

# **ИСТОРИОГРАФИЯ, ИСТОЧНИКОВЕДЕНИЕ, МЕТОДЫ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ**

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## **БАЛТИЙСКАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИОННАЯ СЕТЬ: ВОЕННЫЕ РАПОРТЫ ОТ ФРАНЦУЗСКИХ ВМФ В СКАНДИНАВИИ И ИХ ВЛИЯНИЕ (1914–21 И 1939–43)**

Французские военно-морские атташе в Скандинавии сыграли значительную роль в обеих мировых войнах, на разных уровнях. Во время Первой мировой войны (1914-18) и первой военной операции Франции во время Второй мировой войны (1939-40) их роль была как политической, так и оперативной, они сообщали о нарушении Скандинавией нейтралитета, передвижениях кораблей, экономической войне; с помощью менее заметных помощников военно-морских атташе они также действовали на тайном уровне, нарушение нейтралитета Скандинавии, создание агентурных сетей, соблазнение немецких дезертиров, пресечение немецких диверсий против судоходства союзников в 1917-18 годах, планирование и провал трех военных акций в 1940 году. После поражения Франции в июне 1940 года военно-морские представители Виши в Швеции стали важными посредниками, поддерживая связь с Великобританией, бывшим союзником, формируя геополитические взгляды руководства Виши, сообщая уже в 1942 году о преследованиях евреев и неизбежности поражения стран Оси.

*Ключевые слова:* французский военно-морской флот; военно-морские атташе; Дания, Швеция, Норвегия, Финляндия; Первая мировая война; Вторая мировая война; режим ВИШИ; Маннергейм.

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## **A BALTIC INFORMATION NETWORK: PERCEPTIONS AND WAR REPORTS FROM FRENCH NAVAL ATTACHÉS IN SCANDINAVIA AND THEIR IMPACT (1914-21 AND 1939-43)**

French naval attachés in Scandinavia played a significant role in both World's Wars, at different levels. During the First World War (1914-18) and France's first belligerency during the

Second World War (1939-40), their role was both political and operational, reporting on Scandinavian breached neutralities, ships movements, economic warfare; with the help of less visible assistant naval attachés, they also acted at the clandestine level, breaching Scandinavian neutralities, establishing networks of agents, seducing German deserters, foiling German sabotage against Allied shipping in 1917-18, while planning and failing to conduct three military actions in 1940. Following France's defeat in June 1940, the Vichy Naval representatives in Sweden became important intermediaries, maintaining communications with Britain, the former Ally, shaping Vichy's leadership geopolitical views, reporting as early as 1942 on Jewish persecutions and the inevitability of the Axis defeat.

*Keywords:* French navy; naval attachés; Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland; World War One; World War Two; Vichy regime; Mannerheim.

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In the aftermath of the 1870 disaster, the French Marine Ministry created an intelligence bureau (1<sup>st</sup> Section renamed 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau in 1922) tasked to manage a network of naval attachés following the posting of the first naval attaché in London in 1856. This system was extended to nineteen countries in 1913 including six in the Baltic starting in 1886 and nine in 1939<sup>1</sup>. While at first the network consisted of just three attachés in Russia, Denmark and Germany, the second serving as nonresident in Sweden and Norway, the network underwent drastic changes during the two World Wars and the interwar period with the creation of assistant naval attachés tasked to conduct illegal activities against France's main adversary, Germany, its allies, and the host country, when it partnered with Germany.

This presentation will focus on the attaché role in the Scandinavian countries during the First and Second World Wars. It is based specifically on the studies conducted after the Great War by the French Naval War College and on the attaché reports from Sweden and Finland during the 1939-1943 period.

The constitution of an attaché network in the Baltic area started in 1886 in St-Petersburg, Russia followed by Copenhagen, Denmark (1888), with non-residence in Sweden and Norway, followed by Berlin, Germany in 1895<sup>2</sup>.

During the Great War the naval attaché in Denmark extended its network to Stockholm, Sweden and Kristiana, Norway with assistant naval attachés managing secret services ("Service de Renseignements", SR, for Intelligence services). In the interwar period, the Naval attaché in newly created Poland was also nonresident in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden while the Navalattaché in Germany was

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<sup>1</sup> *Salkin-Laparra G.* Marins et diplomates, les attachés navals, 1860-1914. Vincennes, 1990; *Sheldon-Duplaix A.* Le renseignement naval français des années 1850 à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale // *Revue Historique des Armées.* 4/2001. P. 47-64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

nonresident in Denmark and Norway<sup>3</sup>. In 1939 and before the German invasion, the latter moved to Denmark while Naval attachés were posted in Sweden, Finland, Norway, with assistants to handle secret services. After the June 1940 defeat, this network was reduced to a Naval attaché in Sweden, nonresident in Finland where he had an assistant.

*The constitution of an attaché network in the Baltic area*

YEARS	COUNTRY	
	Resident Naval attaché	Nonresident Naval attaché and/or Assistant Naval attaché
1886-1917	Russia	
1888-1926	Denmark	Sweden, Norway
1895-1914	Germany	
1926-1939	Poland	Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden
1926-1939	Germany	Denmark, Norway
1939	Denmark	
1939	Norway	
1939	Finland	
1939	Sweden	
1940	Sweden	Finland

The naval necessity to create secret intelligence services in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway to conduct economic Warfare and monitor Germany from Scandinavian outposts.

With the outbreak of War on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1914, Germany and Austro-Hungary virtually ceased all maritime traffic under their flag, making vain all efforts to intercept their vessels. The situation therefore required closer cooperation between the Allies to determine the registered consignees that could send goods to the enemy<sup>4</sup>. Reports from French diplomatic representations in neutral Scandinavia became of the utmost importance.

The French Navy regarded visits on the high seas as foolish if there was no supporting intelligence. Under the 1856's Declaration of Paris, enemy goods, except contraband of war could not be seized on neutral ships and neutral goods, except

<sup>3</sup> *Tariel C. L.* (lieutenant de vaisseau). *Les missions navales dans les pays scandinaves*, Ecole de guerre navale, 1930-31.

<sup>4</sup> *Michaud M.* *Guerre économique de 1914 au 1er mars 1915 // Ecole de guerre navale. 1925. 3.*

contraband of war, could not be seized on enemy ships. The French Navy needed intelligence to act. At first, rubber, major metals, leather, oil, glycerin, and cotton were not on the list of contraband even though they were being used by the defense industry. To France's discontentment, Britain did not want to prejudice its markets (cotton) and the United States. Washington protected the interests of its companies, such as Standard Oil, that included those of its German subsidiary Deutsche Petroleum Gesellschaft Hamburg. France aligned reluctantly<sup>5</sup>.

On October 25th, 1914, Admiral Moreau in charge of contraband met with the UK first Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, and Edward Grey, the secretary of State for foreign affairs, for the first economic conference of the War. The list of contraband grew from twelve to twenty-six items, now including sulphuric acid, rubber, copper, oil and major metals and minerals. It was now up to the owner to prove that the destination was innocent. However, cotton remained out of the list following British and American opposition. It was important to control that information in neutral countries around the Baltic, namely Denmark, Norway, Sweden<sup>6</sup>.

In Paris, the French Navy Intelligence bureau 's inability to provide intelligence on German submarines during the first two years of the Great War on the one hand and the demands of the economic blockade against the Central Empires on the other hand, prompted the creation in 1915-16 of a clandestine branch (SR) running secret agents. Bordering Germany, the Baltic theater became a privileged area for the deployment of those agents. Secret naval intelligence became of paramount importance to the Navy to make up for a critical lack of information.

On August 6, 1914, Captain Gontran de Faramond de La Fajole the naval attaché in Berlin, together with the French diplomatic staff were taken to the Danish border by German authorities. Faramond remained in Denmark where Paris decides to accredit him as naval attaché. From November 1916, he was assisted in Copenhagen by Auxiliary Commissioner Fournier, replaced in March 1917 by interpreter Officer 3rd Class Le Prevost. In June 1918, the latter was appointed assistant naval attaché, to run clandestine activities unbecoming to Faramond. A wireless operator and a sailor also supported the naval attaché office. Another precious collaborator since the beginning of 1917, was Blanche, the French consul in Esbjerg, near the German border. On August 7, 1916, the Navy Department sent its first instructions to Captain de Faramond and his deputies, Lieutenants Talpomba and Guibaud, who took up their postings in Stockholm and Kristiania. These guidelines focused on new constructions for the German Navy (especially

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<sup>5</sup> *Tariel C. L.* (lieutenant de vaisseau) *Les missions navales...* P. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Michaud M.* *Guerre économique de 1914 ...* P. 4-10

submarines), order of battle and activities, as well as economic intelligence on smuggling and blockade<sup>7</sup>.

De Faramond immediately established contact with the Russian naval attaché Beskorovsky, who had organized an intelligence service on Germany before the war. According to Faramond, «Beskorovsky is absolutely loyal, sharing all his information»<sup>8</sup>. This was also Faramond's opinion of Commander Consett, the British Naval Attaché in Kristiana, also accredited in Copenhagen, helpful to both.

Faramond also exchanged with Danish military intelligence providing his reports on the Schleswig border in exchange for statements of the movements of German submarines, information that Faramond treated with suspicion, thinking that they were underestimated to prevent an Allied intervention. Faramond employed Danish sales representatives traveling to Germany with limited success. Faramond had difficult relations with the French diplomatic representation and disagreed with their views calling for stronger action to pressure Denmark. The attaché was too well known and under surveillance by both the Danish authorities and German intelligence.

Consequently, the 1st section in Paris decided to create a parallel organization, independent from Faramond. In December 1915, a Dane nicknamed «Rouen» was recruited in Paris to establish a secret intelligence network in Denmark, distinct from the Naval attaché's network. His SR «Marine» Copenhagen soon became well informed about the economic and moral situation of Germany thanks to its agents. During 1917, German deserters provided information on submarines and the Navy's organization (Heligoland, the Elbe, the Jade). At the end of 1917, the Danish police and the German counterintelligence managed to thwart the service. On April 9, 1918, "Rouen" and most of his agents were arrested<sup>9</sup>. The services of Lieutenant Talpomba and Guibaud in Sweden and Norway were also independent from Faramond, an essential condition for the information to be transmitted without delay to Paris.

In Stockholm Talpomba was on hostile territory. Supportive of Germany for economic, cultural, and scientific reasons as much as for fear of Russia, Sweden was hostile to the Entente. King Gustave V was openly Germanophile. He advocated the formation of a Scandinavian block led by Sweden and which could assist the Central Empires. Norway's opposition thwarted this project<sup>10</sup>.

Helped by two deputies, Talpomba demanded from the six French consuls in Swedish ports to report on the merchant ships' movements. Except for one, all refused, leading the French minister in Stockholm to dismiss two, including the

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<sup>7</sup> *Tariel C. L.* (lieutenant de vaisseau). *Les missions navales...* P. 20-25.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* P. 20-25.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* P. 20-25.

<sup>10</sup> *Tariel C. L.* (lieutenant de vaisseau). *Les missions navales...* P. 26.

French consul in Lulea, the port of embarkation for Swedish iron ore bound for Germany. In August 1916, Sweden closed the Kogund pass with mines, blocking the entry and exit of the Baltic to belligerent submarines, affecting in practice British and Russian units, German submarines now crossing into the North Sea through the Kiel canal. At the same time, the Swedish Navy escorted German freighters traveling from Gothenburg and Lulea to Stettin and Lubeck. In November 1916, Talpomba proposed two special operations: the bombardment of a point on the German coast with an airplane from Sweden and a trap to lure German torpedo boats into the North Sea. Considered too risky compared to the expected benefit, Paris rejects them. After a year in office, Talpomba had developed excellent relations with the allied services, countering successfully German agents placing bombs on Allied merchant ships in Swedish and Norwegian ports. This case caused such a stir that Norway seemed on the verge of declaring war on Germany. The King of Sweden then tried to discredit Talpomba by accusing him of having placed bombs on board an English freighter to harm Germany. Sweden was after Talpomba. The attaché was closely monitored, with his mail being opened and sometimes confiscated by Sweden. On October 7, 1917, the Quai d'Orsay addressed a formal protest to the Swedish government. In December, Paris instructed Talpomba to henceforth employ an intermediary to deal with his agents<sup>11</sup>.

Lieutenant Guibaud took up his duties in Norway on March 1, 1917. His three deputies were based in Kristiana, Tromsø and Bergen. Guibaud struggled to recruit agents. He explained that “the Norwegian is the most neutral of neutrals, almost indifferent to international politics, with the exception of Swedish ambitions”; unlike Faramond, Guibaud received little from Consett, the British naval attaché, much better acquainted and less prone to share. Discreetly, Guibaud inquired about defense of the country in the event of Norway joining the Entente, a hypothesis that the Norwegians contemplated while refusing to discuss it. Guibaud proposed the organization of an Anglo-American naval base in Stavanger while the General Staff in Paris preferred Kristiana<sup>12</sup>.

From August 1918, the Navy General Staff in Paris changed the orientation of its attachés in Scandinavia. Finland and Russia were the new priorities. The conditions of Lenin's arrival in Petrograd had not been forgotten. Besides monitoring German endeavors to evade the terms of the Armistice, attempts which the Germans and the Russians might make to introduce agitators into France were a great concern<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, Talpomba redirected his efforts in Finland. In April 1919, he sent Auxiliary Lieutenant Alexeiev, a former lieutenant-commander in the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. P. 27-33.

<sup>12</sup> *Tariel C. L.* (lieutenant de vaisseau). *Les missions navales...* P. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. P. 38.

Imperial Russian Navy, to Helsinki while Lieutenant Ziegler crossed into Russia to follow General Youdenich's offensive against Petrograd. Auxiliary lieutenant Alexeiev, was also sent on a secret mission to Petrograd in the spring of 1919, distinguishing himself by sabotaging the machinery of the icebreaker *Yermak*. Yet, the prospects for the Entente seemed unencouraging. As early as October 1918, reports from agents sent to Russia estimated an Anglo-French intervention ineffective; at the end of November 1919, it was reported that on the northern front English soldiers were fraternizing with the Reds". While on November 30, 1918, a Bolshevik representative in Stockholm had declared that he doubted the success of an Entente intervention in southern Russia, the French mission in Russia was adamant that such an intervention would be fatal to the Reds. But the Bolshevik estimate collected by Talpomba proved to be correct, the Entente failing to overturn the course of events in the Russian Civil War. In the Black Sea Fleet, the French squadron was plagued by mutinies fueled by the Bolshevik propaganda<sup>14</sup>.

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919, the Navy General Staff in Paris decided to recall Guibaud while Talpomba resumed his duties in Stockholm, closing the post in March 1921. By then, the situation in Russia and the Baltic countries had stabilized. In October 1919, de Faramond left Copenhagen for Helsinki, replaced by Captain Lagrenée until June 1922<sup>15</sup>.

Overall, the emergence of a clandestine collection branch was a major development which enabled France to obtain valuable naval, economic, and political intelligence on Germany and Russia, both during the War and the Bolshevik Revolution.

Following the practices adopted during the Great War, assistant naval attachés in charge of secret naval intelligence were posted in Berlin, Warsaw, Stockholm, Riga, Helsinki during the 1920s. An Intelligence requirement plan had been set up, to deal with all aspects of naval developments. But in November of 1926, Fernet, the new head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau, expressed his frustration: «...we must get rid of this paper jugglery: we must direct the flow and not be directed by it...» Fernet went on stigmatizing the encyclopedic character of the instructions given to the officers sent abroad, and the lack of synthesis. Attachés were instructed to limit the number of their reports while improving their quality and relevance<sup>16</sup>. Soon enough the mounting tensions in the 1930s, forced the Navy to refocus its effort, Scandinavia becoming a key element of France's strategy during its initial belligerency against Germany, in support of Poland (September 1939-July 1940).

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P. 38-40.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 43.

<sup>16</sup> *Sheldon-Duplax A. Le renseignement ...* P. 60.

September 1939-July 1940: the importance of Scandinavia in French War plans.

On September 2nd, 1939, the Navy 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau was reinforced and restructured as part of the War plans and the Secret intelligence (SR) was detached from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau to form a new body, a 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau. Reservists, mainly translators, were assigned to foreign countries, bringing the total complement to 260 personnel in twenty-nine locations including twenty-two Embassies. The French Admiralty thus had five observation balconies all around the Baltic in the Baltic States, Finland, Sweden, Denmark to study Germany, the immediate adversary, and the USSR, the prospective adversary, which invaded Finland on November 30, 1939<sup>17</sup>.

In Stockholm, Commander Lambert was assisted by ethnologist Paul Emile Victor, whose knowledge of the great North was precious. The question of Franco-British assistance to Finland was coupled with a planned operation against the "iron ore route" between Sweden and Germany. Head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> bureau of the Admiralty, Captain Samson estimated that by cutting this route, the allies could asphyxiate Germany in two years and win the war<sup>18</sup>.

Intervention in Finland was therefore at the heart of Franco-Swedish relations during the first quarter of 1940. French public opinion reacted much more strongly to events in Finland than to those in Poland. On March 19, 1940, the Daladier government fell because it could not help Finland. But for the allies', helping Finland was part of a strategic plan to cut the Swedish iron ore route to Germany: the iron route ran in winter through Narvik in Norway and in summer through Lulea in Sweden. By crossing these two countries to help Finland, the Franco-British expeditionary force could close the Swedish mines to Germany. They first plan an operation against Petsamo, in Lapland, which would also make it possible to seize Finnish nickel. Commanding Finnish forces, Marshal Carl-Gustav Mannerheim preferred passage through Narvik and Lulea while worrying about the consequences and the possible invasion of the two Scandinavian kingdoms by Germany. For this reason, the Finnish government never asked for the Franco-British intervention that Paris and London are calling for. As for Sweden, Lambert summarized its position «The terror of the consequences that this intervention could entail is the basis of the Stockholm government's position». As soon as he took office in September 1939, Lambert was instructed to promote French viewpoints in Swedish newspapers and to seek as much information as possible on strategic raw materials. In addition to the

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<sup>17</sup> Sheldon-Duplaix A. Le poste de l'attaché naval français à Stockholm (septembre 1939-mars 1943) // *Aselius, Gunnar et Caniart, Valérie* Ed. Quatre siècles de coopération militaire franco-suédoise, actes des journées d'études franco-suédoises organisées à Stockholm les 25 et 26 octobre 2005 et à Vincennes les 7 et 8 décembre 2006. Service historique de la défense (SHD). 2009. 204p.

<sup>18</sup> *Caroff A.* La campagne de Norvège, 1940. Service Historique de la marine. 1955. 212 p.



use of the press, human intelligence is a privileged source of information for the naval attaché. The «War» and «Navy» intelligence posts of the Stockholm Intelligence Service (SDR or SR) employ informants, usually volunteers, and often well placed in northern European banking and industrial circles. In March 1940, the Soviets broke through the Finnish lines. In Helsinki, the leaders thought that the allied aid would arrive too late. On March 13 the Finnish plenipotentiaries concluded an armistice in Moscow<sup>19</sup>.

On April 9, German forces invaded Oslo, Kristiansand, Iggesund, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik. On April 17 and 18, Allied forces landed at Namsos and Andalsnes in central Norway. Unable to contain the German forces, they had to evacuate on May 2. In the north, the allied forces landed on April 15 managed to retake Narvik on May 28. The invasion of the Netherlands and France forced the allies to repatriate their expeditionary force, relinquishing control of the two Scandinavian countries on the Atlantic seaboard. Fearing an imminent invasion of Sweden and living in fear of action by the 5th column against their premises in Stockholm, French military and naval attaches destroyed their archives in April 1940<sup>20</sup>.

The propaganda activity was carried out in competition with that of the German naval attaché, Rear Admiral Steffan. The press office of the German legation was active with Germanophile newspapers such as the *Stockholm Tidningen* and the *Aftonbladet* or close to the Nazis such as the *Nationell Tidning*. Lambert provided documents and photographs to major daily newspapers to present the activities of the French Navy. Quoted by the main daily newspapers, the telegrams of the French agencies Havas and Reuters are more numerous than those of the information agency of the Reich DNB. While the Communist daily *Ny Dag* supported the Red Army in Finland against «Mannerheim's White Guards clique», it defended itself from any collusion with Germany, later highlighting the resistance of Norwegian Communists against the German invader<sup>21</sup>.

But beyond the press, the SR Marine sought more precise information from well-connected informants. One of its main goals was to identify and denounce Swedish companies or individuals who represented German interests.

On the front line, the naval attaché in Helsinki informed the Admiralty directly and retransmitted certain information to Stockholm, such as orders of battle for the Soviet Baltic fleet provided by Finnish sources. The hub of peace negotiations between the belligerents, the Soviet embassy in Stockholm and its charming

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<sup>19</sup> SHD Marine (Defense Historical Service, the archives of the French MoD), II BB7 St1, letter n. 42, AN Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 22/2/1940.

<sup>20</sup> SHD Marine, II BB7 St1, letter, NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, undated, 8/1940.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Letter n. 101, German propaganda, AN Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 19/4/1940.

representative, Madame Kollontai, also constituted an objective for the military mission. An SR source in the Soviet legation mentioned disagreements at the top between Stalin and Molotov. But the most audacious clandestine operation was the plan to block the Swedish port of Lulea imagined in Paris. The Stockholm post was not involved for obvious reasons. The Admiralty preferred to act from Helsinki through Peltier, the naval attaché. Peltier was instructed to buy a freighter, recruit a crew, and sink the stone-laden ship in Lulea's harbor passes. Peltier was also about to buy the two Estonian submarines which would be rearmed in the Baltic by French crews to attempt a coup against the Kriegsmarine<sup>22</sup>.

July 1940-43: ambivalent role for the Vichy Naval attachés in Sweden and Finland, leaning towards the Allies while shaping Admiral Darlan's views on the inevitability of Germany's defeat.

With the successes of the Axis, and the defeat of France, the post of the naval attaché in Stockholm recovered the responsibilities of the four other posts to continue to inform the Admiralty installed in Vichy. As a non-resident attaché in Helsinki, he also followed the situation in occupied Denmark and Norway. Commander Marius Peltier and Lieutenant Commander Guillaume Rostand became successively Admiral Darlan's key sources of information on the war.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1940, the naval attaché positions in Finland and Sweden were merged again. Peltier, the incumbent in Helsinki, was appointed in Stockholm. Speaking English, German, Spanish and Russian, Peltier had served in the Baltic during 1921-22 aboard the naval division sent by France to protect Poland and the Baltic States against Bolshevik Russia; later, he spent a year in Riga to pass his Russian interpreter certificate. But the key man of French intelligence in Finland was his assistant, Alexeev, mobilized in 1939-40 as assistant naval attaché in Finland who, besides Russian, could also speak Finnish.

Peltier was able to develop «trusting and friendly, often close» relations with the Swedish and Finnish navies. His instructions were to «maintain the French reputation» and «to observe events». France's prestige remained despite the defeat. Peltier was also tasked by Darlan and Samson to exchange intelligence with the British naval attaché, Captain Denham. Denham harbored little illusion on the possibilities to reconcile with France. «The French Navy will never forgive us Oran [the British attack against the French fleet in Mers El Kébir, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1940]». Yet, Denham's reports on his exchanges with Peltier were sent to Commander Ian Fleming (father of the James Bond literary character) and the British political warfare department, helping to prepare propaganda broadcasts, targeting Vichy's sailors. In November 1941, Captain Denham entrusted Peltier with a special message

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. CRR n. 6, NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 16/1/1940.

from the British Admiralty, upon the initiative of the British Prime Minister Churchill, for Admiral Darlan. The content of this message is not known but Peltier had become a courier between London and Vichy via Stockholm<sup>23</sup>.

Peltier's main activity remained to inform Admiral Darlan, Commander-in-Chief, and Minister of Marine from June 1940, taking over as Vice-President of the Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Interior and Minister of National Defense in February 1941, making him the de facto head of the Vichy government. Captain Samson, head of the Navy 2<sup>nd</sup> bureau in Vichy, obtained for his Swedish counterpart, Captain Angelin, the Legion of Honor. In Finland, Peltier had made strong friendships during the weeks spent under Soviet bombardment. Mannerheim liked him. Relations with United States naval attachés were «unrestricted». Far from constituting acts of defiance, exchanges with the British attachés were pursued in full agreement with Vichy. In addition, Peltier took advantage of his perfect command of the Russian language to establish "close and unrestricted relations with the USSR military mission in Stockholm, and this until July 1941"<sup>24</sup>.

From July 1940 to June 1941, Sweden and Finland lived under the threat of Soviet hegemony even as Germany increased its pressure on these two countries to obtain raw materials and send troops to occupied Norway. For Helsinki, Germany appeared more and more as the guarantee of its security against the USSR.

Early in June 1941, Peltier met with Commander Taradin, the new Soviet naval attaché. Peltier noted the unpopularity of the Germans, the resistance of the Norwegians and the hostility of the Danes in the face of Nazi brutality. Later that same month, Peltier travelled to Finland, reconnoitering Petsamo in northern Finland and the routes that allowed the transportation of German troops to Norway. Arrived in Rovaniemi he met a German colonel who made no secret of the movement of his soldiers towards the Russian border. Peltier returned directly to Stockholm to inform both Vichy and the Soviet military attaché<sup>25</sup>.

Successor of Peltier after November 10, 1941, Lieutenant Commander Rostand lacked linguistic skills and Finnish experience. However, Rostand quickly learned Swedish, producing detailed reports of the local newspapers. In Finland and like Peltier, Rostand depended entirely on Alexeev whom he could hardly control. Mannerheim continued to display his Francophilia, upsetting protocol to invite Rostand to lunch and dinner the day they first met, introducing him to his staff officers, all former graduates of the Paris War College, and all French speakers<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> SHD, Marine, Oral history, Rear-Admiral Peltier.

<sup>24</sup> SHD, Marine, II BB7 St1, letter n. 18, NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 24/4/1941.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Letter from Peltier to EMG/2, Paris 12/1/1945.

<sup>26</sup> SHD Marine, II BB7 St2, NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 30/9/1942.

In Stockholm, Captain Angelin, head of Swedish naval intelligence invited Rostand to dinner six times over a little more than a year. But Rostand's critical contact remained the British naval attaché, Captain Denham. The latter described Rostand's position in November 1941: «Without intending to collaborate with us, he seems to want, like his predecessor, to help us understand the difficulties of his government and occasionally communicate intelligence to us...[according to Rostand], the fact that the Germans hold more than a million prisoners should prove that his [Vichy] government resists many German demands...on grounds which would have complicated matters for Great Britain.»<sup>27</sup>. Rostand also cultivated the German attaché, something that his predecessor had been reluctant to do.

As early as February 1942, Rostand believed that the fall of Germany was «ineluctable». In March, Rostand reported on the racial policy implemented by the Reich: deportation of Poles to eastern Poland and Belarus, of Galicians to Ukraine. On August 3rd, Rostand called the fate reserved for the Jews «infamy» and seemed to suggest the existence of the “final solution” when he wrote. "As regards the Jews, all the information agrees to establish with what infamy they are treated, regardless of their origin; at the current rate, the Jewish question will no longer arise in Europe after the war». The naval attaché reported on the changing mood in Sweden, mainly through reading the press and chatting with Swedish officers. In March 1942, he noted a «horror of Communism as great as that of Nazism in this country where advanced socialism and ethnographic unity render Soviet extremist theories and German racial theories useless»<sup>28</sup>.

Admiral Darlan's replacement by Pierre Laval as Vichy's Vice-president of the Council in April 1942 was very badly received in Stockholm and Rostand seemed to make Swedish criticisms his own. Taking shelter behind his local sources, he reported that «Mr. Laval and Mr. Quisling are exposed to the same judgment» Shortly after, he described Quisling as «a terrible scoundrel, barely contained by the Germans and who acts in all areas as a despot and a tyrant»<sup>29</sup>.

Overall, Rostand noted a shift both in Sweden and in Finland towards the Allies. 1942 marked a turning point. Sweden found itself caught in a crossfire. Its cargo ships were torpedoed by Soviet submarines because they carried contraband of war to Finland. At the same time, Swedish fishermen were machine-gunned by German planes in the Skagerrak. In that context, the Swedish citizenry supported less and less the concessions made to the Reich. Rostand observed that the population was kept in the dark about German violations of Swedish neutrality for

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<sup>27</sup> SHD Marine, Private papers Mangeot, GG2 167, Reference sheet, n. 604/1/303, Naval attaché Stockholm to the Director of Naval Intelligence, 28/11/1941.

<sup>28</sup> SHD Marine, II BB7 St2, CR n. 97, Notes on Germany, 3/8/1942.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. CR activities, n. 1, NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 18/4/1942.

fear of demonstrations: Ferry boat passages of Nazi forces increased dramatically from German occupied Copenhagen to Malmö (77 to 207), from Elsinore to Helsingborg (158 to 424), all those movements destined to reinforce the Axis in Norway. In Finland, the press detailed the Wehrmacht's setbacks, despite Helsinki's co-belligerency with Berlin. A Finnish newspaper reported: «From the Glacial Ocean to the Black Sea, the Russians launched a vast offensive; they are advancing everywhere except in Finland». As Rostand put it, «that's a kind way of saying one's deed to the great ally». He interpreted this article as evidence of dissent between two partners of necessity, Berlin having caused Helsinki's misfortune by signing the pact allowing Moscow to invade. From a conversation with Mannerheim, Rostand understood that the Finish Marshal no longer believed in a German victory. His worry was to secure conditions not too harsh for Finland<sup>30</sup>.

The scuttling of the French fleet in Toulon following Germany's invasion of the Vichy Free Zone on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1942, further undermined the legitimacy of Vichy's naval representations abroad. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, Rostand expressed openly his dissent in his digest of Swedish newspapers: «our Marshal [head of Vichy State Philippe Pétain] could be forgiven. taking into account his old age", but «M. Laval is considered a traitor to his country». Stating his "absolute certainty in the impossibility of a Nazi victory», Rostand's report was scribbled in the margin with a «shut up!» from his reader in Vichy. The handwriting may resemble that of the pseudo-collaborationist Lieutenant Commander Henri Rollin, recruited by the British Intelligence Service, and later exfiltrated from Vichy to London. Once a Vichy devout, chasing de Gaulle sympathizers within the Stockholm French legation, Rostand abandoned his post, resurfacing in Algiers, appointed executive officer of the light cruiser *Terrible*. Army Lieutenant-Colonel Poupard performed the duties of interim naval attaché until the transfer of the legation to the Provisional Government of the French Republic in August 1944<sup>31</sup>. Eager to return to Sweden, Rostand was denied the assignment, due to his earlier Vichy diligence.

### Conclusions

French naval attachés in Scandinavia played a significant role in both World's Wars, at different levels. During the First World War (1914-18) and France's first belligerency during the Second World War (1939-40), their role was both political and operational, reporting on Scandinavian breached neutralities, ships movements, economic warfare; with the creation of assistant naval attachés, they also acted at the clandestine level, breaching Scandinavian neutralities, establishing networks of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 30/9/1942.

<sup>31</sup> SHD Marine, II BB7 St2, NA Sweden to Admiralty, Stockholm, 30/6/1942.

agents, seducing German deserters, foiling German sabotage against Allied shipping in 1917-18, while failing to conduct three military actions in 1940, most notably to help seizing Sweden's Iron ore mines, block Lulea's harbor and purchase Estonian submarines in the wake of Estonia's collapse.

During both Wars, those reports from Scandinavia potentially or effectively impacted policy making. Except for Anglo-Russian submarine operations, the Baltic remained largely a German lake during the Great War; in 1917-21, French naval attachés were at the forefront to assess the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution, on Russia and on Allied troops assisting White forces, exposed to a contagious and effective proletarian propaganda.

Following France's defeat in June 1940, the Vichy Naval representatives in Scandinavia became important intermediaries, first to maintain intelligence exchanges with Britain, a former Ally, immediate foe, and potential future Ally; one was even entrusted with a message, presumably by Churchill to Darlan; the second purpose was to assess War developments and inform Vichy on the outcome. In 1942, all indicators already pointed to the inevitability of the Axis defeat. The same year, the Stockholm Naval attaché entertained no illusion over the fate of the Jews, informing Vichy that they were being exterminated. In June 1941, Peltier also claimed to have informed the Soviet Embassy in Stockholm about German troops moving on Finnish territory towards the Soviet border. This claim cannot be substantiated by another source. It may explain how Peltier later became a Naval attaché in Moscow despite his loyalty to Vichy, late in the War<sup>32</sup>. During 1940-42, the Scandinavian naval attaché reporting helped shape Vichy's Admiral Darlan's geopolitical views. Reflecting the attaché's pessimist forecasts on the Reich's perspective, Darlan already foresaw its defeat during the Summer of 1941: "Gentlemen, Germany has lost the war!" Yet, Darlan reminded committed to a collaborationist policy, at least in the Allies' eyes, the Germans very much doubting his sincerity. During 1940-42, the two successive Stockholm attachés also influenced Britain's perception of the Vichy regime and British speculations on how to reconcile with the bulk of the French Navy, a "fleet in being", still very present in British minds, despite the Armistice's restrictions. The scuttling of the French fleet in Toulon on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1942, made that consideration suddenly less important, removing instantaneously the Naval attaché's legitimacy in Stockholm. Until then, and despite, France's defeat, the "fleet in being" still gave a status to Vichy France. The Swedes were especially sensitive to the parallel between their situation and that

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<sup>32</sup> Interview reported by Lehieux, August 1941 quoted by Couteau Begarie H., Huan C., Darlan. P. 445.

of Vichy, both States having to endure, resist and give way to German demands. With Laval replacing Darlan, Sweden distanced itself from Vichy.

Without a Navy, Vichy's Naval attaché had become irrelevant. Rostand rallied North Africa to resume war against Germany alongside the Allies while Peltier remained a Vichy loyalist, now heading the Section of Economic Studies (SEE) in the Merchant Marine Ministry. Tasked to analyze economic data to forecast War developments, the SEE is at the origin of France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), created on 27 April 1946 and still in existence<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> SHD, Marine, Oral history, Rear-Admiral Peltier; <https://www.insee.fr/en/accueil> 10.