'a long and most important article'[196]—given that the source was a newspaper to which the Admiralty gave no thought to subscribing, it is unlikely they would have seen it had their attaché not located it.

Secondly, it was always possible for an attaché to get lucky and obtain a publication of real intelligence significance. An entry from the Dumas Diary illustrates the sort of serendipity that could occur. In May 1908, he 'sent round to the Government booksellers today for a handbook on rangefinders sufficiently out of date to allow of its sale to the public'. To his surprise and delight, he 'received an answer that it was out of print but they sent me the *new one* which I despatched forthwith to London before they could ask for it back'.[197] While such an occurrence was not the norm, it does illustrate clearly why it was worthwhile for an attaché to keep abreast of open sources.

CONCLUSION: RANGE OF SOURCES

Britain's service attachés in Berlin were not spies. They shunned espionage and the covert, illicit, or improper collection of information. All their material was gained openly through legal methods. For the most part, service attaché intelligence consisted of diplomatic reporting based upon information supplied by their many different human contacts. Supplementing this human intelligence was material

[195] Dumas, NA 41/07, 27 July 1907, FO 371/364.
[196] Dumas Diary, 27 July 1907.
[197] Ibid., 6 May 1908.

garnered from what they could see, hear, and read themselves. It was this range of sources, and this alone, that provided them with the raw data for their letters and dispatches.

Of course, knowledge as to attachés' sources merely leads the historian to ask other questions. Precisely what information were they able to obtain from these methods? On what issues was it focused? How detailed was it? And was it reliable? These are the topics that will be addressed in the next two chapters.

3

Men and Machines: Service Attachés as Procurers of Information on Personnel and Materiel

In September 1910, the newly appointed Captain Watson reported a rather curious conversation that had taken place between him and the head of the Kaiser's Naval Cabinet, Admiral von Müller. Among the topics covered was the question of technical advances and the value of keeping these secret. Watson, apparently, put little store in such matters:

> I submitted . . . that secrecy as to material is not of very great value, as these secrets nearly always leaked out, and that the deciding test in warfare was the personnel and not the materiel . . .
>
> That extreme secrecy in peace leads largely to distrust and that as it is not of great value in the ultimate test, war, was undesirable in the interests of good relations between the countries.[1]

Watson's remarks were, unsurprisingly, greeted with scepticism in the Foreign Office, where Eyre Crowe disdainfully minuted: 'What value may attach to Captain Watson's doctrine that naval secrets are not worth keeping is a matter for the Admiralty to appreciate.'[2] While the Admiralty chose not to comment, it can safely be stated that his position was not one they endorsed. All the evidence suggests that, while the Royal Navy placed considerable emphasis on keeping its secrets firmly under wraps, it was decidedly interested in learning about German technical developments.[3]

This point must have been conveyed to Watson, because a year later he was taking a radically different view of the value of monitoring German technical developments. As he explained to Murray F. Sueter, the inspecting captain of airships, he now believed that acquiring knowledge about German progress in military materiel was both an essential task in itself and, moreover, a particular

[1] Watson, NA 40/10, 17 Sept. 1910, FO 371/901.

[2] Minute by Crowe, 17 Oct. 1910, ibid.

[3] There are many dockets that indicate the desire of the Admiralty to keep its secrets intact. For example, Admiralty 28 Nov. 1908, 'No Foreigners to be allowed to visit a Dockyard without the Sanction of the Admiralty', ADM 1/7995.

remit of his post: 'My view of a Naval Attaché is that he should investigate as much as possible in all branches . . . I have done this in the case of Gunnery and Submarines, and now I have worked up your branch up to the point where you can usefully step in.'[4]

Watson's 1911 evaluation of the role of the attaché as a gatherer of technical information was certainly correct. According to the instructions issued to naval attachés, the reporting of technological and materiel improvements was an essential component of their work.[5] It was similarly central to the military attachés. Service attachés, it would, therefore, seem, were perceived in all quarters as procurers of information on the scientific and industrial development of foreign armies and navies. It is this element in the work of the service attachés that will be explored in this chapter.

The matter in need of determining is the attachés' effectiveness at obtaining information on German materiel progress. To this end, certain key questions will be posed. What sort of technical data were the attachés able to collect? How comprehensive and accurate was this information? And how did their submissions on such developments compare to those sent by the service attachés of other nations? Needless to say, these are wide-ranging questions. The officers appointed to Berlin reported on a vast array of technical questions, ranging from new metal alloys to wireless telegraphy equipment and from gyroscopes to mobile canteens. Given this breadth of coverage, it would be impossible within the confines of a single chapter to examine every technological issue that found its way into their dispatches. Some method of selection will be required. Accordingly, the focus of the chapter will be only on those materiel developments that were considered by the attachés both regularly and in detail. An additional criterion for inclusion will be the manner in which this reporting was made. Some technological issues were of interest only to one of the services, while others were of equal interest to both the army and navy. Accordingly, some topics were subject to the joint reporting of both attachés, who collaborated to provide the best possible insight into the developments taking place, while other topics were explored by only one of these resident officers. Examples will include all the possible permutations of joint and individual reports. Thus, the chapter will begin by looking at one topic that was consistently investigated jointly by the military and naval attachés, namely German aviation. It will then consider the reporting of the naval attachés on such purely maritime matters as advances in German destroyers and submarines. It will finish with an examination of German experiments with motor vehicles, an exclusively military concern.

Side by side with their role as purveyors of technical information, the attachés were also required to provide details about the officers and men who would use the equipment with which they were provided. Watson's view, cited above, that

[4] Watson to Sueter, 9 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/2471.

[5] See the memorandum accompanying the letter of appointment of Dumas as naval attaché, FO 371/75.

'the deciding test in warfare was the personnel and not the materiel' may well have been a peculiar perspective on the importance of technological development, but it was not without merit in so far as it rated highly the human element in modern conflict. Both the War Office and Admiralty endorsed the notion that the competence, spirit, and level of training of a country's enlisted men and their commanders was a matter of the utmost importance. Accordingly, they expected their attachés to provide regular and detailed information on this. The attachés obliged. As a result, the chapter will conclude with a summary of the views of the service attachés in Berlin about the quality of the officers and men who comprised the German army and navy.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN AVIATION

The interest of the British in German aviation can be dated to the very earliest days of its development and to the pioneering work of Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin. Zeppelin, a senior officer in the Württemberg army, who had been compelled to resign his commission after a clash with the Kaiser, devoted his enforced retirement to undertaking experiments in lighter-than-air travel. In May 1898 he founded his own airship company and immediately began construction of his first machine—the *Luftschiff Zeppelin 1* or simply *LZ.1*—a task that was completed in the summer of 1900. The maiden flight of this extraordinarily innovative, if under-powered, vessel took place on 2 July.[6] Colonel Waters penned the first-known service attaché report on Zeppelin's work some three weeks later. Sadly, what he said has been lost to history.[7] Equally sadly, he does not appear to have produced any further dispatches on this topic. This might have been because the *LZ.1* ceased flying that October and was subsequently dismantled. It could also have been because the subject was being amply covered by the British consul in Stuttgart, Dr Frederick Rose, who residing closer to the count's base at Friedrichshafen on the Bodensee, possessed better facilities for keeping an eye on Zeppelin's experiments.[8] However, this halt to Waters's reports—whatever the cause—did not mean that the interest of the service attachés in airships had ended. In February 1904, when it was apparent that Zeppelin had raised sufficient funds to build a second machine, Waters's successor, Gleichen, sent in a new dispatch on the topic. He proposed that £20 be found from the War Office budget to pay Rose, whom he described enthusiastically as 'a scientific investigator', to compile a special report on any trials that might take place. Such a submission, he

[6] Robert Jackson, *Airships in Peace and War* (London, 1971), 52–3.

[7] The report in question was Waters MA 3/00. There are no surviving copies, but the paperwork states that it was dispatched from Berlin on 27 July 1900, FO 64/1494.

[8] A minute about Rose's reports is appended to the record of Waters MA 3/00 in the Foreign Office file, ibid.

suggested, 'will probably be of considerable value to the War Office'.[9] Evidently this suggestion was not quickly adopted by the military authorities, for in early October, in response to a request from his superiors, Gleichen sent in his own short summary of Zeppelin's progress.[10] With this effort, Gleichen appears to have concluded his study of German airships. As in the case of Waters, this was perhaps because such work was rendered unnecessary by the reports of Rose, which, shortly thereafter, flowed once again to the Foreign Office.[11]

Colonel Trench, Gleichen's successor, proved to be far more fulsome when it came to detailing the development of German aeronautics. Unlike his forerunners, who were content to delegate matters to Rose, Trench sent in a veritable stream of his own dispatches on Germany's progress in aerial navigation. Quite why he should have been so much more concerned than his predecessors with this topic can only be a matter of speculation. Quite possibly Trench, as an artillery officer, was more interested in these technical and scientific questions than the guardsman Gleichen. More likely, however, was that Trench's more copious writing on aerial matters simply reflected the nature of the times, for his tenure as attaché coincided with many of the most notable achievements in airship technology as well as the birth of popular German Zeppelin-mania. The volume of information he provided was, most probably, the natural product of the accelerated process of achievement of these years. In any event, Trench sent in reports on several different types of airship, including the Parseval, Gross, and Zeppelin machines, as well as on the auxiliary industries that developed in the wake of their construction.

Trench's first known report on German aviation focused on the work of Major August von Parseval. If Zeppelin was the main advocate of the rigid airship, a vessel where the gas envelope was held in shape by a taut frame, Parseval was the leading German exponent of the non-rigid airship, a vessel whose structural integrity was maintained by air pressure. Parseval began his work in 1906, holding preliminary test flights of an experimental design as early as May of that year. These were reported by Trench, who also sent in details about the principles underlying Parseval's design. This new airship, he explained, was 'a type apart' owing to 'the number of rigid parts being reduced to a minimum'. As to its method of working: 'two small air sacks are placed in the ends of the long main balloon and into these sacks air is continually being forced by a fan when the balloon is at work'. Admittedly, Trench noted that even Parseval himself cautioned that there was 'a good deal of progress to make before his invention can be seriously employed on service'.[12] However, as subsequent reports showed, progress was rapidly attained, such that, by December 1908, Trench informed the Directorate of Military Operations that a Parseval balloon had been officially

[9] Gleichen MA 10/04, 18 Feb. 1904, FO 64/1593.
[10] Gleichen to DAQMG, 3 Oct. 1904, AIR 1/728/176/3/20.
[11] Robin Higham, *The British Rigid Airship, 1908–1931: A Study in Weapons Policy* (London, 1961), 36.
[12] Trench, MA 6, 27 June 1906, AIR 2/196.

accepted by the Prussian Ministry of War for use by the German armed forces.[13] The knowledge that this machine was now a bona-fide weapon of war prompted the attaché to undertake a more detailed investigation of its specifications and capabilities. As he reported, the principal advantage offered by Parseval's blimp was its ease of transportation and deployment:

> The Parseval type of balloon is of the flexible (unstarr) type and is designed to have maximum buoyancy for a limited size, to be easily transported by a small number of vehicles, to be easily filled in the open, to be able to make journeys of ten hours duration, to take a crew of three or four and to land easily practically anywhere.

These design features, the attaché testified, had all been attained. And this was not all. Having witnessed the Parseval II undergoing speed trials, Trench was able to state that, in addition to its other properties, the machine could manage a respectable 54 km per hour. Information obtained about subsequent flights also proved that it was capable of sustained and repeated operations.[14]

Another airship inventor to come under scrutiny was Major Hans Gross, the officer commanding the Prussian army's balloon battalion, who, in conjunction with Nikolas Basenbach, a talented engineer, designed and built a series of 'Gross' or 'Military' airships. These were 'of the semi-rigid type', Trench explained, 'that is their shape is maintained not only by the use of ballonets but by the aerostat being laced to a rigid keel'. The design was obviously a successful one, for, as Trench reported, between June 1908 and January 1909, a number of test flights were conducted, the last of which carried the Kaiser's brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, and the chief of the Great General Staff, General von Moltke, over Berlin.[15] They were not the only dignitaries to see the *G.II.* On 10 May the vessel was paraded before 300 members of the Reichstag. Five days later, it was displayed to selected members of the Staff College.[16]

Trench was further impressed by the use of airships at German manœuvres. His first mention of such an event is a reference to the Gross II and Parseval II being 'tried in tactical exercises of a Guards Brigade in presence of the Emperor at Doberitz' on 25 May 1909.[17] More significant, however, were the 'military airship manœuvres' that occurred in October and November. Undertaken 'to ascertain what services could be performed by airships in war time' and 'to test various improvements and new fittings such as wireless telegraphy equipment', these exercises provided a further opportunity for the Parseval and Gross machines to integrate themselves into German military culture. These manœuvres also witnessed the testing in the field of machines by that other famous name in German lighter-than-air travel, Count Zeppelin.[18]

[13] Trench, Memorandum No. 659, 7 Dec. 1908, AIR 2/196.
[14] Trench, MA 6/09, 30 Jan. 1909, FO 371/672.
[15] Trench, MA 7/09, 3 Feb. 1909, ibid.
[16] Trench, MA 20/09, 4 June 1909, FO 371/673.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Trench, MA 1/10, 3 Jan. 1910, FO 371/902.

Trench first reported on Zeppelin's work in November 1907, when he wrote a dispatch outlining the provisions made in the 1908 army estimates for money to purchase two of the count's airships.[19] Other reports followed in its wake. In April 1909, Trench sent in technical details of the Zeppelin *LZ.5*, which, on being taken over by the Prussian army, had been given the military designation *Z.II*. This vessel, the colonel explained, was '16-sided in section and of the same length as the *Z.I* but 13 m in diameter instead of 11.7 m. Its content is 15,000 cub. m. Of the 17 balloon-cells which the aluminium case contains, 16 are of cotton and an experimental one is of goldbeaterskin.' Other details included the specifications of the two Daimler motors—110 HP and 300 kg each—and news that the cars had been given a rudimentary suspension system. They were, the attaché stated, 'protected against blows when landing by India-rubber cushions'![20] Just how useful these rubber bumpers actually were is not mentioned, but on the effectiveness of the airship itself Trench had no doubt. As he subsequently reported, the *Z.II* successfully completed its test flight in May and undertook a number of long journeys between Friedrichshafen, Frankfurt, and Cologne in July.[21] Zeppelin's next creation, the *LZ.6*—Trench consistently referred to it as the *Z.III*—also made a number of long flights at this time. This included a difficult journey from Friedrichshafen to Berlin to enable the machine to be inspected by the Emperor. Although not really ready for such a trip, the vessel was able to make the distance with only three unscheduled landings. In short, the various Zeppelin airships were proving to be machines capable of undertaking sustained long-distance flights.

Trench also submitted dispatches about the developments in the supporting technologies and auxiliary services necessary to maintain an airship fleet. Foremost amongst these were the sheds in which the dirigibles were housed. As airships were delicate machines, easily thrown about and damaged in high winds, dedicated hangars that shielded them from the elements were crucial. As Trench reported, there were a number of different theories as to the principles on which these should be constructed. Zeppelin, for example, favoured circular sheds; Parseval was an advocate of rectangular designs. The result was a proliferation of different patterns. Probably the best known of these was the 'Reichshalle', Zeppelin's floating hangar on the Bodensee. Trench, who visited the area, described the building for the benefit of his superiors:

> The shed is formed of girder iron framework from 3 to 5 feet in depth and covered with corrugated iron sheeting, the whole supported on four rows of closed iron pontoons. One end is completely closed and the other end is closed up to a height of 13 feet. Half way up the framework, hinged platforms about 13 ft wide are fixed to facilitate work on the balloon. . . . I estimate the side to be 50 ft high, . . . the total height from floor to ridge as 70 ft and the interior floor width as 85 ft.

[19] Trench, MA 72, 29 Nov. 1907, FO 371/263.
[20] Trench, MA 18/09, 16 Apr. 1909, FO 371/673.
[21] Trench, MA 1/10, 3 Jan. 1910, FO 371/902.

Equally detailed descriptions were sent in of the military sheds at Metz, Cologne, and Berlin.[22] Some attention was also paid to the Siemens-Schuckert hangar, which was being built to a design that would enable the finished building to 'be easily turned in any direction'.[23]

Another technological development consequent upon airships was anti-aircraft artillery. Although Trench had reported on shooting practice against captive balloons by regular field gun batteries as early as March 1907,[24] his first mention of specialist weapons against dirigibles came from a dispatch, written in April 1909, on the subject of 'Power-traction Vehicles'. Among the new trucks being produced by the German motor industry was an armoured vehicle sporting a 2-inch quick-fire gun that was evidently 'intended for use against "air cruisers" '.[25] A follow-up report considered the matter further. There were, Trench now relayed, two companies, Krupp and Erhardt, both of which were making strides to manufacture effective 'artillery for use against balloons', simultaneously producing designs that placed a pivot mounted quick-fire gun on a lightly armoured vehicle. In all cases, the guns, which ranged from 50 mm to 105 mm in calibre, were capable of a high elevation and a wide traverse and possessed sufficient muzzle velocity to be able to hit a target at an altitude of 5,000 metres. As to the shells, Trench reported that shrapnel projectiles as well as time and contact fused explosive caps were being considered, no decision as to which was most suitable having been made.[26]

Taking these various submissions together, it is clear that Trench sent back a considerable quantity of information on airships. His reports covered a range of different manufacturers, offered insights into their design principles and the technical specifications of their products, and gave details about test flights and performances in the field. Additionally, Trench submitted dispatches on allied advances in areas such as sheds and anti-aircraft guns. In his final report on aerial matters, he also offered an opinion on future developments. The Germans, he stated, were devoting time and resources to airships 'due to the belief that they will form useful auxiliaries'. An increasing number of airships and a network of strategically positioned bases could be anticipated.[27]

If Trench provided a considerable amount of data on airship development during his tenure of office, no less remarkable was the fact that he was doing this largely on his own. As we can see, in the years up to 1910, the bulk of the information on airships sent from Berlin emanated exclusively from the military attaché. Little, if anything, came from his naval colleague. The reason for this is disclosed in the diary of Captain Dumas. Here was an officer who was enthralled by the development of powered flight. As he recorded the very first time after witnessing

[22] Trench, MA 19/09, 22 May 1909, FO 371/673.
[23] Trench, MA 7/09, 3 Feb. 1909, FO 371/672.
[24] Trench, MA 45, 28 Mar. 1907, FO 244/682.
[25] Trench, MA 15/09, 7 Apr. 1909, FO 371/671.
[26] Trench, MA 21/09, 10 June 1909, FO 371/674.
[27] Trench, NA 1/10, 3 Jan. 1910, FO 371/902.

an airship passing over Berlin: 'I can't help realising how curious it will seem in future years to think one could look upon such a sight as a wonderful and amazing step forward, but so indeed it is and I am proud to think that I am one of the first foreigners to see it.' Nevertheless, for all his fascination, it is instructive that he did not report the matter to the Admiralty, but, instead, 'took copious notes for Trench to send in'.[28] As this entry makes clear, Dumas saw aviation less as a naval than a military matter. Given this view, it is hardly surprising that he never submitted a single report on airships. His successor, Heath, does not seem to have been much more expansive. The sum total of his reporting on aviation is a few short paragraphs located towards the tail end of some of his regular reports. For example, in August 1910, he reported with the brevity that he reserved for aviation issues that 'one naval officer has been sent to Zeppelin for a course of instruction'.[29] Even this short observation was more the exception than the rule. On the whole, Heath, too, was happy for the bulk of the information on aeronautical matters to be supplied by the military attaché. Indeed, he seemed to believe that he had discharged his duty by requesting of Trench that when forwarding his submissions on aerial concerns to London, the military attaché ask the War Office to show them to the DNI.[30] He did not think it important to report on such matters himself. How is this to be explained?

The detached attitude taken by these naval attachés to developments in German aviation almost certainly reflected the fact that the German navy, in the person of Admiral Tirpitz, took absolutely no interest in such matters. Keen to see all possible funds devoted to battleship construction, he vigorously resisted any expenditure on experiments in airships lest it divert money from his precious dreadnoughts.[31] Observing this disdain for aviation in the Reichsmarineamt, the British naval attachés doubtless took their cue from the State Secretary and reckoned that, as the German navy would not be developing an air service any time soon, they did not need to follow such matters either. For several years, this was a safe assumption. However, in 1911, Tirpitz finally succumbed to the ever-increasing pressure placed upon him and agreed to allocate funds to aviation. Watson, the new naval attaché, who was something of an aerial enthusiast, was more than happy to follow this lead. Consequently, from 1911 onwards, reporting on developments in German aviation became the mutual concern of both service attachés, who often pooled their resources to produce combined dispatches on this topic.

Their first joint report on aeronautics was written in October 1911. Frustratingly, no copies have survived. However, from a number of references to it in other documents, it is clear that the theme of this paper was that Germans had come to realize that the era of the airship was over and that dirigibles had been superseded for all practical purposes by aeroplanes. Russell and Watson

[28] Dumas Diary, 27 Aug. 1907. [29] Heath, NA 27/10, 6 Aug. 1910, *BD* vi. 510.

[30] Thus, the postscript to Trench Memorandum No. 659, 7 Dec. 1907, states: 'The N.A. would like the D.N.I. to see this', AIR 2/196.

[31] H. H. Herwig, '*Luxury' Fleet*, (London, 1991), 83–4.

stated: 'the rigid type (Zeppelin) is only retained out of deference to the pre-eminent services of the aged Count Zeppelin, and that on his death, this type of air-ship will cease to be built'.[32] If this was their opinion in October, events in the following months would cause them to make a rapid and total volte-face. The process began in November, when the naval attaché took a trip in the new Zeppelin airship the *Schwaben*. Invited to travel in the foremost gondola or steering position, Watson experienced a two-hour journey over Berlin. It was an enlightening voyage and persuaded the naval attaché that the latest Zeppelin dirigibles were capable of performing entirely beyond his expectations. In particular, he was impressed by the smoothness of the Maybach engines and the manœuvrability of the giant vessel. As he recorded: 'Ease of turning by working the wheel was certainly remarkable, also facility of movement in up and down direction by working horizontal planes was very great, trials of this being carried out.'[33] A similar trip undertaken in the new Parseval VI proved equally revelatory. Once again, the notes on the flight emphasized the solid performance of the craft: 'The ship steered well. Alterations of elevation were quickly and well carried out. No difficulties were experienced either on leaving the ground, landing, or in entering the shed.' They also stressed the operational utility of the vehicle, especially for reconnaissance purposes: 'At the height at which we travelled, considering that it was winter time, observation of objects on the earth was easy. No bodies of troops, however small, could have escaped observation unless they had been concealed in woods.'[34]

However, if the attachés were influenced by 'the considerable access of speed, reliability and manœuvring powers' of the latest Zeppelin and Parseval, they were even more impressed by the performance of the newest entry into the German dirigible world, the Siemens-Schuckert airship.[35] The existence of this machine had first been reported by Trench in February 1909. However, owing to the 'great secrecy . . . maintained about it', details had been few and far between.[36] This had not changed with the passage of time. Russell had reported the completion of this craft in April 1910, but had not been able to provide much more information, for 'very special secrecy still appears to be observed with regard to the details of construction of this vessel'.[37] Owing to the mystery surrounding it, when the Siemens-Schuckert airship finally appeared in public view, it caused a sensation, not least among the British service attachés. Their especial interest was first aroused when they saw it in the early afternoon of 5 December 1911, while it was making a flight over Berlin. Such was their astonishment at its performance that they immediately penned a report on the topic. What particularly struck them

[32] The report in question is NA 27/12, MA 24/12, 6 Oct. 1912. Portions of it are quoted in NA 37/12, MA 35/12, 9 Dec. 1912, FO 371/1127.

[33] 'Description of a Passage made in *Schwaben* by Naval Attaché, November 10, 1911', enclosure in Watson and Russell, NA 40/11, MA 37/11, 11 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/2311/221/3.

[34] 'Notes on a Flight in Parseval VI', ibid.

[35] Watson and Russell, NA 37/12, MA 35/12, 9 Dec. 1912, FO 371/1127.

[36] Trench, MA 7/09, 3 Feb. 1909, FO 371/672.

[37] Russell, Memorandum No. 913, 7 Apr. 1910, AIR 2/196.

was that the airship made such a good account of itself in what they described as 'extremely disadvantageous conditions'. As they explained, not only did the airship have to battle against a wind reaching force four on the Beaufort scale, but, in addition, 'the weather conditions were those of a dark winter's afternoon, with an east-south-east wind and every likelihood of snow or rain falling with the fresh breeze before nightfall'. Yet, despite these impediments, the Siemens-Schuckert managed to attain 'a speed . . . on this occasion of 26 miles an hour against the wind and of 58 miles an hour with the wind. This gives the dirigible a normal speed of 42 miles an hour . . .' Furthermore, the Siemens-Schuckert airship also seemed exceptionally agile: 'It is true that the vessel was pitching in the strong breeze, but her manoeuvring power was quite unimpaired and very remarkable. The performance we witnessed was in every respect a fine one and far surpassed anything we have come across in our recent experiences with other German airships.' Consequently, the attachés were convinced that 'the extraordinary speed and power of the Siemens-Schuckert airship, under very adverse conditions appears to us to call for immediate and special notice'.[38]

Taken together, the demonstrable attainments of the Zeppelin *Schwaben*, the Parseval VI, and the Siemens-Schuckert dirigible, all of which had been witnessed first hand, unambiguously indicated to the British service attachés that 'the airship movement has developed in an extraordinarily rapid degree here lately'.[39] Naturally, having identified this advance, the attachés quickly moved to considering the practical implications of this improvement in German airship technology. In their view, this amounted to a considerable accession in Germany's war-making powers. As they first explained in January, serious thought was being given by the Reich authorities to the possible use of airships for aerial bombardment. 'The German authorities', they reported, 'are now really considering whether they cannot usefully employ airships for dropping explosives on Ships, Towns and Dockyards.' This was a possibility to which they lent serious, albeit cautious, credence: 'To those who have seen airships in Germany passing over their heads and have knowledge of their largely increased powers, and the familiarity with which they are managed, it will be apparent that this idea now seems to be by no means an impossible one in the stress of war.'[40] This point was reiterated more firmly in March, when it was not only restated that the German authorities were contemplating arming their airships with offensive weapons, but also that they were creating the infrastructure necessary to launch these vessels against Britain:

> Obviously, to carry out such long passages they must have airship halls at convenient places near the north-west borders of Germany. In this connection we would mention the new hall building at Hamburg to hold two airships of the largest type; and the reports that others are contemplated for the North Sea coast in closer proximity to our shores. An airship station at Wesel or Cleve would be closer still.

[38] Watson and Russell, NA 36/11, MA 33/11, 5 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/1607/204/85/4.
[39] Watson to Sueter, 9 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/2471.
[40] Watson and Russell, NA 1/12, MA 2/12, 13 Jan. 1912, FO 371/1370.

From this they deduced:

Should war unhappily ever occur, it appears possible that the largest German airships might . . . endeavour to reach some vulnerable dockyard or other place in England . . . in the hope of effecting a certain amount of damage, moral or material. The arrival of such craft during dark hours, or on one of those very hot days when, owing to the presence of pockets of air and other causes, aviators acknowledge that flight in aeroplanes is difficult, would create a situation difficult to reply to, unless we were equipped with some balloon-gun very much more efficient even than the well-known types which have been experimented with in Germany . . .[41]

That there were numerous German airships capable of undertaking a return flight across the North Sea would be a theme to which the attachés would return on several subsequent occasions. In December 1912, in a joint report revealingly entitled 'Dirigible Airships in Time of War', the attachés pointed out that there were 21 to 23 modern airships available to the Reich authorities, many of which 'would be capable of sailing from Germany to Sheerness, Woolwich, or any other desired point in England and return without the necessity of an intermediate descent to the earth'. And what would be the impact of such actions? In this regard the attachés quoted from the lecture of a German naval officer, Captain von Pustau:

Let us imagine a war with England . . . if only we could succeed in throwing some bombs into their docks, they would speak to us in quite different terms . . . With airships we have in certain circumstances the means of carrying the war into British country and in England one imagines with terror that one can already hear the beating of the screws of the Zeppelin cruisers.[42]

The point the attachés wished to make was obvious: the Germans regarded their dirigibles as effective offensive weapons and the attachés considered that the performance of these vessels justified that belief. The occasional mishaps that befell airships from time to time did not diminish either the German enthusiasm for these machines or the attachés' estimation of their worth and fighting value. As Watson reported after the loss of the naval airship, *L.1*:

my conversations with Senior Naval officers . . . show that they regard the accident as one that is bound to happen in the infancy of a new arm; and that they consider the development of airships for naval purposes must be continued, and that the lessons learnt from the accident to the *L.1* must be profited by.[43]

Accordingly, right up until their enforced departure from Berlin in August 1914, the attachés continued to detail the development of German airships. They remained convinced that these vessels, with their growing range, manœuvrability, and fighting power would make a valuable contribution to Germany's war effort in the event of a conflict.

[41] Watson and Russell, NA 11/12, MA 12/12, 12 Mar. 1912, AIR 1/2311/221/3.
[42] Watson and Russell, NA 84/12, MA 41/12, 7 Dec. 1912, AIR 1/657/17/122/563.
[43] Watson, NA 38/13, 18 Sept. 1913, FO 371/1652.

While the attachés kept their superiors well informed about the progress of German airships, it must be acknowledged that dirigibles did not constitute the sum total of the German effort in aviation. Work was also being undertaken in heavier-than-air travel, that is, aeroplanes. This, too, was a matter that interested the attachés.

The first reports on aircraft were sent in by Trench in 1909. On the whole, the attaché was not enormously impressed with German progress in this field. For one thing, nearly all the aviators flying in Germany and the vast majority of their machines were foreign. Thus, in late January and early February, Trench reported a demonstration by the French-built Voisin aeroplane at Tempelhof airfield.[44] Details of a similar exhibition flight by the French-made Latham machine was submitted in October.[45] In addition, Trench sent in reports about the visit of the American aviation pioneer Orville Wright to Berlin. He, too, made a number of flights in his US-constructed machine at the Tempelhoferfeld.[46] Indeed, about the only truly German aviation success that Trench was able to report was a flight by Engineer Grade in October 1909. Flying a succession of figures of eight for some three kilometres in a German-manufactured aircraft, he duly won the Lanz prize. However, this was a rather meagre success in comparison with foreign efforts and, possibly for this reason, Trench felt that the German public was apt to view aeroplanes as 'sport things' rather than serious enterprises.[47]

Although Trench believed that the Germans were rather dismissive about aeroplanes and were not very proficient in this branch of aviation, by the time his successors looked into the matter there was rather more in German efforts to admire. As will be recalled, Watson and Russell reported in October 1911 that there was a growing sense in Germany that the era of the airship was over and that the age of the aircraft was about to begin. As they explained, 'the younger officers of the army are inclined to ridicule the dirigible and put their trust only in aeroplanes'.[48] Of course, as we know, they later retracted their view about the impending obsolescence of the airship. However, while changing this side of the equation, they remained upbeat about German efforts in heavier-than-air flight. The reason for this is apparent from one of Russell's reports from late October. Commenting on the autumn German army manœuvres, he noted that aircraft had made a distinguished contribution, particularly in the realm of reconnaissance. This was especially highlighted by one notable incident that came to Russell's attention:

> False disposition of the Blue forces were marked on a map and a staff officer was sent out with a view to this misleading information falling into the enemy's hands. The officer in question was soon surrounded by hostile patrols . . . The map with the false dispositions on it was soon

[44] Trench, Memoranda No. 636, 29 Jan. 1909, and No. 686, 4 Feb. 1909, AIR 1/685/21/12/2243.
[45] Trench, Memorandum No. 800, 2 Oct. 1909, ibid.
[46] Trench, Memorandum No. 801, 10 Sept. 1909, ibid.
[47] Trench, MA 1/10, 3 Jan. 1910, FO 371/902.
[48] Extract from the missing dispatch NA 27/11, MA 24/11, 6 Oct. 1911, contained in General Staff, War Office, 'Report on Aeronautical Matters in Foreign Countries for 1911', p. 24, AIR 1/7/6/77/3.

brought to the Red commander in triumph. The latter, however, determined to verify the information thus obtained and sent out an aeroplane to reconnoitre. The aviator returned in a short space of time and was able to prove that the information was entirely misleading.

And this was not all that aircraft had achieved: 'an Albatross biplane is said to have sailed over the whole of the enemy's front on the first day of the manœuvres and to have returned within 35 minutes bringing back information which the cavalry could not have obtained in less than four hours'.[49] Evidently, the attaché was impressed by what the Germans had achieved with their small number of planes.

Russell's belief that the Germans had the tactical expertise to handle aircraft effectively in the field was matched by his and Watson's certainty that they possessed the manufacturing skills to produce machines of a calibre equal to the operational demands. Indeed, their reports could not have been clearer on the technical excellence of German planes. One dispatch recorded that 'in the Etrich-Rumpler monoplane, and other aeroplanes, both mono and bi-planes, Germany possesses as good machines as any other country, and in the Etrich-Rumpler with its vertical four-cylinder Daimler engine, perhaps one of the best in existence'.[50] However, if the attachés were impressed by the Etrich-Rumpler monoplane, this was as nothing compared to the view they formed of an aircraft witnessed by them inadvertently in early 1912.

On 13 March Lieutenant Colonel Sackville-West, the head of MO2c, wrote to Russell that Adolph Lindner had been in touch with the War Office offering to sell them the rights to 'a flying machine with automatic stability'. Would Russell go to the Johannisthal flying ground to watch a demonstration of this vehicle?[51] Russell replied a week later. As he informed MO2c, he had been with Watson to Johannisthal, where 'no such person as Adolph Lindner has ever been heard of'. However, it was not a wasted trip, because, while there, he had seen 'a wonderful machine', one which he recommended enthusiastically. The machine in question was the Fokker-Eindecker; its designer and pilot was none other than the legendary Anton Fokker.[52] In a supplementary memorandum, written the very same day, Russell outlined his impressions of both the inventor and his plane. The former was described in glowing terms. Fokker, he ventured, 'appears to be endowed in a somewhat remarkable degree with the qualities which go to make not only a skilful and daring aviator, but also a most successful constructor'. As to the machine, this received even greater accolades. Special praise was given to its performance in flight:

A thirty-five to forty mile wind was blowing, not evenly, but in a gusty and treacherous fashion. No other aviator dared to fly; the day was decided to be much too bad. This young man, however, insisted on going up to show the remarkable stability of his machine. . . .

[49] Russell, MA 27/11, 31 Oct. 1911, FO 371/1126.
[50] Watson and Russell, NA 40/11, MA 37/11, 11 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/2311/221/3.
[51] Sackville-West to Russell, 13 Mar. 1912, WO 32/18985.
[52] Russell, Memorandum No. 1417, 20 Mar. 1912, ibid.

He then gave us a most remarkable display, flying with the wind, across the wind and against the wind, turning with consummate ease and certainty. . . .

There seems to be some quite unusual quality in this aeroplane, which during its flight made it again and again recover its equilibrium, yielding and accommodating itself to the wind.

This impressive performance was not the only aspect of the Eindecker to attract Russell's praise; he also noted its simplicity of construction and its ready transportability: 'this machine is taken to pieces and put together again with astonishing ease and speed. This is naturally a great advantage in a military aeroplane and most convenient for transport purposes.' As a result of everything he had learnt about Fokker's machine, Russell made a plea for the War Office to take an interest in the Dutchman's work: 'I strongly urge that the machines made by this young man not only be not lost sight of, but that some further action be taken in this matter.'[53] Watson concurred. Writing for the benefit of the naval authorities, he stated that 'Herr Fokker and his aeroplane are well spoken of at Johannisthal' and added that 'the military attaché and I witnessed a very good flight by him under adverse circumstances'. Accordingly, he also suggested that efforts be undertaken to get 'a special report on this machine'.[54]

Although the attachés had an evident and growing respect for the progress of German aviation, more circumspection was shown in relation to German pilots. Russell in particular did not seem to think that aviation was an area where Germans possessed a natural talent. In his view, any skill they demonstrated was due to practice and perseverance rather than any inherent gift for piloting. For instance, in December 1912, he noted: 'Although it can hardly be said to lie in the genius of the German people to make good aviators, very great advances have been made during the past year in training pilots and gaining experience in the science of aeroplane work.'[55] A year later he recorded a similar view: 'Although the genius of the German people hardly lies in this direction, the energy and efficiency [with] which they are endeavouring to master the art and science of flight is both commendable and worthy of notice.'[56] This was not a tenable position and eventually Russell was forced to acknowledge that even Germans could make naturally accomplished pilots. Reporting in conjunction with his new naval colleague, Captain Henderson, on a long-distance flying competition, the Prince Henry Circuit, held in the summer of 1914, the attaché proclaimed that 'the type of German flying officer [of that time] . . . was remarkably different from the well-known heavy Teutonic type [of previous years]'. Rather, those witnessed at the circuit were 'fine-drawn, lean, determined looking youngsters, among whom a very fine spirit prevails'. This transformation was attributed 'chiefly to the monotony of regimental service and the almost total absence of opportunity for enthusiastic

[53] Russell, Memorandum No. 1427, 20 Mar. 1912, WO 32/18984.
[54] Watson, NA 27/12, 12 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1370.
[55] Russell, MA 42/12, 10 Dec. 1912, ibid.
[56] Russell, MA 45/13, 11 Dec. 1913, FO 371/1647.

and energetic officers otherwise to distinguish themselves', a situation that encouraged the best and most enterprising to volunteer for the flying service. As a result, the attachés concluded:

> Although it might have been thought that it hardly lay in the genius of the German people to produce a race of really first class aviators, the contrary appears to be the case. The standard of skill and dash among the flying officers has risen during the last year in a truly remarkable manner and the spirit which obtains in the flying battalions may certainly be said to leave nothing to be desired. . . . Relentless prosecution of the art of flying is the order of the day.[57]

The tenacity displayed by the pilots in completing the Prince Henry Circuit, a cross-county race lasting six days and covering a thousand miles, doubtless contributed to this view. So, too, did earlier German aviation achievements. One of these was 'the remarkable flight of the German aviator Victor Stöffel'. In October 1913, 'within a space of 24 hrs and 36 minutes' Stöffel 'traversed a distance of 2,200 km (1,375 miles)'. Russell could not help but be impressed: 'Had Stöffel accomplished the same distance in a straight line, he could have flown from Berlin to Oporto in Portugal, Biskra in Algeria, Archangel on the White Sea, Hammerfest in Northern Norway or even the coast of Ireland.'[58] The implications of this were obvious.

As we can see, although Trench had been rather sceptical about German progress with aircraft, his successors did not share this view. Russell, Watson, and Henderson all sent back reports of German successes with heavier-than-air flight. Not only did they acknowledge that the Germans possessed some highly capable aircraft, but there was also a growing, if belated, respect for German aviators. Additionally, it was understood that the Germans themselves expected aeroplanes to make a major contribution in the event of war. Russell articulated the four areas where the Reich authorities anticipated aeroplanes having an effect: reconnaissance, observation of fire, communications, and offensive action.[59]

Yet, despite this catalogue of achievements, the attachés nonetheless believed that Germany, while obviously ahead of Britain in terms of airships, lagged when it came to aircraft. However, this retarded position was more a question of organization and policy than technical skill. As they explained in June 1914:

> In flying with 'heavier than air' machines, the Germans appear to have arrived at a point which we reached a year or two ago. They are making exhaustive trials of aeroplanes most suited to their military needs, but have not yet settled on the best type of machine. They are still learning to fly and have not yet seriously considered the question of 'fighting aeroplanes'.[60]

Thus, while German pilots might now have dash and pluck and while Fokker might produce wonderful machines, the attachés evidently believed that the

[57] Henderson and Russell, NA 24/14, MA 19/14, 10 June 1914, AIR 1/626/17/32.
[58] Russell, Memorandum No. 1844, 2 Dec. 1913, AIR 1/787/204/4/598.
[59] Russell, MA 42/12, 10 Dec. 1912, FO 371/1370.
[60] Henderson and Russell, NA 24/14, MA 19/14, 10 June 1914, AIR 1/626/17/32.

German authorities had yet to back this up with clear and definitive leadership. Only two months later this view would be put to the test.

GERMAN DESTROYERS AND SUBMARINES

The Royal Navy in the early twentieth century was both an enthusiastic advocate and also a regular consumer of technological improvements. This was an era in which, confounding the stereotype of the reactionary sea captain wedded to outmoded tradition, sails, and tar, many new and progressive material developments were being embraced. It was, for example, in this period, under the leadership of the visionary First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher, that the British introduced the all big gun battleship, HMS *Dreadnought*. And these years also saw a large number of other technological innovations being adopted by the senior service. Indeed, so pioneering was it that it regularly received accolades from foreign observers. The American naval attaché in London was one of those who praised the Royal Navy's positive approach to change. As he reported, great advances had been made 'in turbine machinery, hydraulic and electrically controlled gun mountings and liquid fuel boilers'.[61]

The enthusiasm shown by the Admiralty for materiel innovation in its own ships spilt over into an avid interest in how other countries' navies were progressing. For obvious geopolitical reasons, particular fascination was reserved for the expanding maritime power across the North Sea, namely Germany, and technological advances in this nation's fleet were subject to special scrutiny. Numerous areas of progress attracted the Admiralty's attention, resulting in the wish for information on everything from anti-rolling tanks through to underwater signalling devices. This, of course, created a great deal of work for the naval attachés, who were expected to procure much of this data. It is beyond the scope of this volume to cover their efforts in all of these areas. However, a survey of their reporting on torpedo craft, both destroyers and submarines, will illustrate their role in providing material on German technical progress.

The Admiralty's interest in German destroyers, or torpedo boats, as the Germans called them, was a matter of long standing, as was their desire to have the naval attaché in Berlin obtain information on these vessels. It was no coincidence, for example, that upon departing for Germany in February 1906, Dumas should have been instructed by Henry Jackson, the Controller of the Navy, to supply his department above all else with data on German destroyers.[62] This, it seems, was a matter of the highest priority.[63] Nor was it only the Controller who expressed this

[61] X (American naval attaché in London), 26 Feb. 1908, NARA: RG38, u-1-e, 08/118.

[62] Dumas Diary, 2 Feb. 1906.

[63] One indication of the importance of this topic is that the Controller's Department, which in this period kept almost no Ships Covers on foreign vessels, maintained two volumes on foreign destroyers, NMM: Ships Covers 274 and 426.

compelling interest. Admiral Fisher both wrote to Dumas asking about the state of German destroyers and devoted the better part of an entire interview to this topic. As Dumas recorded: 'he wanted details and especially as to the present state of the German destroyers'.[64] Given this evident imperative, it is hardly surprising that the officers sent to Berlin made every effort to gather material on these boats. The particulars they supplied fell into three categories.

The first consisted of technical information on the boats themselves. Some details were obtained through conversation with German naval officers, such as Captain Rieve, the head of the Torpedo Section at the Reichsmarineamt. In November 1903, he informed Allenby that while Germany's current torpedo boats were vessels of 390 tons, capable of carrying 130 tons of coal, the navy proposed to build bigger vessels in the future. These would be destroyers of 443 tons that could ship more coal and heavier guns. It was also anticipated that they would be faster than their predecessors.[65] Another conversation with Rieve some three years later elicited the news that German boats were being designed to carry more fuel in order to give them greater independence from the coaling base.[66]

Yet, useful though Rieve was, most of the necessary information was obtained by visiting German shipyards. For instance, while in Kiel in September 1903, Allenby was able to inspect one of the Germania-built boats. In addition to his impressions of the vessel, which he described as being totally functional—'everything appears for use and not ornament'—the attaché was able to record details of the dimensions, horsepower, speed, and crew complement.[67] Likewise, a trip by Dumas to Elbing elicited the following information:

> They are building at present 12 H. S. torpedo boats . . .
>
> The dimensions are as follows:—
>
> 600 tons; 30 knots; twin screws; bow rudders; 4 boilers, Schichau's W.T. type and carry 150 tons [of coal]; Length, 68 metres; beam, 7.8 metres; draught, 2.2 metres; armament, four 8.8 cm. guns and 2 Maxims, one searchlight and 3 torpedo tubes.
>
> Coal protection only and no armour. Plates 7.5 mm. amidships and 6 mm. at the ends. . . .[68]

The British naval attachés also sent back dispatches on the crews of these vessels. These reports were always highly favourable. Allenby, for example, noted that 'the personnel of the torpedo boats are in a high state of efficiency'.[69] The reason for this was that destroyer crews formed an elite group. As Captain Watson explained, the naval authorities made every effort to man destroyers with people who were already accomplished seamen. Thus, 'as far as possible', he reported, it

[64] Dumas Diary, 6 and 16 Nov. 1907.

[65] Allenby, 21 Nov. 1903, 'Germany. Submerged Tubes, Wireless Telegraphy, Pontoon Target. Destroyers Notes on', NMM: Ships Cover 274.

[66] Allenby, 17 Feb. 1906, 'Germany. Naval Notes', ibid.

[67] Allenby, NA 27/03, 10 Oct. 1903, ibid.

[68] Dumas, NA 32/06, 12 July 1906, ibid.

[69] Allenby, NA 7/05, 11 May 1905, ADM 231/44.

was 'North Sea Fishermen who man the Destroyers'.[70] Furthermore, although the German navy was manned largely by conscripts, Watson informed the NID that these boats had a higher than average complement of volunteers and long-service men.[71] The result of these two circumstances was that German destroyer crews were among the best. As Watson elaborated, 'the dashing ability of the Personnel of the Destroyer [Branch] . . . and their intimate acquaintance with waters in which war would be waged, is often spoken of'.[72] He even paid them the ultimate compliment of suggesting that, man for man, they might be 'as able and daring' as their Royal Navy equivalents.[73]

The final aspect of the attachés' reporting on destroyers concerned the use to which these fine and ably crewed vessels would be put should a conflict between Britain and Germany ever arise. One of the first commentators on German torpedo boat tactics was Allenby, who informed the DNI that he expected offensive action by these craft to play a major part in German battle plans:

> By this mail I have forwarded a few remarks on the recent Russian defeat—I am told the writer, a retired Captain, is not thought much of—I was, however, much struck by the delighted expression of the Naval Captain who pointed to the splendid results of the '*Gunfire first*' and '*torpedo boats afterwards*'. I think we shall find this method will be one of the (if not the *one*) chief points of an action with a German fleet—gunfire until the anti-torpedo boats are knocked out, then a 'cloud' of torpedo boats.[74]

The manner in which such an attack would be organized was described in a subsequent dispatch. The German destroyers would steam under the lee of a column of larger vessels and at the appropriate moment execute a 'breaking through' manœuvre, passing through the line to engage the enemy. The large number of torpedo boats that needed repairs after having been rammed when misjudging the distance when 'breaking through' the line was testimony, the attaché believed, to the constant practice of this manœuvre.[75]

Allenby's deductions were largely accepted by his successors. Dumas also believed that in any naval engagement torpedo boats would play a prominent role. The Germans, he reported, would use them 'with the utmost vigour', even 'rashly', in the context of battle.[76] With regard to the likely method of attack, Dumas concurred in his predecessor's prediction of a 'breaking through' manœuvre: 'The fact of torpedo boats breaking through the lines and coming forward to the attack on battleships in broad daylight seems to be an evolution frequently carried out in the German Navy when engaged in battle tactics.'[77]

[70] Watson, NA 28/11, 12 Oct. 1911, FO 371/1127.
[71] NID Memorandum, May 1914, 'German Destroyer Organisation', ADM 137/3854.
[72] Watson, NA 34/11, 11 Nov. 1911, FO 244/770.
[73] Watson, NA 28/11, 12 Oct. 1911, FO 371/1127.
[74] Allenby to Ottley, 14 June 1905, CAB 17/61. Emphasis in the original.
[75] Allenby, NA 14/05, 26 Oct. 1905, ADM 231/46.
[76] Précis of Dumas, NA 49/06, 21 Sept. 1906. Cited in Watson, NARS 18/13, 8 July 1913, ADM 137/3869.
[77] Dumas, NA 44/07, 11 Aug. 1907, FO 371/262.

Accordingly, there was every reason to suppose that it would occur in actual warfare. Dumas's other comments on German destroyer tactics included the observation that they started their operations in a V formation and that they scattered prior to the actual attack and reformed afterwards.[78] He also believed that they endeavoured to get very close to their targets before firing, launching torpedoes in daytime from no more than 1,500 metres and by night at a maximum of 600 metres.[79]

The ideas about German destroyer tactics advanced by Allenby and Dumas, were confirmed by Watson, who devoted considerable efforts to elaborating on German policy in respect of torpedo craft. In his view, the German naval authorities had developed three forms of destroyer attack. The first of these, which he termed the 'Durch' approach, was the manœuvre already outlined by his predecessors. In Watson's description, it consisted of 'destroyers passing through their own line of battleships and proceeding from their lee to attack the enemy'.[80] That this was potentially a hazardous evolution was evident from the many accidents that occurred in practising it. Watson reported the loss of two vessels, *G.171* and *S.178*, both of which sank while attempting to pass through the line.[81] Nevertheless, the attaché still believed that the German sailors were highly proficient practitioners of this manœuvre. He had even heard of destroyer captains who had such a perfect feel for the movement of their vessels that they could remove a ladder hanging from the stern of a battleship whilst passing through their line.[82] The second form of attack, termed 'Darauf' ('towards'), was a 'night method' of combat. Mentioned for the first time by Watson in November 1910 and apparently described on other occasions thereafter, sadly none of his descriptions of this evolution have survived.[83] The final form of destroyer attack consisted of torpedo boats operating offensively from under the cover of a small cruiser. As Watson explained, the practice was to attach a half flotilla of destroyers—five boats—to a small fast cruiser 'when carrying out offensive exercises against an enemy's battle fleet'. The purpose of this was partly to use the cruiser as a mother ship and partly to aid the destroyers in their assault. Its utility in this latter capacity was straightforward:

> the small cruiser was also used to screen and assist the half flotilla of destroyers in making the attack as suddenly as possible, by the boats rushing to the attack at full speed from under the stern of the cruiser; the cruiser having led them up to that moment at a high rate of speed; the cruiser, at the moment of giving the order to the destroyers to attack, assisting to blind the enemy by working her search-lights with a 'shimmering motion'.[84]

[78] Dumas, NA 66/07, 6 Dec. 1907, FO 371/263.

[79] Extract from Dumas, NARS 60/08, 12 May 1908. Cited in Watson, NARS 18/13, 8 July 1913, ADM 137/3869.

[80] Watson, NA Denmark 4/12, 30 May 1912, FO 371/1377.

[81] Watson, NA 74/12, 16 Oct. 1912, and NA 13/13, 8 Mar. 1913, FO 371/1378 and Admiralty Library: Ca2053.

[82] Watson, NA Denmark 4/12, 30 May 1912, FO 371/1377.

[83] This form of attack was outlined in NARS 94/10, 26 Nov. 1910, This report no longer survives, but a description is in the digest, ADM 12/1478, Cut 52.

[84] Watson, NA 34/13, 27 Aug. 1913, FO 371/1652.

As we can see, the British naval attachés provided a great deal of information about German destroyers. They monitored the building of these vessels, they observed and commented upon the calibre of their officers and ratings, and they analysed the tactical conceptions that were being developed for their use. In so doing, they made it plain that they considered the German destroyer flotillas a formidable weapon of war.

Another advance in sea-power technology that was subject to considerable scrutiny by the naval attachés was the development of German submarines. The first U-boat built in Germany, an experimental craft called *Forelle*, was lowered into the water on 8 June 1903. The earliest known attaché report on submarines was penned by Captain Ewart four days later. Sadly, no copy of the document has survived.[85] Fortunately, there are still examples of the information that was sent back by his successor. According to Allenby, who arrived in Berlin in August 1903, the climate at that time was very chilly there towards submersible craft of any kind. Few in the naval hierarchy wished to invest funds in their development. Writing about his first visit to Wilhelmshaven in September, Allenby noted no real enthusiasm about submarines among the German officers: 'One Rear-Admiral, in a good position to give an opinion, stated that he did not believe in submarines, and only in fine weather might they be expected to do anything. . . . [A] Captain of the staff stated, "we might get a couple for experiments, but experiments are expensive." '[86]

This reticence towards submarines, which, had Allenby but known it, perfectly reflected Admiral Tirpitz's hostility to spending money on such craft, continued to feature in Allenby's reports during 1904. In September of that year, he visited Krupp's Germania yard at Kiel, where he had a revealing discussion with its managing director, Admiral Brandon. The latter informed his British guest both of his own belief in the submarine and also of the work his company was doing, at its own expense, to develop a capacity to design and build such vessels:

> he stated that he was strongly in favour of experimenting with submarines. The first submarine which the firm had built was about 98 feet long. This boat, as an experiment, was satisfactory, and everyone from Prince Henry downwards, who had been in it, came up convinced of the importance of the submarine. The new boat under construction is also an experimental one, an improvement on the first boat, and is from 150 to 180 tons displacement. The experiments are still in progress.

However, the Admiral also admitted that he was receiving no official support in conducting these experiments: 'At present the authorities are against them.' Yet, he was confident that 'sooner or later' the authorities would come round to his way of thinking.[87] His certainty reflected the belief, stated privately on a subsequent meeting, that while 'the present submarines are mere toys . . . there was a great future before them'.[88]

[85] Ewart, NA 22/03, 12 June 1903. The covering letter is in FO 64/1573.
[86] Allenby, 27/03, 10 Oct. 1903, ADM 231/39.
[87] Allenby, NA 10/04, 6 Oct. 1904, ADM 231/42.
[88] Allenby, NA 14/05, 26 Oct. 1905, ADM 231/46.

Whether Brandon's view was widely held in government circles was open to question. On one occasion, the attaché was berated by the Kaiser for the Royal Navy's steady construction of these craft. As Wilhelm put it: 'Submarines—why, you are going for them just because some other nation has gone in for them.'[89] Nevertheless, in 1904 a reluctant Tirpitz was eventually persuaded to place an order for a submarine and a contract for *U1* was awarded to the Germania yard in February 1905. The decision having finally been made in favour of this new technology, the reports of the British naval attaché naturally shifted away from consideration of German attitudes to the vessels and towards the technical side of German submarine construction. Thus, visiting Kiel in October 1905, Allenby provided his impressions of an experimental submarine that he witnessed there. Stating first that it was a boat of about 230 tons, with a surface speed of 11.5 knots, he continued:

> The method of propulsion submerged is electric, and on the surface is oil motor. From a short view of the boat it appears to be much more of a cigar shape than our boats. There is a large funnel inclined aft at an angle of 60° with the horizontal . . . for carrying off the gases, two periscopes and a conning tower considerably raised amidships, and one very long ventilator forward.[90]

This dispatch would be Allenby's last contribution on the question. Having observed the initial hostility to U-boats among the German naval authorities and charted the decline of this sentiment and having commented on the craft built by Germania for their own experimental purposes, he left it to his successors to report more fully on the vessels constructed thereafter.

The baton was picked up by Dumas. Arriving in Berlin in February 1906, he sent back his first information about submarines in June. The material he provided at this stage related principally to the characteristics and performance of the vessels that were being built in German yards for the Russians. The information he obtained suggested that these boats were not living up to expectations, a fact that was of considerable interest for what it revealed about the vessels ordered for the German navy. Thus, Dumas noted attentively that the manager who showed him round the Germania yard 'was loud in his depreciation of them and their design and said they were only good to travel on the surface'.[91] He also paid careful attention to the conversation of the Russian naval attaché, who told him that neither the boats built for his government nor those for the Reich had managed to attain their contract speed.[92] And this was not the only negative comment Dumas picked up about U-boats. As he reported in March 1907, Tirpitz spoke at length to the American naval attaché on 'the uses of submarines to Germany and summed it up in saying that the German waters were wholly unsuited for them'.[93] Yet, despite these views Dumas was also to report

[89] Allenby to Ottley, 14 June 1905, CAB 17/61.
[90] Allenby, NA 14/05, 26 Oct. 1905, ADM 231/46.
[91] Dumas, NA 29/06, 29 June 1906, ADM 231/46.
[92] Dumas, NA 9/07, 13 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259.
[93] Ibid.

that there were notices in the German press in favour of these vessels[94] and that it was clear from the 1908 estimates that money was going to be allocated on a greater scale to building such craft for the German navy.[95] The fruits of this funding became evident in early 1908. Passing through Kiel in early March, Dumas saw 'something, which from the shape of the frames might be a submarine . . . under construction on No. 1 slip' at the Germania yard.[96] Returning to Kiel two months later he was able to confirm this earlier impression, stating that 'two submarines were in course of construction . . . and both nearly ready for launching'.[97]

Consequently, when Dumas handed over to Captain Heath it was clear that, despite the reluctance of the naval authorities, who had not been impressed by the early vessels, Germany was embarking upon a submarine-building programme. It was left to Heath to uncover the details of this programme, the likely specifications of the U-boats constructed, and any hint as to Germany's tactical conception of the uses of such vessels.

With regard to ascertaining the intended nature of the submarine-building programme, Heath was largely limited to two sources: what he could discover from the naval estimates and the press and what he could uncover from visits to the two German dockyards, the Imperial Works at Danzig and the Germania yard at Kiel, where U-boats were built. The former suggested to Heath that the Germans had every intention of constructing submarines in increasing numbers. Analysing the naval estimates for 1909–10, he noted that a 'sum of ten million marks is allowed for building and experimenting with submarines, as against 7,000,000 last year'. He further recorded that a 'new slip for submarines' was going to be erected at Danzig. All of this implied that U-boats were going to be playing a greater role in the German navy. Heath's visits to the German shipyards led him to similar deductions and resulted in him making regular reports about the advanced pace of German U-boat-building. For example, visiting the Germania works in July 1909, he reported at least four vessels being built: 'Of submarines, *U5* to *U8* are under construction, it is not yet known about the work of this year's programme.' Likewise, a trip to Danzig in April 1910 gave Heath the opportunity to view the slips there. Although his observations were obscured by some scantling and canvas sheeting, the attaché estimated that 'at least four, and possibly six' submarines were on the stocks.[98] This confirmed the information that Heath had received from other unnamed sources that 'at Danzig Imp Yard, there are six submarines in course of construction on the slips'.[99] Taken cumulatively, all this information suggested an extensive German programme and it is,

[94] Dumas, NA 12/07, 21 Mar. 1907. *BD*, vi, 19.
[95] Dumas, NA 59/07, 23 Oct. 1907, and NA 64/07, 2 Dec. 1907, ibid. 65 and 74.
[96] Dumas, NA 13/08, 2 Mar. 1908, FO 371/458.
[97] Dumas, NA 23/08, 30 Apr. 1908, FO 371/459.
[98] Heath, NA 17/10, 22 Apr. 1910, FO 371/901.
[99] Heath, NA 11/10, 22 Mar. 1910, ibid.

therefore, hardly surprising that Heath predicted that there could be ten U-boats in service at the end of the 1909–10 budget year.[100]

Just as Heath provided an estimate on the magnitude of the German programme, he also endeavoured to address the question of the specifications of the submarines that would be built under it. Two issues in particular exercised the attaché. One was the question of engines. According to Heath's information, 'the contract for submarine motors up to *U16*' had been given to the Körting Co., who produced a reasonably efficient six-cylinder two-cycle heavy oil (kerosene) engine that was 'a good deal superior to Daimler's'.[101] The other issue was the question of submarine displacement. Heath was convinced that the Germans intended to build ever bigger U-boats. Thus, as early as August 1908 he reported that the *U1* was about 200 tons and that subsequent boats built at Germania would be over 300 tons.[102] He repeated this point in October.[103] Then, in August 1909, he sent back further information: 'I have been informed that the submarines *U5* to *U8* constructed by Germania Yard, are considerably larger than *U1* to *U3*; it was hinted they are more seaworthy and habitable, and have an increased radius of action.'[104]

In relation to the final question, Heath was decidedly of the opinion that the German naval authorities valued submarines not for their defensive qualities in the role of coastal and harbour protection, but for their value as offensive weapons on the high seas. He articulated this point on more than one occasion. In October 1908, a mere three months into his posting, the attaché reported a rumour that extra money was to be found in order to build submarines of greater size. His comment on this rumour is instructive: 'It is hardly necessary to point out that greater displacement is another way of expressing greater radius of action, and that it is hardly likely that the new boats are designed solely for defensive purposes.'[105] He was still expressing similar views towards the end of his period in Berlin. In April 1910, for example, he reported 'a strong rumour' that designs for submarines showed 'a large rise in displacement, it is said up to 1000 tons'. The reason for this, he stated, was that 'the naval authorities consider that as ports are already sufficiently protected, all efforts should be directed to developing craft of this nature, capable of carrying out offensive operations'.[106] A month later, he followed this up with information from the newspapers, which suggested that 'submarines will no longer be confined to coast work, but will exercise more in the open sea'.[107]

As we can see, Heath's contention was that the Germans had a substantial and expanding submarine-building programme, were producing an ever-increasing number of larger boats, and envisaged deploying them in an offensive capacity

[100] Heath, NA 15/09, 24 May 1909, FO 371/674.
[101] Extract from NID 625, 2 June 1909, ADM 137/3905.
[102] Heath, NA 38/08, *c.* 13 Aug. 1908, and NA 39/08, 25 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[103] Heath, NA 47/08, 21 Oct. 1908, FO 371/462.
[104] Extract from NARS 89/09 [NID 911], 11 Aug. 1909, ADM 137/3905.
[105] Heath, NA 47/08, 21 Oct. 1908, FO 371/462.
[106] Heath, NA 16/10, 14 Apr. 1910, FO 371/901.
[107] Extract from NID 472, 5 May 1910, ADM 137/3905.

away from the German coasts. Heath's successor, Watson, accepted these findings and continued reporting from where Heath had left off. Thus, on technical matters, just as Heath had commented on the use of kerosene engines, so too did Watson, who observed the practical problem with such motors. After a visit to Kiel in September 1910, he recorded watching *U1*, *U3*, and *U4* proceeding out of harbour. 'Their smoke was exceedingly great,' he noted, 'and they could be traced to the mouth of the harbour by it.'[108] Another visit to Kiel in June 1912 led to similar observations. The submarines, he remarked: 'appeared to make an extraordinary amount of whitish smoke . . . which in some cases had a bluish tinge, and in some cases turning to black. In several of the boats the noise of the engines sounded all over the harbour, and a considerable amount of misfiring was heard.'[109] Not surprisingly, given this rather unwelcome characteristic, Watson reported that the Germans were eagerly looking for a new system of propulsion, one that was less of an impediment to stealthy travelling. According to the attaché several unlikely possibilities were tested, including 'engines designed to ignite a fine pulverized coal'.[110] However, the key new technology was the diesel engine. Watson notified the NID in May 1911 that several manufacturers were being invited to submit their diesels to competitive trials.[111] He followed this up with the news that 'a section of opinion exists at Krupps that a diesel motor for use under water will be the future propulsive power of submarines'.[112] This was then confirmed with Watson reporting that 'in future all German submarines are to have diesel motors'. Details of the types of motors followed. According to the attaché both Krupp and Augsburg had produced 850 HP engines, the former a two-cycle device, the latter a four-cycle one. Newer and more powerful variants, including a Krupp motor of 1140 HP, were apparently also on the way.[113]

Like Heath, Watson also reported frequently on the apparently increasing displacement of U-boats. In November 1910, he informed his superiors that plans existed for a 1,000-ton vessel and that these had been placed before the Kaiser.[114] Such a boat, he later stated, would possess the 'sea keeping capacity to enable her to go round the British Isles'.[115] This was followed, in February 1911, with a report that there was 'further confirmation that the latest boats are to be 1000 tons'.[116]

Watson also replicated Heath's interest in the number of submarines being built for the German navy. As with his predecessor, he anticipated a large and growing programme, reporting early on in his attachéship the widespread wish among Germans to see an 'expansion of their submarine service'. Such views were attributed

[108] Watson, NARS 85/10, 19 Oct. 1910, NMM: Ships Cover 274.
[109] Extract from NID 442, 6 July 1912, ADM 137/3905.
[110] Watson, NA 49/10, 13 Dec. 1910, FO 244/745.
[111] Extract from NID 198, 11 May 1911, ADM 137/3905.
[112] Extract from NID 253, 15 May 1911, ibid.
[113] Extract from an unidentified report by Watson, 18 Nov. 1912, ibid.
[114] Watson, NA 45/10, 10 Nov. 1910, FO 371/901.
[115] Watson, NA 49/10, 13 Dec. 1910, FO 244/745.
[116] Extract from NID 90, 10 Feb. 1911, ADM 137/3905.

first to naval professionals. As the attaché explained: 'I have met with an evident desire on the part of Naval Officers to hasten onwards Nos. and efficiency in this arm.'[117] They were also expressed in the newspapers: 'In regard to naval expansion press articles in favour of more submarines also appear, and now the initial steps have been taken a rapid development of this arm may be expected.'[118] Just what this meant in numerical terms was explained by the attaché some nine months later when he remarked: 'In regard to the suggestion of increase of German submarines information I have received lately points to Germany having about twenty eight boats built and building.'[119] In July 1912, his estimate had grown to thirty-two.[120] By October it had increased still further. He now believed that twenty-two vessels were 'actually ready for service', that six boats of the 1912 estimates were under construction at Kiel and that 'of 11 submarines to be included for the Estimates for next year (1913), 5 of these boats have already been placed under construction'.[121] In short, the attaché believed that the Germans had a programme for thirty-nine U-boats, some of which were being built ahead of schedule. Fortunately, unlike suggestions of accelerated battleship construction in 1908, which caused a major naval scare, this report did not lead to a comparable Anglo-German 'acceleration crisis' over submersible craft.

Watson's final contribution to the submarine question concerned his estimation of how Germany would deploy these vessels. Like Heath, he believed that the Reich authorities envisaged using them in an offensive role. However, unlike his predecessor who drew this conclusion on the basis of the growing displacement of the German U-boats, Watson made this assessment as a result of his appraisals of the tactics employed in German naval exercises. His first mention of the aggressive use of submarines came from October 1910. As part of a general summary of naval affairs, he reported that, during a voyage by the High Sea Fleet from Kiel to Danzig, submarines were ordered to make a trial attack on the passing warships. Admittedly, he noted that this action was not a success. 'The general opinion', he remarked, 'was that they did not do well.' However, he went on to observe that this was doubtless 'due to lack of experience . . . in attack methods, which will soon be altered by the greater practice made possible by the increasing number of submarines and the establishment of a Submarine School'.[122] Evidently, this bore dividends, for in subsequent years Watson indicated that submarine operations were creating a much more favourable impression. 'I would add, as worthy of note,' he wrote in his report on the 1913 German naval manœuvres, 'that 1910 was the first year in which German submarines executed attacks on the fleet, and that their efforts were then somewhat sneered at by the fleet. I understand, from

[117] Watson, NA 42/10, 21 Oct. 1910, FO 371/901.
[118] Watson, NA 4/11, 17 Feb. 1911, *BD*, vi. 589.
[119] Watson, NA 33/11, 30 Nov. 1911, FO 371/1125.
[120] Extract from NID 442, 6 July 1912, ADM 137/3905.
[121] Watson, NA 77/12, 18 Oct. 1912, FO 371/1378.
[122] Watson, NARS 85/10, 21 Oct. 1910, NMM: Ships Cover 274.

German Naval Officers, that they rate the work of submarines in 1912 and 1913 very highly.'[123] Just what this work consisted of was made clear in other reports. The Germans, Watson believed, proposed to use 'submarines to attack the enemy's battleships'. In any action, he commented, 'the German Fleet tactics would be directed to draw our Fleet towards the Submarines'.[124]

Thus, the British naval attachés in Berlin clearly took a keen interest in the development of German submarines. Although they observed the Reichmarineamt's initial lack of enthusiasm for these craft, they commented extensively on the technical qualities of German vessels once the decision was made to embark upon a building programme. Particular attention was placed on the increasing size of U-boats and the development of improved engines. The information gathered on these points, when added to the indications that a big effort was being made to increase the German submarine fleet, led to several attachés suggesting that the Germany navy viewed these craft as effective offensive weapons.

MOTOR VEHICLES

Given that the Prussian army was considered by most observers to be the finest instrument of military power anywhere on the globe, it is hardly surprising that the British military attachés in Berlin should have taken a keen interest in its equipment. The reports they submitted covered a wide variety of items. For example, Waters wrote a dispatch on the German foreign-service helmet, Gleichen produced a report on field uniforms, Trench penned a description of their field kitchens, and Russell elaborated on the German use of searchlight sections.[125] There were also reports on wireless telegraphy, new explosives, fuels, and illuminants, as well as on rifles and artillery. The focus of this section will not, however, be on any of the above topics, but on the question of mechanization. What did the military attachés report about the German efforts to harness the internal combustion engine for military purposes?

As is often the case, the earliest military records on this topic no longer exist. Thus, while we know that Waters reported in October 1901 on 'Automobiles in the German Army' and that Gleichen added his views in February 1905 as did Trench in December 1906, there is no record of what they actually said.[126] The first surviving reference comes from the embassy's annual report for 1906. In the

[123] Watson, NA 40/13, 29 Sept. 1913, FO 371/1653.

[124] Watson, NA 75/12, 16 Oct. 1912, and NA Denmark 4/12, 30 May 1912, FO 371/1378 and FO 371/1377.

[125] The reports in question are Waters, MA 10/00, *c.* 10 Nov. 1900; Gleichen, MA 19/05, *c.* 27 Apr. 1905; Trench MA 5/09, 22 Jan. 1909; and Russell, MA 18/12, 3 May 1912. See FO 64/1495; FO 64/1616; FO 371/671; and FO 371/1375.

[126] Waters, MA 23/01, 11 Oct. 1901, FO 64/1522. Gleichen, MA 5/05, 8 Feb. 1905, FO 64/1616. Trench MA 28, 28 Dec. 1906, FO 371/80. None of these reports are extant; only the covering letters survive.

section on 'military policy and armaments', Trench noted that trials with what he termed 'road trains' had taken place. These experiments, he reported, had 'proved so successful' that there seemed every likelihood that a number of vehicles would be purchased for the army.[127] Details of further experiments with what were now referred to as 'power traction vehicles' soon followed. In April 1908, he reported on the use of motor vehicles at the Posen manœuvres. A total of twenty-nine petrol-powered wagons, to which were attached some thirty-nine trailers, were tested for their utility in transportation. It had been hoped, depending on the terrain to be navigated and the load to be carried, that these vehicles could cover anywhere between 30 and 100 kilometres in a day. 'The results', Trench noted, 'exceeded expectations.' Consequently, he thought it likely that efforts would be made to secure the use of a greater quantity of vehicles for the army by offering subsidies to private owners who would place their vehicles at the army's disposal in time of war.[128] This was confirmed in January 1909, at which time Trench also reported that the Prussian military estimates for 1909 contained the sum of £135,437 for work with motor vehicles. This was indicative of 'the great importance attached by the German Military Authorities to the provision in the country of a large stock of power-traction vehicles of a type suitable for army use in time of war'.[129] Other evidence of the significance attached to mechanized transport came in the form of a competition for 'weight-carrying power-traction vehicles' that was 'organized by the German Imperial Automobile Club and the *Verein deutscher Motorfahrzeug-Industrieller* with the support of the inspector of Transmission Troops'. The purpose of the competition was to identify those vehicles that were suitable for military use and which might claim a subsidy on the condition of their being available for requisition in time of war.[130] In effect, therefore, the competition was an extension of the policy Trench had anticipated a year previously.

Trench's conviction that the German military authorities placed great store in mechanized transportation naturally led him to articulate not only the methods adopted to promote motor vehicles, but also the uses to which they were put when available. These were diverse. Trench knew of cases where 'power vehicles for the rapid transport of the sick' had been supplied to garrison hospitals. Equally, he had heard of trucks being used as 'power meat-wagons'. 'The outlying forts at Metz', he wrote, 'having suffered from undesirable delays in the supply of the meat, a Gaggenau wagon with ice-chamber fittings has been supplied.' However, he also reported on more definitively military applications of motor vehicles. Thus, he noted that a large number of army units had purchased motor cycles. These could be used for a wide range of purposes. One obvious function was as a tool for 'preliminary reconnaissance' and Trench reported that cyclists had been

[127] Section on 'Military Policy and Armaments' in 'General Report on Germany for 1906', 24 May 1907, FO 371/260.
[128] Trench, MA 92, 16 Apr. 1908, FO 371/459.
[129] Trench, MA 3/09, 12 Jan. 1909, FO 371/671.
[130] Trench, MA 15/09, 7 Apr. 1909, ibid.

deployed in this capacity in the recent imperial manœuvres. Another application was 'orderly duties'. There was, the attaché remarked, a 'saving [of] horse flesh' in using motor cycles rather than stallions for delivering messages. Finally, Trench noted that the German army was experimenting with 'armoured vehicles'. In his first report on this topic, the colonel listed two examples: a mobile anti-aircraft gun—effectively a truck with a 2 inch quick-firing cannon mounted on it—and a prototype armoured car—a Mercedes with plank armour and a fitted machine gun.[131] Four months later, he noted that these vehicles had been tested at manœuvres. The results of these experiments were not mentioned.[132] However, it was clear that the German army was undertaking a variety of tests with motor vehicles at manœuvres. Two weeks later, Trench noted that, at the exercises carried out by the Ninth Corps, motor cyclists were to replace cavalry for reconnaissance duties.[133]

It seems clear that Trench was impressed both by the German use of 'power traction vehicles' and by the schemes developed by the Prussian War Office to encourage the purchase of such vehicles by the German public. There were, he recorded, 41,727 'power-vehicles of all kinds' in Germany at the beginning of 1909, a military resource of some value.[134] However, if Trench wrote on many occasions about German trials with motor vehicles, his successor, Russell, was more laconic on the matter. The only dispatches he produced on this topic during the first two years of his appointment were a summary of 'expenditure in Germany on military motor transport' written at the request of the War Office and a précis of press articles on the topic. Despite the attaché's indifference, the reports made clear the German enthusiasm for the internal combustion engine. Whereas some 300,000 marks had been allocated to vehicles in 1903, this figure had climbed to over 2 million marks in 1911.[135] The magnitude of the German effort eventually made an impression on the attaché, especially when he came to consider the German logistical system. Commenting, as Trench had done before him, on the subsidy offered to vehicle owners who were willing to relinquish them to the army in wartime, Russell observed that there were 960 such vehicles. These, he believed, could be deployed to great effect as a fast supply train: 'by means of this wise system of subsidizing motor transport vehicles in times of peace, the German government has not only supported an important and growing industry but has also made a valuable contribution to the readiness and efficiency of the army for war'.[136] He reiterated this point in April 1914 when he again considered the question of army transport. The 'wise system of subsidizing mechanical transport vehicles', he propounded, would help ensure the effective and smooth operation of the German

[131] Trench, MA 15/09, 7 Apr. 1909, ibid.
[132] Trench, MA 31/09, 5 Aug. 1909, FO 371/675.
[133] Trench, MA 36/09, 13 Aug. 1909, ibid.
[134] Trench, MA 15/09, 7 Apr. 1909, FO 371/671.
[135] Russell, MA 9/11, 28 Apr. 1911, and MA 12/11, 4 May 1911, FO 371/1125.
[136] Russell, MA 30/13, 5 Sept. 1913, FO 371/1652.

army's supply train in the event of any mobilization for war.[137] Such a mobilization was only four months away.

Thus, when it came to reporting on the technological development of the German armed forces, Britain's service attachés in Berlin were anything but sluggardly. They submitted numerous dispatches on the German efforts to perfect and improve their equipment, providing details of the specifications, uses, and deployment of various important innovations. Moreover, these reports were often farsighted. It is notable that the British service attachés managed to focus their efforts upon some of the key areas—aviation, submarines, and mechanized transport—that would most dramatically revolutionize modern warfare. In picking out for particular scrutiny and admiration the Fokker monoplane and the diesel-powered U-boat, they also showed a remarkable ability to home in on some of the best examples of these major military advances. But that is the big picture. A proper evaluation of their work as purveyors of technical information requires some consideration of the minutiae as well. Consequently, it is worth at this juncture considering the accuracy of the material that they sent in.

Broadly speaking, the attachés did a reasonable job in collecting reliable data on German technical developments. That they made mistakes is undoubted. Watson, for example, consistently inflated the tonnage of German submarines and exaggerated the numbers of vessels being built; although, interestingly, his successor, Henderson, managed to obtain accurate data in both respects. Similarly, Watson and Russell overestimated the speed and performance of German airships, in one case by over 50 per cent.[138] Russell's initial and oft-repeated belief that Germans were genetically incapable of being natural aviators was also wide of the mark and appears somewhat comical when one considers the later exploits of Baron von Richthofen and other German air aces.

But there is another side to the ledger. It must be acknowledged that the attachés accurately read the ebb and flow of the debate in German military and naval circles about the importance of aviation and the relative merits of the different craft available. Their data on the build-up of the German airship fleet was largely accurate, as were most of their remarks about the arming of Zeppelins and their growing operational abilities. Nor should it be forgotten that these giant machines did embark upon bombing raids of the British Isles during the First World War, although how effective they were is another matter entirely. By the same token, Trench was right to belittle the German efforts with aircraft prior to 1910. Up until this point, the Reich authorities spent very little money and accordingly enjoyed correspondingly limited success with planes. Only when galvanized that year by the prospect of being eclipsed by the French did the German army make serious efforts in this direction. By then, of course, Trench had left Berlin, but his successors spotted the development and reported fulsomely on the

[137] Russell, MA 15/14, 4 Apr. 1914, FO 371/1989.

[138] Higham, *British Rigid Airship*, 57.

results. Most of their observations ranging from the use of aircraft on manœuvres through to the increasing numbers of well-trained pilots were accurate.[139]

It was not only in matters of aviation that the attachés produced accurate information. Trench and Russell were also correct in reporting that significant investments were being made by the army in motor transport. Mechanization was seen by the German military authorities as a good way to increase mobility and subsidies were paid to vehicle owners to increase the stock of suitable automobiles. Many of these were duly commandeered in 1914 to aid the advance through Belgium and France. Although breakdowns limited their utility, these vehicles were not without effect.[140]

The naval attachés who reported on the work of the German torpedo boats, the development of their tactics, and the excellence of their crews were likewise providing sound information. The same went for the information on their specifications. The tonnage and capabilities of German torpedo craft were generally appraised accurately. Of course, the same could not always be said of U-boats. However, if some of the attachés exaggerated the tonnage of German submarines, they did get other technical details right. The use of heavy oil engines, with all their disadvantages, and the subsequent change over to diesel were details that were reported accurately and quickly. There was also the question of how these vessels would be used. The British attachés, Heath and Watson especially, seem to have had a healthy respect for submarines and appear to have assumed similar views on the part of the German authorities. It is doubtful if Tirpitz was actually so enthusiastic. He remained at heart wedded to the primacy of the battle fleet and saw U-boats as at best a diversion. The leading role that Heath and Watson attributed to them was, accordingly, far from his mind. Far from showing any shortcomings in the attachés, this, in fact, suggests that they had a better sense of what the German vessels could achieve than Tirpitz. In any event, once the war began, the U-boats would prove at least as important as the attachés had predicted and would, if anything, be used more aggressively.

If the British service attachés were generally accurate in the information they provided, it is also instructive to record that their performance as gatherers of information from Germany stands comparison with the attachés that other nations sent to Berlin. Not surprisingly, given that all nations had an interest in staying informed about the latest defence technologies, all of the foreign military and naval attachés in Berlin tended to consider the same issues. Thus, we find that German developments in motorized transport were as interesting to the French and American military attachés as they were to Trench and Russell.[141]

[139] E. D. Brose, *The Kaiser's Army* (Oxford, 2001), 159–65; D. G. Herrmann, *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War* (Princeton, 1996), 138–45.

[140] Ibid. 75.

[141] The reports of the American military attaché on this topic can be found in file 7132. NARA: RG165, M1024, rolls 121–3. On the interest of the French military attaché, see Herrmann, *Arming of Europe*, 75 and 253 n. 68.

The French, who were engaged in what amounted to an 'air race' with the Germans, were also highly inquisitive about German advances in aeronautics. So, too, were the Americans. Finally, there was no shortage of foreign eyes focused on the development of German warships in general and torpedo craft in particular.[142]

How did this information compare to that provided by the British attachés? The example of aviation reporting suggests that the British officers did their work as well as anyone else. The French military attachés in Berlin, for instance, sent back very similar analyses to their British counterparts. In regard to airships, Colonel de Laguiche initially reported on the work of Gross and Parseval, noting the transportability of their experimental craft. He then observed the growing Zeppelin-mania in Germany and, upon the army acquiring one of these vessels, outlined the results of early bombing tests.[143] Laguiche's successor, Colonel Pellé, also kept tabs on the development of German blimps, but was more interested still in their experiments with aeroplanes. Like Trench, he was initially unimpressed by what he saw, noting that there were few German pilots and even fewer German-built machines. However, he was oblivious neither to the efforts that were being made at improvement nor to the successful outcome of these efforts.[144] According to Colonel Serret, the officer who succeeded Pellé, the Germans had made enormous strides by 1914.[145] This was a judgement with which Henderson and Russell would have agreed.

If the broad analysis of French military attaché reports were similar in tone to that provided in the dispatches of their British confrères, the details provided by the American officers in Berlin was no less familiar. Thus, just as Trench considered the question of German anti-aircraft artillery in June 1909, so his American colleague, Captain Samuel Shartle, examined the very same question some six months later. His report about quick-firing high velocity weapons, many of which could be vehicle-mounted, contained much the same information that Trench had provided earlier in the year.[146] Shartle, it might be noted, also sent in similar information to Watson and Russell on the Siemens-Schuckert airship.[147] In a comparable fashion, in 1914, one of his successors, Captain George Langhorne, wrote favourably about the flying skills of Anton Fokker in terms reminiscent of those used in 1912 by Russell.[148] Meanwhile, the American naval attaché, Lieutenant-Commander Walter Gherhardi, was submitting information on the performance of Zeppelin airships and on German trials with arming them.[149] These, too, resemble the reports of his British counterparts.

[142] See the reports of the American naval attaché, NARA: RG38, P-11-a, 05-162 and P-11-d, 1931.
[143] Herrmann, *Arming of Europe*, 77–9. [144] Ibid. 138–42.
[145] D. Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War* (Oxford, 1996), 330.
[146] Shartle No. 1868, 1 Dec. 1909, file 5796-1, NARA: RG165, M1024, roll 44.
[147] Shartle, No. 2435, 23 March 1912, file 6552-5, ibid., roll 91.
[148] Langhorne, No. 2967, 7 June 1914, file 6552-51, ibid.
[149] Z (American naval attaché in Berlin) to ONI, 12 Aug. 1913 and 28 Nov. 1913, NARA: RG 38, A-1-F, 3181.

Thus, it can be concluded that, when it came to gathering technical information, the British service attachés in Berlin were capable officers both in absolute and in comparative terms. The data they supplied, while not faultless, was generally reliable and properly considered. It was occasionally also prescient. At the same time, it can be stated that the dispatches of the British service attachés covered the key issues at least as thoroughly as those of other nations' attachés in Berlin. Their competence as observers of material developments, therefore, seems assured.

PERSONNEL

If keeping their superiors informed about technical developments was a key concern of the service attachés in Berlin, supplying information about the quality of the human aspects of the German army and navy was no less a concern. Indeed, the orders given to both attachés made it clear that such data was a priority. The instructions issued to military attachés listed numerous topics on which reports were desired. Among the issues to which they were enjoined to 'pay special attention' were:

> Qualities of the personnel—officers, non-commissioned officers and men.
> Troops or arms of the service which are better or worse than others . . .
> State of discipline; power of endurance, physical and moral; resolution in adverse circumstances; strengths and weakness of fighting spirit.[150]

Comparable orders were given to naval attachés. High on the list of topics about which it was desired that they submit information was 'personnel'. To discharge this explicit requirement for data on the abilities and fighting-power of Germany's military and naval manpower, the service attachés sent in two different kinds of report: the general and the particular. In the former, the attachés provided an overview of the issue, offering a broad perspective on the quality and attainments of the officers and men of the two services; in the latter, they focused on the personal characteristics of particular named individuals, normally senior officers likely to hold high commands in time of war. Both types of report will be examined.

MILITARY ATTACHÉ PERSPECTIVES ON GERMAN SOLDIERS AND COMMANDERS

As a result of the draconian weeding of the War Office files, the earliest surviving military attaché reports bearing upon the personnel of the German army are those written by Trench. Owing to the fact that he had served alongside the German forces operating against the Herero in South-West Africa, Trench was in a particularly

[150] War Office, 'Instructions for Military Attachés', p. 12. WO 279/647.

good position to comment upon the quality of Germany's military manpower. It is, therefore, of some interest to note that, in a colonial context at least, he was far from impressed with what he saw. The German forces, he ventured, largely due to their inexperience of fighting 'outside temperate civilized countries', were ill prepared for warfare in tropical and subtropical regions. This was especially true when it came to matters of hygiene: 'the importance of sanitation', he remarked, 'seemed in German South-West Africa to be almost entirely overlooked'. A good example of this concerned the use of latrines. As he relayed, the practice in this respect was lax: 'The men (and others) urinated freely all over the place, regardless of evil effects, and I have seen senior N.C.O.'s urinating at noon in a semi-permanent camp, a few feet from their bivouacs.' The result was that, when it came to sanitation, although 'a high standard was to be expected owing to the strict discipline of the troops . . . and the fact that the force was furnished by one of the most scientifically painstaking of civilized nations . . . the results were, nevertheless, far inferior to those obtained in the Zulu and Boer wars'.[151] This was a far from flattering conclusion and was made all the worse by the fact that Trench had been no more impressed by their conduct on the African battlefield.[152]

Of course, that Trench had some doubts about the aptitude of German forces in a colonial context did not automatically mean that he entertained similar reservations about these forces when it came to European warfare. Yet, in this context too, he was not devoid of criticisms. He did not, for example, regard the German army as especially flexible in its thought processes, expressing the view that there was an 'inadaptability' in 'the rigid Prussian system'. He also maintained that the strict training of German soldiers, while breeding commendable obedience to authority, did so at the cost of severely restricting personal initiative. The detrimental effect this produced was highlighted in the annual report for 1906:

> The fact that the iron discipline . . . does not tend exclusively to the production of 'thinking bayonets', was brought somewhat humorously to the notice of the public by the *cause célèbre* of the 'Captain of Koepernick', in which an elderly gaol-bird, a cobbler by trade, having bought the uniform of a Guards officer, relinquished a party of soldiers coming off range duty, as well as those of any police they came across, arrested the mayor and town clerk of a flourishing Berlin suburb, and carried off the contents of the municipal safe.[153]

Be that as it may, however, Trench would have been the first to recognize that the German army was not only a formidable fighting machine, but also an improving one. He had, for example, been impressed by the increasing professionalism of German forces at their annual manœuvres.[154] Additionally, he regarded the spirit and patriotism of German forces as being exceptionally good.

[151] Trench, MA 9, 18 July 1906, CO 417/430.
[152] Trench, South West Africa No. 14, 10 Oct. 1905, WO 106/269.
[153] Section on 'Military Policy and Armaments' in 'General report on Germany for 1906', 24 May 1907, FO 371/260.
[154] Trench, MA 111, 5 Oct. 1908, FO 371/462.

Trench's view of German soldiery—superb warriors, with a few minor flaws—was echoed by his successor. Observing the Pomeranian Grenadiers at the annual manœuvres, Russell was struck by the hardiness and dedication of the men:

> There does not appear to be anything new to be said about the characteristics of the German infantry. . . .
>
> The spirit shown by the troops left nothing to be desired. I asked a Pomeranian Grenadier, whose battalion I knew to have marched well over 40 kilometres that day, if he was tired. 'The Pomeranians are never tired,' was the somewhat indignant reply.

At the same time as praising the troops for their endurance, Russell also indicated a great respect for their initiative:

> The suggestion which has been made that the German infantry soldier is merely a machine is by no means a fair one. The fact that a large number of infantry soldiers carry a map in their boot, with which they follow the course of the operations, would alone appear to be a sufficient indication of the injustice of this indictment.

Yet, Russell was also aware of some important gaps in their training. One of these was the failure to appreciate the effects of modern fire. Infantry formations moved around the battlefield oblivious to the potential of cover and seemingly unaware of the targets they made. Another problem was their system of fire control, which the attaché regarded as 'very elementary'. All too often, fire was delivered 'straight to the front' without adequate thought to distribution. Consequently, in both these areas, Russell believed 'the German infantry has a good deal to learn from us'.[155] However, these failings notwithstanding, Russell regarded the German army as a 'formidable fighting machine'. 'The fixed determination to conquer at all costs' Russell wrote, '. . . has entered into the flesh and blood of the German soldiers of all ranks.' As a result, he believed that 'the vast resources in trained and untrained men at the disposal of the German Empire constitute an asset which it is hard to overestimate'.[156]

In addition to commenting on the quality of German soldiers, military attachés were supposed to furnish 'biographical notes' about the senior German commanders. Indeed, providing appraisals of the 'personal qualities of generals and officers likely to be in, or already in, high commands' was described as 'a most important duty'.[157] Sadly, very few of these appraisals have survived. Among those lost are such historically significant reports as the assessment of Helmut von Moltke made on his appointment as chief of the Great General Staff and various studies of the role of the Emperor in military matters.[158] Nevertheless, from the limited information that does still exist, it is clear that the attachés compiled very frank appraisals of the officers they encountered. A good example of this is Trench's

[155] Russell, MA 27/11, 31 Oct. 1911, FO 371/1126.
[156] Russell, MA 23/11, 22 Sept. 1911, FO 371/1127.
[157] War Office, 'Instructions for Military Attachés', pp. 12 and 17, WO 279/647.
[158] The missing dispatch on Moltke is Gleichen MA 2/06, 6 Jan. 1906, FO 371/75. An example of a missing submission on Wilhelm II is Waters MA 41/02, *c.* 18 Oct. 1902, FO 64/1552.

assessment of General Colmar von der Golz. In June 1909, this officer was given the task of reorganizing the Ottoman army, an occasion that led Trench to send in a detailed description of his attainments. These were many. As Trench pointed out, Goltz had held many important positions and written numerous thoughtful military texts. He also had a reputation for being fiercely independent and outspoken, traits that, it seems, might have cost him the job of chief of the Great General Staff. Trench explained:

> When General von Schlieffen retired several years ago . . . it was thought that Von der Goltz would be his successor, and there is said to have been a good deal of disappointment in the army at his not having been chosen. Von der Goltz has, however, a great deal of independence of character, and not long ago, having strongly criticised in print some views of the Emperor's, fell into such disgrace that it is said he was on the verge of being retired from the army.

However, important though this was, it was Goltz's military-political outlook that most concerned the attaché. 'He strongly dislikes England and the English', asserted Trench, who further elaborated on the general's pan-German credentials:

> General von der Goltz is very East Prussian in many respects and is believed to sympathise in great measure with most of the political views which his able compatriot Professor Schiemann, on whom has fallen the mantle of Treitschke, inculcates at the Kriegs-Akademie and in the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, and in all probability on board the *Hohenzollern*.[159]

In short, Trench regarded the likely wartime commander of the German forces on the Polish frontier as a radical nationalist and extremist. He also saw his presence in the Turkish capital as highly dangerous.

If Trench pulled no punches in his characterizations of German commanders, Russell was no less forthright. In July 1913, he sent in a very critical report on the performance as Prussian Minister of War of Josias von Heeringen—'a sorry exhibition' was the attaché's phrase.[160] He was equally scathing about the military abilities of the Prussian Crown Prince, the Kaiser's eldest son, who was appointed to the Great General Staff in December 1913. While recognizing that the prince was 'immensely popular in the country and is everywhere received with demonstrations of loyal and affectionate enthusiasm', Russell regarded him as having very limited personal attainments. 'The Crown Prince,' he wrote, 'gives the impression of being unduly young for his age and position. He is intelligent without being clever.' In effect, his was not a serious military appointment.[161] Of course, not all of Russell's judgements were negative. Like Trench, Russell had considerable respect for 'the justly admired' and 'redoubtable' von der Goltz, whom he also described as 'a man of brilliant parts and conspicuous military ability'. He also reported favourably on Hermann von Stein, who, he stated, 'is

[159] Trench, MA 22/09, 15 June 1909, FO 881/9543.
[160] Russell, MA 26/13, 5 July1913, FO 371/1651.
[161] Russell, MA 46/13, 16 Dec. 1913, FO 371/1654.

thought to be one of the best staff officers in the German Army' and had been spoken of as a possible chief of the General Staff.[162] On the basis of his performance in September 1914, the first comment on Stein seems a generous one; however, as Stein ended up as Minister of War, Russell was not wrong to anticipate that he would achieve an important position.

NAVAL ATTACHÉ PERSPECTIVES ON GERMAN SAILORS AND COMMANDERS

As was the case with military attachés, the naval attachés provided data on the general quality of personnel in the German navy as well as on particular individuals. Once again, the consequence of draconian weeding of the records is that little of this survives for the period prior to 1906. Thus, our survey of the views of the naval attachés must begin not with Ewart in 1900 but with the observations of Dumas.

In contrast to the military attachés, who, whatever their personal opinions, would have been aware that the Prussian army was generally regarded as the benchmark in military organization, the British naval attachés came from a service that held itself as the global model. The Royal Navy, with its long and glorious history and recent experiences of exercising undisputed maritime supremacy, bred a sense of superiority in its members. It would, therefore, hardly have been surprising if the officers sent to Berlin did not perceive the German navy in reverential terms, but were inclined to point to shortcomings. Initially, this is what occurred.

In respect of German naval officers, Dumas was convinced that, while they were undoubtedly 'sober, hard-working, industrious and zealous',[163] they were lacking in two key respects. The first of these was in regard to the breadth of their outlook. As a result of the Selborne Scheme, candidates for a commission in the Royal Navy were required to acquaint themselves not only with the skills of command and seamanship, but also with the rudiments of naval engineering. Dumas, as a torpedo officer, fully approved of this and defended it robustly at every opportunity, particularly in respect of 'the necessity of every officer in these days being primarily an engineer'.[164] However, as he quickly discovered, the executive officers in the German navy did not share this view. Indeed, owing to the inferior social status of engineers, they were markedly hostile to the notion that they should have anything to do with the profession. As Dumas reported:

> It has also struck me in the course of these discussions how amazingly ignorant these officers . . . are of engineering, and more than one has said to me, when speaking of such matters, 'I am not an Engineer,' as if it was almost an insult to expect him to take an intelligent interest in such matters.

[162] Russell, MA 27/11, 31 Oct. 1911, and MA 26/13, 5 July 1913, FO 371/1126, and FO 371/1651.
[163] Dumas, NA 3/07, 29 Jan. 1907, *BD*, vi. 777.
[164] Dumas Diary, 5 Mar. 1906.

The attaché could only regard this outlook, which he believed showed a serious failure to appreciate 'the importance of the Engineering profession and its application in modern men-of-war', as a major limitation to the quality of German naval officers: 'Such views are . . . of great interest because in these days an officer must possess some knowledge of engineering to satisfactorily command a ship, while theirs, by their own showing, would appear to be too much in the hands of the very people they affect to despise.'[165]

The second shortcoming that Dumas identified in the German naval officer corps related to the very hierarchical nature of their service. As Dumas explained, 'everyone is taught to be a servant and no one a master'. The result was a loss of initiative, which Dumas believed could have a serious effect in battle. Thus, he recorded his belief that 'a change of command during a fight would . . . have more effect in a German ship than with us'.[166] Indeed, as he posited on another occasion, so little opportunity did junior officers possess for the 'temporary exercise of command' or other displays of initiative that 'the prompt destruction of the commander-in-chief in battle should alone almost ensure victory' against a German fleet.[167] In the attaché's opinion, this situation also had a stultifying effect in peacetime. Such was the rigidity of the command structure that even 'in their messes' officers 'sit wholly by seniority' and have no opportunity for the free expression of views. '[B]etween two German officers,' he continued, 'there is never the off-duty and friendly feeling that obtains with us'.[168] The result, Dumas suggested, was that it made German naval officers highly strung, fretful, and prone to 'Nervosität'. In a battle situation, 'when the greatest sang-froid is required', this characteristic could cause 'a state of ill-balanced excitement which cannot fail to be detrimental to success'.[169]

Dumas's belief in the shortcomings of German officers was matched by his assessment of the enlisted men. While German sailors were undoubtedly 'well conducted and well dressed', he regarded 'it is indisputable that they lack a certain "go" possessed by our men, and somehow, impress one as being soldiers at sea rather than seamen'. The principal cause of this was that they were conscripts rather than volunteers, who served for a mere three years and were then discharged into civilian life. Dumas did not believe this was sufficient: 'within the short period of their Naval career . . . it is very difficult to turn a man into a satisfactory seaman, or, rather, he may only become so just as he leaves the Navy'.[170] The result was that, at any given time, a third of all German bluejackets were raw recruits. However enthusiastic they might have been, they lacked the experience necessary to make their ships fit for battle.[171] Consequently, Dumas concluded: 'I do not see

[165] Dumas, NA 12/06, 16 Mar. 1906. *Naval Necessities*, iv, Admiralty Library.
[166] Dumas, NA 3/07, 29 Jan. 1907, *BD*, vi. 778.
[167] Dumas, NA 34/08, 30 July 1908, FO 371/461.
[168] Dumas, NA 22/07, 30 Apr. 1907, FO 371/260.
[169] Dumas, NA 3/07, 29 Jan. 1907, *BD*, vi. 778.
[170] Admiralty, *Naval Administration and Personnel—Germany* (Dec. 1912), 16. This text was written by Dumas. A copy is in the Admiralty Library.
[171] Dumas, NA 6/07, 4 Mar. 1907, FO 371/259.

on what grounds it can be considered that the crew of a German ship is likely to be so good as that of an English one.'[172]

On the basis of his assessment, Dumas believed that the Royal Navy need not be unduly worried about being outfought by the High Sea Fleet: 'given all the fleets in the world, it is after all the personal element that wins a battle, and here, I venture to think, the German is not quite sound'.[173] His successor, Heath, shared many of Dumas's opinions. Thus, while he wrote that German officers were 'hard-working, intelligent men', he, too, noted that they were 'too easily excited' and 'never off duty'.[174] He also concurred that the excessive emphasis on hierarchy affected the performance of the officers. German ships, he felt, were poorly kept, with minor flaws left unattended. The reason was that 'the officers are too much occupied looking for salutes to notice these small matters'.[175] Finally, he believed that German officers were not so passionate about their profession as to care unduly about putting in sea time. 'The German officer,' he stated with evident disapproval, 'especially when married, has a strong hankering for shore billets, his heart is not really on the sea. They infinitely prefer sitting at a desk, pondering over official papers, to the more active sea life, and it appears that few if any of them have any dread of growing stout.' However, despite these views, he was much less sanguine than his predecessor about the inherent superiority of the Royal Navy. This was because he saw definite signs of improvement in the German fleet. For one thing, he thought that the professionalism of the officers manning destroyers was 'having an effect' on the rest of the navy.[176] Furthermore, he noted that extensive efforts were being made to inculcate 'sea habits' in the fleet. Were this to continue, Heath proclaimed, 'in the course of a few years the German officer may equal ours in readiness of resource and capability of action'. The implications of this for 'the safety of the Empire' were profound.[177]

Watson echoed Heath's pronouncements about the growing efficiency of Germany's navy personnel. He placed particular emphasis on dispelling the idea, often advanced by Dumas, that the system of conscription meant that German ratings were below par. While some might initially suffer from seasickness and a lack of familiarity with naval work, Watson argued that the excellent education which German citizens received prior to entry combined with their previous work experience meant that they quickly learnt their duties, even excelling at them. Conscripts from the 'numerous electrical firms of Germany' made excellent 'Electrical Ratings' for instance. Equally, the use of 'men who have been miners' in colliers and lighters explained the 'really excellent coaling achievements of the German navy'.[178]

[172] Dumas, NA 3/07, 29 Jan. 1907, *BD*, vi. 778.
[173] Dumas, NA 34/08, 30 July 1908, FO 371/461.
[174] 'The German Navy' in 'Germany Annual report 1908', 7 Aug. 1909, FO 371/675.
[175] Heath, NA 40/08, 26 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[176] Heath, NA 27/10, 6 Aug. 1910, *BD*, vi. 507.
[177] Heath, NA 40/08, 26 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[178] Watson, NA 88/12, 18 Dec. 1912, FO 371/1379.

Watson was no less convinced of the efficiency and verve of the officer corps. While not oblivious to 'weak points' in their ranks, he nevertheless concluded that they merited the utmost respect:

> The Officers Personnel from the junior Flag Officers down . . . strike one as exceedingly keen, and dispel, particularly the Destroyer Officers, the old idea that German Naval officers used to give one of perhaps not too great mental-physical activity. Of the younger Officers, especially the Destroyer Officers, I can pay them no higher compliment than that they greatly resemble in appearance the smartest young British Naval Officers of equivalent rank.

He also noted that strenuous efforts were being made to improve the quality of the whole by striking 'less efficient officers' from the list.[179] Consequently, he concluded upon leaving Berlin: 'I see no reason to think that the German naval officers of 1913 are inferior to their British comrades.'[180]

The positive assessment of the German navy in general did not, however, guarantee equally favourable views of particular commanders. Sometimes this was a reflection of their views. The British naval attachés were keen to discover who in the German navy was hostile to Britain and who could be counted as friends. Naturally, they were less than flattering about those they considered anglophobe. Watson, for example, had little positive to say about Alfred Breusing, a retired rear-admiral, who spent his years off the active list campaigning for the extreme nationalist right. As he explained, he considered him a liar, a schemer, and a threat:

> I am personally acquainted with Admiral Breusing and find his rapacious hopes in respect of England completely at variance with the desire he has expressed to me for a better relationship between England and Germany.
>
> To put it bluntly it is this type of Naval Officer, like Admiral Breusing, that I know well and distrust profoundly, as I am fully aware of the scheming for a larger German Navy and against England if necessary, going on behind the fair words spoken to me.[181]

Watson's successor agreed, composing a critical report about an 'inflammatory speech' delivered by the admiral.[182]

However, the principal reason for providing character assessments of German commanders was not to evaluate their politics, but to estimate their command abilities. To this end, numerous German flag officers came under scrutiny, including, inevitably, such luminaries as Tirpitz and Prince Henry of Prussia. Not all of these appraisals can be discussed here, but a look at what was said about three of the more famous names—those that headed the German battle fleet in the First World War—is instructive.

The first of these was Vice-Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl. Named as chief of the High Sea Fleet in April 1913, he does not appear to have been highly thought

[179] Watson, NA 34/11, 30 Nov. 1911, FO 244/770.
[180] Watson, NA 44/13, 13 Oct. 1913, *BD*, x2. 716.
[181] Watson, NA 17/13, 28 Mar. 1913, FO 371/1650.
[182] Henderson, NA55/13, 19 Dec. 1913, ADM 137/4164.

of by his British scrutinizers. 'Vice Admiral von Ingenohl has not given the impression of possessing a strong personality', wrote Watson when the news of his nomination broke. Given that Watson had consistently reported since 1912 that if Ingenohl was assigned to this crucial post it would have more to do with skills as a courtier than as a commander, this negative judgement was entirely to be expected. So, too, was the attaché's damning conclusion that 'the Emperor's influence has been at work more than is good for the benefit of the Fleet, and that Admiral von Ingenohl's appointment is the result'.[183] In the light of Ingenohl's poor performance as a commander in the first year of the war, this looks like a sound appraisal.

The man whom Ingenohl beat to the job in 1913 and who would supersede him in 1915 was Hugo von Pohl. He was a much more respected figure. Watson described him as giving the 'impression of ability, quickness of decision, and force of character'. He further pointed out that he had 'considerable sea experience', with ten years' continuous service afloat. When he was passed over for command of the High Sea Fleet in 1913 and given a job at the Admiralty instead, Watson could only conclude that this was the wrong decision: 'My opinion is that it would have been wiser to have left him in the Fleet.'[184] The attaché's judgement is difficult to verify. In practice, Pohl proved a less active fleet commander than might have been expected. However, as he had terminal liver cancer when he was finally put in charge of the battle fleet in 1915, his time in command was marred by illness. This may explain the approach he took.

Pohl's replacement and the man who achieved fame as the commander of the German fleet at the Battle of Jutland was Reinhard Scheer. He had been identified as a high flyer in 1911, but interestingly in his capacity as a naval bureaucrat rather than as a sea commander. As Watson wrote at the time: 'Not likely to fly flag afloat again; more likely to follow in Adm. v. Tirpitz's footsteps.'[185] This view was consistently reiterated. A report from July 1912 states:

> This officer is full of ability. I have before reported on the possibility of this officer succeeding Admiral von Tirpitz. I have been informed that Admiral Scheer was possibly not such a great success as Chief of the Staff to the Chief of the High Sea Fleet, as he is in Admiralty Appointments.[186]

In January 1913, around the time Scheer was appointed to command the second battle squadron, the attaché remarked in a private letter: 'I still place him as Tirpitz's likely successor, and think that he is being now sent to command a squadron to fit him for higher Admiralty administrative billet.'[187] A similar point

[183] Watson, NA 19/13, 12 Apr. 1913, FO 371/1650.
[184] Watson, NA 58/12, 11 July 1912, NA 61/12, 16 July 1912, NA 83/12, 29 Oct. 1912, and NA 19/13, 12 Apr. 1913, FO 371/1377, FO 371/1379, and FO 371/1650.
[185] Watson, NA 24/11, 25 Sept. 1911, FO 244/770.
[186] Watson, NA 61/12, 16 July 1912, FO 371/1377.
[187] Extract from a private letter by Watson, 31 Jan. 1913, ADM 137/4166.

was made three months later: 'This undoubtedly able administrative officer is regarded by some as now being sent to sea to hoist his flag as a prelude to his relieving Admiral von Tirpitz as Minister of Marine. He appears to be a vigorous personality, extremely clever.'[188] Watson was, of course, wrong about Scheer's future career: it was spent at sea rather than in the Admiralty building. However, given the admiral's enigmatic tactical decisions at Jutland, many will view the attaché's judgement about Scheer's command ability as vindicated by events.

It is evident that in the run-up to the First World War, there was no lack of reports from the British service attachés in Berlin outlining the quality of the human material in the German army and battle fleet. German soldiers, although somewhat derided in a colonial context, were nevertheless held to be dedicated and spirited. Their discipline, orderliness, and powers of endurance were consistently praised. Admittedly, there were some doubts about whether the strict Prussian regimentation sapped initiative, but Russell's praise for their intelligence and drive suggests that this was not an issue by 1911.

What applied to the army's enlisted men also applied to the navy's bluejackets. Although Dumas had expressed doubts about their abilities, subsequent attachés were increasingly impressed by their evident professionalism. Watson, for one, believed that the long-service men could hold their own against the best in the Royal Navy and that the three-year conscripts would prove admirable sailors should it come to the test. He also believed, as did Heath, that the younger up-and-coming officers of the navy were of the utmost quality and were daily improving.

When it came to the higher ranking officers, opinions were more varied and reflected the impressions made by particular individuals. Few long commentaries on the principal generals have survived. However, from those that do, it is clear that the British military attachés were not shy of expressing criticism where they felt it was due. Heeringen, for instance, did not much impress Russell. Equally, they noted merit where they saw it. Thus, von der Goltz was highly rated by both Russell and Trench, although the latter had much to say about the general's anglophobe and extremist politics. Similarly, the naval attachés were no less forthcoming in expressing their opinions of the senior German flag officers. Not all were highly esteemed. Of the three admirals who commanded the High Sea Fleet in wartime, one was slated as a courtier rather than a sailor. The other two fared better. Moreover, it should be noted that there were many other senior naval officers—for whom space does not permit consideration—who were highly regarded by the naval attachés for their competence, dedication, and professionalism. Examples of officers singled out include Bachmann, Lans, Schüz, Schmidt, Henkel, and Hipper.[189] In essence, they regarded the leadership of the High Sea Fleet as sound.

The judgement of the attachés that the German armed forces were manned by capable and dedicated recruits and officered by professionals of high and growing

[188] Watson, NA 19/13, 12 Apr. 1913, FO 371/1650.
[189] Watson, NA 61/12, 16 July 1912, FO 371/1377.

standing, when added to the picture of technical excellence painted in respect of German equipment, pointed to definite conclusions. The German army and navy were highly proficient and well-oiled machines. 'Formidable' was the term used by the ever-apposite Russell. True, the attachés expressed some reservations about some of Germany's commanders. General von Heeringen fared badly in Russell's esteem; Ingenhohl was much criticized by Watson. But they were more the exceptions than the rule and many other senior officers were highly estimated for their abilities. Essentially, therefore, the attachés had the utmost respect for the men and machines of the German armed forces. Of course, this picture of German military and naval power had consequences. If the attachés thought the Reich well endowed with martial might, the inevitable question was whether their leaders intended to use this power. The attachés' perspective on this question forms the subject of the next chapter.

4

Harbingers of the German Menace: The Service Attachés' Perspective on Germany

Although the literature on Britain's service attachés is sparse, there is one point upon which all agree: every one of the attachés who served in Berlin eventually came to perceive Germany as a major threat to British national security. As Lord Newton succinctly and unambiguously put it with respect to the British naval attachés, the opinion 'that the development of the German Navy was directed against England . . . was shared by every successive naval attaché at our Berlin Embassy'.[1] Similar views have been ascribed to Britain's military attachés. Hilbert, the first scholar to look systematically into this question, wrote of 'the fundamental military pessimism' of the military attachés and their 'growing preoccupation with the German danger'.[2] In their attitude to Germany, he concluded, 'the military attachés showed themselves antagonistic almost everywhere'.[3] Likewise, Vagts, who produced the classic study, *The Military Attaché*, recorded that 'some of the worst alarmists of pre-1914 Europe had been the attachés', who were 'inclined to see war as . . . immediately impending' and who 'shared [the] fear' then prevailing 'about the danger of a German landing'.[4] Opinion then is unanimous: attachés were harbingers of the German menace. If this point seemed self-evident before the bulk of the surviving archival material was released, how does it appear now that the available papers are open to scrutiny? Does the documentary evidence still sustain this interpretation?

THE VIEWS OF THE MILITARY ATTACHÉS, 1900–1906

In respect of the earlier military attachés, it is not evident that it does. Indeed, in their case, some serious reservations must be noted in respect of this theory. Admittedly, the surviving documentary evidence is fragmentary, particularly in regard to Colonel Waters, the first military attaché to Berlin to be appointed in this period. Very few dispatches by him actually survive. Moreover, those that do,

[1] Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (London, 1929), 248.
[2] L. W. Hilbert, 'The Role of the Military and Naval Attachés' (University of Cambridge, 1954), 223.
[3] Ibid., 243.
[4] A. Vagts, *The Military Attaché*, (Princeton, 1967), pp. xi, 169, and 333.

tend to focus on issues that do little to advance our understanding of his reporting of the German menace. Thus, while we are still able to read his thoughts on the expenses of German army officers,[5] we do not possess any reports by him on the wider question of Anglo-German relations and the prospect of conflict between these two nations. Consequently, the only clues to Waters's opinions on such matters are the comments that he includes in his various memoirs. According to these volumes, Waters made at least two prophetic reports on the prospects for a future continental conflict. The first concerned the inevitability of a European war. As he noted in his first book, he had reported early in his career that the arms race made such a conflagration inevitable:

> it was obvious that a titanic struggle must be the sequel of the ever-increasing armaments on the Continent. . . . The continual increase of armies and navies must ultimately, *as I reported at the time*, bring the financing of unproductive expenditure to breaking point. . . . Nations must either fight, hoping to conquer, or else become bankrupt, which they would be too proud to do without a struggle.[6]

Additionally, he also recalled informing the British government in 1902 on the authority of an article in the *Militär-Wochenblatt* that such a war must begin with a German sweep through Belgium.[7]

Although these reminiscences cannot be validated with documentary evidence, they are worth taking seriously. For one thing, where the statements in Waters's books can be checked against his few surviving original reports, they are invariably accurate. In addition, Waters's assertion that he predicted a German invasion of Belgium is especially noteworthy because at the time he published this claim he had become an active apologist for Germany, vigorously denying the theory of German 'war guilt' and campaigning strenuously against the Versailles Treaty. Believing so vehemently in Germany's innocence, it seems unlikely that Waters should lay claim to having warned of a German march through Belgium, a fact so very damaging to his cause, unless the claim was categorically true.

Yet, notwithstanding Waters's belief that a war was inevitable and a German march through Belgium its likely opening deployment, it is not evident that, while serving as military attaché, he ever saw the Reich as a direct threat to Britain. None of his surviving reports mentions a German invasion of the British Isles or even speculates about entrenched German antipathy to British interests. Nor do the titles of his missing dispatches give any indication that he ever considered such matters. It seems fair to conclude, therefore, that while Waters believed that Germany would be a belligerent in a future conflict and would impinge on Belgian neutrality, he did not believe in a German menace to Britain. Interestingly, in this respect, Waters does not stand out greatly from his immediate successor.

[5] Waters, MA 6/01, 15 Mar. 1901, WO 32/4927.
[6] W. H.-H. Waters, '*Secret and Confidential*' (London, 1926), 253. Emphasis added.
[7] W. H.-H. Waters, *Potsdam and Doorn* (London, 1935), 124–5.

Waters's replacement was Colonel Gleichen. To some extent, this new appointee did reverse Waters's line on German intentions. For one thing, he did detect signs of bellicose thinking in the German army. In early 1904, he reported: 'If I might compare great things with small, I should be inclined to compare the army with a spirited stallion who has never had a chance of showing his mettle or prowess either in the field or in the stable; in fact, the army is "spoiling" for action of some sort.' The existence of this sentiment caused Gleichen some anxiety. One consequence of it, he observed, was 'a general feeling of "what is the use of all this irksome, expensive, and high-pressure life if we are never going to fight anybody?" '[8]

Also worrying for Gleichen was his belief that the Prussian General Staff had made plans for an invasion of Britain:

> It is undoubtedly a fact, though we cannot prove it by documentary evidence, that the Germans have drawn up plans, and keep them up to date, for an invasion of England . . . the thoroughness and calculation with which their Staffs Military and Naval, leaving nothing to chance, provide for every contingency, make it certain that if, and when, the time comes, their plans will be well thought out.[9]

Yet such anxieties were rare. Counterbalancing these views, Gleichen made several other observations about Germany that pointed in quite a different direction. For one thing, he believed that 'the militarism, which has for so many years ruled Germany', was beginning to lose some of its hold over the nation. The 'ordinary German subject', he remarked, was starting to 'learn that even his voice is entitled to be heard in the land'. In its place, there was emerging 'a spirit of unrest abroad in Germany on the subject of the army generally'.[10] Implicit in this was the idea that with the decline of militarism might come a reduction in German bellicosity. As Gleichen amplified in 1904, 'As regards the prospects for the New Year, the outlook is decidedly peaceful. . . . there are, as already reported, no serious militant intentions as far as one can tell.'[11]

Gleichen was also sceptical about the analysis, increasingly commonplace in the British media, that the German fleet was aimed at the downfall of Britain:

> the Germans would never intend hostile action against us as long as their fleet was weaker than ours. As the Emperor said the other day . . . 'as long as the English have got a stronger fleet than we have, we shall have to cave in to them in all political matters: but when our navy is equal to theirs it will be another matter'. Even this remark however does not necessarily imply a hostile intention: it only means that the nations will be on more equal terms.[12]

In other words, Gleichen, unlike many British military, naval, and diplomatic figures, was prepared to accept the sincerity behind the German concept of *Gleichberechtigung* (equal treatment), that Germany aimed, through its fleet

[8] Gleichen, MA 1/04, 2 Jan. 1904, FO 64/1593.
[9] Gleichen, MA 34/05, 9 Nov. 1905, CAB 17/61.
[10] Gleichen, MA 5/03, 12 Nov. 1903, FO 64/1574.
[11] Gleichen, MA 1/04, 2 Jan. 1904, FO 64/1593.
[12] Gleichen to Selborne, 16 Mar. 1906, Bodleian: MS Selborne 92.

programme, at equality with Britain as a world power and not the destruction of British power.

More revealingly still, Gleichen took a very much more sanguine perspective than many other members of the British establishment about the one military operation in which Germany was engaged in this period, namely the campaign against the indigenous tribes in South-West Africa. Partly because of the insensitive administration of this protectorate, in 1904, the Herero people rose against the German colonial regime. Other tribes soon followed. The result was a long-drawn-out conflict that ranged across South-West Africa for the next three years. Over the course of this period, substantial German forces were sent from Europe to quell this 'rebellion'.

The war in South-West Africa provoked considerable anxiety among the colonial officials in the neighbouring British South African possessions, where the build-up of German forces was observed with alarm. The High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, typified this trend. As he informed the Colonial Secretary, Alfred Lyttelton:

> The Germans have already in German South-West Africa between 3,000 and 4,000 armed Boers recruited by them in the Transvaal. . . . They have also 16,000 German regular troops. . . . We have a total of 20,000 troops in South Africa . . . The Germans are therefore at this moment militarily as strong as we are in South Africa.
>
> But it is stated that there are 14,000 more German troops coming out.
>
> If these troops did come out, then Germany would be much stronger in South Africa than we should be.
>
> Is it conceivable that this Army Corps is intended only for the purpose of crushing two small tribes of Kaffirs?
>
> The Emperor certainly did not create his troubles in South-West Africa with a view to a row with us; but is it not possible that he is preparing a position from which he can squeeze us if he wishes to?[13]

Selborne's belief that the build-up of German forces in South-West Africa was a potential threat to British interests in the region was supported by the governor of Cape Colony and the general officer commanding British forces in South Africa.[14] Had Gleichen been convinced of the German menace, then doubtless he, too, would have supported this view. He did not. The Germans, he wrote, had received 'an unpleasant shock' attempting to wage a colonial war. Expecting an easy victory against mere 'natives', they had been unprepared for the local conditions, had attempted to use inapplicable European fighting methods in African circumstances, and had suffered several embarrassing reverses as a consequence.[15] Accordingly, he stated that in his opinion 'the High Commissioner's fears are

[13] Selborne to Lyttelton, 24 May 1905, BL, Add. Mss. 50317, p. 179.

[14] See Hely-Hutchinson to Lyttelton, 23 Aug. 1905. See also Hildyard, 'Memorandum on the Possibility of the Invasion of Cape Colony from German South-West Africa', 5 July 1905, enclosed in Selborne to Lyttelton, 21 Aug. 1905, WO 106/266.

[15] Gleichen, MA 20/04, 8 Apr. 1904, CO 879/80.

groundless'. As he amplified: 'the obstacles with which the Germans have had to contend, both as regards catching their enemy, supplies and transport have been very great; and it is difficult to understand in what practical way they could be in a "position to squeeze us" '.[16]

Gleichen's remarks provoked a heated debate. Selborne responded vigorously to the attaché's report. 'I entirely differ', he wrote, 'from Count Gleichen's view of what the Germans could and could not do in South Africa if they found themselves at war with us.' Instead, he postulated:

> it would be quite possible to pass thousands of men in comparatively small bodies, which might be compared to Boer Commandos, one after another, across the frontier. . . . Whether the Boers would rise can only be a matter of opinion. In my opinion they would at once rise in Cape Colony. . . . If the Cape Colony Boers rose, my opinion is quite clear that the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal Boers would also rise. It therefore seems to me to be an unassailable proposition that, given a war with Germany, Germany is now in a position to squeeze us in South Africa as she has never been before and probably never will be again. . . .[17]

Once again, Gleichen demurred. Writing 'with all due deference', he expressed the opinion that German troops 'could *not* cross the frontier to any appreciable extent':

> Since writing in June, I have talked to German officers who were in the South, and their supply difficulties there were much greater even than I had pointed out: for many months the German troops were living from hand to mouth, and there was not more than *one* day's supplies in the depots: so how they could have started on an expedition over the Orange River I don't know.[18]

Gleichen's correspondence about South-West Africa dispels any notion that he was an uncritical advocate of the German menace. Given the opinions of Selborne and the colonial authorities, here was a perfect opportunity for him, had he so wished, simply to follow the growing consensus from Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria and paint a picture of an antagonistic Germany threatening British interests in South Africa. He not only chose not to do so, but placed himself in direct opposition to these opinions. There can be no doubt that these are not the actions of a man convinced about a universal German threat.

Gleichen's opposition to the stance taken by Selborne is put into particularly sharp relief by the views expressed by his successor, Colonel Trench, who arrived in Berlin in late March 1906. Unlike Gleichen, Trench, who had served as an observer with the German forces in South-West Africa, was absolutely convinced that the German military build-up in the protectorate was a menace. In his view, it was being undertaken deliberately as a contingency for a possible war with Britain. He had first reported to this effect while he was attached to the German

[16] Gleichen, MA 25/05, 15 June 1905, WO 106/266.
[17] Selborne to Lyttelton, 21 Aug. 1905, WO 106/266.
[18] Gleichen to Selborne, 16 Mar. 1906, Bodleian: MS Selborne 92.

forces in 1905. As he explained: 'the Germans are not making any serious attempts to end the revolt, which they could do quickly if they wished, but are making it an excuse for keeping troops near the border with a view to a possible war between us and Germany'.[19] A memorandum to the War Office elaborated on the danger this posed. The German forces in the southern part of the German protectorate had the ability, Trench suggested, to send flying columns into Cape Colony, from where they could form the nucleus of a major revolt against British rule.[20]

If this had been Trench's position when he was following events on the ground in South-West Africa, it was as nothing compared to the view he took upon reaching Berlin. As he surveyed the actions of the Reich government from the panorama of the German capital, he became ever more convinced that an ulterior motive lay behind German operations in South-West Africa. Four factors underscored his analysis. First there was the slow conduct of the campaign. Although Trench agreed that this was in part due to the inexperience of the Germans in fighting overseas, he nevertheless believed that 'one of the reasons the leisurely prosecution of the suppression of the revolt is tolerated by the authorities here is that it affords an excuse for pouring into the colony . . . men and money'.[21] Secondly, and no less worrying, was the German decision to build a railway to Keetmanshoop in the southern part of the protectorate. In Trench's opinion, this was aimed more at facilitating the passage of troops to the border with Cape Colony than it was at suppressing the revolt.[22] Thirdly, there was the decision to retain a large body of men in South-West Africa even after some of the main tribes had been suppressed. 'It is difficult to avoid a belief', Trench recorded, 'that the German chancellor and Great General Staff are very desirous of keeping eight thousand men in South-West Africa (three quarters of them between Keetmanshoop and the Southern border) for reasons unconnected with the native rising.'[23] Finally, there was the decision after the war was effectively ended to reorganize the headquarters of the protectorate's military forces on a more war-like footing. Trench reported that the government proposed a 275 per cent increase in the military budget for the colony, the selection of a major-general to lead its armed forces and the appointment of five field officers to form a regular staff for this contingent. This was, he proposed, 'the first step towards the formation of a colonial army' and an indication that the German adage that 'we must at every moment be ready for war' applied to preparations for an attack on the British colonies in South Africa:

> That the preparations extend to South Africa too seems evident from . . . the large accumulation of supplies made in this neighbourhood; the keenness of the Great General Staff to

[19] Minute by Langley about a conversation with Trench, 'Affairs of German South-West Africa', 24 Jan. 1906, FO 367/8.
[20] Trench, German South-West Africa No 31, 15 Mar. 1906, FO 371/11.
[21] Trench, MA 18, 5 Oct. 1906, CO 879/91.
[22] Trench, MA 25, 13 Dec. 1906, CO 417/429.
[23] Trench, MA 30, 4 Jan. 1907, FO 367/41.

complete the railway from Lüderitzbucht to Keetmanshoop; the maintenance in the Protectorate, after the conclusion of the hostilities, of a force nearly double the strength considered necessary by the present and previous Governors; and, finally, the remarkable development, now under report, of the headquarters of the Protectorate troops.[24]

As we can see, Trench's views about southern Africa could not have been more different from Gleichen's. This serves to bolster the point that, contrary to the prevailing image of the military attaché in Berlin as an automatic Cassandra figure, Gleichen was not an advocate of a German threat. While those around him saw plenty of evidence of a Teutonic menace, he resisted this trend and actually reported to the contrary, even in the face of widespread dissent.

ANGLOPHOBIA AND INVASION: THE VIEWS OF COLONEL TRENCH, MILITARY ATTACHÉ 1906–1910

Trench's reports from South-West Africa are, of course, not only important for the manner in which they contextualize Gleichen's views. They are also a significant source for the opinions of their author. Trench, demonstrably, was anything but a sceptic concerning the possibilities of German hostility on the African continent. This being the case, his arrival in Berlin in 1906 was bound to herald a change of mood in the military reporting from the British Embassy. Nor was this change necessarily confined to memoranda about colonial issues. If the same suspicions that Trench applied to affairs in Africa were utilized in forming his judgements about the situation in Europe, then this shift in mood was likely to be very marked indeed. So it transpired. While Waters and Gleichen could discern evidence of future war and signs of German planning, but did not regard this as aimed explicitly at Britain, Trench would take a radically different perspective. As we shall see, so, too, would his successor, Lieutenant-Colonel Russell. Albeit for their own particular and distinct reasons, both of these officers would strongly express the view that Germany was a potential rival to Britain and a real danger to the nation's security.

Beginning with Trench, as we have already observed, he arrived in Berlin deeply concerned about the threat posed by Germany to the British position in South Africa.[25] His experiences in the Reich capital quickly led him to develop other anxieties. Slowly but surely, he built up a picture of a nation which was implacably hostile to Britain and which was consciously planning her downfall. Several factors underscored this analysis.

The first of these—and the assumption underlying many of Trench's reports—concerned the magnitude of the anglophobia that the colonel detected among the

[24] Trench, MA 51, 25 Apr. 1907, ibid.

[25] My initial thoughts on Trench are in Matthew S. Seligmann, 'The View from Berlin: Colonel Frederic Trench and the Development of British Perceptions of German Aggressive Intent, 1906–1910', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 23 (2000), 114–47. What follows modifies and expands on the arguments of that article on the basis of new evidence and further reflection.

German population. The extent of this 'detestation of England' was, in Trench's view, very widespread. As he reported in August 1908 after several weeks' travel in central and southern Germany, this sentiment was not confined to chauvinistic journals, the capital, and 'the northern States', as had been his 'previous belief and hope', but was evident across the length and breadth of the country.[26] It could also, as he subsequently explained, be manifested in a variety of ways and in all kinds of unexpected settings. For example, so far as Trench was concerned, much of the public interest in 'Motor-Balloon Travel' stemmed from the military applications of this technology against Britain. Attending an open meeting on the subject in December, he recorded that 'the lecturer and his audience (with one exception) seemed to take it for granted that they were all of one mind, that the event to which they looked forward was . . . the invasion of England'. Signs of this abounded during the entire session. When, for example, it was remarked that 'no one wanted a war with England', Trench lamented that 'the observation was received in silence'. By contrast, he recorded in horror that 'the applause was very hearty' when it was suggested that airships would allow Germany to impose her will on Britain and chuck her out of India and Egypt. Yet, so far as Trench was concerned, this was only to be expected: the meeting, especially in regard to its 'tone', was 'indicative of the frame of mind of many people in Germany'.[27]

However, for all Trench's concern over popular sentiment, what made this 'tension of national feeling' and 'strong current of irritation' so alarming was not so much its presence among the general public, troubling though this was, but rather its hold even over informed decision-makers. 'This nervous irritation', Trench remarked, 'does not . . . seem to be the state of mind of only irresponsible persons in inconspicuous walks of life, it would seem to have not left entirely untouched even those whose influence and position are all powerful.'[28] Particularly worrying for Trench was the prevalence of such views among the officer corps of the army. Numerous incidents buttressed Trench's belief that the German military were hostile to Britain. The first recorded indication that Trench was concerned about the attitude of Germany's soldiers came during the visit to Berlin of Richard Haldane, the British Secretary for War, in September 1906. As Trench informed his naval colleague, Dumas, a startling lack of good manners was displayed to this visiting dignitary by the military men who met him: 'Quite junior officers failed to call him Your Excellency and even dared to walk on his right side.' Dumas was shocked: 'If the latter is true, it is absolutely grossly impertinent and though I suppose no one would understand it in England, yet here it is almost beyond belief.'[29] Dumas is certainly correct that from an English and, indeed, a modern perspective, this is a difficult insult to understand. After all, little importance is attached these days to whether one walks on the left or right side of a guest. However, in German-speaking nations in the late nineteenth century there was a rigid etiquette in such matters.

[26] Trench, MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[27] Trench, MA 119, 14 Dec. 1908, FO 371/463.
[28] Trench, MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[29] Dumas Diary, 20 Oct. 1906.

'Proper respect to the honoured guest', recalled Sir Douglas Dawson, who had been made aware of the great importance attached to this convention while serving as military attaché in Vienna, 'not only demanded sitting on his left in a carriage or at table, but the custom was even carried to placing the guest on the right whilst walking.'[30] In an ordered, status-conscious nation like Germany, where the most scrupulous adherence to polite custom was the norm, such behaviour as Trench described would have constituted a powerful signal of disrespect. Certainly, Trench read it as such. Through his eyes, this breach of punctilio spoke volumes about the attitude of the German army and was an ominous omen for Anglo-German relations.

Other developments contributed to his perception of anglophobia among the German officer corps. Foremost amongst these were the opinions relayed to him by the many military men that he encountered. Indeed, as Trench explained to Sir Edward Goschen, it was these conversations more than anything else that had shaped his views. As the ambassador recalled, Trench told him:

> He had formed his opinion entirely from his own close observation during the two years he had been here. He had travelled much and seen and talked with countless German officers of every rank and it was chiefly from his conversations with them that he had gathered that war was inevitable some day or other.[31]

Illustrative of the type of conversation in question is a discussion that took place between Trench and a staff officer of his acquaintance shortly after the crisis broke out over the Kaiser's ill-judged 1908 interview with the *Daily Telegraph*:

> I expressed my inability to comprehend why people in Germany had been so vexed with the *Daily Telegraph* interview. My friend replied: 'I will tell you quite frankly . . . it was that while all our sympathies and interests were with the Boers, the Emperor should have sent a plan to help the English!' There were of course many things that they were annoyed about, but this was a climax!

In the face of this answer, which was unambiguous on the point that bitterness towards the Kaiser stemmed from the help he allegedly gave to Britain, Trench commented:

> I have, personally, felt it difficult to find any other reason for this sudden outburst of ingratitude against the Emperor on account of this publication; but this admission by an experienced staff officer that there is a feeling deep down in their hearts, strong enough at a pinch to come into conflict with their ingrained sense of loyalty and discipline, seems to be yet another indication of the existence of a wide-spread conviction that a conflict with England is not only inevitable but desirable.[32]

Trench's perception of the widespread hostility in Germany towards Britain was important, because of what he believed were the repercussions of such views. The Germans, he maintained, desperately wanted to conduct a programme of overseas

[30] Sir Douglas Dawson, *A Soldier-Diplomat* (London, 1927), 132.
[31] Goschen to Hardinge, 4 Dec. 1908, CUL: Hardinge Papers, vol. 11.
[32] Trench, MA 116, 4 Dec. 1908, FO 371/463.

expansion. There was, he reported, a conviction in the Reich 'that Germany has a high mission to carry out with the right to Colonies for the expansion of its growing population and the hegemony of the world's trade, as well as—if the people be willing to make the pecuniary sacrifices necessary to build a sufficient navy—the command of the sea'. Unfortunately, as Trench also reported, 'things are not going as well as had been hoped and expected' and there had been some 'serious disappointments in the domain of *Weltpolitik*'.[33] The result was a deep sense of frustration that Germany had not been able to achieve its 'high destiny' and a strong desire to take action to remedy this.

Trench was convinced that to this end Germany was prepared, if need be, to resort to arms. As he stated in one unambiguous dispatch, Germany was so 'bent on enlarging its "place in the sun" ', that this policy would be pursued even if the outcome could only be attained 'by the method, "Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt" '.[34] But then this was only what the German people expected. As he subsequently reported, there was a widespread conviction among Germans 'that might is right and that Germany has both', with the result that 'no body here . . . ever really doubts the right, nay duty, of Germany to take everything she can get'.[35]

Such views, Trench suggested, had important implications for Anglo-German relations, because Britain was one of the countries that many Germans thought was responsible for blocking the Reich's path to greatness. To prove this, Trench sent in 'numerous straws which show the direction of the wind'. One of these was a pamphlet entitled 'The Offensive Invasion of England', which the attaché explained clearly illustrated the 'views and hopes . . . of no small number of persons'. Among its core notions was the belief that 'England's animosity to Germany in all parts of the earth and at every possible point of friction had . . . become so bitter that those who controlled German policy could no longer nourish the illusion that even the greatest forbearance could postpone the conflict.' This was, Trench remarked, 'typical' of the portrayal of Britain in Germany.[36]

If Trench believed that Germans saw Britain as their main obstacle, what were the consequences of this attitude? Trench explained his views on this point in a face-to-face meeting with Major General Ewart, the DMO, in February 1908. According to Ewart's account, Trench told him that

> Germany has no immediate intention of attacking Great Britain nor any present wish for war, but 'she wants her place in the sun' and is determined to have it. She is therefore building up a huge navy in order that she may prey on our fears and extort concessions out of us. He says the Kaiser is like a man who covets your watch but would prefer if possible to have it without fighting. If, however, you are not prepared to 'part', he has got his knuckle dusters.[37]

[33] Trench, MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.

[34] Trench, MA 55, 9 May 1907, FO 371/260. The quotation comes from Goethe's 'ErlKönig' and translates as 'And if you are not willing, then I will use force'.

[35] Trench, MA 119, 14 Dec. 1908, FO 371/463.

[36] Trench MA 95, 27 Apr. 1908, *BD* vi. 147–8.

[37] Ewart Diary, 19 Feb. 1908.

Just what these metaphorical 'knuckle dusters' actually consisted of was made clear by Trench in a series of other dispatches, in which the attaché advanced the view that Germany was systematically developing the means to launch an attack on the British Isles. The first step in this process was preparing the public for such an operation—in so far as the existing anglophobia made such preparation necessary—by propagating the view that war with Britain was inevitable and was not to be feared. In part, this was achieved through such propaganda vehicles as patriotic publications. In June 1908, for example, Trench drew the attention of the British authorities to a pamphlet, *Die Finanzen der Grossmächte* (The Finances of the Great Powers), which advanced the view that 'preparation for war is the safest and most productive form of national expenditure'. The reason offered for this proposition was that, as the cost of a successful war is generally borne by the beaten side, military expenditure was more of a necessary investment than a heavy burden. Although the publication was written in a private capacity, Trench noted that the work's author, Friedrich Zahn, was the head of the Royal Statistical Bureau in Munich. Accordingly, the view it advanced, Trench suggested, 'may very reasonably be accepted as an exposition of the financial views of the German Government'.[38]

However, valuable though such pamphlets may have been, the most significant agency for cultivating positive views on a future Anglo-German conflict, as far as Trench was concerned, were Germany's large and vocal patriotic pressure groups. Foremost among these was the *Flotten Verein* (Navy League), an organization which Trench regarded as 'one of the most important wheels in the machinery of the mobilization of the German nation'. The reason for this was that it reached the length and breadth of the population and spoke to Germans of all types: '[The League] boasts of nearly a million members, 4000 branches and an annual income of about £50,000 and has, up to this week, been the one corporate body in Germany of which the members belonged to every religion, every class in society, every party in politics and every state in the Empire.' The result of this was that the Navy League, which Trench regarded as rabidly anti-English, made an excellent propaganda vehicle:

> The *Verein* with its complete organization reaching to all classes in society and to every town and village in the Empire can influence and create a popular movement with marvellous rapidity . . . It has been stated that a war with Germany would certainly be preceded by a period of diplomatic tension especially in the case of a life-and-death struggle when every force of the Empire would have to be brought into play, but if I judge the *Flotten Verein* it would render such period quite unnecessary. The usual preliminary campaign in the public press would be superfluous, the *Flotten Verein* would—when the authorities thought that the moment was appropriate for an appeal to the *ultima ratio regis*—be entrusted with the suitable preparation of public opinion, and (on the sudden outbreak of hostilities) there would be but one mind in Germany.[39]

[38] Trench, MA 103, 7 June 1908, FO 368/194.
[39] Trench, MA 77, 20 Dec. 1907, FO 371/260.

Due to the work of the Navy League in what Trench termed 'the "Imperial" and/or anglophobe education of the people',[40] it was the colonel's opinion that a willingness to resort to conflict existed among the German population. As he reported: 'as far as mental preparation for war goes, this country is mobilized, so that, should it be determined to appeal to arms . . . all that will be necessary will be to give the word to start'.[41]

Alongside this psychological preparation for war, Trench also insisted that practical measures were being taken to make the country ready for an assault against Britain. To begin with, he was convinced that reconnaissance work was being undertaken to furnish the German Great General Staff with the information needed to plan an invasion of the British Isles. Trench reported to this effect in April 1907. Noting that the German military authorities recognized that the defence of Britain rested on the Royal Navy's 'present overwhelming superiority at sea', Trench noted:

> It must not, however, be inferred from this statement of the views probably held by the Great General Staff that there is, for the present, any cessation of the unhasting yet unresting work of preparation for possible operations over the water. I believe that, on the contrary, . . . a very systematic and thorough study is being made of the possible terrain of operations in the United Kingdom.[42]

This report was followed by two further expositions on the subject. In June, Trench reported that a very large number of German reserve officers were being sent to Britain. It is believed, he wrote, 'that the military information they send and bring is appreciated and helps them to promotions, decorations, etc.' A similar system operated with active officers, 'a number of [whom]', he explained, '[were] ordered every year to England on duty for periods lasting from several days to several months'.[43] Then, in December, he filed a further report on the matter. It drew attention 'to the apparently systematic visits paid by considerable numbers of German officers to the United Kingdom . . . under circumstances which leave little doubt that their objective is reconnaissance duty'. In illustration of this, Trench referred to the case of Major-General Scholtz, a chief of section in the Great General Staff, who spent three weeks in Scotland. His trip included none of 'the places usually visited by tourists', but instead endowed the general with a good knowledge of the Clyde. From examples such as this, Trench concluded that 'numbers of officers do go to England on duty of a confidential nature'.[44]

The result of this thorough reconnaissance and staff work was that Trench believed that the German military was ready to launch a sudden surprise attack on the British Isles. This was a point that he developed in his dispatches. The idea that the German military viewed the United Kingdom as susceptible to such an

[40] Trench, MA 95, 27 Apr. 1908, *BD* vi. 147.
[41] Trench, MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[42] Trench, MA 46, 9 Apr. 1907, FO 371/259.
[43] Trench, MA 60, 20 June 1907, FO 371/261.
[44] Trench, MA 76, 18 Dec. 1907, FO 371/263.

attaque brusquée was first mooted by Trench in a report from early 1907 that took as its topic the building of the Channel Tunnel. As the Colonel articulated in the context of this widely debated engineering project, there were two beliefs that 'are held very generally by the officers of the German army, and above all, by the General Staff' that were worthy of mention. These were that 'there is no necessity for a war to be preceded by a declaration or a period of strained diplomatic relations, and that the English army is not in a position to defend the native soil against invasion'.[45] Trench's reason for raising these points at that time related to the advisability or otherwise of the proposed subterranean link between Britain and continental Europe. However, it was not only in the context of the Channel Tunnel that he expressed these views about the attitudes and opinions of the German General Staff. The prospect of a surprise attack was an issue that he also discussed in its own right. As he argued in a dispatch from April 1908, bluntly entitled 'Should Warning Precede Hostilities?', a German assault on the United Kingdom, should it ever take place, would certainly take the form of a bolt from the blue.[46] As he declared, 'the belief generally held is . . . that, should war unfortunately break out between England and Germany, hostilities would be preceded by a period of diplomatic tension and at least three days—or possibly even three months—warning could be counted on'. This view he regarded as 'quite erroneous':

> when Germany comes to the conclusion that her navy is strong enough, or the British fleet sufficiently scattered or otherwise occupied, for there to be a reasonable prospect of success . . . the first move will be made without any warning whatever . . . Exaggerated punctiliousness is not a Prussian characteristic, when there is nothing to be gained by it and I can see, as a soldier, nothing in the results of the Hague Conference to prevent 'a reasoned declaration of war' being handed in the Wilhelm Strasse (or in London) *after* the High Sea Fleet with its convoy of transports had passed the Forth Bridge or the Nore Light Ship.[47]

If Trench thought that a surprise attack on Britain was in the minds of the German General Staff, he also had no doubt that they possessed the means to carry out such an operation. Two factors underscored this assessment. First, there was Trench's judgement that the nature of German policy towards the training and deployment of the army's reserve formations meant that, by the simple mechanism of calling up reserves for training, Germany could create an invasion force without prior warning:

> The number of officers and men of the *Beurlaubenstand* [the reserve] called up each autumn for training is being increased every year by about ten per cent and, for 1908, it equals more than three quarters of the establishment of the standing army. The existing peace units are thus, each autumn brought up to a strength so closely approximating to war strength that they could without actual mobilization be effectively used against a country

[45] Trench MA 33, 4 Feb. 1907, ADM 116/1223.

[46] For a discussion of this term, see John Gooch, 'The Bolt from the Blue', in idem, *The Prospect of War: Studies in British Defence Policy, 1847–1942* (London, 1981), 9–14.

[47] Trench, MA 95, 27 Apr. 1908, *BD* vi. 147.

with a small army were it desired to avoid a preliminary mobilization in order to gain the advantage of surprise. The decentralized procedure followed in calling up men would in conjunction with the custom of training a large number with other corps than their own permit probably, of, say, four or five army corps being got ready within a night's journey of the transports, with very little movement that would strike outsiders and without any notice or comment whatever in the public press.[48]

Such was Trench's anxiety on this point that, over the course of the next eighteen months, he would reiterate this concern on no fewer than four further instances. On each occasion, he made the point that 'Germany could therefore embark on a campaign . . . in the autumn up to the end of September, any year, without giving any warning in the shape of mobilization or special calling up of reserves'.[49]

Additionally, Trench feared that the German General Staff was deliberately creating a culture of secrecy in the Reich that would facilitate the assembly of such a force at other times of the year, as well. At the root of this anxiety were the ever increasing restrictions that were being imposed on those who wished to observe German military manœuvres or inspect those military facilities that might be involved in transporting troops across the North Sea. As he explained, 'systematic measures [had been] taken since the appointment of General v. Moltke as chief of the Great General Staff to prepare the protection of information concerning *personnel* and mobile means of transport, such as rolling stock, vehicles and vessels'. These included:

1. Passes for officers in mufti are abolished.
2. Military Persons are not allowed in the vicinity of (Imperial?) Manoeuvres without passes.
3. The facilities granted to attachés, etc are being systematically diminished, and those given are more apparent than real.
4. The movements of strangers are more closely watched by the police both at and away from manoeuvres than has previously been the case.

What alarmed Trench most about these measures was the motive he detected for their introduction. In his opinion, the ultimate goal of these regulations, which he believed formed 'part and parcel of a general scheme', was to make the initial preparations for a bolt from the blue invasion impossible to detect:

the ultimate object aimed at is the power of practically excluding military persons at any particular time, on the plea that manoeuvres are taking place, from any area in which it is desired to assemble and move in secrecy as far as the outside world was concerned an unusual amount of troops or warlike matériel; in other words, these measures are part of the preparation for war without warning.[50]

As we have seen Trench was convinced of the existence of widespread German anglophobia and of the hostility to Britain of the German army. He also believed

[48] Trench, MA 93, 20 Apr. 1908, CAB 17/61.
[49] Trench, MA 41/09, 25 Sept. 1909, FO 371/676.
[50] Trench, MA 25/09, 24 June 1909, KV 3/1.

in the desire of the German government and people to expand their global influence and in the psychological readiness of the German people for war. Finally, he was certain that the General Staff had formulated plans for an invasion of Britain and had completed all the practical preparation necessary for attempting such an undertaking. The only remaining question was when would this *attaque brusquée* take place? Trench did not believe this was imminent. As has already been noted, he told Ewart that 'Germany has no *immediate* intention of attacking Great Britain nor any *present* wish for war'.[51] He similarly informed Sir Edward Goschen that, while the Reich had plans for an attack on Britain 'cut and dried', she 'would make war on England *in her own good time*'.[52] So what was the Germans' timeframe? Trench envisaged the crisis point coming in the year 1915. He first explained this in a report on the building of the Rhine–Herne canal: 'It is interesting to note that a number of plans of the German Government, not unconnected with facilities for bringing pressure of various kinds to bear on neighbouring and competing powers, seem to have been so made that they shall be completed more or less about the year 1915.'[53] This was a point upon which he elaborated some three months later. '[A] good deal of work of preparation [is] now in the course of being carried out', he stated bluntly, '. . . most of which seem to have been so organized that, as the year 1815 saw the final overthrow by Germany of her arch enemy Napoleon, so its centenary shall offer the surest prospect of the overwhelming of her "word-enemy" England.'[54] So, there it was in clear text: Trench expected war in 1915. Such was the regularity and candour of his reporting of German intentions, that nobody who read his dispatches could fail to appreciate this point, including, of course, the new attaché appointed in March 1910.

INSECURITY AND WAR: THE VIEWS OF COLONEL RUSSELL, MILITARY ATTACHÉ 1910–1914

Trench's successor was Lieutenant-Colonel Russell.[55] Russell arrived in Berlin with a considerable knowledge of German affairs, having just completed two years as a staff officer in MO2c, the subsection of the Directorate of Military Operations that monitored events within the Reich. This meant that he was fully acquainted with the information available to the British General Staff about developments in Germany, among which, of course, was the material supplied by

[51] Ewart Diary, 19 Feb. 1908. Emphasis added.
[52] Goschen to Hardinge, 4 Dec. 1908, CUL: Hardinge Papers, vol. 11. Emphasis added.
[53] Trench, MA 101, 20 May 1908, FO 371/460.
[54] Trench, MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[55] The argument that follows closely reflects that in Matthew S. Seligmann, '"A Barometer of National Confidence": A British Assessment of the Role of Insecurity in the Formulation of German Military Policy before the First World War', *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 333–55. It has been modified and augmented in the light of new evidence.

Trench. Indeed, it might be noted in this respect that Russell's annotations actually appear on one of Trench's few surviving submissions in the War Office files; proof positive that Russell saw Trench's memoranda.[56]

However, if Russell had read many of Trench's reports, this did not mean that he was in complete accord with them. On the contrary, Russell's two years' observation of German affairs in the DMO had given him his own particular perspective on the Reich. While he concurred with Trench that the German army was a formidable military machine, he did not accept uncritically his predecessor's analysis that it was a body riddled with anglophobia and bent upon an invasion of Britain. In fact, Russell's judgement that the German army was the pre-eminent fighting force on the continent initially led him to the entirely contrary conclusion that Germany was not currently inclined towards war. Secure in the knowledge that the Reich could not be attacked by another power with any realistic prospect of success, Germans, in Russell's view, had little reason to be bellicose and no inclination to belligerency.

This assumption did not mean that Russell was oblivious to the outpourings of aggressive, posturing, and nationalist literature that existed in Germany and which tried to convince the public that the Reich was under threat from jealous and vindictive neighbours. As he reported in April 1910, a new book by the respected military author General Friedrich von Bernhardi contained a far from optimistic appraisal of the Reich's strategic position aimed at persuading Germans that war was at hand:

> In the concluding chapter in which the author refers to the relation of the people to the army, the necessity for realizing that peace at any price is not a desirable doctrine, the importance of educating the children in military virtues and other kindred subjects, the General affirms that a time may come in the immediate future, not unlike the days of Frederick the Great, when the combined cabinets of Europe planned to crush the rising Prussia.[57]

However, unlike Trench who always regarded such scaremongering literature as indicative of the popular temperament in Germany and as proof of the all-pervasive propaganda for war, Russell was apt to downplay such belligerent expressions. He was also inclined to discount aggressive utterances if he thought the circumstances merited it. Russell's reaction to a comment made to him one lunchtime by a young German guards officer is a case in point. The latter told the attaché 'that he would much like to fight the English'. When Russell expressed his surprise, the German, conscious of his faux pas, quickly added the rider 'because you are gentlemen and would fight cleanly'. As Russell simply recalled, 'I accepted this somewhat strange, but perhaps rather sporting remark, in the friendly spirit in which it was undoubtedly made.'[58] It is hard to imagine Trench doing the same. Yet, significantly,

[56] See the minutes to Trench, Memorandum No. 530, 20 Mar. 1908, which include Russell's marginalia from 26 Mar. 1908, WO 106/267.
[57] Russell, MA 13/10, 12 Apr. 1910, FO 371/904.
[58] A. V. F. V. Russell, 'Reminiscences of the German Court', *The Fighting Forces*, 1(1924), 68.

Russell made similar allowances even when the remarks in question emanated from the very top. Reporting, for example, a parade at which the Kaiser had told him after inspecting the recruits, 'Yes, with fellows like that one feels as if one could smash up [*sic*] anyone', Russell merely noted that 'It was said with a sort of boyish enthusiasm which was rather nice. I am convinced the remark had no deeper (!) significance.'[59] And this was typical of Russell's assessments. In general, instead of emphasizing those publications and statements that showed German bellicosity, Russell reported in the contrary sense, stressing those articles and conversations that indicated German confidence about their military situation and satisfaction with their geostrategic position. It was in this light, for example, that he drew attention to a newspaper report by Colonel Gädke, the military correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, which focused on the advantageous military balance between France and Germany. 'Colonel Gädke', Russell pointed out after a fuller exposition on the correspondent's views, 'considers that this state of affairs is an eminently favourable one for Germany.'[60] In a similar vein, he detailed the Kaiser's contempt for the martial qualities of the French army, an organization that Wilhelm described to him as decadent, insanitary, and riddled with disease. They would never attack Germany, Russell reported the Kaiser as saying, for 'if they did attempt such a thing, they would get a worse beating than they ever dreamed of'.[61] Nor, in Russell's view, was it only the Kaiser who felt this way. As he made clear, such views permeated the German armed forces at every level. There was, he propounded, an 'amazing confidence in their superiority to all others, and perhaps particularly to the French, which animates all ranks of the German army'.[62]

As we can see, Russell arrived in Berlin with a very different image from Trench regarding the outlook and intentions of the German Empire. In Russell's perception, Germany possessed a supreme sense of confidence in its military prowess, a sentiment that provided a reason for the nation to be peaceful and contented. Unfortunately, as subsequent events were to show, Russell's impression was conditioned by the atmosphere prevailing in Europe at the time of his posting. When he reached Berlin in March 1910, the continent was enjoying a period of apparent tranquillity, a circumstance that tended to validate optimistic reporting. Sadly, this moment of political quiet would prove to be all too transitory. In July 1911, a mere sixteen months after Russell's appointment, the European calm was dramatically and abruptly shattered by the outbreak of the Second Moroccan Crisis. With the start of this critical and bitter Franco-German spat, a period of diplomatic turbulence commenced which created a new and more ominous mood within Germany. In this suddenly fraught environment Russell would find himself compelled to re-evaluate his rosy views about the peaceful state of German opinion and the likely future conduct of the German nation.

[59] Russell to Wade, 4 Feb. 1911, FO 371/1123.
[60] Russell, MA 30/10, 15 Dec. 1910, FO 371/907.
[61] Russell, MA 4/11, 3 Mar. 1911, *BD* vi. 594.
[62] Russell, MA 23/11, 22 Sept. 1911, FO 371/1127.

The starting point for Russell's new perception of the Reich was the outcome of the Second Moroccan Crisis. This incident was anything but a triumph for the German government, especially in regard to public relations. By sending the gunboat *Panther* to Agadir, the German leadership erroneously led the populace to believe that the Reich held the upper hand in the crisis and could anticipate substantial colonial gains. The German people were soon disabused. The meagre territorial concessions to Germany's colonial aspirations ultimately made by the French in the Congo were in no way proportionate to the public's inflated expectations and, accordingly, the resolution of the crisis was viewed in Germany as a major defeat. Indeed, so great was the disappointment with the settlement that many Germans perceived it not only as an unpalatable one-off reverse, but also as proof of a wider and more serious malaise, their nation's general loss of standing in the world.

In the view of the British military attaché, such sentiments had profound ramifications for the German sense of national security. If Russell had always previously maintained that Germans felt militarily confident, with positive consequences for the peace of Europe, he now suggested that, owing to the humiliating outcome of the crisis, new doubts on this score had begun to enter the national psyche:

> From the tone and substance of recent notices in the press, and from other indications of various kinds, I am inclined to think that the confidence of the German people in the perfection and invincibility of their military forces, and particularly in the matter of the superiority of these forces over those of France, has been slightly shaken during the last few weeks.

While Russell in no sense wished to imply that there was 'anything approaching to a panic' in Germany, he did believe that 'a kind of nervous tremor' had taken hold of the civilian population. The roots of this sentiment, which he was careful to stress did not affect the army, lay in the manner in which the resolution of the crisis had affected popular perceptions of the balance of power. In response to their country's climb down, many Germans wanted to know why their nation had not made a more determined stand. '[W]hy', they asked, 'was not the great might of the German Empire exerted at once to decide by war, or threat of war, the differences which existed between them and France[?]' Invariably, they were drawn to the conclusion that the cause of their leaders' forbearance was that France was militarily more capable than they had previously assumed. 'The bold and confident attitude of France during the Morocco negotiations', Russell asserted, 'has produced the uneasy feeling that the French army must be very efficient and very strong.'[63]

This basic re-evaluation of the military situation proved to be only the start of German worries. Quickly, the initial fears that France's unexpected resolve was backed by hidden strength produced something of a cascade effect, with serious consideration being given by the German population to the many possible ways

[63] Russell, MA, No.26, 27 Oct. 1911, *BD* vii. 643.

in which the martial prowess of France might previously have been underestimated. Russell provided one illustration of this in his coverage of an unseemly parliamentary debate that took place in November concerning 'the so-called "Black Peril" '. This was the anxiety that in a future European war France would raise large contingents of African troops from their colonies for service against Germany. This possibility not only caused 'indignation' among the public[64]—doubtless, racially motivated—it also aroused concern, with some Reichstag deputies maintaining that, as 'the military qualities of the natives in question were by no means to be despised', such an accretion to France's armed strength could have serious consequences. Attempts by the government to downplay this perceived threat by reference to the Indian Mutiny and the possible danger that 'giving the coloured men a military training' might actually pose to the French themselves were neither wholly convincing nor successful and the session closed without reaching a meaningful conclusion.[65] Yet, it was not the outcome of this debate so much as what it signified that mattered. The whole incident was indicative of the new light in which the European military balance was being reappraised in Germany and of the genuine fears that had arisen among the German populace about the Reich's comparative military standing.

Thus, so far as Russell was concerned, the Second Moroccan Crisis had produced a major shift in the popular perceptions of the German nation. Whereas prior to its outbreak most Germans had been supremely confident in their military security, in its aftermath this feeling was superseded by a new anxiety about the Reich's power and prestige. In Russell's estimation, the existence of this 'disquietude' would have a number of serious consequences, many of which would prove deleterious to the long-term peace of Europe.

To begin with, the new feeling of insecurity created a wave of hostility among Germans towards those nations that were deemed culpable for Germany's diplomatic embarrassment. Britain was high on this list. This was first made clear to Russell in an interview with the Kaiser in early September, when Wilhelm expressed his anger over Britain's intervention in the Franco-German quarrel, particularly in respect to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Mansion House oration. 'The German people', the Kaiser told him, 'were already irritated over the Moroccan question and Lloyd George's speech had not tended to improve matters.'[66] Significantly, it was apparent to Russell that the army shared the Kaiser's frustration. 'Though burning to vent their hostility on France', he reported later that month, 'their feelings against us are, I think, bitterer still.'[67] Five weeks later he expressed the matter even more strongly:

> The dominant feeling in the army at the present moment—and this feeling is not only confined to the army—is, I believe, one of intense hostility to ourselves. The chief origin of this sentiment is best illustrated by the remarks of some German officers, who recently

[64] Ibid., 644. [65] Russell, MA 30/11, 21 Nov. 1911, FO 371/1120.
[66] Russell, MA 20/11, 1 Sept. 1911, *BD* vii. 493.
[67] Russell, MA 23/11, 22 Sept. 1911, FO 371/1127.

assured my French military colleague that they could very easily and quickly have settled their differences with France over Morocco, if it had not been for the interference of the English.[68]

Thus, in Russell's view, Britain's role in the Moroccan imbroglio had engendered a new and powerful wave of anglophobia. This was a sentiment that would last. As Russell later reported, although he continued to be received on cordial terms by many German officers, he remained convinced that 'the real state of feeling in this country' was one of 'bitterness' against Britain. Indeed, he was continuously struck by 'the depth of hostility with which we were regarded, not as individuals but as a nation'.[69]

Russell also noticed with alarm that the emerging sense of insecurity generated a new popular impetus towards rearmament. He first reported to this effect in December 1911, when he noted that recent events had 'brought about an alteration in the temper of the German people' such that there was 'little doubt that a large section of the public will loudly demand a stronger army and be prepared to render whole-hearted support to the proposals [for military increases]'.[70] Dramatic evidence of the validity of this assessment was provided in January 1912 by the formation of the *Wehrverein* (Army League), a new patriotic pressure group designed to campaign for military increases. As Russell reported, the new organization intended to agitate for increases in the 'infantry, cavalry, artillery and communication troops' and thereby to 'perform for the army services similar to those which the Navy League has so successfully rendered to the Navy'. However, if Russell noted the aims of the new body, he was also struck by its ideological underpinnings. The very ethos of the society seemed grounded in the prevailing feeling of insecurity. As the attaché explained, the *Wehrverein* justified itself on the basis that 'the strategical situation of Germany in Europe had changed for the worse'.[71] In making this assertion the Army League typified the growing sense of national malaise that had emerged out of the humiliation at Agadir. Thus, in campaigning for military increases as a response to this feeling of insecurity, it perfectly captured the new mood of the German nation. Insecurity, it seemed, was promoting militarism.

Russell's appraisal of the transformation of German national sentiment with respect to armaments led him to conclude long before the new measure was actually introduced that 'a scheme of expansion for the army is already in existence'.[72] Accordingly, he was far from surprised when a new Army Bill was placed before the Reichstag in March 1912. Nevertheless, he remained taken aback by the nature of the proposed changes. The German government, he reported, sought 'an improved state of preparedness for war by calling up in larger numbers the men available for

[68] Russell, MA 26/11, 27 Oct. 1911, *BD* vii. 644.
[69] Russell, MA 7/12, 16 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[70] Russell, MA 36/11, 15 Dec. 1911, FO 371/1125.
[71] Russell, MA 5/12, 31 Jan. 1912, FO 371/1372.
[72] Russell, MA 38/11, 21 Dec. 1911, FO 371/1129.

service and by a completion of the organization of the army'.[73] While the former proposal entailed a modest increase in manpower of 29,000 recruits—not insignificant, but far from a dramatic rise—the latter measure involved the creation of two new army corps. It was this that attracted Russell's attention:

> The two new army corps would no doubt have been formed in any case on mobilization, but their previous creation in time of peace furnishes them with a cohesion and a power of smooth and efficient working, which they could not possibly have possessed, had they been hurriedly made up on the outbreak of war.

Hence, it was his opinion that the Army Bill represented a 'very considerable accession of military strength' that would enable 'the work of preparing for mobilization to be more perfectly performed'.[74] In effect, the new military measures had given Germany the ability to strike at their neighbours more quickly.

The enhancement of Germany's mobilization and strike capacity was a matter that caused Russell some alarm given his assessment of the new psychological profile of the German nation. Whereas he had previously been convinced that the Germans were confident in their military prowess and prone to peace as a result of that sentiment, as we have seen, he now believed that they had been shocked into insecurity by the Second Moroccan Crisis. Consequently, his report on the German military build-up was accompanied by a stringent warning. The feeling in Germany was now governed by 'an uncomfortable feeling in German hearts that the army of the Fatherland is gaining a reputation of being unwilling to fight, an intense irritation at what is considered French arrogance and the apparent inevitable hostility to ourselves'. Put these feelings in the context of the new military increases, he suggested, and 'we obtain a sum of national sentiment, which might on occasion turn the scale, when the issue of peace or war was hanging in the balance'.[75] In short, the attaché who had arrived two years previously convinced that Germany had no interest in a resort to arms was now worried by the possibility that the increased strike capacity just created by the new Army Bill might well be used in anger. This was an opinion he conveyed clearly to the ambassador. 'Again Russell tells me', wrote Sir Edward Goschen, 'that in military circles they talk very freely—surprisingly so—about the chances of a war with France.' One possibility, Russell informed him, was that 'they would *like* a war with France'.[76] It was a dramatic transformation of view; and yet this change, substantial though it was, was by no means the final metamorphosis of the attaché's opinions.

Russell's new assessment of Germany's possible future behaviour led him to keep a closer and more sceptical watch on the actions of the German army. As we have seen, he had been inclined in the past to dismiss or explain away all signs of bellicosity. This would no longer be the case. In February 1912, he reported 'rumours of a disquieting nature' concerning secret German military preparations.

[73] Russell, MA 14/12, 16 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[74] Russell, MA 21/12, 13 May 1912, FO 371/1374.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Goschen to Nicolson, 22 Mar. 1912, FO 800/554.

These included increased activity at the Great General Staff, the unexplained purchase of foreign oats and forage, and the acquisition of new rolling stock for the state railways. Although there were many possible innocent explanations for these happenings, in Russell's view, such activities could not be ignored:

> The abnormal activity at the Great General Staff may possibly be partially explained by the fact that it is the season for winter exercises . . .
>
> The purchase of foreign oats on a larger scale than usual may be due to the failure of the crops last autumn . . .
>
> It may be urged that an increase of rolling stock on the Prussian railway system may have been a pressing requirement for some time past . . .
>
> On the other hand, it cannot be forgotten that the voice of the German people has been calling loudly for increased armaments, the political situation in Europe is full of disquieting uncertainties, the feeling of this country against us is full of anger and bitterness and that therefore any indications which point to warlike preparations, however capable they may be of alternative explanation, are not to be left unnoticed.[77]

He made the same point more starkly still in April, when he reported other 'warlike preparations', including the transfer of Chilean government orders from German to Austrian factories, a sure sign that German weapons' manufacturers were working at full capacity to supply their own country's needs. His conclusion as to what these preparations might mean did not pull its punches:

> If these demands and these preparations . . . are made only in the interests of the defence of the Fatherland, it is not easy to explain why they should have suddenly become necessary, when less than a year ago this was not the case.
>
> If they are not intended purely for defensive purposes, there remains but one alternative; they must be designed for offence or rather aggression.[78]

When one remembers that only fourteen months previously Russell had dismissed the Kaiser's comment that with soldiers such as his 'one feels as if one could smash up anyone' with the observation 'I am convinced the remark had no deeper significance', it is clear how far his views had changed. Yet, as the Moroccan imbroglio gave way to the Balkan Wars, it would quickly become evident that the transformation of Russell's opinions had even further to go.

The outbreak of military operations in the Balkans in October 1912 was not a positive development for Germany. At the end of several vicious rounds of fighting, Germany's principal allies found that they had lost power and prestige, while Germany's most likely enemies were among the nations enjoying sizeable accretions of influence, territory, population, and military potential. In this sense, the geo-strategic balance appeared to have been tipped yet again against the Reich. Due to this outcome, the Balkan Wars produced a strong reaction in Germany, causing a renewed clamour for increased armaments, an agitation that was ultimately met in early 1913 by the submission of yet another new Army Bill to the Reichstag. How were these developments to be interpreted?

[77] Russell, MA 6/12, 5 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1373.
[78] Russell, MA 16/12, 19 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1373.

In Russell's view, the new military measures that followed the Balkan Wars once again demonstrated that insecurity had gripped the German nation, a fact he made clear in a series of major dispatches. Foremost amongst these was a report from January 1913 entitled 'influences working for further increases in the German army'. The central tenet of this exposition was that 'the German nation has lost some of it's [*sic*] former confidence in the supremity of it's [*sic*] army, and the army itself has likewise been affected to a certain degree by the prevailing sentiment of disquietude'. While the process had begun with the Second Moroccan Crisis, the Balkan Wars had done much 'to add fuel to the flames of the declining confidence'. For, owing to this conflict, the military and political geometry of Central Europe had changed significantly and, from the German point of view, greatly for the worse. It was now evident 'that the alliance with Austria [could not] now furnish [Germany] with the same measure of military support, as it might have done in the past'. As Russell explained, the Germans had always expected that

> in the event of a great European war, a strong Turkey might have neutralized the power of Servia, but Germany's Austro-Hungarian ally can no longer count on such timely assistance from the dismembered Ottoman Empire. Servia indeed and perhaps not Servia alone, might fall on the flank and rear of an Austrian advance against Russia.

Naturally, as a result of this, it was apparent that Germany could no longer rely upon the full support of Habsburg forces on the eastern frontier. 'This loss of strength . . . they themselves must make good.' Owing to this assessment of affairs, Russell represented the sentiment in Germany as being in favour of large military increases: 'I believe . . . that it is very universally felt in Germany that the main attention of the Government should now be devoted to the army, and to this feeling may be chiefly ascribed the demands for another Army Bill, which are so prevalent at the present time.'[79]

The ultimate consequence of this sentiment was the 1913 Army Bill, a legislative measure that enhanced the peacetime strength of Germany's land forces by an unprecedented and massive 136,000 men. At the same time, it also augmented the regular establishments of existing units, thereby greatly accelerating the speed with which Germany could mobilize and deploy its formidable fighting forces. This vast increase in German military power caused Russell considerable alarm because, in his estimation, there were reasons for believing that these enhanced capabilities were being developed to be used in anger.

To begin with, Russell was more convinced than ever of the prevalence in the German army of a heady mix of anglophobia, Social Darwinism, and militarism, an amalgam of sentiments that he believed was leading some senior officers to press for war:

> there is in Germany a war party, composed chiefly of very senior officers, who consider that war is absolutely indispensable for the health of the German army and who attempt to urge their views upon the Emperor both in and out of season. The animosity of these

[79] Russell, MA 5/13, 23 Jan. 1913, FO 371/1649.

warriors . . . is chiefly directed against Great Britain. From the west of Germany rumours have reached me of this party being in great strength and of being passionately desirous of war, but of war particularly with England.[80]

Moreover, he was also convinced that these views were being propagated among the general public. In December 1913, Russell translated and sent to London an article in the periodical *Der Greif* by Friedrich von Bernhardi on 'Germany's financial and economic preparedness for war'. Among the issues considered in the piece was the question of whether and by what means Germany should go to war. As Russell explained, Bernhardi laid 'special stress' on the circumstances in which war would be desirable. It was Bernhardi's contention 'that a wise diplomacy should exclude the possibility of a war being forced on Germany. German statesmen must, on the other hand, foresee an inevitable war, prepare for it systematically, and seize the initiative at the most favourable moment.' Interestingly, Russell, who, as we have seen, had not been especially worried by a similarly belligerent observation by Bernhardi from 1910, took this remark more seriously. Moreover, he suggested that it enjoyed a real resonance with the German people: 'Such policy as this certainly does not present any new features to Bismarck's fellow countrymen.'[81]

Russell's belief that there was an anglophobic war party propagandizing for war was supplemented by a further—and new—anxiety that the state of German public finances was also a factor pushing the country in the direction of conflict. The reason for this was the enormous cost of the new military programme. As Russell reported in April 1913, the planned measures would entail non-recurring expenditure of £44,200,000 and recurring annual costs of £9,150,000.[82] This was no small amount of money and would require significant tax increases to cover it. Yet obtaining enhanced state funding was a highly sensitive electoral issue in Germany, one that, as the resignation of Chancellor Bülow had demonstrated, could cause considerable political problems. The political ramifications of an expensive new military programme were, thus, potentially very severe. On two separate occasions, Russell turned his attention to the implications of this situation.

The first of these reports was written on 4 July 1913. In a detailed exposition on the impact on public opinion of the new measures, Russell noted that 'on the whole the military proposals meet with approval'. However, the same could not be said about 'the method of providing funds for these changes', which, he stated, 'causes much doubt and uncertainty and a full measure of heart burning'. Indeed, as he went on to observe, owing to the Army Law 'the ship of state is hardly under control in the matter of financial policy'. This was problematic because it was by no means certain that these military measures would be sufficient to restore Germany's sense of security and confidence. 'For how long the heads of the Army

[80] Russell, MA 5/13, 23 Jan. 1913, FO 371/1649.
[81] Russell, MA 44/13, 11 Dec. 1913, FO 371/1654.
[82] Russell, MA 16/13, 2 Apr. 1913, FO 371/1648.

will consider the military needs of the Empire are fulfilled by the improved conditions brought about by the new Bill', Russell pondered, 'remains to be proved.' Did this create a situation where it might be preferable to use the enhanced strike capacity before it was eroded and the need once again arose to ask the public for further monetary resources? This scenario certainly seems to be what Russell was hinting at by the conjunction of ideas in the final paragraph of his report:

> That the sacrifices of the nation have been met with unquestioning and willing enthusiasm can certainly not be said to be the case. That the German army is receiving no mean accession of strength, that the new provisions will make this military machine more ready for war and more capable than ever of carrying out it's [*sic*] ingrained and traditional policy of the offensive, should the decision be taken at any time to draw the sword, stands beyond dispute.[83]

Nor would this be the only time he would imply that the costs of military measures could provoke a German strike. A similar association of ideas appeared in a report penned some three and a half weeks later:

> Whether the real objects of the Army Bill of 1913, which I conceive to be those of gaining such a commanding lead over France as to outdistance competition and even more of obtaining complete security against the rising power of Russia, have been accomplished even for a period by the projected army increases or not, can hardly be judged as yet with any degree of certainty. There can, however, be no doubt that the military strength of Germany is about to be enhanced in a manner which is deserving of very serious consideration, but whether at the same time the financial sinews of the Empire have not been unduly strained by the consequent increase of taxation and the industrial life of the nation been sapped to some extent by the withdrawal of so much manhood from productive work is . . . another more open question.[84]

So what was Russell saying? The military measures just passed might not be effective for long; they gave Germany an enormous temporary military advantage; and they strained the public finances of the Empire. Triangulate these ideas—which Russell had twice placed adjacent to each other—and an uncomfortable possibility emerged: it might be more tempting to use the new military advantage, while it still existed, than ask for more funds, which might not be there. This was evidently not a propitious set of circumstances.

If Russell believed that the German army was more prepared than ever for war, that its officers were motivated by a strong streak of anglophobia to seek battle with Britain, that there was a war party agitating for conflict, and that there were financial factors that might make war desirable in place of further military increases, only one question remained. When did Russell see this conflict taking place? He considered this point in February 1913 and reached a conclusion that was very similar to the one articulated by Trench in 1908. It was his belief that

> war is not wanted at this juncture by the responsible heads of the German Army and that, therefore, no step would be taken deliberately which would be bound to cause uneasiness

[83] Russell, MA 25/13, 4 July 1913, FO 371/1648.
[84] Russell, MA 28/13, 28 July 1913, FO 244/818.

in Europe and might precipitate hostilities. The Emperor was heard to say a few days ago that, as far as he was concerned, there should be peace in Germany until after his jubilee, and from remarks made quite recently by the Chief of the General Staff . . . there seems little doubt that this influential officer is equally undesirous of war at the present time.[85]

As this paragraph shows, Russell, like Trench, believed that the army did not want war 'at the present time', a phrase suggestive of the idea that they did want war in their own time. When might that be? In this context the comment about the Kaiser's jubilee assumes real significance. The anniversary of Wilhelm's succession was 1913. So, like Trench, Russell evidently believed that the period after 1913 was replete with unfortunate possibilities.

Thus, Russell, too, came to believe in a German menace. The process whereby this happened related to his close observation of what he termed 'the barometer of national confidence'. In his estimation, 'the confidence [of the German people] in the military strength of the Empire' had 'sunk to a somewhat low ebb during the critical days of the autumn of 1911'.[86] This had produced anxieties, which had been further exacerbated by the Balkan Wars. The result had been a series of Army Bills and a change of mood among the German people and officer corps, which had led to an increase in hostility towards Britain and a strengthening of Germany's war party. When the constraints of financial limitations were added into this mix, Russell saw a potent motive for war. Germany had enhanced its ability to strike quickly; would it use this capability while it lasted? Russell evidently feared that it might.

Having examined the attitudes of Waters, Gleichen, Trench, and Russell, it is evident that the description of military attachés as harbingers of the German menace, is not one that can be universally applied. To begin with, Waters and Gleichen were actually sceptical of the threat posed by Germany and, in the latter case at least, reported at times to that effect. Of course, Trench and Russell both felt differently, but it is interesting to note that their reasoning was far from identical. Trench's main focus was on the prevalent anglophobia and the desire to invade Britain as a means of eliminating an obstacle to the successful pursuit of *Weltpolitik*. Russell, by contrast, was not only initially sceptical about such matters, but actually believed that Germany, as a secure and confident power, had no wish to resort to arms. He changed this view in late 1911 and, like Trench, began to see strong indications of anti-British sentiments in the army and among the German people. Even so, this perception led him to worry about a German arms build-up and not about an *attaque brusquée* on the British Isles. Russell's fear was that Germany would start a major war, not that the Reich would launch an amphibious invasion of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, these distinctions aside, he did share with Trench a conviction that, after 1913, war was a real danger. As such Trench and Russell could both be termed harbingers of the German menace.

[85] Russell MA 10/13, 9 Feb. 1913, FO 371/1648.
[86] Russell, MA 40/13, 18 Nov. 1913, FO 371/1654.

THE VIEWS OF THE NAVAL ATTACHÉS, 1900–1906

If an examination of the military attachés shows that their attitudes to a German threat were more complex than has previously been believed, what about the views of their naval colleagues? How do their assumptions appear when subject to detailed scrutiny?

While Britain's travelling attachés had visited Germany periodically during the late nineteenth century, it was not until November 1900, with the arrival in Berlin of Arthur Ewart, that a permanent British naval attaché was posted to the Reich. Unfortunately, owing to the meagre survival rate of his reports, much less than might be desirable is known of his views. Furthermore, those of his dispatches that are still extant are unhelpful in respect of his geopolitical thinking. They tell us much about water tube boilers, but on the German menace they are totally silent.[87] Fortunately, this is not the end of the story, for, serendipitously, Ewart's views on this point are available through another route.

In April 1902, Lord Selborne, then First Lord of the Admiralty, approached the Foreign Secretary with a series of 'conundrums' that he wished to have put to the British ambassador in Berlin. Amongst these was the question: 'is the development of [the] German navy intended by the German Govt or people to be directed against England?'[88] Sir Frank Lascelles wrote his reply on 25 April. It was emphatically in the negative: 'The naval development of Germany was not in my opinion intended by the German Government to be directed against England.' However, a postscript the next day contained an interesting revision:

> Since writing the above I have had a talk with Captain Ewart, who has pointed out to me that the development of the German Navy was directed against England. This was stated over and over again during the debates in the Reichstag, and the preamble of the Navy Bill states that its object is to create a Navy which will be equal to that of the greatest sea power. I must therefore modify my answer to the second of Selborne's questions. Ewart is sending full information to the Naval Intelligence Department for Selborne's use . . .[89]

Regrettably, Ewart's letter to the NID does not appear to have survived, but he must have expressed some strong views on the German navy, for on 28 April, Lord Walter Kerr, the Senior Naval Lord, wrote to Selborne on, among other things, the German threat. Evidently he had seen Ewart's submission, for he included a telling comment on the navy's man in Berlin: 'I do not think that I am so much impressed as some, especially our Naval Attaché, with the view that Germany is building *against* us.'[90]

[87] On water tube boilers see Ewart NA 6/01, 8 Feb. 1901, and Ewart NA 7/01, 18 Feb. 1901, ADM 1/7550B.
[88] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 22 Apr. 1902, FO 800/11.
[89] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 25 Apr. 1902 with postscript of 26 Apr. 1902, FO 800/129.
[90] Kerr to Selborne, 28 Apr. 1902, quoted in D. George Boyce (ed.), *The Crisis of British Power: The Imperial and Naval Papers of the Second Earl of Selborne, 1895–1910* (London, 1990), 144.

This correspondence is tantalizingly brief, but nevertheless germane; for as a result of these two letters, one thing is indisputable. Although we do not know the specific details of Ewart's fears, it is beyond doubt that he believed that the German navy was being built against Britain. Was this also the opinion of his successor?

Ewart was replaced in mid-1903 by Captain Reginald Allenby. Sadly, surviving dispatches by Allenby are no more copious than are Ewart's and, as ever, those that do survive are of a more technical than a strategic nature. Consequently, Allenby's opinions on Germany are hard to gauge. Frustratingly, his diary is not especially helpful either. Although he faithfully recorded his engagements, Allenby did not choose to confide many of his personal opinions in his journal. Luckily, there is one piece of evidence that does give an insight into his perceptions of the Reich. In May 1906, a month after he was relieved in Berlin, Allenby gave a lecture at the Naval War College on the topic of 'The German Navy and German Naval Resources'. The text of this oration still exists and contains a short section relating to this issue:

> Lastly, after having met large numbers of German naval officers, I can only say that personally I have always received the greatest politeness, hospitality and kindness from them. While admitting that we, as a nation, are disliked and not altogether, I venture to submit, without some reason, I do not believe this dislike is as great as most people like to imagine.[91]

If that was Allenby's opinion, then it can safely be said that he was very far from being an advocate of a German threat. No one who acknowledged that the cause of the tensions in Anglo-German relations lay on both sides could be so described. The fact that he downplayed the magnitude of the friction between the nations is also suggestive of this.

Thus, as with the early military attachés, it appears that the first couple of naval attachés had more varied attitudes towards the Reich than one might expect from the descriptions contained in the existing historical writing. While in 1902 Ewart undoubtedly saw the German navy as a menace, this was not a fact of which his successor, Allenby, was necessarily convinced. Indeed, as he told the officers at the Naval War College, he regarded many of the popular perceptions of German hostility as much overstated. However, this was not a perspective that would prove enduring. Just as the departure of Colonel Gleichen from Berlin in January 1906 heralded a shift in the military reporting from the German capital, so Allenby's return to Britain in February 1906 prefigured a comparable change in the tone of the naval dispatches. As we shall see, at least three of Allenby's four successors took a radically different stance from him concerning the German threat.

[91] Allenby, 'The German Navy and German Naval Resources', lecture given at the War College Portsmouth, 9 May 1906, NMM: Allenby Papers, MS86/050.

'CHALLENGING BRITAIN'S SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SEAS': THE VIEWS OF CAPTAIN DUMAS, NAVAL ATTACHÉ 1906–1908

The new naval attaché in Berlin was Philip Dumas. Unlike his two predecessors, who left remarkably few clues about their strategic views, Dumas has bequeathed the historian a veritable mountain of information concerning his perceptions of Germany. In part, this is because of the high survival rate of his dispatches, copies of which can still be found in large numbers in the archives. However, it also reflects the manner in which the new attaché compiled his various written submissions. Dumas, it seems, made a conscious decision to break the mould in his reporting by deliberately covering contentious political issues. The occasion for this decision appears to have been his period of training for the attachéship. As was the custom, before he took up his appointment in Berlin, Dumas was summoned to the Admiralty to familiarize himself with the information held there on German affairs. Among these papers were 'the reports from Germany' produced by his predecessors. He did not think much of them. As he recorded in his diary, his over-riding impression was 'their lack of interest'.[92] Although there were doubtless many reasons for this, one of the most likely causes of Dumas's all-too-frank disdain stemmed from the fact that the practice at this stage was for naval attachés to write on mainly technical issues, leaving political matters to the diplomats. However, given that the building of the German navy was clearly as much a political as a military decision, Dumas considered that this was an artificial distinction. Accordingly, he purposefully set out to write a series of dispatches 'dealing with the high political side of the construction of the German navy'.[93] The consequence was not only that his reports tended to be more interesting than those of his predecessors, but, more importantly, they dealt extensively with such matters as German aims and intentions. Here Dumas had clear views. As he was to express in no uncertain terms, while he had no immediate anxieties about a German attack, in the long-term, he regarded the Reich as a profound threat to British security.

At the heart of Dumas's analysis lay the belief that Germans were fundamentally antagonistic towards the United Kingdom. The first significant remark to this effect came from a dispatch, written a mere two months into his posting, dealing with the passage through the Reichstag of the 1906 naval estimates. As Dumas noted, despite the very considerable sums demanded, the measure received parliamentary approval with astonishing ease. Part of the reason for this, in Dumas's opinion, was the German system of public finance. As the government covered

[92] Dumas Diary, 9 Jan. 1906.
[93] Dumas, unpublished autobiography, IWM: 65/23/1, p. 35.

much of its naval expenditure through loans rather than taxes, the general population remained oblivious to the long-term fiscal consequences of their profligacy. However, hatred of Britain was another, and in Dumas's view more significant, factor in the ready consent given to the bulging naval budget:

> The secret of it all is the extremely busy propaganda of the Navy League acting on the greedy desires of the German peoples, as a whole, to despoil England of her trade and Colonies, and day by day one may read in the papers of the efforts that must be made to be ready when the time comes to fight and defeat our Western neighbours.[94]

The point could not have been clearer: the appeal of the navy was its future utility as a weapon against Britain, a country widely detested by the German people.

However, if Dumas thought that the German populace was anglophobic, he did not, in 1906 at least, believe that such sentiments were prevalent either among the naval officer corps or among those in power. This was made evident in August 1906, when Dumas turned his attention to reporting German views of the reduction in British battleship building that was taking place in advance of the Hague Conference: 'I am of opinion that there is great disappointment in Germany that the reduction is so comparatively small; not from the desire for a reduction of armaments or even of expense but because a large portion of the population wish to fight and crush England once and for all.'[95] However, ten days later, he obviously though better of this rather sweeping and indiscriminate statement, because he sent in the following correction:

> In reading over N.A. report 40/06 . . . I regret to find that in summing up I expressed myself badly in saying, without qualification, that a large portion of the population wish to fight and crush England once and for all. I would beg to qualify this by saying that such portion only includes ignorant people who take their politics from the papers and the Navy League publications.
>
> In general I believe the official and superior classes have no such wish and look on the whole agitation as pernicious and dangerous.[96]

Thus, for all his doubts about the German people, Dumas was confident that the Reich leadership had more moderate views. At least, that was his opinion in 1906. By 1907, he had changed his mind.

The first indication of this came in April when Dumas submitted a report of conversations he had held with various German naval officers over the preceding weeks. Included in this dispatch was one German officer's views on the prospect of an Anglo-German war. According to Dumas his interlocutor told him:

> Of course we can do nothing now with your navy so much stronger than ours, but you wait a few years, and then see if we would allow you to have another Boer War. We might lose

[94] Dumas, NA 17/06, 10 Apr. 1906, NHB: 'Naval Estimates, Volume III', T20895.
[95] Dumas, NA 40/06, 10 Aug. 1906, FO 371/79.
[96] Dumas NA 42/06, 20 Aug. 1906, ibid.

our navy in doing it, but you'll lose yours also and the command of the sea, and when we start to rebuild you won't have such an advantage.[97]

In his diary, Dumas expressed strong opinions about the significance of this statement, which he characterized in colourful terms:

That is the true expression of the present feeling in Germany and all hopes are based hardly upon revenge but on the future pleasure of stamping on or outraging the feelings of the one-time haughty Briton and they are rejoicing in the self-sacrifice that builds their fleet because some vague day it will enable them to bring England to its knees. It is all the pitiful and contemptible view of a parvenu nation.[98]

His official report was more restrained, but in some respects more interesting. In response to this remark, he observed: 'Of course, all this was said in a joking manner, but it was evident—in fact, I am sure—that he voiced the views of the navy and, indeed, the country as a whole.'[99] In one sentence the distinction that Dumas had made in 1906 about the views of the 'official and superior classes' contrasting with those of the 'ignorant people' was wiped away. The German navy and the German people were now described as having a single common aim, supplanting Britain as a naval and global power.

That this point about anglophobia being the principal sentiment of the German navy was not an isolated over-reaction to a solitary incident but now reflected Dumas's wider thoughts was made apparent by its repetition, in even stronger terms, some two months later. The occasion was provided by a visit to Kiel. Commenting on the very considerable courtesy shown to him by the naval officers there, Dumas expressed his gratitude but then added a very significant further observation:

At the same time it would be futile not to recognize, and I feel it my duty to state, that I believe that all these same officers are becoming, day by day, more and more firmly convinced that in the near future England and Germany must fight for command of the sea. Accordingly all their strenuous life and work is conceived and carried forward with that end in view. I would add that of course they look upon it as a very terrible future yet none the less they are preparing for it because very nearly all look upon it in the light of a grievous necessity.[100]

So there it was. In Dumas's estimation, 'whatever the feelings public or private may be, the whole aim and object of the German training is to perfect their forces as against England'. 'To me', he observed, 'it seems but the simple honest truth.'[101]

Dumas's belief in a widespread German hatred of Britain was compounded by his sense that this already all too vibrant emotion was being further and deliberately inflamed. The engine of anglophobia responsible for orchestrating the detestation

[97] Dumas, NA 22/07, 30 Apr. 1907, FO 371/260.

[98] Dumas Diary, 27 Apr. 1908. In the diary, the remark is attributed to a member of the German Foreign Office, rather than a naval officer. Either way, it was said by a member of the 'official and superior classes' rather than by one of the 'ignorant people'.

[99] Dumas, NA 22/07, 30 Apr. 1907, FO 371/260.

[100] Dumas, NA 36/07, 1 July 1907, FO 371/261.

[101] Dumas Diary, 1 July 1907.

of Britain was the Navy League. This was an organization that Dumas had long regarded with considerable suspicion. As he had informed Sir Charles Hardinge in June 1907, its purpose and activities were utterly pernicious. The League, he stated, consisted of '900,000 members . . . preaching hate of England to the people at large'.[102] And they were very effective at such propaganda. The attaché's annual report for 1907 considered the impact of their work at length. Having outlined the League's role in portraying 'England as a bogey in the path of German development and expansion', it continued:

Of late their greatest efforts have been to get at the children and in support of this I may note that two English ladies resident in Germany have told me of their children returning from school and asking if it was true that England really wanted to destroy Germany and could they have some small sum towards the defence of the Empire from that wicked State.

In another case I spoke to some school children myself who gravely asked why England wished to destroy Germany and told me further that their teacher had begged them always to remember that England was their enemy.

In themselves of course such stories are ridiculous but they disclose a very serious form of thought which must grow up in the minds of the children and produce a permanent desire for revenge on England.

When I add to this that England has been constantly held up to hatred by Navy League orators in every village in the Empire and that the grown up members now probably amount to at least 600,000, it can be realised what an overwhelming desire for the downfall of England must now exist in Germany.

It is true that it is at present masked by fear but I would submit that it cannot be too strongly realised that England is hated throughout Germany . . .[103]

Given Dumas's assessment of the Navy League's success in inspiring detestation of Britain, it is little wonder that, when the attaché came to write his final report on giving up his post, he was anything but sanguine about the future of Anglo-German relations. Having once more expounded on 'the widespread hatred of England' in Germany, he reiterated his message about German anglophobia:

throughout Germany, England is hated, and, indeed, will continue to be so for many years to come, for I have had overwhelming evidence again and again that hatred is being taught daily in the schools as a duty to children of the tenderest years; an acquirement, even if against all reason, which persists for the greater part of a lifetime, and, further, to provide a feeling (much fostered in the last few years by the Navy League), and which obtains to-day from end to end of the Empire, that, while at present they can do nothing, yet they will bide their time, and then, in some vague future happy day, the reckoning for England shall be bitter indeed. . . .

Moreover, . . . I believe that at the bottom of every German's heart to-day is rising a faint and wildly exhilarating hope that a glorious day is approaching when by a brave breaking through of the lines which he feels are encircling him he might even wrest the command of the seas from England and thus become a member of the greatest Power by land or sea that the world has ever seen.[104]

[102] Dumas Diary, 4 June 1907. [103] Dumas, NA 9/08, 12 Feb. 1908, *BD* vi. 122.
[104] Dumas, NA 34/08, 30 July 1908, FO 371/461.

Dumas's parting message was, therefore, very clear. Like Trench, he believed that Germans hated Britain and hoped one day, by force of arms, to supplant the British Empire.

If Dumas was unambiguous as to the extent and intensity of German anglophobia, the question naturally arises: how did he believe that this desire would be expressed in practice? Did he, for example, like Trench, hold the view that the Germans planned an *attaque brusquée* on the British Isles? The answer, with certain qualifications, is no.

Dumas arrived in Berlin apparently believing that a surprise German invasion might be possible. Told in February 1906, by Sir George Clarke, the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, who was 'contemptuous about the possibility of invasion', that Britain 'must have 30 hrs notice' of such an assault, Dumas noted in his diary 'I wholly demur'.[105] If this incident gives the impression that Dumas adhered to at least the possibility of an unannounced German sea-borne assault, so, too, do some of his early reports. In September 1906, after visiting the port of Emden, he stated, 'in passing', that 'should a raid on England ever be projected this place alone could supply all the transport necessary, while all war material could be loaded up the river . . . in absolute secrecy and brought down to the mouth without a suspicion being raised'.[106] Then, in November, he wrote a full report specifically on this topic. Opening with the comment that, although 'any such invasion has been declared to be impossible', 'my researches and study of the subject have led me to a precisely opposite conclusion', Dumas proceeded to outline in detail how such an operation might be undertaken. Considering everything from sailing distances to lighterage, he made, minuted Spicer, one of the Foreign Office officials to read the dispatch, 'a very good argument' to prove that such an invasion could take place.[107]

Should one take this dispatch to mean that, in November 1906, Dumas believed in the possibility, however remote, of a 'bolt from the blue' invasion? Actually no. As his diary reveals, Dumas's intention in writing this report had nothing to do with making the case for a German invasion. Instead there was a very different ulterior motive: 'Commenced my letter on invasion in which I don't believe at all, but it provides an excellent peg to point out that we have no English consuls or agents [in the key German ports] and that is what I want to get at.'[108] And, indeed, his report did have a lot to say about the vital need for British-born career consuls in the principal German harbours, a need he justified by the possibility of an operation in which, as his journal makes clear, he did not actually believe!

Nor is it only his diary which reveals that Dumas was more sceptical about invasion than might at first appear. It is also clear, on close inspection of the above-mentioned dispatch, that despite the apparent focus on 'the possibility of

[105] Dumas Diary, 1 Feb. 1906. [106] Dumas, NA 47/06, 18 Sept. 1906, ADM 231/47.
[107] Dumas, NA 61/06, 25 Nov. 1906, FO 371/80. [108] Dumas Diary, 27 Nov. 1906.

invasion of England', what the text actually considered was the feasibility of a 'raid'. Yet, if Dumas blurred this distinction in his November 1906 report in order to make his argument about the need for more consuls stronger, he was unambiguous about the distinction in his subsequent dispatches. Hence, his annual report on the German navy for 1907, which also gave consideration to the invasion issue, postulated 'that some 30,000 to 40,000 men might possibly embark in secrecy from the various sea ports in separate expeditions'. However, since Dumas believed that 'even against the Military power of England it would be simply ridiculous to attempt an invasion without at least a force of 75,000 men', he concluded: 'What it therefore amounts to is that while a raiding expedition is possible an invasion is almost impossible, while, even if either party did arrive, long before they had disembarked their stores and artillery, at least a necessary proceeding, our fleets should have arrived and annihilated them.'[109] He arrived at much the same conclusion when he looked into the matter again in April 1908:

> an almost perpetual study of this question for over two years now has led me to the conclusion that any attempt of invasion of England (by which I mean a force of 100,000 men with a fair proportion of artillery and some commissariat, but no cavalry) is foredoomed to disaster from the lack of possible secrecy, and is therefore highly improbable . . .[110]

If, unlike Trench, Dumas discounted a sudden and unexpected descent by the Prussian army upon the British Isles, in what sense did he believe in a German threat? The evidence from both his diary and his dispatches shows that Dumas's anxiety was not about an imminent invasion, but about Germany's long-term intentions. In his estimation, the German navy was being systematically built up for a very particular purpose. As he informed Slade, the newly appointed DNI, in October 1907:

> I believe that very nearly every German outside the larger commercial people now desires that the construction of a fleet of corresponding strength to the Army shall be undertaken as rapidly as possible, and, what is more serious, that the objective of that fleet when completed—only at some vague future date, not now—shall be the wresting of the sovereignty of the seas from England.[111]

He made a similar point in his diary, when three months later he jotted unambiguously: 'it is plain that Germany means in the future, and not so distant either, to fight England for the command of the seas'.[112] What were the elements that made up this assessment that Germany had a long-term plan to overturn and supplant Britain's maritime supremacy?

The principal consideration was Dumas's appraisal of German shipbuilding capacity and his deductions as to how this constructive prowess would be used. As

[109] Dumas, NA 9/08, 12 Feb. 1908, *BD* vi. 124.
[110] Dumas, NA 19/08, 9 Apr. 1908, FO 371/459.
[111] Dumas to Slade, 18 Oct. 1910, ADM 137/3858.
[112] Dumas Diary, 31 Jan. 1908.

he reported in October 1906, after having visited most of the pertinent facilities, the German maritime industry was formidably advanced and frighteningly efficient:

> the German shipyards could within a period of two years and nine months construct a battle fleet consisting of:
> 9 Battleships of the largest size,
> 3 large armoured cruisers [i.e. battle cruisers],
> 34 small cruisers or scouts,
> 99 Destroyers.[113]

As, both in terms of numbers and speed of delivery, this output capacity was only marginally behind Britain's, this was alarming, not least because of the uses to which Dumas expected these skills to be put. As the attaché made clear, he was convinced that the productive muscle of the German yards would be consciously applied to eroding 'the margin of superiority which England, in Naval power, has over Germany'. Should this occur—and it was the attaché's firm conviction that it was for Britain 'a matter of enormous interest to check this ambition by every means in our power'—then a new and dangerous era would open in Anglo-German relations.[114] This was a point he developed in more detail in a dispatch focusing on the 1908 German naval estimates. These, he stressed, were 'enormously important and significant'. Not only were they 'distinguished by a huge advance in almost every direction', with 'economy . . . cast to the winds', but they revealed the true purpose of the German naval shipbuilding programme:

> They are important for England in that they anticipate an extremely rapid construction of a modern battle fleet of the greatest strength while at the same time steps are in contemplation to provide concurrently all proper auxiliaries for the efficient use of the same.
>
> They are significant because they further provide for the absolute safe guarding of the coasts thus leaving the fleet free in some five years' time, when the said coast defences are as strong as possible, to move out and be able to assume the proper metier of such a fleet—the offensive.[115]

In other words, Dumas's assessment was that Germany was attempting to undermine British maritime supremacy and, thereby, place her fleet in a position to go on the offensive against the Royal Navy.

Dumas's description of German intentions begged the question: when would this offensive take place? On the whole, the attaché did not regard this threat as imminent. True, he did believe that if ever there were a sudden shift in the balance of power, he could not vouch for Germany's restraint. As he confided: 'if they ever think they are even momentarily strong enough I am convinced they would be at us in a moment and moreover at the heart of London'.[116] However, as this was not a circumstance that Dumas considered likely, he concentrated for the most part

[113] Dumas NA 52/06, 3 Oct. 1906, FO 244/666.
[114] Dumas, NA 9/08, 12 Feb. 1908, *BD* vi. 131.
[115] Dumas, NA 65/07, 5 Dec. 1907, ADM 137/3858.
[116] Dumas Diary, 15 Apr. 1907.

on attempting to predict when Germany's naval progress would permit an offensive strategy to be pursued.

The date parameters he most commonly proposed were the years on or after 1913. For example, as we have already seen, on the basis of the programme outlined in the 1908 naval estimates, Dumas thought that a German offensive posture might occur 'in some five years' time', that is 1913.[117] This was not the only occasion on which he made this projection. In February 1908, he again speculated on the possible timing of an Anglo-German conflict, in this instance basing his judgement principally on the widening of the Kiel Canal and the building of the expanded naval base at Wilhelmshaven. As he explained, until Wilhelmshaven was finished, there was no protected harbour that could accommodate and maintain all the vessels needed to fight a naval battle in the North Sea. Equally, until the widening of the Kiel Canal was completed, the German Baltic and North Sea squadrons could only join together as a combined fleet after the former had made a perilous journey around Denmark. 'Therefore from these considerations', Dumas maintained, 'we again see every desire on the part of Germany to postpone any war until both of the works at Wilhelmshaven and on the canal are finished.' Although the Wilhelmshaven base was well in hand, the canal, it should be noted, was not due for completion until 1913 at the earliest. Additional supplementary evidence, also pointing to this timeframe, were the new dry dock being built at Brunsbuttel and the harbour and port facilities under construction on Heligoland. These 'great works which Germany will have in hand for the next five years', Dumas regarded as a further 'hostage for peace'.[118] Until, that is, they were completed, an event also scheduled, coincidentally, for the year 1913!

Parenthetically, it might be noted that Dumas continued to believe in the importance of the year 1913 long after he had left Berlin. Asked in November 1911, whether he would be prepared to go back to Germany as naval attaché, he recorded: 'On the whole I am inclined to going and risking much for the certainty of making history, for I firmly believe Anglo-German relations will reach a crisis in 1913 and it would be pure delight to share the responsibility with Europe.'[119] In a similar vein, in a discussion with Churchill in early 1912, Dumas told the new First Lord that 'he could rest assured that nothing would induce Germany to fight till 1913 or rather until the Kiel Canal was finished'.[120] Evidently, the stress on 1913, first adduced in 1907 and reiterated often thereafter, was a deeply held conviction.

So, in summation, it was Dumas's opinion that the widespread German detestation of Britain did not, as Trench believed, herald a sudden attack on the British mainland, but rather found expression in systematic preparations for a war to challenge Britain for the sovereignty of the seas. To this end, the German navy was being deliberately and carefully built up to put it in a position to enable it to take the offensive at some stage on or after 1913. Given this assumption, what was

[117] Dumas, NA 65/07, 5 Dec. 1907, ADM 137/3858.
[118] Dumas, NA 9/08, 12 Feb. 1908, *BD* vi. 125 and 130.
[119] Dumas Diary, 16 Nov. 1911. [120] Ibid., 3 Jan. 1912.

Dumas's prognosis for the future? On this matter, his diary records a revealing conversation with his friend and colleague, Walford Selby: 'walked along the beach talking over the state of affairs, which Selby declares can never improve unless Germany is prepared to drop the building of her fleet. This can never be and if so it must be future war, a fact I believe in myself though I fear to recognize it.'[121] There are several other entries to this effect scattered across the diary. Reluctantly, it seems, Dumas predicted war.

THE GERMAN ACCELERATION SCARE: THE VIEWS OF CAPTAIN HEATH, NAVAL ATTACHÉ 1908–1910

Dumas was succeeded on 1 August 1908 by Herbert Heath. If the tenor of his early reports is anything to go by, then Heath possessed a keen interest in the Navy League and the impact of its visceral propaganda on German public opinion.[122] Given the time and opportunity to examine naval developments in the Reich according to his own inclinations, all the indications are that Heath would have chosen to focus his efforts on this issue, producing like his predecessor detailed reports on German anglophobia. However, it was not to be. Within two and a half months of his arrival in Berlin, a new naval panic would get under way, the so-called 'acceleration scare', and Heath would find that all his energies were necessarily devoted to the question of whether or not the German navy was building battleships in advance of its published programme. Focusing on little else for months on end, Heath's outlook would be moulded by this experience. Owing to his constant immersion in the acceleration issue, he would emerge as a leading advocate of a new German threat perception theory, the idea that the Reich was attempting surreptitiously to outbuild Britain and, thereby, supplant the Royal Navy as the premier maritime fighting force in the North Sea. For this reason, the logical place to begin any examination of Heath's perceptions is with the origins of the acceleration scare. How did this naval panic begin and what part did the British naval attaché play in the process?

From the British perspective, there were two main issues that prompted this crisis. First, there were general anxieties about Germany's shipbuilding capability, especially in regard to the number of vessels that could be constructed and the speed at which they could be delivered. Could the Germans, it was wondered in Parliament, the press, and the Admiralty, outbuild and overtake the British? Secondly, there were specific fears about covert German shipbuilding and the secret gathering of materials to enable more rapid construction to take place. Would the British public one day wake up, as was widely speculated in 1909, and find that the Germans had stolen a march on the Royal Navy and now had as many, or even more, dreadnoughts than the British?

[121] Ibid., 19 May 1907. [122] Heath, NA 44/08, 30 Sept. 1908, FO 371/457.

These fears came together forcefully in the public mind in 1909. However, from the Admiralty's point of view they were not new issues. The staff at the NID had been following the question of German shipbuilding for some time, a line of enquiry that had been extensively fuelled by the reporting of the British naval attachés. The question of German building capacity, for example, had long been an issue for the navy's man in Berlin. One of the earliest surviving examples is a letter by Allenby from September 1905. Its focus was 'the capabilities of the German shipbuilding yards to deal with any large scheme of the reconstruction of the Russian Navy', which navy had recently been decimated in the war with Japan. Allenby's conclusion was that the German yards were more than able to do so:

> I think it may be fairly assumed that 4 of the best private yards could undertake to lay down 5 battleships of the largest size forthwith. At the end of 18 months, 5 more could be laid down and without doubt 10 battleships could be handed over inside 5 years. At the same time 4 Armoured Cruisers could be commenced, and 8 vessels completed within 5 years.[123]

What made these figures so remarkable was that they evidently referred to construction that was *additional* to the building that was then being undertaken for the Germans themselves. This represented an enormous potential output of warships.

Allenby was not the only naval attaché to be impressed by Germany's naval construction facilities. Dumas also made a point of highlighting the great potential of the German shipbuilding industry. His dispatch of 3 October 1906, which suggested that Germany could build nine battleships and three battle cruisers in less than three years, has already been cited above. This, however, was but one of his contributions to the question. In addition to the material he provided about shipyards, he also reported on the ongoing expansion of Germany's naval ordnance industry. The importance of this information cannot be over-rated and stemmed from the logistics of warship construction. Contrary to popular perceptions, the complex and time-consuming element in the building of a major surface warship was not the fabrication of the hull, but the manufacturing of the heavy guns and their mountings. The reason for this is that an 11- or 12-inch gun turret was an extremely complex piece of machinery that was required to function faultlessly under conditions that produced great physical stresses upon its components. Accordingly, if it were not to break down in battle, engineering precision was required in its manufacture. Consequently, the five or six turrets required for a dreadnought took a great deal of time to manufacture, often longer, in fact, than the ship that would eventually carry them. For this reason, any country that aspired to the rapid construction of large numbers of warships needed not only a sizeable shipbuilding capacity but also a comparable productive capability in terms of guns and mountings.

[123] Allenby, 'Rebuilding the Russian Navy: Will German Yards be Able to Construct Many Ships?', 5 Sept. 1905, FO 244/650.

Dumas's reports on the rapid expansion of the Krupp's armaments firm suggested that the German government well understood this side of the equation. The attaché inspected the company's works at Essen twice during his tenure in Berlin. The information he supplied was summarized by the DNI in July 1908:

> In September 1906, the naval attaché was conducted over the works by Herr Eccius who assured him that the constant increase of the establishment and reconstruction of shops was due to the normal development of the business; however the naval attaché reported that signs of new construction and rebuilding were everywhere visible, which points to a more than normal expansion of the works.
>
> The works were again visited in August 1907 when considerable reticence was displayed on the part of the officials; the naval attaché was not permitted to see the more important parts of the works. He reported, however, that an immense amount of reconstruction and re-building work was in progress and that two huge workshops of 22,000 square metres (floor space) as well as some smaller ones were in course of construction for the execution of German Navy and Prussian orders alone.[124]

Little wonder, then, that Dumas maintained that Germany could construct large numbers of warships. He also believed that the German yards were capable of building vessels more quickly than they had so far chosen to do. Analysing the 1908 naval estimates, Dumas noted that considerably increased sums had been allocated to the first instalments for the 1908 ships as compared to those from previous years' programmes. Two possible conclusions could be drawn from this: that the ships would be larger and the period of construction less. Dumas considered both outcomes to be likely, predicting that Germany would now build battleships in thirty-three months and battle cruisers in thirty.[125]

As we can see, even before Heath was appointed as naval attaché, much consideration had been devoted to the question of Germany's warship building capacity and some alarming conclusions reached. The Reich could construct battleships in numbers and at a rate that could rival the British. This would be a factor of tremendous importance when the second causative issue, fears that Germany was covertly building battleships ahead of their published programme, was added into the mix.

As with the question of Germany's building capacity, worries about secret German shipbuilding were not new in 1908. An incident recorded by Dumas in his diary in November 1906 shows that this was a perennial fear: 'A frantic letter from Ottley [the DNI] saying he hears a rumour that Germany is already building her new ships behind screens at Kiel and will I go and look.' In 1906 Dumas was able to reassure the authorities that this was not so.[126] In the second half of 1908 similar rumours would begin to circulate. The difference was that this time the new naval attaché would categorically confirm their veracity.

The first whispers that Germany hoped to begin work on its 1909 ships ahead of schedule appeared in July 1908. The earliest document recording this is a letter

[124] Minute by Slade, 15 July 1908, on docket G10073/1908, ADM 116/3340.
[125] Dumas, NA 65/07, 5 Dec. 1907, ADM 137/3858.
[126] Dumas Diary, 5 Nov. 1906.

by the American naval attaché in Berlin, who had heard from 'two quite different sources' that the Reichmarineamt contemplated 'laying down a fourth battleship this year . . . notwithstanding that there is no money in the Budget for such fourth ship'.[127] Whether or not the British naval attaché was likewise aware of the rumour is difficult to verify, as the relevant Admiralty documents no longer exist.[128] However, there is some evidence that Dumas did hear and report it. The principal indication comes from his diary. When the acceleration scare reached panic proportions in early 1909, resulting in accusations of incompetence being levelled at the Admiralty and, by extension, at the former naval attaché, Dumas wrote an indignant paragraph in his journal recording that he had reported the extra German construction in August 1908.[129] He wrote similarly to the well-connected imperial propagandist, Charles Boyd, to whom he stated that, as regards the question of accelerated building, 'the two extra German ships laid down in November and December last were simply commenced to provide work for the German shipyards in a period of great commercial depression. I myself had reported it as being intended in the first week of August last.'[130] Unfortunately for the historian, Dumas was in London in the first week of August, having his final audiences with the King, Admiralty, and Foreign Office. Consequently, any reports he made at this time—and he made many of them, including one to Fisher on 'the German navy and the powers of construction there'[131]—would have been given orally rather than in writing. His assertion is, thus, unverifiable. Nevertheless, it is more than plausible. For one thing, on 14 August, Fisher wrote to the First Lord, informing him of 'a report [that] the Germans are going to lay down an extra German dreadnought to take advantage of slackness of work in German dockyards'.[132] This is, almost to the word, what Dumas claimed to Boyd he had told the Admiralty. Furthermore, there is Heath's behaviour upon his arrival in Germany. In the second week of August, just after Dumas's alleged report was delivered, the new naval attaché promptly and without taking any time to settle in to his new billet, took off on a tour of the German naval ports. This unusually hasty excursion, which suggests that he was urgently looking for something—signs of covert building perhaps?—is compounded by what he wrote immediately following his visit to Kiel and Hamburg. Tacked onto the end of this dispatch in the final sentence, quite out of the blue, appears the comment: 'In my opinion the [German naval] programme could be accelerated so far as ship building is concerned.'[133] As this observation was not prefaced by any previous discussion of building rates and did not follow logically from anything else stated in the report, it was a very odd remark to make. It does, however, make perfect sense if it

[127] Belknap to Rodgers, 23 July 1908, NARA: RG 38, Case 9485.

[128] The documents were lost when Case 4877, 'Anglo-German Relations and Shipbuilding Programme', was weeded. ADM 12/1442, Cut 52.

[129] Dumas Diary, 29 Mar. 1909.

[130] Dumas to Boyd, 12 Apr. 1909, Bodleian Library: Milner papers, DEP 35.

[131] Dumas Diary, 4 Aug. 1908.

[132] Fisher to McKenna, 14 Aug. 1908. CCAC: MCKN 3/4.

[133] Heath, NA 39/08, *c.* 25 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.

was an answer to a question that the attaché had been set by the NID prior to embarking upon this tour of dockyards and shipbuilders.

If, as seems likely, Dumas reported that accelerated building was taking place and Heath was given instructions to verify this alarming prospect as quickly as possible, it is perhaps unsurprising that the new attaché did not take long to find the evidence of covert construction that he sought. On 13 October 1908 the liberal newspaper the *Berliner Tageblatt* reported that orders for two battleships of the 1909 programme, due to be awarded after 1 April 1909, had already been assigned to two private yards. This story, which was picked up by the American naval attaché as well as the Berlin correspondent of *The Times*, was similarly noted by Brookfield, the British consul in Danzig.[134] He informed the Admiralty that 'one of the battleships included in next year's programme [was] reported to have been ordered to be built by Messrs Schichau . . . [and] that an order for one other has been given to the Vulcan Works, Stettin'. Heath, who wrote a private letter to the DNI 'on the progress of ships building', also confirmed this story.[135] Although this letter is missing, a surviving report from a week later gives some idea of what he might have said: 'The estimates for /09–/10 are not yet published, but there seems no doubt that the contracts for two of the battleships for that year's programme have already been placed. This is six months at least before the usual time, and before the money has actually been voted.'[136] This news would be the start of many such communications. Hereafter, official reports from Heath bearing on the question of acceleration began to pour into the Admiralty.

The first, dated 20 October, related to the attaché's visit to the Imperial Dockyard at Wilhelmshaven. Technically, Heath was there to inspect one of the battleships of the 1908 programme, the *Ersatz Oldenburg* (the future SMS *Ostfriesland*), which had been ordered in April of that year. As such, his visit was theoretically unconnected with the question of acceleration, which related principally to ships of the 1909 programme. However, what the attaché learnt about the building of this 1908 vessel would have a huge impact on his reporting of the 1909 programme battleships. As he recorded: 'A good deal of work has been prepared for the *Ersatz Oldenburg* in the shops, but my guide explained that the official laying of the keel was delayed as long as possible in order to make a record.'[137] This innocent admission that the yard had gathered material well in advance of construction to ensure that, when building did commence, it could be completed more rapidly, made a forcible impression on Heath. If this mechanism could be used to speed up construction of the 1908 ships, what was there to prevent it being done in the future as a means of accelerating construction? This question, which was merely implied in the 20 October report, would be stated quite openly in subsequent communications.

[134] Belknap to Rodgers, 17 Oct. 1908, NARA: RG 38, Case 9458. *The Times*, 15 Oct. 1908, p. 5, col. f.

[135] Entry in the Admiralty Digest for the docket British Consul 14 Oct. 1908, ADM 12/1454, Cut 52. Also, Marder, *FDSF*, i. 153–4.

[136] Heath, NA 47/08, 21 Oct. 1908, FO 371/462.

[137] Heath, NA 46/08, 20 Oct. 1908, ibid.

In early November Heath had a conversation with de Salis, the chargé d'affaires at the British Embassy, concerning the 'rumour . . . that the three battleships which according to the Naval programme are to be laid down in the financial year beginning on the 1st of April 1909 had already been taken in hand'. According to the latter, Heath told him that 'as far as he can find out there seems to be a good deal of truth in this rumour; the preparation of the material—a lengthy part of the business—has, as far as he can make out, already begun, although normally no money should be available for these ships until next financial year'.[138] Then, two weeks later, acting on information supplied to him by the American naval attaché, Heath supplemented this with the news 'that material is now being collected, and preparation being made to start building early in the new financial year'.[139] Following this, in January 1909, he wrote on two separate occasions that he had been informed, by different sources, that 'Messrs Schichau have commenced collecting their material for a battleship of the 09–10 programme'.[140] Then, in March, he reported a conversation with a German naval officer, who informed him that 'all private shipbuilders were of necessity a little speculative, if they thought there was a "possibility" of getting an order for a battleship, they would probably prepare material in "anticipation".'[141]

As this slew of dispatches indicates, Heath was convinced of two facts. First, that orders for the 1909 programme battleships had been awarded ahead of schedule to two or more private yards; and, second, that material for these vessels was being collected in advance to ensure that when building began it could be done on an accelerated basis. On top of this, as further communications from him would show, he was also of the opinion that special measures were being taken to finance this arrangement. For the most part, this consisted of manipulating the funds voted to the navy by the Reichstag. As Heath reported in January 1909, 'Sums not spent in one year, may apparently be carried over to succeeding years without further question.'[142] The effect of this, of course, was to create a pot of money that could potentially be used to fund unscheduled building. Nor was this all; a year later Heath sent the NID a comparative statement of estimates and expenditure for the period 1904 to 1908. This showed that during these years a sum of £627,000 was accumulated from unspent monies 'voted in past years for new construction of ships'.[143] The possible uses of such a fund included hastening construction on selected vessels.

Further compounding Heath's suspicions were the measures taken to prevent him gathering information on the state of progress of the ships in question. Naturally enough, with whispers of preparations being made ahead of schedule to

[138] De Salis to Tyrell, 3 Nov. 1908, FO 800/61.
[139] Heath, NA 48/08, 16 Nov. 1908, FO 371/463.
[140] Heath, NA 3/09, 14 Jan. 1909, and Heath NA 4/09, 21 Jan. 1909, FO 371/671.
[141] Heath, NA 8/09, 17 Mar. 1909, FO 371/672.
[142] Heath, NARS 10/09, 27 Jan. 1909, ADM 137/3859.
[143] Admiralty 7 Feb. 1910, ibid.

construct certain battleships of the 1909 programme before their allotted time, Heath was eager to inspect the yards to which these vessels had, according to the rumours, been allocated. In the case of the Vulkan yard at Stettin, he was given permission to inspect the works in early May and, consequently, was able to report that 'no signs of preparation for the laying down of any big ship could be detected, nor was any preliminary work noticed in the shops visited'.[144] Naturally, this produced a positive effect, allaying British suspicions and even allowing the Kaiser to tease the attaché about the nation's foolish anxieties. As Heath described the conversation: 'His Majesty then laughingly alluded to my late visit to Vulkan Yard. "I know all your movements. You went over all the building slips, looking for an extra battle-ship, but there was none there!" '[145] On this basis, it seems fair to say that had similar visits to the other relevant yards been arranged, it would have undoubtedly helped calm the crisis. Unfortunately, they were not permitted. Heath's application to visit Schichau's works at Danzig was refused. Not surprisingly, he placed the worst possible construction on this rebuttal. Referring to the battleship that had allegedly been started there only after 1 April, Heath sarcastically remarked: 'It would have been interesting to see how far she had advanced in seven weeks.'[146] From this alone, it is clear as to why he believed his application had been declined.

Owing to these events, Heath became increasingly convinced that Germany was attempting to accelerate its programme. In his view the Reichsmarineamt was trying, by assigning orders months in advance and encouraging shipbuilders to collect materials ahead of construction, to create circumstances in which German ships could be completed more quickly. He was not alone in this perception. Soon it became the received wisdom in the Admiralty, Parliament, and the press that a German acceleration was a reality. Unfortunately, whereas Heath's reports were secret, speeches in the House of Commons and articles in newspapers were not. The German authorities were thus aware of the British view of their activities. As mentioned in Chapter 1, they were anything but impressed by the construction placed upon them and accordingly they vented their displeasure on Heath. Facilities were progressively withdrawn from him and he received increasingly peremptory treatment from Tirpitz and the Reichsmarineamt staff. However, human nature being what it is, the more rudely he was handled, the more convinced Heath became that he was correct and the greater became his desire to justify and substantiate his reports. Accordingly, in the last nine months of his posting, he spared no effort to show that an acceleration had been planned and that the German naval authorities had attempted a deception.

One means of achieving this was to demonstrate that the official German statistics for warship construction times could not be trusted. The first report to suggest this was written in November 1909. Commenting on the commissioning of the

[144] Heath, NA 13/09, 4 May 1909, FO 371/673.
[145] Heath, NA 16/09, 1 June 1909, Admiralty Library: Ca2053.
[146] Heath, NA 15/09, 24 May 1909, FO 371/674.

first two German dreadnoughts, the *Nassau* and *Westfalen*, Heath noted that there was a significant discrepancy in the real and official figures for her delivery into service:

> The *Westfalen* was officially commissioned on the 16th November. It is interesting to note that although the 'official period' for steam trials &c is given as 'about six months', i.e. ships will not be 'officially' ready for service till about six months after delivery, a period of six weeks has elapsed since the *Westfalen* left the Weser Yard.[147]

The implications of this report were obvious: there was five months' worth of elasticity in the scheduled building times for a battleship. And this was not just true in the case of the *Westfalen*. He also expressed his doubts about the figures given for the *Rheinland*.[148] Consequently, Heath was extremely sceptical about the value of Germany's 'official' warship construction data. A cynical dispatch from late March 1910 encapsulates the full measure of his scepticism:

> there appears, in most of the leading Berlin newspapers of today, an article (evidently communicated), dealing with the statements made in the British House of Commons, as to the rate of building of the *Nassau* and other ships of her class.
>
> A table is given showing that according to German 'official' dates, each of the vessels, occupied 36 months, or more in building.
>
> The value of the table may be judged from the following,
>
> *Westfalen* was 'officially ordered' 6 months after *Nassau*
>
> : : 'officially commissioned for trials' six weeks after *Nassau* and yet she is only 'officially' three months less time in the building.

And this was not his only quarrel with the figures:

> A few further facts as regards *Westfalen* are as follows, 1st attempt to leave the builders in Sept /09 (took the ground). Result of first steam trial reported in papers of 12th Oct /09. According to tables published today, ship did not start trials till 16th Novr /09.
>
> One more fact is, that although it is stated that definite orders were given for *Nassau*, on 31,5,/06, it is perfectly well known that no suitable slip existed in Wilhelmshaven, until well on in /07.[149]

On the basis of facts such as these, Heath was drawn to certain conclusions. First, he was sure that Germany could build more quickly than they maintained: 'in my opinion there is no doubt of the capability of the principal German builders, to turn out a battle ship in 30 months, from the time the work is first started, and not counting any preliminary work. I am also of opinion that Krupp can supply the guns and armour as required for this output.'[150] Second, he believed that the building process was so arranged as to facilitate this. The 'normal lines' of German shipbuilding, he suggested, 'are apparently so arranged so that ships are well advanced during the first two years of construction and are in

[147] Heath, NA 26/09, 16 Nov. 1909, FO 371/676.
[148] Heath, NA 7/10, 3 Mar. 1910, FO 244/746.
[149] Heath, NA 13/10, 24 Mar. 1910, FO 371/901.
[150] Ibid.

readiness for rapid completion should occasion require it'.[151] Thirdly, he considered that the budget was also put together with this in mind: 'The rate of advancement of various ships is uncertain, for the conditions of the [Navy] Law expressly lay down that the money which is voted for one ship, may be within certain limits spent on another ship.' Therefore, he was convinced that all the ships under construction could be hastened and he included in one dispatch a table showing both 'the official date on which the ships indicated should be delivered for trial' and 'the date by which it is thought the ships could be got ready for service, if thought desirable'. Needless to say, the latter was considerably in advance of the former.[152]

Thus, as we can see, Heath had a very particular perspective on the nature of the German threat. Unlike his predecessor, who had concentrated on the long-term implications of German anglophobia, Heath was (understandably) fixated on the immediate impact of German shipbuilding rates. His analysis was that Germany was deliberately attempting to steal a march on the British and catch up or even overtake the Royal Navy by covertly constructing dreadnoughts in advance of the published programme. The obvious danger was that, by such means, British maritime supremacy would be destroyed. Was Heath's anxiety an enduring vision?

THE LARGE NAVY PARTY: THE VIEWS OF CAPTAIN WATSON, NAVAL ATTACHÉ 1910–1913

To some extent Heath's successor, Hugh Watson, shared his predecessor's perception. Following his arrival in Berlin, he submitted a number of dispatches that provided further corroboration of the acceleration thesis. In November 1910, for example, he observed on two occasions that the contracts for German ships allocated far more time to the yards than was actually necessary to complete the work. Why was this done? At one level, this flexibility was a sensible measure that provided a cushion for unexpected delays. As Watson reported, because of this in-built elasticity a strike among dockyard workers at Hamburg 'would not affect dates of completion' of the ships on order there.[153] On the other hand, Watson was also aware that this 'considerable margin' had other consequences; it did, for example, 'make it possible to hasten' the building process 'if required'.[154] And this was not the only factor supportive of the acceleration thesis. Watson also concurred with Heath that the budgeting arrangements for the German navy made it easy for funds to be surreptitiously moved from one ship to another 'if desired'.[155] This, too, he suggested, could be used to hasten construction.

[151] Heath, NA 28/09, 17 Dec. 1909, FO 371/677.
[152] Heath, NA 27/09, 9 Dec. 1909, ADM 137/3859.
[153] Watson, NA 43/10, 4 Nov. 1910, FO 371/901.
[154] Watson, NA 46/10, 29 Nov. 1910, *BD* vi. 556.
[155] Watson, NA 48/10, 11 Dec. 1910, FO 244/746.

If the new attaché accepted Heath's premise that conditions allowed for an accelerated building programme, did he likewise believe that this was the practice? The answer is a qualified yes. True, Watson did ultimately acknowledge that the statement made by Tirpitz in 1909 that Germany would have thirteen capital ships by the autumn of 1912 and not before had been 'substantiated'.[156] However, at the same time, he noted that there were considerable disparities in what the Germans claimed about their shipbuilding programme and the reality of their actions. In September 1911, he reported that the construction times of the battleships *Ostfriesland*, *Thuringen*, and *Helgoland* were 33, 30, and 32 months respectively and that these building times were achieved despite 'a strike of two months in August and September 1910'. Consequently, Watson concluded that the many statements by Tirpitz that German capital ships took between 36 and 40 months to construct 'do not hold good now'. Rather, in his view, 'the opinion formed during my predecessor's time of the capabilities of German shipbuilding was entirely justified'.[157]

However, if Watson concurred with Heath about the possibility of a German acceleration, this did not mean that he shared his predecessor's obsessive preoccupation with the topic. Like Heath before him, the new attaché held that Germany posed a danger to Britain, but his threat perception analysis did not hinge upon battleship construction rates and fears of accelerated building. Rather, in his case, the focus rested upon the designs and machinations of a group centred on Tirpitz and the officials of the Reichsmarineamt, but which also included Germany's armaments companies, shipbuilding interests, and fleet enthusiasts, which Watson collectively labelled 'the Large Navy Party'.[158] In his opinion, this coterie, which he once revealingly described as 'the Tirpitz-Krupp-Shipbuilding-Navy League Group',[159] acted as a cohesive unit to promote not just German naval expansion, but German naval expansion in direct and deliberate opposition to British national interests. Holding this belief, the new attaché naturally did everything he possibly could to shed light on the dangerous direction that German maritime policy was taking under the guidance of this hostile cabal and to amplify on its aims and methods.

At the heart of Watson's analysis was the opinion, repeatedly expressed, that the ultimate aim of Tirpitz and the Large Navy Party, notwithstanding their many public and private claims to the contrary, was to construct a fleet equal to Britain's and capable of challenging British maritime supremacy. In September 1911 he wrote:

> the evidence of German naval politics and activity of the past few years leads one to the opinion that the authorities concerned, from His Majesty downwards, have been steadily

[156] Watson, NA 44/13, 13 Oct. 1913, *BD* x2. 711.

[157] Watson, NA 22/11, 1 Sept. 1911, FO 371/1125.

[158] Watson first coined this term in NA 11/11, 30 Mar. 1911, *BD* vi. 614. He used it extensively thereafter.

[159] Watson to Marsh, 22 Mar. 1912. R. S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: Companion*, ii3 (London, 1969), 1531.

building up the German fleet, with admirable consistency and political strategy, to rival the English fleet, if not alone, at least with the aid of allies in the Mediterranean.[160]

This, it should be noted, was but one of many such pronouncements on the topic. On 8 February 1912, he decided—'at the risk of reiteration'—once again to record his unwavering judgement that 'it is time we realised that the naval policy of Germany is conducted on motives of suspicion and with a desire to always gain an advantage over England'.[161] Then on 21 February came the statement: 'It must, I submit, never be lost sight of that it has been the chief aim of Admiral von Tirpitz's official career to make the German fleet equal to or nearly equal to the British. . . . This aim is shared by his immediate subordinates, if not more widely.'[162] Again, on 28 March, he asserted that, for as long as Tirpitz remained in office, he would use his 'very powerful personality to exert its influence in pursuit of the aim of his recent years, namely to make the German Fleet still nearer to the English'.[163] Other reports followed in this vein, all of them based upon the premise, first outlined by Watson in May 1911, that Tirpitz possessed 'somewhat of a bias against England'.[164]

Of course, wishing to rival the Royal Navy and actually doing so were not the same thing. In order to build such a fleet under the noses of the British Admiralty and against the natural inclination of the German public not to pay higher taxes, Watson was conscious that Tirpitz and his confrères would need to pull off quite a feat of political legerdemain. In particular, they would have to be successful in two complicated and challenging endeavours.

The first of these was to forestall British countermeasures by misleading the British government and people about Germany's actual intentions. In Watson's estimation, Tirpitz was prepared for this problem and had devised a plan to deal with it. To begin with, he would build up Germany's maritime forces in seemingly innocuous incremental stages, slowly eroding Britain's margin of naval strength in the process. Additionally, while doing this, he would attempt to throw 'dust in the eyes of England', claiming that the German navy was no threat to Britain and thereby hoping to blind his putative adversaries as to his actual objectives.[165] As the attaché explained, the combination of these two actions—small but regular incremental increases alongside reassuring and calming statements—formed the strategy by which Tirpitz endeavoured to lull Britain asleep while he drew the German navy ever closer to Britain's. According to Watson's analysis, when put into effect, this scheme operated according to a three-part process:

(a) First a period during which they state loudly that the German Fleet is not intended to compete with England, and that England is so strong at sea that it is impossible for Germany to do so. . . .

[160] Watson, NA 25/11, 27 Sept. 1911, *BD* vi. 645.
[161] Watson, NA 5/12, 8 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1372.
[162] Watson, NA 6/12, 21 Feb. 1912, ibid.
[163] Watson, NA 21/12, 28 Mar. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[164] Watson, Germany (Secret), 24 May 1911, FO 371/1123.
[165] Watson, NA 5/12, 8 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1372.

(b) To secondly create a confused circle of argument on relative Naval strengths which makes it impossible to pin them down to a clear statement of policy. At the same time they bring in Naval increases, and just before doing so they put up, or allow, a certain set to spread the idea sedulously that no increase is intended. . . .
(c) Thirdly . . . when thinking they have whittled down British Naval supremacy sufficiently by their successive increases they show their hand somewhat and state that England can no longer claim the supremacy she has claimed in the past.[166]

By such means, Watson insisted, before the British even knew what was happening, a situation would be created where the Germans could proclaim 'that German Naval strength should be two-thirds that of England, and then why not equal to it'.[167] Such, at any rate, was the logic of the Large Navy Party. As Watson explained: 'the supporters of German Naval increases urge that, if they are continued, the relative strategical and tactical superiority of the British Fleet will be gradually whittled down to vanishing point'.[168]

Secondly, to create a German fleet to rival the Royal Navy—no cheap undertaking—Tirpitz required the consent and, more importantly, the funding of the German taxpayer and the Reichstag. Given the massive sums that would be needed for such a scheme, securing this would be no easy task. Hence, in addition to misleading the British, Tirpitz and his allies were aware that to achieve their aims they would also have to spare no effort to arouse widespread popular support in Germany for the fleet building programme. It was Watson's belief that the Large Navy Party had numerous tools at its disposal for moulding German public opinion.

At the most extreme end of the spectrum, he was convinced that this group was willing to manipulate foreign affairs, even to the extent of engineering a major international crisis, merely in order to provide a rallying cry for their shipbuilding campaign. Thus, when the Second Moroccan Crisis broke in mid-1911, Watson reported to the British authorities that one likely reason for Germany's provocative decision to send a gunboat to Agadir was to provide a basis for 'a further increase of the German navy':

> The German Admiralty lacked a reasonable excuse for addition to the present Navy Law, and intimations had been given from various Parties in the Reichstag that no further increase would be approved of. . . .
>
> The Naval political position is now altered. It would appear that Foreign Politics has afforded an excuse to the German Admiralty for an increase in, or quicker replacement of the German Navy. I am of opinion that the Moroccan affairs are being used by them with design, and that they were started largely to give the excuse referred to.[169]

In addition to engineering major diplomatic crises, Watson believed that the Large Navy Party was quite willing to interfere in British domestic politics in

[166] Watson, Germany (Secret), 2 July 1912, Admiralty Library: Ca2053.
[167] Watson, NA 6/12, 21 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1372.
[168] Watson, NA 50/12, 15 June 1912, FO 371/1377.
[169] Watson, NA 23/11, 15 Sept. 1911, FO 244/770.

order to further their ends. In March 1912, he reported that information had come to his attention that the German naval attaché in London, Captain Widenmann, had secured an interview with Sir George Armstrong, the editor of the *Globe* newspaper and a close associate of the Conservative leader Andrew Bonar Law. While there was nothing remarkable *per se* in such an interview, Widenmann's decision to use the occasion to suggest that Germany's 1912 naval increases had been agreed to and accepted by the British government in the person of Lord Haldane was certainly out of the ordinary. Watson interpreted this 'indiscretion' as a 'calculated' act. It was, he suggested, 'committed deliberately to an agent of the Conservative Party in the hope that the Conservative Party would make such capital out of it as would be inconvenient to the Liberal Party, and that out of such inconvenience the Germans might perhaps reap some advantage'. Watson's rationale for this deduction was that the Large Navy Party was at that time having difficulties generating public enthusiasm for its naval expansion programme. Accordingly, he reasoned, 'outside assistance to rally more supporters to them' would be very welcome and, as nothing was more likely to secure more adherents than a British newspaper being critical of German naval increases, this was evidently the outside assistance they had in mind.[170] By supplying a Conservative British newspaper with the ammunition for launching such a story, Widenmann was following a Machiavellian strategy. He was attempting to create a British political debate that could arouse the indignation of the German public and so provide a basis for naval increases. Little wonder that Watson, who was prevented by the ambassador from sending the above report through official channels,[171] should have taken the opportunity a few days later to record that Widenmann was 'a clever and faithful mirror for reproducing and ventilating the views held in German Admiralty before such sections of English opinion as may be useful'.[172]

Of course, as Watson would have been the first to admit, generating major international crises and interfering in British domestic politics were not the only mechanisms open to the Large Navy Party for securing fleet increases. A less risky method was to use media manipulation to create an environment receptive to the shipbuilding message. It is notable in this respect that Watson consistently reported that the German Naval Expansionists possessed a formidable propaganda machine, the sole purpose of which was to 'educate' the public in naval matters. The heart of this naval publicity organization was the Nachrichtenbüro (Press Bureau) of the Reichsmarineamt. As Watson recorded on numerous occasions, this office was, despite protestations to the contrary, a dedicated propaganda department 'more closely associated with the political side of the German Admiralty than with the Bureaus [*sic*] which deal with more exclusively Naval subjects'. Proof of this was abundant. Its key officials were 'always in the Reichstag

[170] Watson, Germany (Secret), 15 Mar. 1912, FO 800/354.
[171] It was sent privately. Goschen to Nicolson, 16 Mar. 1912, ibid.
[172] Watson, Germany NA 13/13, 19 Mar. 1912, FO 371/1375.

when naval matters are under discussion' and regularly '[received] Representatives of the Press in their respective offices at the Reichs-Marine-Amt'. They were also in constant touch with the leaders of the Navy League.

The result of such activities, especially the forging of close connections between the Press Bureau and Germany's corps of naval journalists, was that the Nachrichtenbüro was in a position to be extremely proactive in directing public opinion in maritime matters. According to Watson, it was able to inspire articles, direct naval agitation, and, if necessary, even conduct a fully fledged press campaign in favour of fleet increases. Consequently, Watson was in no doubt that the Press Bureau was not only in the vanguard of German naval propaganda, but was actually directing it. The full extent of the control that it exercised was outlined by the attaché in a report from April 1912. In it he detailed the manner in which a nominally independent naval journalist, in this case Captain von Kuhlwetter, was in reality subject to the guiding hand of the Nachrichtenbüro and its official Captain Humann:

> It should be understood that there is a set of regular Naval Writers; one of these, Kapitän zur See Kuhlwetter, has only recently joined the ranks of Naval Writers.
>
> The day after the First Lord of the Admiralty's speech on the Naval Estimates, in an article which was practically his maiden effort, and before the Bureau under consideration had established close touch with him, Kapitän Kuhlwetter praised the First Lord's speech as being a fair one, and said that it should be thought over.
>
> On that day a gentleman connected with the Foreign Press was sitting in [Kapitänleutnant] Humann's office, when that Officer was called up on the telephone by some-one whom he addressed as Herr Kapitän, and to whom he was very respectful.
>
> My informant said that he thought it was probably Kapitän zur See Hollweg, the Departmental Chief.
>
> From this Kapitän, Kaptlt Humann received instructions which he repeated and wrote down. They were to the effect that the article of Kapitän Kuhlwetter was taking the wrong line, and that Kaptlt Humann was to see that the view was to be spread abroad that the speech of Mr Churchill on the Navy Estimates was an outrage on Germany.[173]

With information such as this coming his way, it is little wonder that Watson asserted that there was 'no doubt that the Reichs-Marine-Amt Press Bureau are responsible for, or are connected with the Writers of many of the articles that appear in the German press on Naval matters'.[174]

If Watson was certain that the Nachrichtenbüro was orchestrating a press campaign, he was also clear about the angle they were taking. The salient feature of the Press Bureau's propaganda was that it was designed to generate support for the fleet by arousing suspicions of Britain. 'I have no doubt', he wrote, 'that the Press campaign against England, or rather the Naval or larger part of it, is done with the full cognisance of the German Admiralty, and is part of the policy of that

[173] Watson, Germany NA 34/12, 29 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[174] Watson, NA 15/12, 22 Mar. 1912, FO 371/1371.

Department . . . [for] obtaining naval increases'.[175] This was a point that he made on numerous other occasions. Commenting on the volume of articles 'decidedly antagonistic to England' that appeared in the German press whenever naval increases were called for, Watson recorded that he was 'under no illusion as to the origin of this policy':

> From my experience I have not the least doubt but that this is a campaign directed from the Admiralty, and made with the design:—
> (a) To rally supporters in Germany to a larger German navy.
> (b) To provoke a provocative reply out of England, in Parliament or press, which the German large navy party could again turn to their use as a lever to get more adherents to a larger German navy . . .[176]

Hence, he remarked:

> no one who has closely studied the actions of the German naval authorities of the past few years can help being struck by the clever way they have manipulated events and German public opinion to their advantage, and submit that the clever series of pretexts and methods of allaying English doubt and awakening the German people are clearly visible if a retrospect is made of German naval politics during past few years.[177]

In summary, in Watson's conception, the Large Navy Party was a cohesive unit centred on Tirpitz and the Imperial Navy office, which sought, through discreet incremental stages, to build a fleet capable of rivalling the Royal Navy. To this end they had created a formidable propaganda machine in the Reichsmarineamt in order to rouse the German people with anti-British articles and make them receptive to the naval expansionist agenda. According to Watson, they were also willing to stir up international affairs, even to the point of provoking a major diplomatic crisis, merely to provide better grounds for naval increases. They were likewise prepared to interfere in British politics. All of this begs the question: to what end? Unfortunately, on this point, the normally prolix Watson was extremely vague and uncharacteristically laconic. To a large extent, this appears to have been because Watson was less interested in why the Germans were doing what they were doing than explaining to the Admiralty the countermeasures that he believed they should take. His dispatches are, thus, filled with advice on Britain's best response to the German naval programme. Arguing that the Large Navy Party had previously been encouraged by British naval reductions to believe that they could catch up with the Royal Navy, Watson unambiguously called for a steady British shipbuilding programme that would render such hopes obviously illusory. This point was first made by Watson in October 1910, a mere two months after his arrival in Berlin. Commenting on the desire among German naval officers for 'a good understanding with the British Navy', he observed: 'I would submit that

[175] Watson, Germany NA 34/12, 29 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[176] Watson NA 8/12, 26 Feb. 1912, and NA 9/12, 29 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1371.
[177] Watson, NA 25/11, 27 Sept. 1911, *BD* vi. 646.

such good understanding would be more frank and durable in character if the latter has a very decided superiority in ships and men, which by its magnitude will preclude further possibility of expansion of German Fleet Law.'[178] He made the same point at regular intervals during the remainder of his posting. For example, in May 1911, he reported that 'the only way to a good understanding between the two countries on the Naval question is for England to steadily build ships yearly, or add to her Naval strength, until Germany realizes it is hopeless to catch her up'.[179] In March 1912, he wrote in respect of Germany's 'ambitions to be nearly up to England in naval strength' that 'the cure lies in the removal by England of the temptations towards further ambitions in this direction'.[180] He articulated a similar argument in January 1913.[181]

Nevertheless, if Watson mostly concentrated on advocating a larger British shipbuilding programme in order to quash Germany's naval aspirations before they became a danger, he did leave a few clues as to what he considered Germany would do if successful in building a rival fleet. A report from November 1910 considered the question, albeit briefly, of what Germany would have done if Britain had not ordered four extra dreadnoughts as a result of the acceleration scare and if Germany had thereby been able to catch up with the Royal Navy by 1912: 'I am informed by a trustworthy source, that prior to England definitely deciding to lay down the 4 Armoured Ships of last years Estimates, the German Admiralstab were working night and day in anticipation of war with England.'[182] This notion that the German fleet was being constructed so that, on achieving parity with the Royal Navy, it could be used in a war against the United Kingdom was one that Watson would cultivate on other occasions. Reporting variously that 'the German people are . . . inflamed against Britain' and that 'they appear now to solely regard their fleet as a weapon against England', he surmised that there was only one possible explanation for the naval building programme.[183] As he explained in early 1912, at the moment when yet another increase in German maritime power was in the offing:

> The increases in the Fleet Law, if brought in, will tell their own tale of Germany's intentions; but at the present moment there is, in my opinion, an air of unrest and preparation about; rumours are current of additional work being done by officers of the Admiralstab up to 1 and 2 A.M. . . . Other rumours, hard to define, are current which even go so far as talk of war in the Spring, England being usually indirectly indicated; while the ordinary remarks one hears on the part of many Germans is that they consider war with England is inevitable. This is corroborated by what foreigners living in Berlin tell me as to Germans spoiling for a fight.[184]

[178] Watson, NA 42/10, 21 Oct. 1910, FO 244/745.
[179] Watson, Germany (Secret), 24 May 1911, FO 371/1123.
[180] Watson, NA 20/12, 27 Mar. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[181] Watson, NA 2/13, 20 Jan. 1913, *BD* x2. 669.
[182] Watson, NA 44/10, 10 Nov. 1910, FO 371/901.
[183] Watson, NA 25/11, 27 Sept. 1911, *BD* vi. 646. Watson, NA 6/12, 21 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1372.
[184] Watson, NA 5/12, 8 Feb. 1912, FO 371/1372.

This was not a very precise prediction, nor was it grounded in verifiable data. However, if it were a genuinely held conviction, it would explain the persistent reiteration of the point that to forestall future difficulties 'a steady, strong reply to German naval estimate on the part of England, repeated every year' was needed.[185] Such, in any case, was the leitmotif of Watson's attachéship.

THE VIEWS OF CAPTAIN HENDERSON, NAVAL ATTACHÉ 1913–1914

Watson left Berlin in mid-October 1913, formally handing over to his successor, Wilfred Henderson, on 15 October. Henderson took on the job a mere nine and a half months before the outbreak of the First World War. Ironically, given the imminence of the impending conflagration, in contrast to his immediate three predecessors, all of whom reported on the German danger, Henderson's dispatches are largely devoid of any such sense of threat. True, he did comment on the possibility that future German naval increases might be in the offing, but as to any likely future Anglo-German difficulties he was entirely silent.[186]

Quite why this might have been can only be a matter of conjecture. However, given that Henderson was appointed at such a pivotal moment, it is a point upon which some speculation is worthwhile. One possible explanation is that Henderson made no mention of a German threat because he did not believe in one. However, given how unusual such views would have been, in such an eventuality one might have expected him to write reports discounting this widely held perception and giving the reasons for his views. He did not do so. Thus, this explanation, while obviously not beyond the bounds of the feasible, seems unlikely.

Another and more likely possibility is that, in the short period in which he was in post, Henderson simply never got around to writing down his vision of Anglo-German relations. After all, the new naval attaché served in Berlin for a mere nine months, not a long time in which to get one's bearing and master the difficult brief which was Anglo-German naval relations. Moreover, whilst in the German capital, the unfortunate attaché was beset by personal problems. Some of these related to his wife, who suffered from a difficult nervous mental condition. Such was the extremity of her illness that she was prevented from coming to Berlin and Henderson, who was naturally worried about her, felt compelled to submit his resignation as attaché on 17 December 1913 in order to return to her. Although he later retracted his notice, worries about his wife's health must have affected the performance of his duties, especially as Henderson was not a well man himself.[187] According to John Godfrey who served under Henderson when the latter was

[185] Ibid. [186] Henderson, NA 21/14, 5 May 1914, FO 371/1990.
[187] For details on Henderson's wife and the attaché's resignation, see FO 371/1654.

Captain (D) of the fourth destroyer flotilla, the attaché possessed a problematic stomach condition. 'Wilfred Henderson', he recalled, 'suffered from some gastric trouble which triggered off his quick temper and was apt to make him unpredictable, unreasonable, petulant and, at times, very angry. . . . On one occasion he foamed at the mouth.'[188] It should be said that there is no record of this latter trait ever materializing while he was at the Berlin Embassy. However, the absence of such extreme symptoms notwithstanding, this information further compounds the sense that Henderson had much to distract him while he was in Berlin.

Another factor that might have acted to delay any inclination Henderson may have had to send back reports on the German menace is that in his nine months in post he never inspected the German harbours or shipyards. Ironically, this was because of orders from London rather than any obstruction from the German authorities. On 1 May 1914, Henderson had asked Admiral Tirpitz if he might visit the German naval ports and the latter had given his consent telling the attaché 'whenever you want to go just tell my chief of staff and let him know dates'.[189] However, after reporting this, Henderson received specific instructions from the DNI 'not to take advantage of offer until further notice'.[190] This notice never came; the visits never happened. Thus, if Henderson was waiting for a sight of the German shipyards before giving his opinion of the German threat, then the opportunity never came. Consequently, Henderson departed Berlin for service in a war against Germany never having himself commented on the likelihood of such a conflict.

In conclusion, it can clearly be stated that the opinions of the four soldiers and six sailors who served in Berlin as service attachés in the years 1900 to 1914 were not nearly as uniform as the previous historiography has implied. Three of them—Waters, Gleichen, and Allenby—did not believe in the notion of a German menace, while one of them—Henderson—expressed no view on the matter. Of the remaining five attachés, all believed in some kind of German threat, but their opinions as to what this might consist of differed considerably. Trench, for example, was worried about a German landing in the British Isles, while his successor never considered this idea and the naval attachés actively discounted it. In a similar vein, Heath spent nearly the entire time he resided in Berlin concentrating on the question of a German acceleration, whereas both his predecessor and his replacement took only the most marginal interest in the question.

Nevertheless, it is evident that among the five attachés who did see a danger to Britain in Germany there were some areas of common ground. One of these was the question of German anglophobia. Trench, Russell, Dumas, Heath, and Watson all at some time or other gave consideration to the dislike that existed in the Reich for the United Kingdom and suggested that this emotion provided

[188] J. H. Godfrey, 'The Naval Memoirs of Admiral J. H. Godfrey, vol. I (1902–1915)' (unpublished manuscript, date unknown), p. 87, Special Collections, UCI.

[189] Henderson, NA 20/14, 1 May 1914, FO 371/1990.

[190] Admiralty to Foreign Office, 15 May 1914, ADM 12/1527, Cut 52.

some basis for understanding German military and naval behaviour. Most of these men—Heath excepted—also suggested that there was a strong possibility of future German aggression. Trench, Russell, and Dumas all hypothesized that the years between 1913 and 1915 might see such a cataclysm come to pass. As such, it would not be unreasonable to label them collectively, despite their many differences of view, as harbingers of the German menace.

5

Taking Centre Stage: The Influence of the Service Attachés on the British Government

As we have seen in the proceeding chapters, the service attachés wrote numerous dispatches about Germany and regularly vocalized their opinions about German affairs. While this torrent of foolscap shows that the British government did not want for on-the-spot military and naval appraisals of the Reich, this paper trail does not, in itself, prove that attaché reports carried any weight with the authorities in London. Yet, it is clearly important to any assessment of the role of the military and naval attachés to understand what effect their ideas had on Britain's decision-makers.

To measure the impact of the service attachés three criteria will be used. First, this chapter will look at the extent of the distribution of the data that the attachés provided. Obviously, the more widespread the dissemination of their reports, the greater was the opportunity for these submissions to affect people's views. This is, essentially, a quantitative measure of influence. Secondly, the chapter will focus on the opinions held by Britain's decision-makers concerning the data provided by the attachés. Clearly, the higher the regard in which this information was held, the more seriously it would be taken and the more likely it would be to sway the decision-making process. This is, in essence, a qualitative indication of influence. Finally, there will be an assessment of the extent to which direct action was taken in response to material submitted by the service attachés. Evidence of government decisions made on the basis of such information will, naturally, demonstrate a significant level of persuasiveness on the part of the attachés. This is, fundamentally, a Newtonian measure of influence, one judging cause and effect.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE ATTACHÉ REPORTS

The question of who received service attaché reports is relatively easy to establish. As will be recalled, military and naval attachés had to send all official reports via their head of mission, who forwarded them to the Foreign Office for subsequent transmission to the appropriate service ministry. At the same time, to avoid delays in the receipt of important information, the attachés sent duplicate reports direct

to the military and naval intelligence departments. Consequently, all formal reports by the service attachés were seen by the Foreign Office and either the War Office or Admiralty.

Within these various departments, the circulation lists for attaché reports were extensive. Thus, in addition to the staff responsible for registering and indexing these dispatches upon arrival, a large number of other parties read and annotated these documents. In the case of the Foreign Office, dispatches by the military and naval attachés in Germany generally came to the Western Department, where they were seen by the junior, assistant, and senior clerks in that division. They were also marked for the assistant under secretary responsible for supervising the department and then passed to the permanent under-secretary and ultimately the Foreign Secretary. In effect, it was quite possible for half a dozen or so officials to peruse these dispatches.[1]

A similar situation prevailed in the case of the War Office. Here reports were received in the Directorate of Military Operations, coming first to the subsection that dealt with German affairs, namely MO2c. They would then be passed up the chain, going to the head of the European Section, MO2, before reaching the Director of Military Operations. Furthermore, such dispatches would normally be passed to the permanent secretary, the chief of the Imperial General Staff, and ultimately the Secretary of State for War. Where relevant, the documents might also be sent to the heads of other War Office departments, such as the director of fortifications and works or the director of military training.[2] Once again, we can see that a sizeable grouping of the senior military establishment routinely received attaché reports.

Procedures were similar with respect to the attaché material coming to the Admiralty. The advanced copy of naval attaché reports would be received by the Naval Intelligence Department, where it would be marked for distribution to the head of the Foreign Division. It would also go to ID14, the section charged with collating information on German materiel, movements, manœuvres, estimates, and personnel; and ID15, the section dealing with administration, coast defences, shipyards, arsenals, and factories. If there was relevant material therein, it might also go to ID16, which was responsible for ordnance and torpedoes, and/or ID 17, which covered engineering issues.[3] It would also be forwarded to the Director of Naval Intelligence. In addition to the advanced copy, the Admiralty also received the original version of all naval attaché reports, which was forwarded to them—somewhat later—by the Foreign Office. This would routinely be marked for distribution to the Secretary, the First Lord, and the First Sea Lord.[4]

[1] The best description of Foreign Office procedures is in Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Office Policy, 1898–1914* (Cambridge, 1969), 76–81.

[2] Illustrative of the circulation of attaché reports around the War Office are the signatures on the dockets in WO 32/18984 and WO 32/18985.

[3] For the distribution of responsibilities within the NID, see paper 811 in ADM 231/47.

[4] Admiralty 12 Nov. 1902, 'Procedure as to Marking of Certain Papers, Now Marked to Both Civil Lord and Financial Secretary', ADM 1/7601.

Comments would normally be solicited from the DNI and, where relevant, from those departments responsible for naval materiel such as the Controller or the Director of Naval Ordnance. Reports bearing on strategic or tactical matters might also be sent to the head of the Naval War College in Portsmouth.[5] Once again, this meant that every naval attaché report was seen by half a dozen or so senior figures within the naval establishment.

In addition to the internal distribution of military and naval attaché reports within particular ministries, these dispatches were often circulated to particular individuals within the government. The Foreign Office, for instance, regularly sent files—service attaché reports included—to Buckingham Palace, 10 Downing Street, and select members of the Cabinet. Illustrative of this is Watson's dispatch NA 10/13 on Admiral Tirpitz's remarks in the Budget Committee of the Reichstag. This was forwarded to the King, Lord Haldane, Lord Crewe, Lord Morley, and Lloyd George.[6] Other dispatches were similarly treated, albeit not necessarily to the same combination of dignitaries.[7]

On top of selecting certain files for viewing by specified ministers, the Foreign Office also sent certain dispatches to its in-house publisher to be professionally set and printed. The products of this process, known as confidential prints, were then distributed as seemed appropriate. Normally, those of special interest went to designated Cabinet ministers, while those of general interest were widely circulated both around government departments in London and also to the various British embassies and legations overseas, which were thereby kept informed of the course of British diplomacy. Given that a fair number of service attaché reports were selected for production as confidential prints, normally, but not exclusively, of the latter variety, this means that their circulation was potentially widespread, at least among the British diplomatic corps and the higher echelons of government.

Even when attaché reports were not forwarded to particular Cabinet ministers or selected for inclusion in the confidential print series, duplicates might still be made by the Foreign Office for the information of other interested departments. Thus, Trench's dispatch on the development of the Rhine–Herne canal was reproduced for the Marine Department of the Board of Trade.[8] In a similar vein, copies of most of the attaché reports relating to the war in South-West Africa were made for the Colonial Office and the British administration in the Cape and Johannesburg.[9] Nor was it only the Foreign Office that copied attaché reports to other parts of Whitehall. Both the War Office and Admiralty regularly made duplicates of such dispatches for the Committee of Imperial Defence. Hence, the Army Council supplied many of the attaché reports on German airships that

[5] Watson, NA 36/13, 5 Sept. 1913, ADM 1/8356.

[6] Endorsements on Watson NA 10/13, 1 Mar. 1913, *BD* x2. 684.

[7] e.g. Henderson, NA 16/14, 21 Mar. 1914, which was sent to the King, the Prime Minister, Lord Crewe, and Lord Morley, ibid. 740.

[8] Annotation on the docket containing Trench, MA 101, 20 May 1908, FO 371/460.

[9] Many reports by Gleichen and Trench on South-West Africa are in CO 48, CO 417, and CO 879.

came before the Sub-Committee on Aerial Navigation.[10] Likewise, the Admiralty provided the CID with attaché reports bearing on the question of invasion as well as Germany's susceptibility to economic pressure.[11]

As we can see, there was widespread printing, copying, and distribution of service attaché reports around the corridors of power in Whitehall, as well as, to some extent, among the British missions overseas. However, this circulation among the top establishment was by no means the full extent of the dissemination process. Reports provided by the attachés also percolated down to less rarefied circles, with both the War Office and Admiralty active in distributing attaché material outside of the Olympian heights of the executive. The principal reason for this was instructional purposes. In order for Britain to be successful in any future war it was recognized that the officers in charge of leading the army and navy needed to have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the nation's potential adversaries. To ensure that they possessed this information, numerous War Office and Admiralty printed books were produced about the armed forces of the European powers and, not surprisingly, most of these manuals embodied material supplied by the service attachés. Just how extensively the service attachés contributed to the creation of such publications needs to be considered.

In the case of the War Office, it is clear that the military attachés played a very considerable part in the production of its core literature on foreign countries. The army produced five major series—two annual volumes and three irregular, but frequently updated books—devoted to spreading the best and most up to date knowledge about the world's leading military powers.

The first of these was the annual volume *Report on Changes in Foreign Armies*, which as its title suggests was a compendium of recent developments that had taken place in the thought, equipment, and training of the world's major land forces. Such changes were, of course, exactly what attachés were sent overseas to observe and, therefore, they were much involved in the production of these volumes. As the preface to the 1907 edition explained, this series was 'prepared chiefly from information furnished by the British Military Attachés at the various foreign courts'.[12] This was no understatement. According to the regulations, military attachés were expected to submit dispatches explicitly for the purpose of facilitating the compilation of this volume. Consequently, detailed instructions were provided to the attachés as to what to include in such dispatches, how they should be laid out and even identifying the thirty headings ranging from '1. Number and Composition of Army Corps, &c'. to '30.

[10] e.g. the War Office letter, 21 May 1912, forwarding four dispatches on airships to the CID, CAB 17/20.

[11] These include Dumas NA 9/08, 12 Feb. 1908; Heath NA 3/10, 10 Feb. 1910; and a Joint report by Heath, Trench, and de Salis, 26 Mar. 1910, on 'German Dependence on Oversea Traffic for Supplies in Time of War', CAB 17/61.

[12] General Staff, *Report on Changes in Foreign Armies during 1906*, p. iii, WO 106/6183.

Important military literature published during the year' into which such reports should be broken.[13]

Another publication of a similar type was the annual volume *Report on Foreign Manœuvres*. Also taking the form of a compendium, in which the various exercises undertaken by foreign armies were catalogued, this series again benefited from attaché input. As the 1905 edition explained, it was prepared 'from reports furnished by the British Military Attachés and other officers'.[14] As with the *Report on Changes* volume, to facilitate this contribution, detailed instructions were provided to the attachés regarding the types of information required and the headings under which they should produce their reports.[15]

More important than these two annual publications were the so-called 'Military Compilations' produced on the major powers. There were three 'Compilations' volumes for each country. These were: *The Military Resources of. . . .*; *Handbook of the . . . Army*; and *Field Notes on the . . . Army*. Each of these books fulfilled a different role. The *Military Resources* volume was conceived as 'a study of the military framework of the country'. The *Handbook* was intended 'for practical use in the country and for general reference'; while the *Field Notes* was envisaged as a wartime work and was to be 'kept in manuscript and . . . only . . . printed when the possibility of war renders its issue to the army advisable'. Accordingly, it was 'written in a very abbreviated form'.[16] This was in marked contrast to the *Military Resources* volume, which was a lengthy and dense publication. The 1911 edition of *Military Resources of the German Empire* ran to no less than 342 closely typed pages.[17] It was, moreover, accompanied, though not many people knew this, by a 'Secret Supplement',[18] *Special Military Resources of the German Empire*, that offered a further 173 pages of information.[19]

All the available evidence suggests that the military attachés played a substantial part in the creation of these works. To begin with, their role in the production of these manuals was explicitly stressed in the War Office's *Instructions for Military Attachés*, which explained in intricate detail the layout of these books and the types of information required from the military attachés for them. It also stated that 'the M.A. will assist . . . in the compilation of [these] works' and noted that they were 'compiled by the General Staff from information received from the M.A. and other sources'.[20] Additionally, the few references that exist to the 'Military Compilations' in the state papers generally demonstrate attaché involvement. Hence, the Annual Report for Germany for 1906 from the Berlin Embassy,

[13] 'Memorandum for the Guidance of Military Attachés', Appendix B, 'Form for the Annual Report on Changes in Foreign Armies', FO 371/75.

[14] General Staff, *Report on Foreign Manœuvres 1905*, p. iv, WO 106/6170.

[15] 'Memorandum for the Guidance of Military Attachés', Appendix A, 'Form for the Report on Manœuvres of a Foreign Army', FO 371/75.

[16] *Instructions for Military Attachés*, WO 279/647.

[17] General Staff, *Military Resources of the German Empire* (1911). A copy is held by the Army Historical Branch.

[18] *Instructions for Military Attachés*, WO 279/647.

[19] General Staff, *Special Military Resources of the German Empire* (Feb. 1912), WO 33/579.

[20] *Instructions for Military Attachés*, WO 279/647.

in referring to 'the Secret War Office publication *Military Resources of the German Empire*' stated that 'the greater part of this work was written by the late military attaché to this Embassy'.[21] That this was, indeed, the case is made evident by the survival of typescript copies of two draft chapters from this book, both of which were written and signed by Colonel Gleichen.[22]

On the basis of the above, it is clear that the military attachés were directly and intimately involved in obtaining information about their host nations for works that would be disseminated to both the higher echelons of the War Office and the army in general. Just how broadly these books were distributed needs to be considered. In the case of the annual manœuvres and changes volumes, the answer is fairly widely. To some extent, this was just common sense. After all, there would have been little point in updating and printing these manuals every year, if they did not contribute to the general education of the army. The evidence of the quantities produced, the status of the volumes, and the comments about distribution contained in their prefaces also all sustain this interpretation. Thus, we find that these annual works were manufactured in large numbers: 450 of the *Changes* book were printed, while the run for *Report on Foreign Manœuvres* was even greater at 550.[23] Moreover, until 1913, they were given a secrecy designation—'For Official Use Only'—that would have allowed of their being shown to a wide range of army personnel. Only in 1913 were they finally made 'Confidential'. However, even with this change, it is clear that the General Staff did not wish to restrict access to these texts unduly. Hence, the preface to the March 1913 edition of the *Manœuvres* volume notes that to facilitate the spread of useful information copies would be deposited in military reference libraries. Similarly, general officers, who were invariably sent this text, were informed of 'the necessity of bringing [it] to the notice of all those under their command who are likely to profit from its perusal'.[24] Clearly, it was intended that the knowledge it contained should be widely available.

The same logic applied to the *Military Resources* manuals and *Handbooks*. The evidence again sustains this interpretation. To begin with, 750 copies of the 1911 edition of the *Military Resources of the German Empire* were produced, a printing run that only makes sense if a broad dissemination were intended. That this was, indeed, the case is confirmed by the *Instructions for Military Attachés*, which states that at least some of the 'Military Compilations' were given a generous circulation. Part one of the *Military Resources* volume, for example, was described as being 'given a wide distribution', although it was also recorded that the 'Secret Supplement', living up to its title, was 'much less widely distributed'.[25] However,

[21] Lascelles *et al.*, 'General Report on Germany for 1906', 24 May 1907, FO 371/260.

[22] Gleichen, MA 33/05, 3 Nov. 1905, and MA 34/05, 9 Nov. 1905, CAB 17/61.

[23] Publication information, including print runs and date of production, was indicated on the first insert page of both War Office and Admiralty printed volumes.

[24] General Staff, *Report on Foreign Manœuvres in 1912*, WO 33/618.

[25] *Instructions for Military Attachés*, WO 279/647.

it is known that this status did not prevent a copy of the latter volume for Germany being sent to the Army Staff College. Marked as 'Secret' and not to be issued without 'verbal instructions from the C[omman]dant' it was utilized by the directing staff to keep their lectures up to date and accurate. Strict instructions, however, were issued that they were to employ their discretion in using it in this way, that they were not to quote from it, and that 'it is in no case to be made accessible to the Students themselves'.[26] Nevertheless, such stipulations aside, it is clear that even this, most secret of material, did get circulated for instructional purposes, albeit not necessarily with the recipients of the information knowing its origins or source.

Just as the military attachés were major contributors to War Office publications designed to increase knowledge of foreign forces in the army, so the naval attachés played a similar role in promoting throughout the Royal Navy an understanding of the maritime forces of Britain's neighbours. To this end, they contributed to a number of important Admiralty printed works.

One of these was the Naval Intelligence Department's biannual publication, *Reports on Foreign Naval Affairs*. This series, which disseminated information on foreign war vessels, dockyards, and harbours until it was discontinued in April 1909, consisted largely of naval attaché material. To compile the volumes, the DNI earmarked appropriate naval attaché reports on foreign naval facilities for inclusion. For example, Dumas's dispatch NA 32/06, which detailed the inspections that he had made of the yards at Danzig and Elbing, was minuted by Captain Ottley, 'it is proposed to print these reports in the next issue of *Reports on Foreign Naval Affairs*'. He was true to his word; when the next edition appeared in September 1906, Dumas's dispatch was incorporated in it.[27] This pillaging of attaché reports was not uncommon. The section on Germany in the volume printed in July 1907 consisted of material culled from five of Dumas's dispatches.[28] As the NID routinely printed 475 copies of *Reports on Foreign Naval Affairs* and issued one 'to ships on all stations', this meant a wide circulation for the attaché's views.[29] The fact that 'discretionary power' was also given to the recipients of these copies 'to communicate, in special cases, to other persons belonging to H.M. Service' relevant portions of the volumes, further increased the dissemination.[30]

Naval attachés also contributed to a range of other NID publications. One of these was the series *Papers on Naval Subjects*, another biannual production collating

[26] General Staff, *Special Military Resources of the German Empire* (Feb. 1912). These annotations appear on the copy in the Joint Services Command and Staff College Library. I would like to thank Dr Robert Foley for bringing this to my attention.

[27] Minute by Ottley, 21 July 1906, on Dumas, NA 32/06, 12 July 1906, NMM: Ships Cover 274. This dispatch ultimately appeared in *Reports on Foreign Naval Affairs* (1906), vol. 1, ADM 231/46.

[28] ADM 231/47.

[29] The distribution information comes from 'List of Current Books "For the Information of Officers in H.M. Service Only" and Signal Books issued to the Fleet by Various Admiralty Departments', ADM 231/40.

[30] *Reports on Foreign Naval Affairs* (1904), vol. 1, ADM 231/39.

important articles on maritime issues from specialist journals. The papers included came from a variety of sources but there is no doubt that some of the submissions were provided to the NID by naval attachés.[31] As 500 copies of these works were produced, this again meant a wide dissemination of attaché-provided information. In addition, the attachés were also an important source for the NID's more frequent circular, *Foreign Naval Notes*. This printed summary of interesting articles that had appeared in the foreign press, was issued 'as requisite',[32] that is to say as often as the presence of suitable articles in the continental media justified it. Judging by the numbering of the series, this seems to have been about once every ten days. Obviously, the NID was not dependent upon the attachés for articles in those periodicals already received by subscription in the department. However, for all other journals they were reliant upon their men on the spot. They were also dependent upon the attachés for suitable pamphlets and books—to which the NID could not subscribe—extracts from which were sometimes printed in the series. For example, in January 1914, Henderson sent the Admiralty translations of key sections from a book by Judge Troeltsch entitled *Deutschlands Flotte in Entschiedungskampf* ('The German Fleet in Decisive Combat').[33] These excerpts were promptly incorporated into the *Foreign Naval Notes* for early March, one hundred copies of which were printed for distribution around the navy.[34]

Consequently, we can see that in terms of supplying information on foreign war vessels, dockyards, and harbours as well as on the views of the continental media on maritime affairs, the naval attachés were central. Their submissions were regularly printed in important NID publications, which were issued for wider dissemination among the navy. This, however, was not their full contribution to the spread of naval information. The naval attachés were also responsible for updating some of the navy's more secret reference texts, such as the NID volumes on the coastal defences of the maritime powers. However, probably the most important of these additional and more restricted manuals was the Admiralty's 'Personnel Book', its collection of character assessments of leading foreign naval officers. Ensuring the accuracy of this text was one of the principal tasks of the naval attaché. According to the *N.I.D. Notes for Guidance of Naval Attachés*: 'He should . . . regard it peculiarly as his province to see this book is kept correct, and all material corrections are to be forwarded to the N.I.D. as soon as possible.'[35] That the naval attachés took this injunction seriously is evident from the diaries of those officers who worked in the NID and who saw attachés come to the department to have 'a good look at the Officers Characteristics book'.[36] When it comes to assessing the specific assiduity

[31] Examples of materials submitted by naval attachés that were subsequently included in *Papers on Naval Subjects* can be found in ADM 1/7522 and ADM 1/7600.

[32] X1554/09, 'Appointment of Intelligence Officers to Home Fleet', ADM 1/8042.

[33] Henderson, NA 2/14, 6 Jan. 1914, FO 371/1985.

[34] *Foreign Naval Notes*, 4 Mar. 1914, No. 17. RN Submarine Museum: 'Foreign Submarines 1913', Flag Officer Submarines, Historical Section, vol. N.4.

[35] *N.I.D. Notes for Guidance to Naval Attachés*, ADM 1/8204.

[36] Domville Diary, 17 Feb. 1912, NMM: DOM/19.

in this respect of the naval attachés in Berlin, the historian is further fortunate that five manuscript volumes of the 'Personalities' book for the Imperial German Navy still survive.[37] From these it is evident that the naval attachés were a major source of information about the German naval officer corps. True, they were not the only source. Newspapers were culled for details of appointments and promotions; and naval personnel who met German officers in foreign ports or at social occasions also supplied their impressions. Nevertheless, written and pasted into the Personnel book were numerous extracts from attaché reports detailing their observations of Germany's principal captains and admirals. And the attachés were seen as experts in this field. We know, for example, that once the war had started and information was urgently required on Germany's naval leadership it was to the former attachés that the British commanders turned. Thus it was that in February 1915 Admiral Jellicoe, Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, obtained observations from Captain Watson on the new head of the German High Sea Fleet, Admiral Hugo von Pohl.[38] Equally, it was the former attaché's impressions ahead of any other file that Jellicoe passed on to the battle cruiser commander, Vice-Admiral Beatty, when he heard that the latter sought details of his prospective adversary.[39] Once again, this is a clear illustration of how attaché derived materials were circulated around the navy.

As well as incorporating the material supplied by the naval attachés into printed books, the information was sometimes sent directly to the appropriate fleet commanders. For example, three weeks after Dumas communicated to the Admiralty the news that a 'flotilla of destroyers with gunnery and torpedo training ships &c. [had been] placed in commission under a Rear Admiral for the purposes of practising strategy',[40] this information was passed on to the Commander of the Channel Fleet.[41] In a similar vein, a year later, Dumas sent the Admiralty an article from the *Wilhelmshaven Tageblatt* which stated that a squadron of German battleships had passed through the Little Belt. As the Little Belt was the shallowest of the channels connecting the North Sea and Baltic, it had been assumed that it was impassable for deep draught vessels like battleships. This assumption was obviously no longer valid and, as a result, Dumas's information was communicated to the Channel, Home, and Atlantic Fleets, as well as to the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth.[42] As the letter from the Admiralty stressed, they wished Britain's fleet commanders to pay 'especial attention' to the fact 'that in future the German Navy possess, in addition to the Great Belt and the Kiel Canal, a third passage into the North Sea from Kiel'.[43] Further examples of this process abound. In October 1912 and September and October 1913, Watson sent in detailed reports about

[37] ADM 137/4163 to ADM 137/4167.
[38] Watson to Jellicoe, 28 Feb. 1915. Quoted in Marder, *FDSF* ii. 166.
[39] Jellicoe to Beatty, 26 Apr. 1915. A.T. Patterson, *The Jellicoe Papers* (London, 1966–8), i. 157.
[40] Digest entry for docket Cap D24, 2 May 1906, ADM 12/1430, Cut 52.
[41] Thomas to C-in-C Channel Fleet, 23 May 1906, ADM 144/27.
[42] Digest entry for docket Cap D52, 2 May 1907, ADM 12/1442, Cut 52.
[43] Admiralty to C-in-C Atlantic Fleet, 15 June 1907, ADM 145/2.

the German naval manœuvres. Naturally, these were considered carefully in the Admiralty, but they were also sent to the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet.[44] Clearly, the forwarding of attaché reports to commanders in the front line was a routine procedure, indicative once again of the broad distribution of the information they supplied.

From the above it is evident that the naval attachés, like their military confrères, were important providers of specialist information to their colleagues both in the corridors of power and in the front line. In the case of the naval attachés, there is also evidence that their views were disseminated even further, sometimes by less orthodox means.

The main unorthodox mechanism by which attaché reports gained wider currency was through the practice adopted by Admiral Fisher of having certain documents professionally set as Admiralty prints. These prints, which as Professor Sumida has noted, were invariably and misleadingly headed 'Secret' or 'Confidential', were then widely distributed by Fisher to his friends at court, in Parliament, or in the press. The purpose of this mailshot strategy was to persuade the recipients that they were in receipt of privileged Admiralty memoranda and, thereby, influence them to support Fisher in his controversial naval policies.[45] Among the papers that were distributed in this manner were several documents emanating from the naval attaché in Berlin. The reason for this is not hard to discern. As Fisher introduced measures to scrap obsolete warships and redistribute the fleets, he became vulnerable to the charge that he was endangering the country by weakening its maritime forces *vis-à-vis* the German navy. Hence, documents from the navy's man in Berlin that suggested that the Germans believed their sea forces to be greatly inferior to the Royal Navy, or which indicated that the German authorities were troubled by Fisher's reforms, or which even implied that the German fleet would be impotent against British maritime power thanks to Fisher were extremely useful to the First Sea Lord in his propaganda battle. Accordingly, he made sure that copies of such documents reached sympathetic naval journalists such as Arnold White, James Thursfield, Charles Napier Robinson, and Archibald Hurd.[46] Prints of this kind were also sent to influential political figures, including no less a personage than the King.[47] The consequence of the latter distribution was to ensure Edward VII's continued support for Fisher's work. The result of the former was to inspire some friendly articles in the press. It is surely not coincidental, for

[44] See digest entries for dockets, Foreign Office, 23 Oct. 1912 and 16 Oct. 1913, ADM 12/1502, Cut 52, and ADM 12/1515, Cut 52.

[45] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, 'Sir John Fisher and the *Dreadnought*: The Sources of Naval Mythology', *Journal of Military History*, 59 (1995), 629–30.

[46] Admiralty prints of Dumas's reports are in the papers of Arnold White and James Thursfield, NMM: WHI/14, WHI/141, THU/1, THU/2/2, THU/2/3, and THU/2/6. They can also be found in the papers of Charles Napier Robinson, RNM: Ad. Lib. MSS 252/12, Robinson Papers vol. 1. See also Fisher to Hurd, 23 Feb. 1908, which suggests that Fisher sent material from Dumas to Hurd, RNM: MSS 1998/35.

[47] Admiralty Prints of attaché materials sent to the King can be found in the Royal Archives in the series VIC/W57. See e.g. 'Why the British "Home Fleet" is a Necessity', RA VIC/W57/106–107.

example, that Dumas's dispatch NA 39/06 of 28 July 1906, reporting an article in the *Schlesinger Volkeszeitung* that the German navy would be unable to take the offensive in a war with England,[48] should have been turned into a print in August and then found its way, unattributed of course, into an essay in the October edition of the *Quarterly Review*.[49] Such positive publicity was all part of Fisher's plan.

Even less orthodox than Fisher's propaganda of the prints was the journalistic enterprise to which at least one attaché resorted in order to ensure that his opinions received a wider audience. In May 1908, Dumas finally lost patience with his subtle attempts to influence the media and wrote an article for a friendly journalist to place in the *Westminster Gazette* under the correspondent's own by-line. The manner in which this occurred is recounted in Dumas's diary:

> Bashford in to see me . . . I said suddenly are you ready to write and will you guarantee that what I say shall appear in the *Westminster Gazette*. He said he was and could and sat down and I dictated an article showing our relative numbers at present and in the future and giving the accurate probable dates for the completion of their Dreadnought type of ships. I ended by quoting the annual report of their Navy League, this showing that they are certain to carry out their programme and deduced ours in consequence, the immediate result being the necessity for our laying down 6 or 7 armoured ships next year and Naval Estimates for £40,000,000.[50]

The article appeared on 18 May 1908 and immediately caused great excitement. Fisher had it cut out for the attention of the First Lord informing him that, as Bashford had previously been a 'consistent opponent of exaggerated views of German shipbuilding', it was an important piece.[51] Dumas also recorded that there was 'much interest in . . . Bashford's (my) article', including from Fisher, who wrote, to the amusement of the attaché, asking him what he thought of it.[52] Evidently, it was a much-noted publication, although, as in the case of the Admiralty prints used in pro-Fisher papers, only the authors knew the original source. Nevertheless, it does illustrate the possible breadth of circulation of the views of the British naval attaché in Berlin.

Yet another unconventional means by which the information supplied by the attachés could be given a wider distribution was through the use of such material in ministerial answers given in Parliament. For a short period, such deliberate indiscretions were commonplace, as Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty from 1905 to 1908, was not averse to rebutting the political criticisms of his opponents by giving out privileged information that he had received from the attaché in Berlin. One example of this comes from July 1906. Answering the accusation of his predecessor, Lord Cawdor, that the Admiralty's shipbuilding

[48] Dumas NA 39/06, 28 July 1906, FO 371/78.
[49] 'The Naval Situation', *Quarterly Review*, 205/409 (Oct. 1906), 320–1.
[50] Dumas Diary, 9 May 1908.
[51] Fisher to McKenna, 19 May 1908, CCAC: MCKN 3/4.
[52] Dumas Diary, 20 and 21 May and 9 July 1908.

plans were inadequate, Tweedmouth responded by stating that British reductions had been enabled by delays in foreign naval programmes:

> Germany for the first time has failed to fulfil her programme, and the delay in those German vessels has been more than four months; and only this morning I have had information that the first of the two great battleships proposed to be laid down by Germany will not be laid down till the month of September next.[53]

This public revelation of information that could only have come from the attaché in Berlin caused Dumas a great deal of discomfort. As he jotted in his journal, as a consequence of 'Lord Tweedmouth's foolish speech', his activities became subject first to lots of unwelcome scrutiny and then to some severe criticism in the German press.[54] Thus, when the First Lord cited one of his reports again half a year later,[55] he was irate: 'Furious to see again in the papers that Lord Tweedmouth has been quoting me in a speech. I suppose it is very complimentary but it is ruinous for learning things and it is annoying to think that he shouldn't realise that my reports are not things to be used for party purposes.'[56] Evidently, the Sea Lords were no more impressed than was Dumas, for Fisher wrote to the attaché deprecating the First Lord's indiscreet behaviour and promising to do something about it.[57] He was evidently successful. An entry in the Military Branch precedent book indicates that in late May 1907 it was decided that answers to parliamentary questions that might compromise a naval attaché were no longer to be given out.[58] Thereafter, this mechanism for putting attaché reports into the public domain was, effectively, closed. However, prior to this point, parliamentary speeches represented yet another unorthodox means of disseminating attaché materials.

Consequently, in relation to the first test—the quantitative measure of influence—it is clear that attaché reports, or at least extracts and information from them, were widely disseminated. Not only did many key decision-makers in various government departments get to peruse them, but so too did numerous service personnel reading instructional manuals. Added to that, we know that there was a group of naval journalists who had sight of those attaché reports that Fisher turned into Admiralty prints. Even the general public, had they but known it, had direct access to the views of the British naval attaché in the form of an article penned by him for the *Westminster Gazette*. Finally, it is also evident that Tweedmouth carelessly disseminated some attaché reports through his speeches in the House of Lords, a point quickly picked up by the German papers, if not by the British ones. Thus, in quantitative terms, it can be stated that the reports of the British service attachés had a surprisingly wide reach.

[53] House of Lords, 30 July 1906, *The Parliamentary Debates*, 4 ser. 162, p. 302.
[54] Dumas Diary, 11, 13, and 21 Aug. 1906.
[55] House of Lords, 1 May 1907, *The Parliamentary Debates*, 4 ser. 173, p. 832.
[56] Dumas Diary, 4 May 1907. [57] Ibid., 30 May 1907.
[58] Reference to file M01358/07, NID 24 May 1907, in the 'M Branch Precedent Book, 1902–18', ADM 198/4.

THE RECEPTION ACCORDED TO THE SERVICE ATTACHÉ REPORTS

If it is relatively easy to establish who received the service attaché reports, the question of what these people thought of them—our second test—is harder to determine. This is in spite of the fact that, in theory, obtaining this information should be a relatively straightforward task. Every report that was received by the War Office, Admiralty, and Foreign Office was placed in a folder—known as a docket—upon which the various recipients of the document recorded their opinions and noted any actions that they wished to be taken. As a result, establishing whether attaché reports were perceived as valuable intelligence papers should entail simply checking the dockets for positive or negative comments and noting whether action was taken in consequence of the information contained therein. Unfortunately, the archival weeding process has rendered this simple matter almost impossible. In particular, the mass destruction of military and naval intelligence papers in the War Office and Admiralty files means that there is a real dearth of docketed service attaché reports among the records of these two ministries. Ascertaining the opinions of the military and naval establishment about the service attachés is, therefore, dependent upon the serendipitous survival of papers—alas, all too infrequent—or upon the inclination of the leading figures of the day to record such matters in their private correspondence—also infrequent. In short, it is dependent upon luck. Sadly, this cannot always be relied upon to produce information of the type and in the quantities desired.

In respect to the reception accorded by its senior staff to attaché reports, the department for which the fewest clues exist is the War Office. However, certain facts are clear. The first of these is that while Arnold-Forster was Secretary of State great store was set on the information received by the military attaché in Berlin, Colonel Gleichen. This first became apparent in April 1904, six months after Arnold-Forster became Secretary of State for War, when the War Office received a report by Gleichen on the disasters that had befallen the German forces in South-West Africa. It was, Arnold-Forster minuted, 'a very interesting paper; as I think are all papers from this source'.[59] This expression of approbation was duplicated on several other occasions. In June 1905, Arnold-Forster received what he described as 'an alarmist telegram from Selborne calling attention to the great increase in the German force in Damaraland'.[60] His response was to call upon the chief of the General Staff to have a paper drawn up on the situation in South-West Africa that could be circulated to the Cabinet. In doing this, he drew particular attention to 'the valuable information in the Reports of our Attaché in Berlin', which he desired should be incorporated in the final document.[61] Interestingly,

[59] Minute by Arnold-Forster, 22 Apr. 1904, on Gleichen MA 20/04, 8 Apr. 1904, WO 106/265.
[60] Arnold-Forster Diary, 19 June 1905, BL: Add Mss 50348.
[61] Minute by Arnold-Forster, 23 June 1905, BL: Add Mss 50317.

the memorandum produced, although unattributed with respect to its sources, took fundamentally the same position as Gleichen about the situation in South Africa.[62] Evidently, the Secretary of State's suggestion was acceded to. However, given that Arnold-Forster had lunched with Gleichen a week before the memorandum was written and recorded his view that the colonel was both 'interesting' and 'much the best Attaché we have at present', this is perhaps not surprising.[63] He evidently held this officer in the highest esteem.

If Arnold-Forster's attitude towards Gleichen demonstrates that it was possible for the political head of the War Office to have close contacts with the attaché in Berlin as well as the highest regard for the officer as an intelligence source, there is also evidence that at least one Director of Military Operations enjoyed similarly cordial relations with the army's man in Germany. The DMO in question was Brigadier General Henry Wilson; the attaché was Lieutenant-Colonel Russell. These two soldiers were men of previous acquaintance. Russell knew Wilson from his days as a student at Staff College, an institution of which Wilson was then the commandant. The young guardsman was obviously an admirer, describing his chief as 'an Irishman of great character and ability and very witty besides' and it would seem that Wilson reciprocated.[64] It would prove a helpful connection. When, in 1910, Russell was sent to Berlin and Wilson was appointed DMO, the two were already on friendly terms and were able to develop a quick rapport over intelligence matters. Sadly, much of their dealings was carried out by private correspondence, of which little survives, and by personal meetings, of which there is rarely a record.[65] However, the ledger is not entirely blank. It is clear from Wilson's diaries that he visited Russell in Berlin in February 1911 and again in September 1912. While he was there the two were able to discuss German affairs, both *à deux* and with other interested parties such as the British ambassador and naval attaché, as well as with the French military attaché.[66] Moreover, this seems to have been of a piece. Wilson, who expressed the hope that Russell was 'flourishing' in Berlin, evidently also saw the attaché as a useful source on German cavalry, questioning him about their performance in the imperial manœuvres.[67] In the summer of 1911, he also summoned Russell to a meeting of British military attachés, a mini-conference that included the army's representatives in Rome, Paris, Italy, Constantinople, Vienna, the Low Countries, and, of course Berlin.[68] Obviously, Wilson valued the views of the attachés in general and of Russell in particular.

[62] War Office, 'Memorandum on the Military Situation in German South-West Africa', submitted to the Cabinet 5 July 1905, ibid.

[63] Arnold-Forster Diary, 29 June 1905, BL: Add Mss 50348.

[64] Russell manuscript, p. 50.

[65] That there was a private correspondence is evident from an official letter of Wilson's in which he states that he will be 'writing . . . privately'. Wilson to Russell, 1 Mar. 1911, WO 106/59. There is one surviving example of private correspondence going the other way. Russell to Wilson, 30 Mar. 1913, SHC: Onslow Papers, G173/21.

[66] See Wilson's diary for 20–24 Feb. 1911 and 19–22 Sept. 1912, IWM: DS/MISC/80 reels 4 and 5.

[67] Wilson to Russell, 7 Nov. 1910, WO 106/59.

[68] Wilson Diary, 12 June 1911, IWM: DS/MISC/80 reel 4.

Wilson's papers are not the only source that indicates that Russell's insights were well received by the military hierarchy. Another important figure to keep a record of events was Major Adrian Grant-Duff, the military assistant secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence. In addition to the access that this prestigious post gave him, as a former member of the Military Operations Directorate, Grant-Duff also had good contacts with the officers there and was well placed to hear the intelligence that was being received and the opinions formed as to its quality. Among those who shared their views with him were Henry Wilson, the DMO, and Colonel Dallas, the head of the European Section of the Directorate. From what they told him, it is clear that Russell's intelligence in early 1912 of 'very great military activity in Germany' was taken very seriously in the War Office, as well as being noted in the CID.[69]

If it is clear from the, admittedly limited, evidence that both Gleichen and Russell were valued purveyors of intelligence on Germany, whose views were noted by the Secretary of State for War, the DMO, and the staff of the CID, what of the opinions provided by Colonel Trench? Direct information on this point is sadly very limited. Indeed, it is something of an irony that there is more surviving evidence about how the Admiralty viewed Trench than there is on the attitude of the colonel's own employer, the army. Thus, while there are three extant Admiralty dockets on reports by Trench, as well as details on a further, now weeded, file, there is not a single surviving War Office commentary on Trench's work.[70] The only point that can be made for certain is that Trench did meet personally with the DMO, Major-General Ewart, for what the latter described as 'a very long talk' about Germany. Ewart's diary entry on this meeting, quoted in the previous chapter, includes no dissent on the part of the DMO as to Trench's views and, indeed, implies some concurrence in the notion of a German threat.[71] This agreement should not come as any surprise. It is a well-established point in the existing historiography that Ewart was suspicious of German intentions and tended to see the Reich as Britain's principal military opponent.[72] His diary includes numerous entries to this effect. In May 1907, for example, he recorded:

> Relations are very strained at present between Germany and Great Britain. To my mind war is highly probable, if not absolutely inevitable in the course of a few years. Germany, ever increasing in population but a late arrival in the field of colonization, feels that she cannot satisfy her aims and ambitions unless she can defeat us.[73]

[69] Grant-Duff Diary, 19 Feb. and 7 May 1912, CCAC: AGDF 2/2.

[70] The three extant dispatches are Trench MA 33, 4 Feb. 1907, MA 34, 6 Feb. 1907, and MA 68, 11 Nov. 1907. They can be found in ADM 116/1223 and ADM 1/7974 respectively. There are also details on the Admiralty's now weeded docket on Trench MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908 in Marder, *FDSF* i. 148. They show that, in most cases—surprise attack excluded—Trench's views were taken seriously.

[71] Ewart Diary, 19 Feb. 1908. The relevant excerpt is quoted in Ch. 4.

[72] Neil Summerton, 'The Development of British Military Planning for War Against Germany, 1904–1914' (University of London, 1970), 161–3.

[73] Ewart Diary, 11 May 1907.

Given opinions such as these, it is not surprising that, warned by Trench as to the dangerous long-term implications of German *Weltpolitik*, the DMO should have concurred in the attaché's assessment. His opinion, after all, was exactly the same.

Importantly, Ewart's assessment of German hostility was widely shared in the military establishment. Major-General Sir James Grierson, for example, had believed since 1897 that an Anglo-German conflict was in the offing. Accordingly, appointed DMO in 1904, he spent much of December 1905 and early 1906 working on the forces required for a war with Germany.[74] He was not alone. General Sir John French, who was also involved in the planning process at this time, told Ewart in early 1906 that 'he fancied that war with Germany was sooner or later inevitable'.[75] Another key figure who believed that 'Germany desires more room and is resolved to have it no matter at what expense' was General Sir Douglas Haig. This belief led him to some startling conclusions. While serving as chief of the General Staff in India, he recorded his opinion that German enthusiasm for the Baghdad Railway scheme could only be explained by the desire of German leaders to obtain 'a lever over Great Britain by being able to threaten her on the Indian frontier'. Consequently, he warned that 'the day is not far distant when it will be possible for Germany to concentrate military strength on the borders of Afghanistan'.[76]

This widespread adherence to the concept of a German menace among the top echelons of the British military establishment might give rise to the expectation that Trench's reports about German ambitions would be widely shared and respected. However, this does not appear to have been entirely the case. According to Dumas, who personally thought Trench 'clever',[77] the colonel was not highly valued by his immediate superiors in military intelligence. In September 1907, Gleichen, who had become head of the European Section at the DMO, described Trench to the naval attaché as 'absolutely useless to us'.[78] Gleichen, Dumas was 'maliciously amused to hear', made a similar observation to him about Trench some eight months later.[79]

Unfortunately, no record exists to explain why the head of MO2 should have thought this. One possible clue is provided by the context of the pronouncement. When in June 1908 Gleichen told Dumas that Trench was 'useless', it was during a conversation about invasion. Trench, it will be recalled, was a vehement advocate of the notion that the Germans were planning a surprise sea-borne assault on the British Isles, an operation of which he asserted they were more than capable. Whilst this belief put Trench in good company—Lord Roberts, the former Commander-in-Chief, adhered to the very same view—it also meant that the military attaché was entirely at variance with the opinions of his superiors in the War Office. Gleichen, for one, took exactly the opposite view. As he explained to the

[74] Macdiarmid, *Grierson*, pp. 133 and 213–17. [75] Ewart Diary, 15 Mar. 1906.
[76] Memorandum by Haig, 2 Apr. 1911, NLS: Haig Papers, ACC 3155, No. 890.
[77] Dumas Diary, 8 Nov. 1907. [78] Ibid., 10 Sept. 1907. [79] Ibid., 11 June 1908.

second CID invasion inquiry in February 1908, he regarded a surprise German landing as impossible.[80] Ewart thought likewise: 'Lord Roberts' "bolt from the blue" theories altogether overstep the mark'.[81] And this was not his sole problem with such arguments. In addition to regarding them as fallacious, the DMO also held them to be politically inexpedient. The reason was that Ewart, like many other members of the military hierarchy, had a particular vision of the future role of the British army. He envisaged that, in the coming European war, Britain's professional soldiers would be sent abroad to fight alongside the French on the principal continental battlefield. They would, in effect, be used as an expeditionary force to strike directly at the enemy. All of his plans were predicated on this assumption. However, as Ewart was well aware, this deployment was contingent on the army not being needed to protect the British mainland. Should the possibility of a German invasion of the British Isles be once conceded, it was inevitable that the army would be redesigned to meet this threat, which meant being remodelled as a home defence force. This was Ewart's greatest fear. As he confessed in October 1907, a month before the invasion inquiry began: 'I am always afraid of money being taken away from the regulars for the benefit of a stay at home force. What we want is a good striking force able to take advantage of sea power and help possible allies on the Continent. That has always been the traditional policy of Great Britain.'[82] He expressed similar views after the inquiry concluded: 'What is the use of an Army which can only be used on the assumption that the Germans have defeated our Navy and gained a footing in this country. It is the oversea expeditionary soldier whom we want.'[83]

In this context, Trench's incessant reports of an impending surprise attack on the British Isles was exactly what Ewart did not wish to hear. While he might well agree with the attaché about Germany's hostile intent, he would not have had any use for his many vigorous pronouncements on invasion. Not only that, Ewart would have found the contrast between Trench's dispatches and the reporting of the naval attaché very stark. While Fisher was able to buttress the Admiralty's case to the invasion inquiry by submitting two of Dumas's most recent dispatches contesting the very possibility of a German invasion, the army had to keep very quiet about the outlook of their man in Berlin.[84] Indeed, so silent were the military authorities that the invasion advocates even claimed that they had ordered the military attachés not to report on such matters. As Lord Roberts asserted, 'I have been told that the Military Attachés will not say these things. They have been told that certain information that they have been giving was not agreeable, and was not required, and they were not in future to make any report on these things.'[85] The army vigorously denied this but they did not produce any of Trench's reports as proof.

[80] Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Invasion Inquiry, 4 Feb. 1908, CAB 16/3A.
[81] Ewart Diary, 20 July 1908. [82] Ibid., 26 Oct. 1907. [83] Ibid., 12 July 1909.
[84] Minutes of the tenth meeting of the Invasion Inquiry, 26 Mar. 1908, CAB 16/3A. See also Dumas NA 7/08, 3 Feb. 1908 printed in the appendices to the final report, CAB 16/3B.
[85] Minutes of the third meeting of the Invasion Inquiry, 12 Dec. 1907, CAB 16/3A.

Thus, if the statements made to Dumas in 1907 and 1908 were true and Trench was not popular in the War Office at that time, it would seem likely that his outlook on invasion played a major part in this. In contrast to his naval colleague, Trench sent the army nothing that could be used in their presentation to the invasion inquiry. On the other hand, Ewart took Trench's reports on other matters much more seriously. A file of correspondence from the Royal Aircraft Establishment shows that, throughout 1909 the DMO assiduously sent Trench's dispatches on German aviation to the competent authorities, forwarding them with covering letters implying that they contained information of importance.[86] Trench's views on German espionage were similarly held in high regard. Accordingly, not only were his reports on the Reich's methods of protecting military information passed on to the newly created Secret Service Bureau,[87] but so too were his opinions about those German officers resident in Britain and allegedly engaged in spying. Indeed, he was considered such an authority on this matter that Vernon Kell, the first head of counter-intelligence, asked the DMO for an introduction to Trench, so that he could discuss with him German espionage in Britain.[88] Naturally, there is no direct evidence as to why the colonel's views on German spies should have carried such weight. However, if one were to speculate, the answer appears to be that Trench's opinions on this were very similar to the DMO's. Ewart believed that 'we are lamentably behind other nations especially Germany which employs hosts of agents and spies through an S.S. Bureau'.[89] It will be recalled that Trench thought this as well. This suggests that where Trench's views did not contradict General Staff policy, but actually reinforced it, they were much more welcome.

Thus, it would appear that military attaché reports enjoyed some influence over at least one Secretary of State for War, as well as over various members of the Military Operations Directorate. However, there is one important qualification to be made. There are clear indications that reports that challenged existing plans and assumptions were less favourably received than those dispatches that buttressed widely held and established views. Hence, Russell's reports about German military activity in 1912 impressed the head of MO2 sufficiently for him to discuss the matter with the assistant military secretary to the CID. Similarly, Trench's reports on German aviation were considered important enough for the DMO to forward them with all due dispatch to the director of fortifications and works. His information on German espionage was similarly directed to the Secret Service Bureau. Yet, at the same time, Trench's forthright views on invasion almost certainly aroused the ire of Gleichen and led to him labelling the attaché as useless. If nothing else, this shows that the influence of military attachés did not run as far as challenging existing preconceptions at the War Office.

[86] 'RAE Appendices 1909', AIR 1/729/176/4/4.

[87] Copies of Trench MA 25/09, 24 June 1909, and 44/09, 15 Dec. 1909, are in the files of MI5, KV3/1.

[88] Kell Diary, 29 Aug. 1910, KV1/10.

[89] Ewart Diary, 31 Dec. 1908.

If certain deductions can be made about the reception accorded to military attaché reports at the War Office, can the fate of naval attaché reports upon their arrival at the Admiralty be similarly inferred? Once again, owing to the destruction of archival documents, information on this matter is very far from complete. However, despite the fact that the Admiralty papers were extensively weeded, there are substantially more clues about the reception given to naval attaché reports than exist for those of their military colleagues.

One reason for this is that, in contrast to the War Office, where the archivists did not retain the cumulative index to their registered files, the Admiralty preserved the digests to its Record Office holdings. Recorded in these volumes are particulars of all of the documents sent to the central Record Office. Most of the time these details are quite basic and include little more than the subject of the document—possibly with a short summary—as well as the author and date of receipt. However, there are important exceptions. One of these is crucial to understanding the reception of attaché reports at the Admiralty. For some unknown reason, in certain years, especially 1906 to 1909, the compilers of the digests did not stick to recording the basic outlines of the various papers that they registered; they also made occasional reference to what was written on the dockets. In particular, where a document elicited substantive comments from any of the principal Admiralty officeholders, this fact was recorded. Thus, for a four-year period, if a naval attaché report aroused special interest, this was logged in the digest. Accordingly, by checking these entries, it can be determined exactly how many naval attaché reports were considered especially valuable. It was a sizeable number. In 1907, for example, special notice was taken of ten of Dumas's submissions. Three of these focused on German shipbuilding, two on naval manœuvres, two on the naval estimates, one on the amendment to the naval law, one on coastal fortifications, and one on the passage of the German fleet through the waters around Denmark.[90] Clearly, Dumas was valued both as a dependable source and for the range of information that he provided. A similar situation prevailed in respect to the reports of Captain Heath.[91]

Such deductions from the yearly digests are not the sole way in which these original guides to the central Record Office can be of use. In addition to compiling the regular annual volumes, the Record Office staff also produced a work spanning fifty-year periods called the 'compendium'. Described as 'a sort of superdigest' in which 'all material of special interest [was] recorded', the compendium effectively named all the most important documents in each and every area of the Admiralty's work, including intelligence on Germany.[92] Under this heading, the compendium cited a number of naval attaché reports. This was especially so for the years 1910 to 1913. For this period, instead of the usual written entries into the book, a specially prepared page was composed and pasted into the volume.

[90] ADM 12/1442, Cut 52. [91] See Cut 52 in ADM 12/1454 and ADM 12/1466.
[92] Letter to Davies, author unclear, 9 Feb. 1950, PRO 17/15.

The majority of the reports it lists, especially for the years 1912 and 1913, are dispatches from the naval attaché in Berlin.[93] This reinforces the point deduced from the annual volumes for 1906 to 1909 that the Admiralty considered the attachés in Berlin as important purveyors of intelligence.

A further source of information about the reception accorded to naval attachés reports is the writing of Arthur Marder. In July 1956, this American academic was allowed into the Admiralty Record Office to look at files pertaining to the years 1904 to 1919. Among these documents were numerous papers, including several dispatches from the British naval attaché in Berlin, subsequently destroyed. In a couple of cases, the extracts Marder cites from these reports are the only remaining records of the text of these documents. In every instance, his quotations from the dockets are the sole surviving evidence of what was written upon them. As such, they represent a unique opportunity to glimpse the reactions of the Admiralty hierarchy to several naval attaché reports. Revealingly, Marder's citations make it clear that the Naval Intelligence Department took very seriously reports about the quality of Germany's naval personnel. In August 1908, Heath visited Kiel, where he 'was so much struck by the change that is slowly but surely working its way over the German navy' that he recorded his impressions of the servicemen that he saw. They were largely positive. 'The men', he stated, 'have a different appearance to the German blue jacket of a few years ago, they look well fed, healthy and happy: they walk with more freedom and perhaps even a slight indication of the so-called "sailor's roll". They are no longer soldiers in sailors' uniform.' The officers also impressed him: 'I believe that in the course of a few years the German officer may equal ours in readiness of resource and capability of action.' Although the attaché admitted that his remarks were 'based on a visit to Kiel of only some 48 hours duration' and were, therefore, obviously far from definitive, they were nevertheless received seriously at the NID.[94] As Marder records, the DNI minuted this report: 'There is no doubt that the German Navy has made great advances lately and that they are straining every nerve to improve.'[95] He obviously felt no uncertainty about the validity of the attaché's information.

In addition to the clues from the Admiralty digests, the compendium, and Marder, there is also evidence as to how the information provided by the naval attachés was received from the few surviving docketed reports. Admittedly, such documents are scarce. Sadly, the officials responsible for weeding the Admiralty archives were at least as talented in destroying the historical record as the staff who sifted the War Office documents, with the result that the main collections of Admiralty papers contain few examples of these precious files. Fortunately, the decentralized bureaucratic structure of the Admiralty meant that the pulping of documents by their central Record Office did not always have the same irreparable effect that the destruction of the War Office registered files had in relation to

[93] *Compendium 1885–1934: Codes 50–56*, ADM 12/1899.
[94] A copy of the report is in the Foreign Office files. Heath, NA 40/08, 26 Aug. 1908, FO 371/461.
[95] Marder, *FDSF* i. 149.

army records. For, in some respects, the Admiralty was a more diffuse organization than the War Office. Various branches were responsible for maintaining their own separate registries and, as a consequence, some files that might otherwise not have survived are still extant. For example, copies of a number of naval attaché reports, including duplicates of the dockets, were sent to the Controller's department because the information they contained on German technical developments was relevant to the work of that body. These reports were then bound into the Ships' Covers—sturdy volumes charting the principles behind British warship construction—where they can still be found today. In a similar vein, the Naval Intelligence Department used to maintain its own collection of papers on foreign naval developments. Amongst these were a few docketed files, including some naval attaché reports. When, after the First World War, a selection of NID records were bound for use by the Historical Section (later Naval Historical Branch), some of these dockets were included amongst them. They, too, still exist today.

Thus, largely for bureaucratic reasons, a few complete Admiralty dockets containing naval attaché information have managed to escape destruction. While the number of such documents is not great, they are nevertheless highly revealing. From the comments on them it is possible to ascertain that, for certain topics at least, the attachés were a highly regarded source of information.

The activities and developments at the principal German naval ports and shipyards were one such topic. As will be recalled, one of the key tasks assigned to the navy's man in the Reich was to inspect the main German harbours and coastal regions. This they did on a regular basis. Hence, in early July 1906, Dumas made a trip to the Baltic ports of Danzig and Elbing. The docket on the attaché's subsequent dispatch shows that his observations were of considerable interest to the DNI. Two items in particular attracted Ottley's attention. The first related to 'the building capacity of Schichau's' two yards, which was greater than anticipated. As the DNI highlighted: 'At Danzig they are prepared to lay down 6 Battleships at once and to deliver the first one in 25 months complete . . . At Elbing (Torpedo Craft Works) they are prepared to lay down 24 destroyers at once and to deliver the first in 6 months . . .' The DNI was similarly concerned by Dumas's report on the advanced state of German destroyer construction, which again exceeded expectations: '12 destroyers of this year's programme are much further advanced than we had knowledge of; 4 are half built; 4 just laid down; and the material for the remainder is being assembled'.[96] Clearly, these were not only important details, but also ones that were received with evident interest.

Dumas was not the only attaché to be valued for his observations from German harbours. A trip by Watson to Kiel in September 1910 also produced useful results so far as the NID was concerned. The attaché reported on the grounding of the battle cruiser *Von der Tann*, the arrangement of turrets on the *Helgoland*, the laying down of the battleship *Ersatz Hagen* (later named *Kaiserin*), the smoke

[96] Minute by Ottley, 21 July 1906, on Dumas NA 32/06, 12 July 1906, NMM: Ships Cover 274.

emitted by German submarines, the trials of German destroyers, and the widening of the Kiel canal. The comments on the docket make it clear that Watson's observations were of considerable use to the DNI. The paragraph on the grounding of the *Von der Tann*, for example, not only confirmed an existing report, but also provided additional information that enabled the department to estimate the effect of extra coal stocks on the battle cruiser's draught. Similarly, the report of smoke produced by German submarines was valuable because it corroborated existing information about the performance of Körting engines. Likewise, Watson's observations on destroyers were useful not only for confirming the existing presumptions about storm trials, but also for providing new information about destroyer personnel. On this issue, the attaché reported that 'fishermen do their 3 years service in destroyers to ensure getting seamen in them', a fact the DNI specifically highlighted as 'of interest'.[97]

If there are dockets that demonstrate that attaché reports from coastal inspections were well received, there are others that show that these officers were also valued for the technical information they provided. One indication of this comes from 1903 and concerns the design of German destroyers. In May, at the prompting of Arnold-Forster, then parliamentary secretary to the Admiralty, a reference sheet was sent to Captain Ewart in Berlin requesting him to 'take any steps you may consider desirable' to obtain certain items of information about German torpedo boats. In particular, details were sought on the weight, habitability, speed, hull form, and relative battle-worthiness of the German vessels.[98]

The origins of this request went back several years. As early as March 1901, Arnold-Forster had expressed the view that British destroyers were badly designed and that the German boats were greatly their superior.[99] Subsequent experiences had confirmed him in this view. In particular, during a visit to Kiel in August 1902, he had been highly impressed by what he had seen of German torpedo boats.[100] Moreover, he had also happened to have the opportunity to speak to a German engineer, Johann Schütte, the man in charge of the Nord-Deutsche Lloyd model tank, who had further convinced him of the excellence of the German vessels of this class. Consequently, upon his return to Britain he determined to do something about the perceived inferiority of the British ships and finding out more about German destroyers seemed an appropriate starting point. Accordingly, he had instructed the above-mentioned series of questions be sent to the British naval attaché.[101] Ewart replied on 16 June. The Germans, he said, produced fast, habitable boats of lower than expected displacement, which were considered superior by the men who sailed on them to their British equivalents.

[97] Watson, NARS 85/10, 19 Oct. 1910, and accompanying minutes by Bethell, 2 Nov. 1910, NMM: Ships Cover 274. [98] Nicholson to Ewart, 1 May 1903, NMM: Ships Cover 184A.
[99] Arnold-Forster to Selborne, 30 Mar. 1901, BL: Add Mss 50296.
[100] Arnold-Forster, 'Notes on a Visit to Kiel and Wilhelmshaven, August 1902 and General Remarks on the German Navy and Naval Establishments', pp. 12–13, ADM 116/940B.
[101] Arnold-Forster to the Controller, 29 Apr. 1903, BL: Add Mss 50296.

The information he sent was considered 'very interesting' by the assistant director of naval construction, Henry Deadman, who nevertheless refused to believe that the figures—which seemed to show that German ships outperformed British vessels on a lower displacement—could be genuine. The DNC, Sir Philip Watts, dismissed them with the simple minute: 'The data given is probably inaccurate.' Neither man considered the attaché's remarks about the relative fighting value of the British and German vessels required any comment. Significantly, this rather complacent judgement was not one that Arnold-Forster was prepared to accept and he strenuously argued for treating the attaché's information with greater seriousness:

> I am afraid I do not quite concur with the last paragraph of the D.N.C.'s minute. He says: 'The remaining replies of the Attaché do not appear to call for any remarks.' . . . I think the statement reported to be made by many German Officers and brought to our notice by our own Naval Attaché *is* worthy of remark, and, *prima facie*, I should be inclined to believe that if German officers 'are very well satisfied with the strength, habitability and seaworthiness of their boats' and if they consider them in all these respects 'superior to all British boats', they have some valid reason for their belief.[102]

Accordingly, he insisted that this was a matter that required further pursuing.

In response to Arnold-Forster's comments, a further set of questions was dispatched to Germany.[103] Sadly, at this point, the paper trail runs dry. However, for present purposes, the information on the docket is clear. On the issue of the relative merits of British and German destroyers, Arnold-Forster was inclined to accept the information provided by the attaché—at least to the extent that it justified further enquiry—ahead of the dismissive reassurances of his senior officials.

Ewart was not the only British naval attaché to comment on German technical developments. So, too, did Watson, who in November 1911 sent in a four-page dispatch entitled 'the Capabilities of the German Fleet'. The report focused on the many signs of excellence in German materiel and personnel. Watson drew particular attention to German confidence in the superiority of their heavy guns, as well as to their pride in the performance of their destroyers, armour, battle cruisers, submarine personnel, and torpedoes. 'Allowing for Teutonic enthusiasm over their own productions, to which they may possibly be prone', Watson suggested, 'it is I submit advisable that this confidence should be carefully taken note of in England, and consideration be made whether it is justified or not.'[104]

Watson's report was taken extremely seriously in the Admiralty, where it elicited considerable comment from both the DNI and the DNO. The former agreed with the attaché that German destroyers had attained exceptional speeds, that the Germans were making every effort to improve their torpedoes, and that 'the

[102] Minutes by Deadman, 4 July 1903, Sir Philip Watts, 7 July 1903, and Arnold-Forster, 14 July 1903, on 'Germany. Particulars re Schichau and Germania Torpedo Boat Destroyers', 16 June 1903, NMM: Ships Cover 184A.

[103] Arnold-Forster to Schütte, 18 Aug. 1903, BL: Add Mss 50296.

[104] Watson, NA 34/11, 30 Nov. 1911, FO 244/770.

Torpedo-Abteilung is said to be the most sought after branch of the German Navy and to contain the smartest officers'. However, it was on the question of German gunnery that the most detailed discussion took place. Here, the DNI observed that in commenting on German ordnance he was labouring under a considerable disadvantage: 'The Germans are no doubt better placed to form an estimate of the excellence of their ordnance as compared with that of H.M. Service since their knowledge of our ordnance and its capabilities must greatly exceed our knowledge of theirs.' Nevertheless, he concurred with the attaché that 'the life and accuracy of Krupp guns would certainly appear to be very high'. The DNO, whose opinion on this matter was sought, did not dispute this, but offered a counter-perspective. In a long technical exposé, he suggested that, while the German 11-inch gun was certainly a fine weapon, he was certain that the British 13.5-inch gun was its superior.[105] It was not an unexpected conclusion. Nevertheless, the fact that the DNO had to consider the matter at all is evidence of how seriously the attaché's ideas were taken.

Another topic where there are surviving dockets that offer a useful indication about the reception accorded to attaché reports by the Admiralty is the question of the annual German naval estimates. According to the Admiralty digests, the naval attachés had traditionally been an important provider of information on this matter. Indeed, during the years from 1900 to 1904, it seems they supplied most of the Admiralty's material on this issue.[106] Sadly, as the dispatches from these years do not themselves survive this is difficult to corroborate. Fortunately, for the subsequent period, the situation changes dramatically. The reason for this is that, for the years from 1905 until 1911, five volumes of Naval Intelligence Department papers exist that chart the NID's main sources of information about the German estimates and the department's consequent thinking about the German naval programme. These volumes tell us much about the developing role of the naval attaché on this question.

The first surviving report on this topic is Allenby's dispatch from 6 December 1905. If the digests reveal that the naval attaché was a key source on the German estimates for the years 1901 to 1905, this report confirms that this was also the case for the 1906–7 programme year. Over 26 pages, the attaché first translated and then went into considerable detail explaining Germany's maritime budget. The DNI's two-page response verifies not only that this was Ottley's main source on the matter, but also that he accepted Allenby's deductions about the scope and import of the estimates. Echoing the attaché's report, which emphasized the increase of £975,183 over the previous year and 'the enormous cost of the projected vessels', the DNI recorded:

> The German Naval Estimates for 1906–7 amount to about 12½ million pounds, which is an increase of nearly a million pounds over those of this year.

[105] Minutes by Bethell, 14 Dec. 1911, and Moore, 28 Dec. 1911, NMM: Ships Cover 426.

[106] See entries for Cut 52 Germany in ADM 12/1354, ADM 12/1367, ADM 12/1379, ADM 12/1391, and ADM 12/1404.

The new construction to be commenced in 1906–7 is
2 Battleships (costing £1,785,714 each)
1 Armoured Cruiser (Costing £1,345,401)
2 2nd Class Cruisers
12 Torpedo Boats
1 Steam Miner
1 or 2 Submarines

The increase in cost of the new Battleships and Armoured Cruiser over those laid down this year is very marked.

No details of their dimensions or armament are given; but it is understood that the Battleships are to be of 17,700 tons, 19½ knots, and are to carry 8—28 cm (11″) and 12—19 cm (7.6″) guns.

In short, Ottley accepted all of Allenby's conclusions. The report, with Ottley's comments, was then sent to Tweedmouth and Fisher, both of whom, in a sign of assent, initialled the docket without comment.[107]

Allenby's role as a reporter on the German naval estimates was continued after his departure in February 1906 by Dumas. The NID compilation 'Naval Estimates Vol. II' contains little else but reports by Dumas for the period April 1906 to August 1907. Sadly, none of these dispatches is accompanied by the original Admiralty docket. So beyond establishing the centrality of Dumas as a source on the German naval budget, these files tell us little about the reception his views were accorded. However, a subsequent volume does contain an indication about the value ascribed to his judgements on the naval legislation for the 1908–9 programme year.

In early December 1907, Dumas submitted two consecutive reports covering the maritime questions then before the Reichstag: namely, the proposed amendment to the Navy Law—the *Novelle*—and the estimates to be passed in consequence of this. Interestingly, in what appears to have been a new departure, on both occasions Dumas's reports had been anticipated by the NID. Thus, receiving NA 64/07 on the *Novelle*, the minutes noted that this information 'has already been submitted on N.I.D. 951'.[108] Likewise, the docket on Dumas's report on the estimates recorded that this topic had already been the subject of a departmental paper, namely NID 958.[109] Both NID 951 and NID 958 were analyses, produced in the Naval Intelligence Department itself, of articles published in the semi-official German government newspaper, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.[110] In other words, on the basis of open sources, the details of the amended German Fleet Bill and naval estimates were with the NID two weeks before the attaché's dispatches were written.

[107] Allenby NA 18/05, 6 Dec. 1905, and minutes by Ottley, 15 Dec. 1905, Tweedmouth initialled the docket on 22 Dec. 1905, There is no date beside Fisher's initials, NHB: Naval Estimates vol. II, T20895.

[108] Minutes by Slade, 18 Dec. 1907, on Dumas, NA 64/07, 2 Dec. 1907, ADM 137/3857.

[109] Minutes by Slade, 18 Dec. 1907, on Dumas, NA 65/07, 5 Dec. 1907, ADM 137/3858.

[110] NID 951, 20 Nov. 1907, ADM 137/3857, NID 958, 23 Nov. 1907, ADM 137/3858.

If the Naval Intelligence Department already possessed this information, does this mean that the naval attaché's reports were redundant? The answer is no. For one thing, the officials at the NID were not so naive as to take German newspaper reports totally at face value. Corroboration from their man in Berlin was definitely desired. Furthermore, there was the not inconsequential matter of detail. A couple of columns of newsprint outlining general features of forthcoming budgets were no substitute for a thorough report covering the matter in depth. Once again, this made the attaché's submission valuable. Finally, it was also the case that the naval attaché provided useful on-the-spot analysis of a kind that did not appear in the 'North German Gazette'. Hence, Dumas's dispatch on the 1908–9 estimates, contained several important deductions. These included his prediction that the Germans would build their major surface warships more quickly in the future, that they would equip them with larger and more powerful torpedoes, and that they were doing all of this in preparation for a conflict with Britain. Slade considered all of these points in the minutes. In every case he accepted the attaché's judgement. An appended paper scrutinized Dumas's assertion regarding shipbuilding times and concluded they were correct:

> The following table shows the sums proposed as first instalments for the new 1908 ships as compared with those for the 1907 ships. It will be seen that the instalments for *next* year are greatly in advance of those for *this* year, even more than if the ships were only going to be reasonably increased in size, so it appears certain that ships in future are to be built in less time than has been the case, probably battleships and armoured cruisers in from 30 to 33 months, protected cruisers in under 2 years, and destroyers in from 9 to 12 months.

A similar paper confirmed the attaché's deductions about the likely deployment of 20-inch torpedoes. Most interesting, however, were the minutes that related to Dumas's assertion about Germany's future offensive intent. The DNI accepted the attaché's contention, repeating it almost verbatim:

> Finally, Captain Dumas states that these Estimates are of the highest importance for England in that they anticipate an extremely rapid construction of a modern fleet of the greatest strength, while at the same time anticipating every proper auxiliary for the efficient use of the same.
>
> They are also significant because they further provide for the absolute safeguarding of the coasts, thus leaving the Fleet free, in some five years' time, to move out and assume the proper role of such a Fleet—the offensive.[111]

Evidently, he agreed.

While Slade was willing to accept Dumas's analysis of the 1908–9 German estimates, were subsequent DNIs as ready to concur with the interpretations of his successors? This is difficult to gauge, as there is only one example of a docketed attaché report on the German naval estimates written after Dumas's departure. In February 1911, Watson penned a dispatch on the passage of the 1911–12 naval

[111] Minutes by Slade, 18 Dec. 1907, on Dumas, NA 65/07, 5 Dec. 1907, ibid.

estimates through the Reichstag's budget committee. Among many unexceptional observations, he made one prediction about the reduction in Germany's annual shipbuilding purportedly mandated in the following year under the naval law. This he maintained was unlikely to go ahead: 'I submit that it is probable that German naval estimates for 1912 and succeeding years will provide for the construction of three armoured ships per year, instead of two as at present proposed by navy law.' Admiral Bethell concurred in this, admittedly, not very controversial judgement: 'I am inclined to think that the Naval Attaché is correct in his prophecy that Germany will only drop one large armoured vessel after this year.' The docket was also signed by McKenna and Admiral Wilson, signifying their concurrence.[112] Accordingly, in so far as we have documentary material on the matter, it shows that attachés' views on the estimates continued to be valued.

Thus, it seems clear from the evidence contained in the digests, the compendium, the papers seen by Marder, and the evidence of the few surviving dockets, that the reports of the naval attachés were cordially received by the Admiralty. These dispatches provided useful data to the NID on a wide variety of topics ranging from shipyards, destroyers, gunnery, naval personnel, and the annual estimates. True, some of this information was merely corroborative—although no less useful for this—but the attachés were also valued for the new material they supplied as well as their on-the-spot interpretation of German naval developments.

In addition to the two service ministries, there was one other government department intimately involved in the work of the service attachés: the Foreign Office. While our understanding of how attaché reports were viewed by the War Office and Admiralty is rather scanty, the situation is rather different in respect to the Foreign Office. There are two reasons for this. First, in 1906, the officials there introduced a new filing system that encouraged copious comments on in-coming correspondence. Consequently, where files survive, they are often highly revealing. Secondly, the Foreign Office archivists, in contrast to their colleagues in the service ministries, adopted a much more enlightened weeding policy. They kept nearly all of the principal policy files. As a result, although little is known about how Britain's foreign policy establishment viewed attaché reports in the period up to the end of 1905—before the new filing system was introduced—there is a very complete record of their opinions in the years thereafter. This reveals that service attachés were highly regarded by the diplomatists in Whitehall.

The introduction of the new Foreign Office filing system in 1906 coincided with the appointment of a new naval attaché, Dumas. It is clear from the Foreign Office minutes that this officer quickly established a very high reputation in diplomatic circles. Sir Edward Grey, for example, noted on one of the attaché's communications, 'Capt. Dumas writes very interesting reports. I hope the Admiralty recognize how well he does.'[113] The Foreign Secretary's sentiments were widely

[112] Minute by Bethell, 13 Mar. 1911, on Watson NA 4/11, 17 Feb. 1911, Wilson signed the docket on 17 Mar. 1911; McKenna initialled it on 20 Mar. 1911, ADM 137/3860.

[113] Minute by Grey on Dumas, Denmark NA 1/07, 25 Sept. 1907, FO 371/243.

shared. The Western Department clerk, Gerald Villiers, penned this glowing testimonial on one dispatch concerning the German manœuvres: 'I wish we could communicate Captain Dumas's remarks . . . to Mr Maxse and the Naval Correspondent of the *Standard*.'[114] In a similar vein, Eyre Crowe regularly praised the attaché's work. 'Captain Dumas argues his case with his customary ability and thoroughness', he wrote on one report from March 1907.[115] 'Captain Dumas always states his views in an interesting way', he suggested on another.[116] Nor was he alone in regarding Dumas's work as interesting. At various times, other officials, including Gerald Spicer and Ronald Campbell, all expressed themselves in this sense.[117] Indeed, it is notable that, even when disagreeing with the attaché, most Foreign Office clerks were complimentary about his reports. Villiers prefaced one dissenting minute with the words: 'It may be presumptuous to differ from so high an authority . . .'[118] Crowe did likewise. Although he wrote on one report that 'if [this] judgement were to be unquestionably accepted by the Admiralty, the Lords Commissioners would, I consider, be misled', he nevertheless, tempered this criticism with the observation that 'something appreciative might be said respecting Captain Dumas's otherwise excellent report and generally about his energy and efficient assistance to the embassy'.[119] However, perhaps the clearest statement about the value accorded by the Foreign Office to Dumas's reports comes from the minutes appended to his final dispatch. Walter Langley, the Assistant Under-Secretary, spoke for many when he stated:

> Captain Dumas has written many interesting reports and in this last effort he has given us the impression of a painstaking observer respecting the public opinion and the intentions of Germany in regard to this country. . . .
>
> Captain Dumas . . . has furnished us with so much valuable information of a quasi-political character that it would not seem to be out of place for us to take an opportunity of expressing . . . our appreciation of the pains he has taken to set out clearly the political aspect of the questions with which he has had to deal.

Grey concurred:

> I think he sees some things through magnifying glasses, but some of his observations are very acute and interesting; and his habit of observing and reflecting upon the state of feeling and point of view of the foreign country in which he is placed should be commended and encouraged.[120]

If the minutes leave little doubt that Dumas was highly respected by the Foreign Office, they are similarly unambiguous about the standing of the military attaché

[114] Minute by Villiers, 29 June 1908, on Dumas NA 27/08, 22 June 1908, FO 371/460.
[115] Minute by Crowe, 11 Mar. 1907, on Dumas, NA 7/07, 6 Mar. 1907, *BD* viii. 128.
[116] Minute by Crowe, 6 May 1907, on Dumas NA 22/07, 30 Apr. 1907, FO 371/260.
[117] See Spicer's minute on Dumas NA 71/07, 19 Dec. 1907, and Campbell's minute on Dumas NA 73/07, 27 Dec. 1907, FO 371/260.
[118] Minute by Villiers, 30 Mar. 1908, on Dumas NA 17/08, 27 Mar. 1908, FO 371/447.
[119] Minute by Crowe, 4 Feb. 1907, on Dumas NA 3/07, 29 Jan. 1907, *BD* vi. 13.
[120] Minutes by Langley and Grey on Dumas NA 34/08, 30 July 1908, FO 371/461.

appointed a few months after him, Colonel Trench. Trench sent in dispatches on a wide variety of matters. These included the role of the Navy League in shaping German public opinion, the espionage conducted by German officers in Britain, anti-British speeches in public venues, and the purpose behind German secrecy laws. The records show that his views on all of these issues were treated with respect in the Foreign Office. Thus, a report suggesting that the German Navy League was instrumental in mobilizing German public opinion for war against Britain was greeted with absolute concurrence. 'There can be no doubt', wrote an unidentified official, 'as to the great power wielded by the *Flotten Verein* . . . From all its utterances it is fairly obvious that the driving motive of the *Flotten verein* is hostility to this country, and that it is ever working to educate German public opinion in that direction.'[121] Similar approbation greeted Trench's suggestion that German officers regularly undertook 'reconnaissance' trips to Britain to prepare for a future amphibious assault: 'there is evidently a good deal of work going on which can only be in preparation for a possible invasion. . . . the German General Staff at any rate do not exclude the possibility of an invasion taking place some day'.[122] An equally favourable minute was penned on Trench's report detailing a public meeting of the German Society for Motor Balloon Travel, at which one speaker openly advocated the use of airships to invade Britain. 'It has long been known here how violently Anglophobe Germany really is,' asserted Villiers, 'but there are still people in England who refuse to believe it. It is a pity that this dispatch as it stands cannot be printed in big type in every newspaper in the British Empire.'[123] No less concurrence was shown by Spicer regarding Trench's assertion that new German secrecy measures at manœuvres were designed to hide the gathering of an invasion force:

> As the Germans must be quite confident that their country is unassailable, and know that no country can possibly think of invading Germany, it is obvious that these precautions are being taken to enable them when the right moment arrives to launch their attack without indications of their intent being given.[124]

In short, on a wide range of issues, Trench's reports were received with great interest in the Foreign Office, whose officials accepted many of his judgements without question.

The obvious esteem in which the opinions of Dumas and Trench were held begs some explanation. Beyond the obvious point of their being competent and capable officers, whose professionalism deserved to be taken seriously, what was it that ensured that their views were so favourably received? There are two issues that help clarify this.

First, there is their content. As has been demonstrated in Chapter 4, Dumas and Trench, albeit in different ways, were both convinced that there was a real and

[121] Minute on Trench, MA 77, 20 Dec. 1907, FO 371/260.
[122] Minute by Langley on Trench, MA 76, 15 Dec. 1907, FO 371/263.
[123] Minute by Villiers on Trench, MA 119, 14 Dec. 1908, FO 371/463.
[124] Minute by Spicer on Trench, MA 25/09, 24 June 1909, FO 371/674.

tangible 'German menace' and regularly said so in their reports. Significantly, this conviction that Germany posed a threat to Britain was widely shared by key figures in the Foreign Office. Officials like Hardinge and Crowe, while certainly not crudely anti-German, were nevertheless deeply suspicious of the intentions of the Reich government and were constantly on the look out for proof of German hostility. Consequently, they were highly receptive to submissions from Britain's military and naval specialists overseas that confirmed from a professional martial perspective the conclusions that they had already reached by other means. As Trench and Dumas frequently submitted reports warning of the danger posed by German aspirations, their views were certain to find favour.

Evidence to substantiate this theory comes not only from those reports that elicited praise—which as we have seen were often those reflecting on hostile German intent—but also from the few dispatches by these attachés that were discounted upon receipt at the Foreign Office. Revealingly, these were almost invariably those that painted an optimistic picture of Anglo-German relations. Thus, a report by Trench concerning the Kaiser's friendliness towards him that attempted to suggest that this bonhomie was an 'expression of a desire to "bury all unkindness" between the two nations' was met with scepticism in London. Crowe's minute was to the point:

> I think Colonel Trench draws some very far-reaching conclusions from the gracious manners and words of the Emperor. The Emperor was equally gracious last year to the French officer who attended the German manœuvres about the time when the conflict with France over Morocco was acute. If the conclusion then drawn had been that the Emperor desired to show his friendship to France, it is clear that a serious mistake would have been made.[125]

Crowe was not alone in disputing Trench's assumption that meaning lay behind the Kaiser's occasional shows of favour towards things British. In September 1907, the colonel reported again in this sense: 'I have ventured to mention a number of apparently trivial incidents in the treatment of British officers by the Royal family, as they seem to indicate the existence of a very friendly feeling towards our country.' Spicer pointedly disagreed, attributing such displays instead to the Kaiser's travel plans: 'The "very friendly" feeling noticed by Colonel Trench may be expected to continue till after the imperial visit to England, and need not be regarded as possessing any special significance.'[126] Similar corrections were applied to Dumas's more optimistic pronouncements. When the naval attaché sent in a newspaper report apparently indicative of a burgeoning realization among middle-class Germans that in the interests of peace their fleet should be allowed to grow no further, Crowe penned a long refutation:

> I rather doubt whether the 'body of better instructed commercial Germans' whose views the article is thought by Captain Dumas to represent, is of any material size or importance. My impression . . . is that the necessity of an all-powerful navy has become an article of

[125] Minute by Crowe, 5 June 1906, on Trench MA 3, 1 June 1906, FO 371/78.
[126] Minute by Spicer on Trench MA 64, 5 Sept. 1907, FO 371/262.

faith with the whole mass of the German population, including large numbers of socialists.[127]

Minutes such as these make it clear that Trench and Dumas were valued principally for those of their reports confirming the 'German menace'. By contrast, dispatches that disputed the ideas held in the Foreign Office were much less likely to be accepted. As nearly all of the dispatches sent in by these two attachés fitted into the former category, it is clear why the more dismissive minutes cited above were more the exception than the rule. It also gives us one explanation for why they were both so highly regarded.

Another reason for the evident appreciation shown in the Foreign Office towards the reports of Trench and Dumas was that the opinions of Sir Frank Lascelles, the ambassador in Germany, were no longer in tune with those of the diplomatists in Whitehall. This discrepancy partly reflected a generational shift. Sir Frank had been appointed to Berlin in 1895—a very different era in Anglo-German relations—and held views about the basic harmony of interests between Britain and Germany and about the possibilities of cooperation between the two nations which, while once commonplace, had since ceased to be widely accepted. Hence, his reports frequently embodied assumptions that found no favour in the Foreign Office, whose officials all too often discounted his analyses as a result. This divide between the diplomatists in London and Lascelles in Berlin is a point that has been long established in the historiography and is normally exemplified by some of the more critical minutes that were appended to his reports by the London establishment.[128] But the true nature and extent of the rupture is actually best illustrated from private correspondence. In February 1907, Walford Selby, then serving as acting third secretary at the Berlin embassy, wrote to his parents explaining the fissure that divided the ambassador from his superiors:

> I am much amused here at the slight friction which is going on between our own Foreign Office authorities at home and our ambassador in regard to the policy to be pursued in regard to Germany. The ambassador is Germanophil [*sic*] and is desirous of avoiding reporting home any news which might tend to irritate our authorities at home; he is also even in my opinion, unduly regardful of the susceptibilities of the German Emperor and authorities in general. The Foreign Office on the other hand, having after years of inexplicable fear in regard to Germany, suddenly awoken to the fact that we are overwhelmingly stronger than Germany, that in fact Germany can be squeezed at any time so far as we are concerned, is not desirous of being unnecessarily polite to Germany as we have been in the past, and wishes Germany to feel that we are fully aware of our superiority in the event of any trouble arising.

As Selby's description demonstrates, between Lascelles and London there was an irreconcilable difference of opinion.

[127] Minute by Crowe, 13 Jan. 1908, on Dumas NA 2/08, 9 Jan. 1908, FO 371/457.
[128] G. Monger, *The End of Isolation* (London, 1963), 315.

The upshot of this was that, being unwilling and unable to rely on the ambassador for reports they credited, the officials at the Foreign Office sought other conduits of information on Germany. One such channel was none other than Selby. Motivated by the belief that 'the Foreign Office policy is the right one', he forwarded many of the facts that Lascelles wished to withhold or smooth over:

> I personally send home privately to any friend in the F.O. every hostile cutting or article I can find, knowing that they will be received with open arms. . . . I think that especially in regard to Germany the F.O. ought to know everything that is being said and done here, and it is no good suppressing anything because of its causing irritation.[129]

Selby was not alone is supplying the Foreign Office with information. More well-known as a channel for such material was Sir Fairfax Cartwright, the British Minister in Munich, whose reports found considerable favour in London, largely because they were in tune with Foreign Office thinking on Germany.[130] However, another even more important source were the service attachés. Unlike Selby, who had to correspond privately, or Cartwright, who was based in Munich, the military and naval attachés could report both *officially* and from *Berlin* on all the issues that Lascelles wished to avoid.

The freedom of the attachés to send such reports to London did not always please the ambassador. Illustrative of this is an incident recorded by Dumas concerning a report he had written about the importance of ensuring that, in an Anglo-German conflict, Germany could not block the Baltic: 'Had a talk with Sir Frank over my Baltic letter which personally I consider masterly and convincing and so was disappointed to hear Sir F. say that he should write a covering letter to say let well alone. Of course this is the voice of the old diplomacy but it is none the less disappointing.' Revealingly, the attaché's disappointment was tempered by the realization that the ambassador's disapproval probably did not matter: 'However, my objective is not here but the F.O. and under the present regime I believe that my views will carry more weight even than Sir Frank's.'[131] This was an astute judgement. Unlike the ambassador, the views of the service attachés on the 'German menace' were similar to those of the Foreign Office establishment and, as such, were well received. The result was that the opinion of the attachés was often given precedence over Sir Frank's. This is well illustrated by the case of Trench's report 'Should Warning Precede Hostilities?' The dispatch, which forcibly argued that Germany would attack Britain without prior declaration should the occasion arise, was a powerful statement of the extremity of German anglophobia. This was not a view accepted by the ambassador, who forwarded the report with evident disapproval. 'Colonel Trench's views', he wrote, 'appear to me to be of a most unduly alarmist nature, which I am unable to endorse.' Despite this ringing note of ambassadorial dissent, upon the dispatch's arrival in the

[129] Selby to his Father, 8 Feb. 1907, Bodleian: Mss Eng. C.6615.
[130] Monger, *End of Isolation*, 316.
[131] Dumas Diary, 5 Mar. 1907.

Foreign Office it was the attaché's rather than the ambassador's view that prevailed. A minute by Crowe leaves no doubt on this:

> Colonel Trench expresses the view that if and when Germany considers her naval power equal to the occasion of defeating the British navy, whether by superior force or by concentrated attack on dispersed units, then Germany is likely to act by a surprise attack.
>
> Sir F. Lascelles does not apparently share this view, but it is probably quite correct nevertheless.[132]

Thus, as we can see, Dumas and Trench were highly regarded by the Foreign Office authorities in London. Both these men were capable officers, who deserved the trust of the diplomatic establishment. However, this was undoubtedly not the only explanation for why they received it. One important reason was that they shared the same outlook as the Whitehall diplomats about the existence of a German threat. Hence, their reports reinforced the prevailing belief system in the Foreign Office. The fact that Lascelles did not share these beliefs and refused to report in this sense also contributed to the high regard in which these two attachés were held. In the absence of submissions from the ambassador containing the assumptions that were expected by the diplomats in London, dispatches from his nominal subordinates containing these ideas were doubly welcome. Both Dumas and Trench were major beneficiaries of this situation.

However, this was not an advantage that was to be enjoyed by either Dumas's or Trench's successors. In late 1908 Sir Edward Goschen superseded Lascelles in Berlin. The new ambassador, while in no sense anti-German, was nevertheless much more inclined to be suspicious of the Reich government than was his predecessor and, thus, his appointment heralded an important shift of emphasis in the outlook of the British mission to Germany. Thereafter the views of the Berlin embassy would be considerably closer to those of the Foreign Office, a transformation that ended the rift between the two bodies. Given that these divisions had been one of the principal features propelling the service attachés to prominence, it is appropriate to ask whether the high esteem in which the London diplomatic establishment held these officers diminished as a result.

In the sense that in the aftermath of Lascelles's departure there were to be no more instances of the ambassador's opinion being overridden in favour of the views of his military or naval advisers, it is certainly the case that, with the appointment of Goschen, the influence of the attachés did slip from the heights it had attained. However, it must be recognized that this was a decline from a position of prominence that had emerged under exceptional circumstances. It did not mean that the attachés ceased to be valued or sank into obscurity. Indeed, the remarks penned in response to their dispatches suggest that they continued to be held in high regard. Of course, in one respect, this is not surprising. Most of Dumas's and Trench's successors felt some anxiety about the German threat and, therefore, possessed views

[132] Lascelles to Grey, 1 May 1908, enclosing Trench MA 95, 27 Apr. 1908; and minute by Crowe, 4 May 1908, *BD* vi. 146–9.

that were comparable to those held by the officials in the Foreign Office. Moreover, they continued to supply information concerning the German menace, a fact that made their dispatches of interest to London's diplomats.

Once again, this fact is confirmed by the comments these dispatches received. When Russell sent in a report about the increased rapidity of German mobilization and the dangerous consequences that accrued therefrom, Sir Arthur Nicolson, the permanent under-secretary, wrote privately to Goschen informing him of his interest.[133] Others felt similarly about the attaché's work. Crowe, for instance, was deeply impressed by Russell's report of a German military exercise involving an assault on defended coastal fortifications, an operation that appeared designed to improve the army's preparedness to fight a war with Britain. 'There is no doubt whatever', he noted, 'that the German Government are thoroughly preparing for the war which they expect to wage before long against this country.'[134]

What applied to the new military attaché also applied to Dumas's successors. The minutes clearly show that Heath's dispatches about the acceleration of German shipbuilding in 1908–9 were accepted without hesitation in the Foreign Office. When the attaché submitted the information that 'the contracts for two of the battleships for [next] year's programme have already been placed', Crowe responded: 'Work is being pushed on for which the money has not yet even been voted by the Reichstag.'[135] Equally, when a few weeks later, Heath reported that material had already been collected for at least one, if not more, of these battleships, Spicer attached the greatest importance to the attaché's remarks:

> The statement that the German Govt have already placed the contracts for the battleships of the 1909–10 programme and that material for these ships is already being collected in advance of their being laid down is further evidence of the determination of Germany to keep at least abreast of us in the matter of battleships of the new type.[136]

If Heath's reports on acceleration were treated with respect by the Foreign Office, so were Watson's many submissions on the duplicitous strategy adopted by Admiral Tirpitz to undermine British naval supremacy. We find, for instance, that one batch of dispatches on this topic received the following accolade from Crowe: 'These reports, especially No. 34, are worth reading. They expose in a crushing manner the dishonest manœuvres by which the German Admiralty deliberately misinform the Reichstag and public.'[137] This testimonial was far from unique. Another report on this topic was minuted by Eric Drummond: 'An extremely interesting dispatch, and one which, I believe, sets out the situation very accurately.'[138] In a similar way, Villiers recorded his obvious approval of a dispatch that

[133] Nicolson to Goschen, 16 Apr. 1913, FO 800/365.
[134] Minute by Crowe on Russell, MA 26/12, 14 June 1912, FO 371/1374.
[135] Minute by Crowe on Heath, NA 47/08, 21 Oct. 1908, FO 371/462.
[136] Minute by Spicer, 23 Nov. 1908, on Heath NA 48/08, 16 Nov. 1908, FO 371/463.
[137] Minute by Crowe, 7 May 1912, on Watson NA 33/12, 34/12, and 35/12, 27, 29, and 30 Apr. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[138] Minute by Drummond, 11 Dec. 1911, on Watson NA 35/11, 6 Dec. 1911, FO 371/1125.

attempted to reveal the hostile intent behind one of Tirpitz's speeches: 'Interesting. Captain Watson suggests that Admiral Tirpitz's idea is to tie England down to a definite proportion and prevent her availing herself of the colonial ships—a Machiavellian policy which has not been seen through by the pacifist press over here.'[139]

If Watson's reports of German scheming were accepted willingly by the Foreign Office, it is revealing that the attaché's few optimistic assessments of Anglo-German naval relations were generally rejected by the diplomats. On 26 March 1912, Watson sent in a dispatch suggesting that there was a growing sense in Germany that naval competition with Britain was impossible. The next day, he followed this up with another submission expanding this theme. These reports received a sceptical, even chilly reception in the Foreign Office. 'This may be an indication of the growth of a new spirit', wrote George Russell Clerk on the first dispatch, 'but I should like some more authoritative evidence before building any hopes.'[140] Crowe was even more dismissive. On the second dispatch, he minuted: 'There is, I think, nothing in it. Not worth printing.'[141] Accordingly, as was the case with Trench and Dumas, so it was with Watson: those reports that coincided with the assumptions of the diplomats tended to be welcomed; those that did not were less favourably received.

Thus, the evidence from the diplomatic minutes is clear. Reports by the service attachés were generally cordially received in the Foreign Office, where these officers were perceived as an important source of information. This was especially true in the era when the ambassador was out of favour, but continued even after Sir Frank Lascelles had retired. Hence, we can conclude that the Foreign Office, like the War Office and Admiralty, generally held the service attachés in high esteem.

Therefore, in relation to the second test—the qualitative measure of influence—it is clear that attaché reports were valued by all three of the ministries that routinely received them. Where they exist, dockets generally demonstrate a positive response to the information and analyses the attachés provided. Where there are no dockets, private correspondence and diary entries reveal a similar picture. Admittedly, the evidence also suggests that certain reports were more highly valued than others. The War Office appears to have been least receptive to those submissions that contested its notions about a German invasion of Britain and most receptive to those that confirmed its ideas, such as those detailing the magnitude of German espionage in the United Kingdom. Likewise, the Foreign Office lent the greatest credence to dispatches supportive of its general outlook and was most dismissive of those that challenged its existing preconceptions. However, as Wesley Wark has shown in relation to British intelligence on Nazi Germany, such reactions are not uncommon in government agencies.[142] The important point is that the majority of

[139] Minute by Villiers, 17 Feb. 1913, on Watson NA 7/13, 13 Feb. 1913, FO 371/1649.
[140] Minute by Clerk on Watson, NA 19/12 of 26 Mar. 1912, FO 371/1374.
[141] Minute by Crowe, 2 Apr. 1912, on Watson NA 20/12, 27 Mar. 1912, ibid.
[142] Wesley Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (London, 1985).

attaché reports appear to have found favour in the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office.

POLICY DECISIONS AND SERVICE ATTACHÉ REPORTS

If the first two criteria by which the impact of the service attachés can be measured have demonstrated a reasonable degree of influence on the part of these officers, what of our third test, evidence of government actions taken in the light of their reports? Owing to the paucity of surviving documentation, this is not easy to establish. Many decisions by the military, naval, and foreign policy authorities were reached after considerable discussion, much of which was informal corridor chat. Minutes and position papers were, therefore, often never created. Even where such documents did come into being, they were often not kept for posterity. Nevertheless, despite the problems of evidence, there are areas where it is apparent that the input of the attachés played a part in the decisions reached. Two examples will be provided below.

The first of these is British airship policy. As was revealed in Chapter 3, from the earliest days of successful powered flight, the service attachés provided considerable quantities of information on the progress of German lighter-than-air travel. What was done with this data? Prior to 1908, the answer is probably very little. Thereafter the situation changed. In October of that year, in response to the rapid developments in 'aerial navigation' taking place around the globe, the British government established a technical sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence to examine whether Britain should attempt to create an aeronautical capability of its own. At its first meeting, in January 1909, the question of progress in German airships loomed large. The committee members were informed that available intelligence strongly suggested that Germany was developing its airships for use in a military capacity. In particular, it was stated that German naval officers were being trained in the use of these machines and that accordingly 'there are grounds for supposing that the German Government intends to use the rigid Zeppelin airship for naval purposes'.[143] Partly on this basis the sub-committee recommended in its report that money be found to begin a British airship programme.

Quite where this intelligence on German airships came from was not stated in the report of the sub-committee. However, when, a month later, this report was placed before a full gathering of the CID, further evidence of German activities in the field of aviation was presented in support of the recommendations being made. This time the provenance of the information is known. According to Professor Robin Higham, who was fortunate enough to examine several files at the archives of the Air Historical Branch and Air Ministry prior to their being

[143] 'Report of the Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Aerial Navigation', 28 Jan. 1909, CID 106-B, CAB 16/7.

weeded, this material consisted of dispatches by the British service attachés in Germany:

> By the time the full Committee of Imperial Defence met at the end of February it had before it the urgent reports of the military and naval attachés in Berlin, giving details of the military Parseval non-rigid and its trial flight of eleven and a quarter hours and also mentioning the fact that the German Admiralty and War Office were believed to be setting up a joint airship service for use in the area Heligoland-Wilhelmshaven.[144]

Of course, the presentation of information and its acceptance are not the same thing. Significantly, however, at the end of this meeting, the recommendations of the subcommittee were approved in full and an experimental British airship programme was authorized. Did the data provided by the attachés play any part in this outcome? Professor Higham believes that it did. Posing the question 'who made airship policy', he responded: 'The original impetus appears to have come from the Germans through the naval and military attachés . . .'[145] If this is to be believed, the inception in 1909 of a British airship programme was, in part, the product of attaché reports.

It is a matter of historical record that, after this promising start, the nascent British airship programme quickly began to unravel. In September 1911, the airship *Mayfly* was wrecked in an accident. Following this discouraging and costly disaster, the whole programme was effectively cancelled and all attempts to resuscitate airship experiments ran into a brick wall. What eventually restarted the programme was news of fresh developments on the European continent. Once again, the attachés played a major role in this process.

In December 1911, the military and naval attachés in Berlin became aware that the Germans had made substantial further progress in dirigible airships. This news came as something of a surprise to them. As recently as the previous October these two officers had boldly stated in a joint report that the Germans were 'inclined to ridicule the dirigible and put their trust only in aeroplanes'.[146] Now, a mere two months later, they thought otherwise and, rather shamefaced, sought to correct the erroneous impression they had fostered about the state of German aeronautics. Accordingly, Watson and Russell proceeded forthwith to impress upon their superiors the excellence of German airship technology and the skill with which the Germans were able to handle these complex machines. Thus, in addition to a series of private letters sent by Watson to well-placed individuals in the naval hierarchy,[147] the two officers penned a slew of joint dispatches on aviation matters, which they proceeded to send home with unremitting regularity over the next few months. No less than three full reports were hurried to London in December.

[144] Robin Higham, *The British Rigid Airship, 1908–1931: A Study in Weapon's Policy* (London, 1961), 38. The files seen by Professor Higham appear no longer to exist.

[145] Ibid. 328.

[146] This quotation from the missing dispatch NA 27/11, MA 24/11, of 6 Oct. 1911 comes from the General Staff publication, 'Report on Aeronautical Matters in Foreign Countries for 1911', AIR 1/7/6/77/3.

[147] Watson wrote to Sueter on 9 Dec. 1911, AIR 1/2471. He wrote to Churchill's private secretary, Edward Marsh. Watson to Marsh, 22 and 23 Mar. 1912, CCAC: CHAR 13/8/109.

Another followed in January; two more in March; yet another still in April; and a further one in May. In effect, the two attachés barraged their superiors with warnings about the substantial prowess of German lighter-than-air travel.

The upshot of all this activity was that when the realization finally dawned in the higher reaches of the government that Britain was lagging behind the other powers in regard to airships, a large corpus of material existed that could be utilized to help frame policy. Matters moved quickly. Although the technical sub-committee had concluded on 28 February 1912 that 'the prospects of the successful employment of the rigid type of airship are not sufficiently favourable to justify their costs' and that, therefore, 'naval experiments should be confined to the development of aeroplanes', this conclusion soon came under pressure.[148] In March, Winston Churchill, after reading Watson's accounts from December 1911 of his flights in the latest German dirigibles, became convinced of the need to procure a Zeppelin and a Parseval airship.[149] In April, he informed the full CID that 'dirigible balloons in Germany had made great advances' and that he felt the technical sub-committee should reconvene to look into the topic again.[150] This it did on 14 May and immediately the work of the attachés began to make its mark. Mervyn O'Gorman, superintendent of the balloon factory and one of the army's top aviation experts, arrived bearing one of the attachés' joint reports from December 1911. The dispatch so impressed John Seely, the Secretary for War and the sub-committee's new chairman, that he decided to have it printed and circulated.[151] This was the start of a trend. A week later the War Office sent three further attaché reports to the CID.[152] Another joint report was transmitted on 4 June.[153] This was followed on 17 July by an additional memorandum from the military attaché.[154] Most of these documents were printed and circulated. The result was that when the sub-committee reassembled on 30 July it had before it a whole series of dispatches by the military and naval attachés. These reports had a substantial effect. At the end of its deliberations, the sub-committee decided to recommend both the resumption of British airship work and the purchase of a Parseval airship from Germany. This outcome, which utterly reversed the recommendation made in February, was, according to the sub-committee's report, based upon 'fresh information on the subject of airships [that] had been brought to the notice of the Admiralty and War Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence'. And where did this 'fresh information' originate? The report was clear on this point:

The new facts regarding airship developments which were brought to the notice of the Sub-Committee at the outset of their enquiry were contained in a joint dispatch from the

148 'Report by the Technical Sub-Committee of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on Aerial Navigation', 28 Feb. 1912, CID 139-B, CAB 38/20/1.
149 Memorandum on 'Dirigibles', [possibly 19] Mar. 1912, AIR 1/2306/215/15.
150 Minutes of the 116th Meeting of the CID, 25 Apr. 1912, CID 139-B, CAB 38/20/9.
151 Hankey to Moncrieff, 14 May 1912, CAB 17/20.
152 War Office Letter, 21 May 1912, ibid.
153 Domville to the Assistant Secretary of the War Office, 5 June 1912, ibid.
154 Brade to the Secretary of the CID, 17 July 1912, AIR 1/2311/221/3.

naval and military attachés at Berlin, dated 11th December, 1911 . . . and in miscellaneous reports of more recent date on the Parseval, Zeppelin, Siemens-Schuckert, and Italian airships.[155]

While this was not the only evidence the sub-committee viewed, it was clearly highly significant. Thus, it can confidently be asserted that just as the attachés had been important in influencing the sub-committee's original decision in February 1909 to begin an airship programme, so they were instrumental in promoting its re-endorsement in July 1912.

This was not to be the end of their role. To begin with, pending the ratification of the sub-committee's recommendations by a full meeting of the CID, attaché reports continued to be used to make the case for airship experiments. Thus, we know of at least one occasion in advance of the full meeting of the CID on which Churchill forwarded a joint report on German successes with dirigible airships direct to the Prime Minister.[156] However, if the First Lord felt confident that by such means he could ensure that the sub-committee's recommendations would be accepted, he had not reckoned with the opposition of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Wilson. On 6 December 1912 the 120th meeting of the CID was held and the report of the technical sub-committee placed before it. An observer, Major Grant-Duff, best describes what happened:

We discussed again the question of airships . . . Rather unexpectedly Arthur Wilson launched out into an attack on airships, maintaining that their power of carrying explosives was small and that they could easily be dealt with by the fire of 12″ guns of the fleet! His criticisms much impressed the committee. His first statement I cannot check, but a very brief calculation will show that the second is almost childishly foolish. However, the result despite appeals from Winston and Seely the matter was hung up.[157]

This was not the outcome that had been anticipated and action was quickly taken to deal with the situation. Once again, the attachés were in the vanguard of this process, as it was their reports that were pressed into service to try and overcome Wilson's opposition. Unaware of the wrangling in Britain, on 7 December, Russell and Watson had sent in a dispatch entitled 'Dirigible Airships in Time of War', which argued that in a conflict Germany would possess a large number of airships capable of attacking Britain. Never one to miss a trick, Churchill instructed that the report be sent to Wilson. 'It does not affect his arguments', the First Lord noted, 'but it shows the continued development of the air service in Germany and the reliance placed upon it by the Government and public.'[158]

[155] 'Report and Proceedings of the Technical Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on Aerial Navigation', 30 July 1912, CID 159-B, AIR 1/2311/221/3.

[156] Digest entry for the docket Foreign Office 2 Oct. 1912. This contained a joint report by Watson and Russell (NA 71/12, MA 33/12) dated 24 Sept. 1912. It was sent to Asquith on Churchill's instruction on 10 Oct. 1912, ADM 12/1502, Cut 52.

[157] Grant-Duff Diary, 8 Feb. 1913 (discussing 6 Dec. 1912), CCAC: AGDF 2/2.

[158] Minute by Churchill, 26 Jan. 1913, on Watson NA 84/12, Russell MA 41/12, 7 Dec. 1912, AIR 1/657/17/122/563.

Wilson was singularly unimpressed by this dispatch. Nor was he swayed when extracts from it were sent to him again in a long letter composed by Churchill in February 1913.[159] In the end Wilson's opposition was only silenced by bringing all the technical experts together to counter his views. Among those drafted for this purpose was Admiral Jellicoe, whose conviction about the value of airships had been cemented when, in November 1911, he had been taken by the naval attaché, Watson, on a flight in the Zeppelin *Schwaben*. Another instance of attaché influence.

Thus, between February 1909 and February 1913, the military and naval attachés in Berlin were key players in the debate about British airship policy. They provided much of the information upon which the key decisions were based and contributed reports that were widely circulated as part of the decision-making process. Indeed, their input was vital to both the genesis and the resurrection of the British airship programme. Yet, the influence of attaché reports did not end there. Once the decision to resume experiments with airships had been taken at the 122nd meeting of the CID on 7 February 1913, there was the inevitable question of how much money was to be allocated to this programme. Obviously the War Office and the Admiralty were eager for sizeable sums to be allotted and began lobbying to this end. Memoranda of various kinds were drawn up to show that such expenditure was justified. For example, on 17 June, Seely submitted to the Cabinet a paper drawn up by David Henderson, one of the army's leading aviation experts, which emphasized just how far behind France and Germany Britain had fallen in aeronautical matters, especially airships.[160] Henderson's memorandum was detailed and informative, but it was not enough. More had to be done to make the case and to this end the Admiralty decided to adopt the approach that had worked before of submitting to the Cabinet information obtained from within Germany. To this end, Churchill decided to print a report by one of the attachés. On 12 June 1913, Russell had written that in the coming year the Germans proposed spending the staggering sum of three million pounds on aeronautics. As a result, the country's already sizeable and proficient airship fleet seemed 'likely to make very marked advances during the current year'. This was a powerful message and accordingly, after consultation between Churchill and Seely, this dispatch was circulated to the Cabinet on 14 July.[161] As such, it is a good example of the continuing influence of the service attachés on the airship policy debate.

Another area illustrative of the role of attachés in the decision-making process is the question of British naval policy in the context of the alleged 'German acceleration' of 1908–9. As ever, gaps in the documentary evidence make ascertaining the attachés' influence difficult. The principal problem is the state of the

[159] 'Letter from Mr Churchill to Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson', 3 Feb. 1913, CID 172-B, AIR 1/2311/221/26.

[160] Henderson, 'Military Aeronautics', 2 June 1913, Nuffield College: Mottistone papers, box 15.

[161] Russell, MA 23/13, 12 June 1913, ADM 116/1278.

Admiralty archives. On 19 August 1938, the main naval attaché reports on German shipbuilding and Anglo-German relations in the years 1906 to 1911 were taken out of the regular sequence of files and bound together in two volumes, entitled Case 4877.[162] Unfortunately, the case has been pulped. With its destruction, the majority of naval attaché reports on this subject, and, more importantly still, their precious dockets, have been lost forever. Yet, despite the formidable gaps in the archival records, there are still clues as to the origins and dynamic of the acceleration scare and the role that the attachés played in it.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, although there is evidence that the British naval authorities first heard rumours of secret German building in early August 1908, the acceleration question only really gained momentum in Whitehall with the confirmation of this fact in mid-October. The cause of all the excitement was a report by the consul in Danzig, confirmed by a letter from Heath, that advanced preparations were being undertaken in respect of two battleships of the 1909–10 programme. The report caused consternation in the NID, where Slade noted that this procedure could have a huge impact on the naval balance:

> Six months ahead of the financial year, about eight months before the money is voted and about fourteen months before British ships of the corresponding year are allotted. If this practice is continued, there is no reason why Germany should not complete her ships in little more than two years from April of the Programme Year.[163]

The prospect of Germany being able to complete major armoured vessels in so short a timeframe was self-evidently significant and, hence, further news on the matter was eagerly awaited from the naval attaché. When it arrived it was treated with the utmost seriousness. The significance allotted to Heath's submissions is apparent from the entries in the Admiralty digest. As will be recalled, two copies of every naval attaché report were sent to London: the original, which was forwarded though the Foreign Office, and an advanced copy sent direct to the DNI by the attaché himself. The usual procedure was for the staff of the NID to make what use they wished of the advanced copy; the Sea Lords and higher officials were not generally troubled with the report until the original version was formally sent to them by the Foreign Office. In exceptional cases, however, where, for example, a particularly rapid response was required, the advanced copy might be put before the relevant members of the board. The digest records only six instances when this happened to reports from Berlin. Three of these relate to the acceleration scare.

On 20 October Heath wrote a dispatch about his visit to the dockyards at Wilhelmshaven and Bremen. Among the information he relayed was news that the prior preparation of materials meant that one of the battleships being built at the Imperial Dockyard could be completed very quickly. This news was sent

[162] Information about Case 4877 comes from the Admiralty digest, ADM 12/1442, Cut 52. Information about the date of its creation comes from two transfer vouchers in ADM 1/7963.

[163] Minute by Slade, 21 Oct. 1908, on the (missing) docket containing the report of Brookfield at Danzig and the letter from Heath. Quoted in Marder, *FDSF* i. 154.

straight to the board. Similar treatment was accorded to a report from 16 November containing information supplied to Heath by the American naval attaché that material for a new dreadnought was being collected ahead of schedule by the Schichau yard at Danzig. Once again, the advance copy was sent upward for consideration without waiting for the original.[164] The same urgency was shown in relation to a dispatch in which Heath outlined a conversation with Admiral Tirpitz, in which the latter denied any truth behind the acceleration claims and expressed his deep irritation at how his actions were being interpreted. As before, it was decided not to wait for the arrival of the original report from the Foreign Office and the advanced copy was placed before the higher Admiralty officials.[165]

The unusual haste with which Heath's reports on matters connected with the German acceleration were put before the senior Admiralty staff is a strong sign of the significance attached to this issue. It also illustrates the important part that Heath played in the early stages of the crisis as a purveyor of crucial information. Other evidence supports this interpretation of the attaché's role. We know, for instance, that Heath returned to London on at least two occasions in late 1908 to report personally on the developments in Germany. On 5 November, Slade recorded in his diary that Heath came to see him at the NID. 'He had a lot to say about German preparations', recorded the DNI in a frustratingly laconic entry.[166] He reported again at the Admiralty on 22 December, this time to see McKenna and Fisher.[167] Sadly, on this occasion, there is no record of the conversation. However, given that in the subsequent fortnight, the First Lord was to write a series of letters to Cabinet colleagues warning of the dangers of a German acceleration, it can safely be assumed that this was one of the matters they discussed.[168]

The fact that Heath's reports were considered important enough to be rushed in front of the board and that Heath himself also had several opportunities to present his views personally, suggests that his views carried some weight in the Admiralty. Sadly, there is a real want of information with which to prove this. In so far as it exists, the evidence is strongest with respect to Slade.

There are solid reasons for expecting that Slade would value Heath's reports. For one thing, Heath was Slade's choice as naval attaché. Indeed, the DNI had to persuade a reluctant Fisher to condone his appointment.[169] It is also the case that the two officers shared a similar outlook on German affairs. Heath, as we have seen in the last chapter, feared that Germany aimed to mount a sustained (if secret)

[164] Digest entries for Heath NA 46/08, 20 Oct. 1908, and NA 48/08, 16 Nov. 1908, The Record Office titles for these files are Cap H109, 20 Oct. 1908, and Cap H112, 16 Nov. 1908, ADM 12/1454, Cut 52.

[165] Digest entry for Heath NA 10/09, 30 Mar. 1909, The Record Office title for this docket is Foreign Office 3 Apr. 1909, ADM 12/1466, Cut 52.

[166] Slade Diary, 5 Nov. 1908, NMM: MRF/39/3.

[167] Fisher to McKenna, 22 Dec. 1908, CCAC: MCKN 3/4.

[168] S. McKenna, R*eginald McKenna* (London, 1948), 70–9.

[169] Slade Diary, 28 May 1908, NMM: MRF/39/3.

challenge to British maritime supremacy. We know from both his official and private papers that Slade was also deeply suspicious of Germany. In September 1908, for example, he received a copy of Trench's report about the extreme anglophobia of the German public. He was highly impressed by the colonel's appraisal, fearing, like the military attaché, that these hostile sentiments could produce war. The situation, he recorded in the minutes, was 'most serious' and could lead to 'a possible irrational attempt [by the Germans] to cut the Gordian Knot with the sword'. Britain, he concluded, needed to be vigilant in shipbuilding lest 'a diminution of will to maintain our superiority would only encourage Germany to take some step which both powers would ultimately bitterly regret'.[170] He made similar observations the same day in his diary:

> Matters are getting serious on the continent generally, as there is a general feeling of unrest and distrust of what Germany may do. I do not think she will attack us directly, although she might do anything to get herself out of the isolation she is in at present. What we have to do if we want to keep the peace in Europe is to arm as fast as we can. We must not reduce our preparations by a single ship or a single man and then we may knock some sense in German heads.[171]

This diary entry was, of course, a private document, but Slade was not shy of embodying such sentiments in official memoranda. One paper from late 1908 described the 'competition in armaments which is being forced on us by Germany' as 'only another form of war'. In vividly Social Darwinist language he proceeded to explain that 'if we relax our efforts to keep up in the race we immediately become the prey'.[172] Given these assumptions about German intentions and the need to respond to them with a vigorous naval building programme, it was always likely that Slade would be receptive to Heath's warnings about accelerated German shipbuilding and the need to take action to counter it. His diary confirms this. Recording Heath's interview with him on 5 November, Slade remarked that the attaché 'had a lot to say about German preparations, which entirely coincide with my views'.[173] Given this conformity of opinion, it is little wonder that the DNI should have rushed the advanced copies of the attaché's reports before the board.

However, alongside these indications of Heath's influence, it must be acknowledged that he was not the only avenue of information available to the Admiralty on the acceleration issue. Material also came in from a variety of other sources, especially in regard to the expansion of Germany's capacity to built heavy gun mountings and armour plate, the two essential components of any major warship. One of these was the British military attaché in Constantinople, Colonel Conyers Surtees. In December 1908, this officer had a long discussion with the local representative

[170] Minute by Slade, 9 Sept. 1908, on Trench MA 107, 17 Aug. 1908. Quoted in Marder, *FDSF* i. 149.

[171] Slade Diary, 9 Sept. 1908, NMM: MRF/39/3.

[172] Slade, 'The Estimated Progress of Great Britain, France, Germany, and United States in Shipbuilding According to the Latest Information', 1908, NMM: MRF/39/3.

[173] Slade Diary, 5 Nov. 1908, ibid.

of the German armaments firm of Erhardt, a conversation which allowed the latter to vent his frustration with the favouritism shown by the German government to Erhardt's main rival, Krupp. In the course of this rant, the Erhardt representative let slip some interesting information. To begin with, he informed the attaché that Krupp had recently purchased 'enormous quantities of heavy machinery . . . for . . . manufacturing big guns and big naval mountings'. Then, he noted that this equipment gave the company a construction capacity 'far in excess of any requirements for the existing naval programme of Germany'. Finally, he offered an explanation for why this had been done, stating that the investment was made so that Germany could 'secretly prepare all the mountings, ships' plates, ammunition, &c., at Krupp's, and then to suddenly commence the creation of a number of battleships sufficient to, at least, equal the naval strength of England'.[174] This was startling news. However, it was news that was emerging from several separate sources. Some of this information was confirmed by British industry. For example, the Naval Intelligence Department knew as early as January 1908 that Krupp had ordered a 4,000 ton forging press from Davy Brothers of Sheffield.[175] Then, in April 1909 Mr H. A. D. Acland, who had visited the plant at Essen, confirmed that the press had been erected, much to the interest of the assistant DNI.[176] Other sources corroborated this information about the enlargement of Krupp's industrial capacity. In early 1909, Admiral Garcia and Captain Fliess, members of an Argentine government commission sent to Europe to visit shipbuilding facilities, inspected the Krupp Works at Essen. Upon reaching Britain, they shared their impressions with the Admiralty. Among the points they imparted was the knowledge that approximately one hundred large naval guns—a staggering figure—were 'nearing completion' at the works at Essen.[177] Finally, an additional conduit of data was Sir Trevor Dawson, managing director of Vickers. His firm regularly provided the Admiralty with industrial information obtained from their contacts in the Reich. In the context of the acceleration scare this included news of the laying down of vessels and, also, of unusually large German purchases of key raw materials, especially nickel, a metal that was 'an essential ingredient in the manufacture of armour and guns'.[178] From this, it was possible to deduce that German firms intended to increase their output of these products. The logical surmise was that this was being done to build more warships with great rapidity.[179]

Thus, as we can see, the Admiralty obtained data on the productive capacity of German naval armaments firms from a range of different people. Yet, for all these many sources of information, the one most commonly referred to in the literature is H. H. Mulliner, the manager of the Coventry Ordnance works. Mulliner, who

[174] Surtees, MA Constantinople 66/08, 18 Dec. 1908, FO 371/561.
[175] Minute by Slade, 15 July 1908, on file G10073/1908, ADM 116/3340.
[176] Digest entry for docket PRO A51, 19 Apr. 1909, ADM 12/1466, Cut 52.
[177] Fisher to McKenna, 2 Mar. 1909, CCAC: FISR 1/7.
[178] McKenna, 'Battleship Building Programmes of Great Britain, Germany, France, United States, Italy and Austria (June 1909)', 14 July 1909, CAB 37/100/97.
[179] Note by Baddeley [of a conversation with Bacon], 3 July 1935, ADM 116/3340.

regularly travelled to Germany on business and had numerous contacts in the armaments industry, first approached the government with news of Krupp's expanding capacity for heavy ordnance production in May 1906. He supplemented this information at various times thereafter and also had face-to-face meetings with several key decision-makers. On 9 July 1908 he met with Reginald Bacon, the director of naval ordnance, on 19 February 1909 with the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, and on 24 February 1909 with Sir Charles Ottley, the secretary to the CID.[180] On all those occasions, he endeavoured to impress upon his listeners that Germany in general and Krupp in particular were increasing substantially their capacity to turn out heavy ordnance and armour plate.

Yet, despite this plethora of sources, it appears that few of these were relied upon by the Admiralty. Certainly, no great importance was attached to Mulliner. One sign of this is a minute written by the DNI in July 1908. Commenting on Bacon's meeting with Mulliner a few days previously, Slade noted that the information the latter supplied was not especially significant. It merely 'confirms', he wrote, 'the reports that we have been receiving from time to time' about German shipbuilding. In particular, his news about the increased capacity of Krupp's was, in its essentials, already known because of two visits to Essen by Dumas.[181] In short, the naval attaché had already briefed the naval authorities on this point.

The idea propounded in Slade's minute that much of the data upon which the Admiralty relied when formulating a response to German shipbuilding in 1908–9 came from the attachés is also confirmed by the private correspondence of Admiralty officials from the mid-1930s. They were considering the acceleration scare twenty-five years after the event because a Royal Commission had been created to look into the private manufacture of armaments. One of the causes célèbres that this body investigated was the idea that armaments firms—especially Mulliner's—had hoodwinked the government into authorizing a big naval building programme in 1909 by supplying false information about German intentions. This variation on the 'merchants of death' theory was utterly denied by the naval authorities. An indignant Sir Oswyn Murray wrote: 'The information which the Admiralty obtained indicating that the Germans had actually collected materials for and laid down ships in advance of their programme did not come from Mulliner or the armaments firms, but from quite other sources.'[182] Quite who these other sources were, Murray did not say, but his former colleague, Sir Vincent Baddeley, did: 'My recollection is that we had full information about Krupp from the Naval Attaché and from Trevor Dawson and possibly others.'[183]

In endeavouring to understand the origins and early stages of the acceleration scare from the British perspective, it is clear that the role played by the naval

[180] For records of the 9 July meeting see ADM 116/3340. Details of the 19 Feb. meeting are in the Asquith papers, Bodleian: Asquith MS 21. For the 24 Feb. meeting see Ottley to McKenna, 25 Feb. 1909, CCAC: MCKN 3/14.

[181] Minute by Slade, 15 July 1908, on file G10073/1908, ADM 116/3340.

[182] Murray to Hankey, 8 May 1936, ibid.

[183] Baddeley to Barnes, 12 July 1935, ibid.

attachés needs to be given some prominence. While a mass of information was received by the Admiralty from a variety of sources, the naval attachés were among the most constant and important. Dumas kept Slade well informed about the development of the Krupp Works; Heath did the same in respect of the early collection of materials for the 1909 battleships. In the former instance, we know that this data was accorded more weight than that provided by the notorious but less credible Mulliner, which was at best seen as corroborative in the NID. In the latter instance, we know that Heath's views coincided with Slade's and that, possibly for this reason, possibly because of the urgency of his news, the DNI placed the advance copies of the attaché's first reports of a German acceleration straight before the board. We also know that Heath returned to London to report in person at the Admiralty in November and December 1908 and that the Admiralty's campaign to respond to the new German threat by increasing the British building programme began in earnest shortly thereafter. The inference to be drawn is that Heath's reports played a major part in inducing this development. Admittedly, this is to some extent circumstantial, but other evidence substantiates this notion of a connection between the attaché's warnings and Admiralty action. In particular, there is correspondence in Grey's private papers that links Heath's information with the Admiralty's earliest moves to ascertain the true nature of German shipbuilding plans. On 3 November 1908, the count de Salis, first secretary at the embassy in Berlin, wrote to the Foreign Office to report the rumour that additional German battleships had been laid down and that Heath believed this rumour to have some foundation. Enclosed with de Salis's letter was a memorandum, 'Battleships Building or Projected', in which the naval attaché wrote: 'It is stated on good authority that the contracts for these ships have already been awarded: two to Vulkan Works . . . one to Schichau at Danzig.'[184] The response to this submission came on 18 November: 'First Lord of the Admiralty is anxious that everything should be done to verify report mentioned by Count de Salis.'[185] This is the first recorded statement of this type and shows clearly how Heath's information set the ball rolling.

Finally, it should be noted that, as the crisis progressed, Heath continued to play a role. It is clear, for example, from the correspondence of the opponents of a big British naval building programme that the Admiralty's case for an increase in the estimates rested in large measure on the information provided by the naval attaché. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, for one, complained bitterly about the use of what he considered this tainted source. 'The Admiralty', he acknowledged in a letter to his main political ally, Winston Churchill, 'have had very serious news from their naval attaché in Germany' and aimed to use this to 'lay down 8 Dreadnoughts next year'. 'Could we not secure *reliable* information', he wondered.[186] Churchill

[184] De Salis to Tyrell, 3 Nov. 1908, FO 800/61. [185] Grey to Goschen, 18 Nov. 1908, ibid.
[186] Lloyd George to Churchill, 3 Jan. 1909, R. S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: Companion*, ii2 (London, 1969), 938.

concurred. As he informed the Prime Minister, he regarded the Admiralty's case for extra battleships as nothing more than a 'response to the gossip of naval attachés and the whisper of Krupp's backyard'.[187] He, too, placed little faith in it. While this attitude was to be expected, the fact remains that the grumbles of Churchill and Lloyd George show the basis on which the Admiralty made its claims and thereby further cement the point that the naval attaché was instrumental in this crisis.

The two examples cited above show that in different ways the service attachés could exert an influence over British government policies. In the case of British airship development, it is apparent that the attachés provided much of the information that drove the decision-making process. Not only were their reports circulated to the CID, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, as well as to recalcitrant opponents of lighter-than-air flight such as Arthur Wilson, but they appear to have been vital evidence at key moments in the policy debate. Equally, Dumas, through his reports on the expansion of Krupp's Works, and Heath, by his dispatches on the early allocation of battleship contracts and the advanced gathering of materials, were essential players in the genesis of the 1909 acceleration scare. As will be recalled, Heath's reports were first received by Slade in the NID, whose opinion on German affairs was confirmed by them. The DNI then rushed them before the Board of Admiralty. Subsequently, the information was used by the Admiralty in its campaign to increase the British naval building programme. Thus, in the acceleration crisis, as in the issue of British airship policy, a process of attaché reports producing an effect on government can be delineated. In relation to our third test of attaché influence—impact on government—it can, therefore, be concluded that the service attachés made their mark.

In conclusion, it can confidently be asserted that the British service attachés in Berlin were respected purveyors of information, whose views and reports were both widely circulated and highly regarded. Also, in so far as the surviving documentary evidence permits, it can be stated that they exerted some influence over certain policy debates and government decisions. Of course, it would be wrong to overstate their significance or to suggest that they were more than a small component in a big governmental machine, but at the same time it is abundantly clear that they were anything but *quantités negligeables*. While few would have gone as far as Gerald Spicer, who told Dumas that 'the naval attaché was as important in Berlin as the ambassador', it is evident that they had an important role to play.[188]

[187] Churchill to Asquith, 3 Feb. 1909, ibid. 942.

[188] Dumas Diary, 10 Aug. 1908.

Conclusion

The question of why Britain went to war in 1914 remains a controversial one. True, few would argue today that slogans such as 'plucky Belgium' or the 'rights of small nations' were anything other than camouflage for a step motivated by wider political concerns. However, there is still an active debate about what those political concerns actually were. Did Britain seek to prevent a rampant Germany from acquiring domination of the continent or did an inept Foreign Secretary overcommit Britain to France and Russia as part of a misguided policy of appeasing the two powers most able to threaten the British colonial empire? Those that take the latter view tend to regard the decision for war in 1914 as a mistaken one. In the case of Niall Ferguson, the argument has even been made that German domination of the continent would not have been such a bad thing for Britain anyway.[1] And that is assuming that this threat actually existed at all. As far as Ferguson is concerned, it didn't. In his view, fear of German supremacy—'the Napoleon neurosis' he termed it—was an illusion that was not founded upon any actual information in the possession of the British government, but rather reflected the biases and preconceptions of the British diplomatic establishment. As he amplifies: 'it is a striking fact that the alarmist claims of a German Napoleonic design were at odds with much of the intelligence which was actually being received from Germany'. Accordingly, he concludes that the oft-mentioned 'German design for Napoleonic power' was at best an exaggeration, at worst fabricated.[2] He is not alone in this stance. John Charmley has argued similarly, commenting on 'British delusions that Germany was threatening the balance of power in Europe'.[3] Likewise, Keith Wilson has characterized the popular equation of Wilhelmine Germany with Napoleonic France as 'inverted, contorted and perverted' and the fear of German dominance of the continent as pure 'invention'. The thesis of a German threat, he maintains, was arrived at 'in the absence, or directly contrary to, the evidence'.[4]

The material presented in this book suggests otherwise. The British service attachés in Berlin were by no means uniform in their opinions. Yet, the vast majority—indeed, after 1906, a unanimity—agreed on one point: they believed

[1] Niall Ferguson, 'The Kaiser's European Union: What if Britain had Stood Aside in August 1914?', in idem (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London, 1997).

[2] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), 75.

[3] John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain and the Balance of Power 1874–1914* (London, 1999), 358.

[4] Keith M. Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy, 1904–1914* (Cambridge, 1985), 116. There are, of course, critics of this view. See Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia 1894–1917* (Oxford, 1995).

that the German armed forces were well equipped and professional organizations that were being built up not for self-defence, but with a view to being used in anger. And this aggressive deployment was not seen as a hypothetical danger at some distant date, but was expected within a finite and discernible period of time. Attaché after attaché, both naval and military, lined up to give the years from 1913 to 1915 as the most likely timeframe for German offensive action. So much for there being no warnings to the British government of a German menace.

Of course, if nobody had been reading these reports, then their existence could hardly be said to have mattered, but, as we have seen, they were widely distributed throughout government and the armed forces. Indeed, the attachés seem to have had a powerful voice. This started at the level of the embassy, where they were both popular and respected members of the community. Walford Selby, third secretary in Berlin, was perhaps more enthusiastic than most when he noted of Dumas that he 'is one of the cleverest and most interesting men I have ever met. He is always full of information in regard to Germany and her fleet and I never tire of listening to his opinions on the subject.'[5] However, judging by the glowing annual appraisals written by the ambassadors, Selby was not alone among embassy staff in his admiration for the attachés and their views. Nor was it only diplomats in Berlin who felt this way. Other members of the Foreign Service trusted the attachés and spread their message about the German threat. For instance, in June 1908, Cecil Spring Rice wrote to the newspaper proprietor Leo Maxse to tell him that the military and naval attachés both believed, albeit in different ways, that the Reich posed a danger to British security.[6] And these sorts of comments emanated from higher up still. A few months after Spring Rice's letter, the Foreign Secretary passed a dispatch by Trench concerning the widespread German 'detestation of England' to the Prime Minister. Owing to Britain's naval supremacy, Asquith was not unduly worried. 'German opinion may be "mobilised" ', he told Grey, 'but they know quite well that, so far as we are the objective, they cannot for a long time to come get within striking distance.' However, it was not so much Germany's present capabilities as future intentions that were at issue. Asquith recognized this and thus took the attaché's message seriously. As he went on to observe, 'these reports do not encourage me to be sanguine as to an approaching *détente*'.[7] The fact that within six months the British and German governments were arguing about the accelerated building of German dreadnoughts, a controversy centred on attaché reports, would tend to sustain Asquith's conclusion.

As all of these examples demonstrate, there can be no doubt that the attachés' opinions had both an audience and an impact. Accordingly, whatever else may be said, if there were British Cabinet ministers, Foreign Office officials, and military and naval leaders who harboured suspicions of German aggressive intent, it was certainly not in opposition to the views being sent to them. On the contrary, the

[5] Selby to his mother, 11 Mar. 1907, Bodleian: Mss. Eng. C.6615.
[6] Spring Rice to Maxse, 3 June 1908, West Sussex Record Office: L. J. Maxse papers, 458.
[7] Asquith to Grey, 28 Aug. 1908, FO 800/100.

government's military and naval advisers on the spot were constantly warning of the German menace and the government, or at least the relevant ministers, were receiving the message. In so far as the surviving record allows us to judge the matter, it appears that they were also listening.

Looking back on British diplomacy from the vantagepoint of 1951, Sir Walford Selby, by then retired after a distinguished career, noted how well coordinated British foreign and defence policies had been before the First World War. The nation's 'defence preparations', he revealed, 'moved punctually and exactly in step with the requirements of the developing situation in Europe'. Selby attributed this to the tireless work of able ministers such as Haldane, McKenna, Churchill, and Grey, whose diligence and foresight had ensured the 'intimate interconnection . . . between our foreign policy and defence preparations'.[8] It is not the purpose of this book to denigrate the work of these great statesmen, rather to raise awareness of the role of some lesser known figures who worked below them out of the political limelight. The British military and naval attachés in Berlin toiled at the very interface of defence and diplomacy that Selby describes. If these two attributes of Britain's policy were as well connected as Selby maintains, then the information, warnings, and data they provided doubtless played a part. Certainly, in the light of what they wrote and the frequency with which they expounded their views, it cannot be said that British political leaders were unaware either of the military and naval capabilities of the German Empire or of the possibility, even likelihood, that these capabilities would be used deliberately in anger. Accordingly, the British decision for war in 1914, if made on an assessment of the German threat, was not based on the absence of intelligence information suggesting this, nor in the face of material that suggested the opposite. There was no 'false prospectus', to coin a phrase applied to the intelligence misappraisals relating to Iraqi WMDs in 2003, but real reports of a genuine danger. That those ministers who had been reading these reports for many years chose to act in August 1914 thus makes considerable sense.

[8] Walford Selby, *Diplomatic Twilight 1930–1940* (London, 1953), 180–1.

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Index