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Swedish and British security officialdom, a suspected spy, and information management in the era of the Second World War

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses Swedish and British security officialdom with a focus on information-management techniques in a pre-electronic information order. It examines the challenges security officials faced in investigating a Finnish sea captain suspected of espionage during the Second World War. Information about him emanated from three communication contexts – a police station, an interrogation centre, and an immigration office. The British security establishment was confronted with information asymmetries; although information about the case existed in the files, it was not available to officials working in different temporal and geographical settings. There were also marked differences between the bureaucratic cultures of Swedish and British security agencies regarding assessment and reporting of security information. The article shows that the captain worked for the German military intelligence and maintained contact with British officials in Stockholm, but was never imprisoned. On the basis of this case, four suspect interrogation survival strategies can be delineated: playing the victim, seeking favour by flattery, bold exaggeration and appeals to ideological congruence. To some extent, these survival strategies contradict the conventional wisdom in criminal-psychological research on the behaviour of guilty suspects. Rather than keeping stories simple, the sea captain inundated the interrogators with bizarre details to avoid detection.

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Introduction

During the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, security officials of different states faced considerable challenges in piecing together profiles of suspected spies and agents in a largely pre-electronic information order,¹ where dissemination of information between different geographical and institutional locations was time-consuming and laborious. This was particularly the case with low priority individuals, who were not major war criminals or previously ‘flagged’ by security agencies. The present study shows that challenges in information management – ‘the rational organisation of information within organisations’² – (e.g. collection, evaluation, storage and dissemination) especially intra-jurisdictionally, occasionally led to confusion, imprecision and somewhat disordered

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¹For the concept of “information order,” see, C. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996), 4, 366.

²A. Black and R. Brunt, “MIS, 1909–1945: An Information Management Perspective,” *Journal of Information Science* 26 (2000): 186.

handling of security information. This article discusses the nature of security officialdom from a comparative Swedish-British perspective with a focus on information management, the impact of different communication contexts for information gathering as well as national differences in intelligence services' and police organisations' bureaucratic cultures.

These themes are explored in the context of investigation processes whereby Swedish and British security officials sought to uncover details about a Finnish sea captain Torsten Fock's (b. 1904) connections to foreign intelligence services and diplomatic establishments during the first years of the Second World War. The available primary sources show that Fock started to work for the German military intelligence service, the Abwehr, at the turn of 1939–1940 and that officials of the British legation in Stockholm were in contact with him in the spring of 1940 in relation to ship acquisitions. As far as possible, the study also examines Fock's motives, and the 'survival strategies' he used when questioned to convince the interrogators of his innocence. This research is based on British Security Service (MI5) files and Swedish wartime security service's (Allmänna säkerhetstjänsten) historical records. In addition to MI5, when read meticulously, the KV files reveal material from several agencies and departments of the British state, including the Immigration Office, the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS/MI6), and the Home Office. The Swedish sources consist of the police records of Stockholm and Gothenburg district offices. In addition, the wartime Finnish state police's (Valtiollinen poliisi or Valpo) historical archives and the Sir Winston Churchill online archive have been consulted.³

Fock spent his childhood in Viipuri and Helsinki and became competent in several languages. From 1923 onwards, Fock sailed around the world working on several different British, Australian, Swedish, American and German vessels. In 1929–1932, Fock returned to Finland to study at the Turku maritime school. At the same time, he was working on ships that sailed from Finland to Sweden and Britain. He passed the captain's exam in May 1933 and received his first appointment as a captain in August the following year. Between 1935 and 1937, Fock started his career in shipping business in collaboration with a Finnish firm the Northern Steamship Co. Ltd.⁴ Apart from my recent article, which focuses on Swedish counterintelligence operations against British economic warfare in Scandinavia in 1939–40,⁵ Fock's endeavours and the security officials' investigations of them, have not attracted attention in the existing literature on British and German activities in Scandinavia during the war.⁶ Previous research has mainly focused on top-level diplomacy.⁷

³Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate a German file on Fock. This means that much of his alleged connections in particular to Nazi Germany's secret state police, the Gestapo, remain just that – allegations. Allmänna säkerhetstjänsten operated in 1939–45 and was the predecessor of Sweden's current security police Säpo.

⁴Protokoll, hållet vid förhör å kriminalavdelnings station tisdagen den 9 juli 1940 med finske medborgaren, sjökaptanen Torsten Fock, RA SÄPO P1223/1.

⁵M. Suonpää, "Swedish Counterintelligence Operations against British Economic Warfare in Scandinavia, 1939–1940," *Historical Journal* 64 (2021): 410–431.

⁶Fock is mentioned, but not discussed in T. Pryser, *Tyske Hemmelige Tjenester i Norden: Spionsaker og Aktører 1930–1950* (Oslo, 2012), 101, 491.

⁷See, for example, T. Munch-Petersen, *The Strategy of the Phoney War: Britain, Sweden and the Iron Ore Question 1939–1940* (Stockholm, 1981); J. Nevakivi, *Apu jota ei pyydety. Liittoutuneet ja Suomen talvisota* (Helsinki, 1971); D. Dilks, "Great Britain and Scandinavia in the Phoney War", *Scandinavian Journal of History* 2 (1977): 29–51; E.B. Golson, "Did Swedish Ball Bearings Keep the Second World War Going? Re-evaluating Sweden's Role," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 60 (2012): 174; C. Cruickshank, *Special Operations in Scandinavia* (Oxford, 1986); P. Tennant, *Vid Sidan av Kriget: Diplomati i Sverige 1939–1945* (Stockholm, 1989); H. Denham, *Inside the Nazi Ring: A Naval Attaché in Sweden 1940–1945* (London, 1984); P. Molander, "Intelligence, Diplomacy and the Swedish Dilemma: The Special Operations Executive in Neutral Sweden, 1939–1945," *Intelligence and National Security* 22 (2007): 723; J. Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin: The Swedish Experience of the Second World War* (Edinburgh, 2011), 136.

This article does not just track Fock's movements chronologically nor does its main focus lie simply on Fock. Instead, the narrative follows the chronology of the largely unrelated Swedish and British/Allied investigations of Fock's activities and connections. The Stockholm and Gothenburg police investigated the case in 1940 and 1941; the Allied Prisoner of War (POW) investigators at Bad Nenndorf in the British occupation zone of Germany in January 1946; and British immigration authorities and intelligence services at the North Sea ports of Grimsby and Hull in the turn of 1946–47. Fock reappeared in the British intelligence services' radar briefly in 1955, which was apparently the last phase of the case. Thus, the focus is on three different types of interrogation environments or 'communication contexts' – a police station, an interrogation centre, and an immigration office.⁸ These different informational settings shaped information-management processes and thereby the type of intelligence each interrogation yielded.

To some extent, this study employs the concept of 'information asymmetry' as a theoretical background. Developed first in economics, the concept has subsequently been applied in several different fields, including peace mediation studies, and to a degree, intelligence studies. Asymmetrical information occurs when 'one side knows much more than the other' side, is thus in a position to 'take advantage of the situation', and can create for themselves an 'information advantage'.⁹ In the present study, somewhat differently, the concept of 'information asymmetry' denotes gaps, imperfections, and discrepancies in intra-jurisdictional (especially the United Kingdom) management of information. The case will show, for instance, that although one UK security agency already possessed information on a possible offender, that information was not available to another state agency when it was needed in a different temporal and geographical context. Thus, UK security officials operated with asymmetrical information. Possible reasons behind this type of information asymmetry identified in the present study include insufficient knowledge of or interest in the case history on the part of individual officials, technological deficiencies arising from a pre-electronic information order, and misguided preconceptions of the individual under investigation. There is no evidence of comparable information asymmetries within the Swedish security establishment. Instead, in Sweden's case, there is evidence of 'information symmetry' as the country's security service received information from both the UK and Germany, thus highlighting the country's peculiar brand of neutrality.¹⁰ The article focuses on the following questions: What did Swedish and British security officials know of the case in different temporal and geographical contexts? How did they obtain, manage, evaluate and report information? What kinds of decisions did they make based on the information available to them? How reliable is this information as evidence for historical research?

⁸See, G.H. Gudjonsson *The Psychology of Interrogations and Confessions: A Handbook* (Chichester, 1999), 25–28; R.A. Zagovec, "Talking to the Volksgemeinschaft: German War Society as Seen by Western Allies through Front-Line Interrogations," in J. Echternkamp (ed.), *Germany and the Second World War, Vol. IX/II* (Oxford, 2014), 312.

⁹See, J. Barkley Rosser Jr., "A Nobel Prize for Asymmetric Information: The Economic Contributions of George Akerlof, Michael Spence and Joseph Stiglitz," *Review of Political Economy* 15 (2003): 3–21; Robert W. Rauchhaus, "Asymmetric Information, Mediation, and Conflict Management," *World Politics* (2006) 58 (2006): 207–241; A. B. Zegard, *Spies, Lies and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence* (Princeton, 2022), 207–212, citation on pp. 208 and 209.

¹⁰See, W. Agrell, "Sweden and the Dilemmas of Neutral Intelligence Liaison," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29 (2006): 633–641.

Source criticism figures as the key aspect of historical research, but its role is even more crucial in histories of policing, intelligence, and espionage. The authenticity of the document, the origin of the information, and the method of information acquisition (interrogation, surveillance, eavesdropping, and so forth) are of utmost significance viz. the conclusions that can be drawn with the sources in question. Moreover, security professionals, like all experts, use a distinctive specialist terminology and have an operational culture that needs to be considered.¹¹ As mentioned, much of the information on Fock came from interrogations. This means that the relationship between the interrogator and the interrogee emerges as the most significant setting. Interrogation as a ‘communication context’ often carries negative images of potential wrongdoings, including the use of mental and physical violence, performed in an environment of unbalanced power relations.¹² The contemporaries in the 1930s and the 1940s realised the challenges interrogations entailed. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel R. W. G. Stephens, the Commandant of one of the wartime interrogation centres in London, the Camp 020, described interrogations as ‘war of nerves’ where ‘neither side can be sure of success’. In his view,

no spy, however astute, is proof against relentless interrogation. Some unforeseen circumstance, some trivial lapse, is pounced upon, exploited by the interrogator, until a break is complete. Yet, no interrogator, however talented, however experienced, can guarantee such a break. A failure in timing, a mistaken appreciation of a Balkan character, a bad trace, a delayed document, how many times have such things spelt ruin.¹³

Notwithstanding the clear cultural stereotype about a ‘Balkan character’,¹⁴ these are valuable insights into the difficulties involved in interrogations. They also reveal that information attained through interrogation is not necessarily a sufficient guide for historians to past events or ‘facts’ as such. Interrogation reports as sources pose a double challenge. The most fundamental questions are, first, was the person being interrogated telling the truth, and second, were the statements reported correctly. Moreover, ‘the factual core of what has been recorded can be of use to the historian only when interrogation reports . . . can be considered as collaborative efforts between the person being questioned and [the] questioner’.¹⁵ As far as possible, these ideas will be followed in the present study.

Police interrogations in Sweden

The wartime Swedish domestic security service consisted of seven regional divisions. Stockholm County division (number IV) was the most significant of them and it comprised of three sections – surveillance, telephone censorship and postal censorship. The surveillance section’s work was in practice conducted by the Stockholm criminal police’s (CID) sixth department, which had four branches each specialising in countering different threats: the first conducted surveillance of Soviet spies and Swedish

¹¹K. Rentola, “Tiedustelun historian ongelmia,” *Academia Scientiarum Fennica* (2009): 52–57.

¹²Zagovec, “Talking to the Volksgemeinschaft,” 312.

¹³“A Digest of Ham on the Interrogation of Spies, Volume One,” in *Camp 020: MI5 and the Nazi Spies*, “Introduction,” O. Hoare (Richmond, 2000), 105.

¹⁴See, for example, M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford and New York, 1997).

¹⁵Zagovec, “Talking to the Volksgemeinschaft,” 313.

communists; the second monitored Nazi Germany's espionage; the third focused on Allied espionage and sabotage; and the fourth managed Sweden's central surveillance register until 1943.¹⁶ Stockholm CID's detectives Torsten Söderström and Wilhelm Magnusson were in charge of countering German espionage.¹⁷ They also investigated Fock. Information about him began to reach Swedish authorities on 24 May 1940, when a Swedish businessman contacted Stockholm's police because he suspected that his longstanding associate was involved in espionage,¹⁸ an allegation Fock categorically denied when interrogated by Stockholm's police on 5 July 1940. In this interrogation, details about his links to British officials also began to emerge. According to the interrogation report, the British Naval Attaché in Stockholm, Commander John Poland,¹⁹ had shown interest in Fock and told him during several meetings that the British were interested in purchasing ships in the Swedish market.²⁰ On 28 June 1940, Poland had contacted Fock and instructed him to travel immediately from Finland to Stockholm. A Swedish police memorandum recorded verbatim the telephone conversation between Poland and Fock: 'I will come over, but it will cost me some money', said Fock. Poland replied that 'we will pay for it'. Fock responded that 'in that case I will travel tonight'.²¹ The Swedish police managed to capture this information because the country's espionage laws allowed the security service to intercept all communications. Most legations in Stockholm were bugged,²² unlike many of the hotel rooms where clandestine conversations often took place.²³

The differences between two intelligence-gathering tools used by the Swedish police, direct interrogation (HUMINT) and phone tapping (SIGINT), exemplify the potential traps involved in researching intelligence and policing history. Information presented in interrogation reports is often open to considerable amount of interpretation and their reliability is difficult to measure. Indeed, as Sheila Kerr has pointed out 'incomplete, ambiguous and misleading evidence prevents a full and accurate assessment' when 'speculations, hypotheses, and conspiracies turn the evidence into a tangle.'²⁴ As historical evidence, an intercepted telephone conversation is more trustworthy than an interrogation report because 'the interception of an opponent's own reportage has always provided invaluable intelligence'.²⁵ However, if counterintelligence practices, such as phone-tapping, is exposed to the opponent, they can use communication channels for counter-deception and disinformation

¹⁶J. Flyghed, *Rättsstat i Kris: Spioneri och Sabotage i Sverige under andra världskriget* (Stockholm, 1992), 284–285, and figure 4.1. facing page 280.

¹⁷Flyghed, *Rättsstat i Kris*, 285.

¹⁸Promemoria, 17 July 1940, RA SÄPO P1223/1. The businessman's name was Adolf Bonthelius.

¹⁹The Swedes misspelt his name as 'Polland'. He was replaced in June 1940 by Henry Denham. See, Tennant, *Vid Sidan av Kriget*, 64.

²⁰T. Söderström, Protokoll, Hället vid förhör å kriminalavdelnings station den 5 juli 1940 med finske medborgaren, sjökaptanen Torsten Fock, RA SÄPO P1223/1. Fock and Poland had initially met when Fock applied for a visa to a trip to Britain.

²¹"Promemoria angående finske medborgaren, sjökaptanen Torsten Fock," July 19, 1940, RA SÄPO P1223/1.

²²Molander, "Intelligence, Diplomacy and the Swedish Dilemma," 733–734; Flyghed, *Rättsstat i Kris*, 161–265. The espionage law was a part of a larger legislative reform of 1940 that also included stricter laws on foreign citizens and press freedom.

²³Suonpää, "Swedish Counterintelligence," 418.

²⁴S. Kerr, "Investigating Soviet Espionage and Subversion: The Case of Donald Maclean," *Intelligence and National Security* 17 (2002): 101.

²⁵N. Rescher, *Espionage, Statecraft, and the Theory of Reporting: A Philosophical Essay on Intelligence Management* (Pittsburgh, 2018), 26.

purposes.²⁶ What renders making assessments about trustworthiness difficult in the Fock case is the fact that detective Söderström never evaluated the quality or the significance of the information retrieved.

Swedish police records also indicate that Fock was in contact with another British operative, George Binney, who worked as a representative of the British Iron and Steel Federation in Sweden and allegedly asked Fock to start working as his advisor specialising in purchasing ships.²⁷ This information also came from Fock in an interrogation and we thus face the same problem of reliability. However, it would not have been surprising had this happened because this type of activity was at the core of Binney's work in Sweden; his task was 'to coordinate the purchase and supply of ball-bearings and special steels'.²⁸ He was also behind the three British blockade-running expeditions – Rubble, Performance and Bridford – between January 1941 and March 1944.²⁹ Swedish police files show that Binney was under surveillance already in January 1940 and that he met Fock at least on one occasion at his hotel in July 1940.³⁰

It is clear that British officials considered the option of hiring Fock as a contact person or a business intermediary. This is significant because, as we shall see, MI5 still denied this after the war. Fock was well-placed to undertake such a job. He had wide business and social networks in Stockholm, including a banker Gunnar Palm and businessmen Gunnar Hopsdahl and Ivar Scheja.³¹ Later in the war, in March 1941, the SIS referred to Scheja as a member of a pro-Nazi Swedish 'gang of crooks' who had cooperated with the well-known German arms-dealer Josef Veltjens during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).³² Although Swedish and British investigation processes were seemingly largely separate, it is possible that some cooperation existed. The SIS-MI5 correspondence from December 1940 refers to a 'first class source' in Sweden that had informed the British that Fock was regarded in Gothenburg as a likely German agent.³³ Of course, the source in question was not necessarily Swedish or connected to the Swedish security service.

In addition to Stockholm, Gothenburg was vital in the context of Swedish national security. The Abwehr had functioned in the country since the interwar period, but its size grew considerably at the outbreak of the war, when it built 'an extensive organisation' inside Sweden.³⁴ The Abwehr was particularly active in Gothenburg and it had close links to local Swedish Nazis, three of whom faced charges of collusion with German intelligence in 1942. From the perspective of the Abwehr, these arrests were detrimental and resulted in the establishment of an Abwehr outpost in Gothenburg under the command

²⁶Suonpää, "Swedish Counterintelligence," 430.

²⁷Protokoll, hållet vid förhör å kriminalavdelnings station den 5 juli 1940 med finske medborgaren, sjökaptenen Torsten Fock, RA SÄPO P1223/1; Fortsättning å förhöret (med Fock) den juli 9, 1940, RA SÄPO P1223/1.

²⁸"Obituary: Sir George Binney, DSO", *The Geographical Journal* 139/1 (1973): 199–201; Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin*, 138–139; Golson, "Swedish Ball Bearings," 174–175; Tennant, *Vid Sidan av Kriget*, 224–256.

²⁹Suonpää, "Swedish Counterintelligence," 411.

³⁰Suonpää, "Swedish Counterintelligence," 427.

³¹Protokoll, hållet vid förhör å kriminalavdelnings station den 5 juli 1940 med finske medborgaren, sjökaptenen Torsten Fock, RA SÄPO P1223/1; Fortsättning å förhöret (med Fock) den 9 juli 1940, RA SÄPO P1223/1; F. Nilsson, Promemoria, Stockholm, October 12, 1948, RA SÄPO, P1223/2.

³²SIS, "Undesirables in Sweden: German, pro-Nazi, Possible Fifth Columnists," March 14, 1941, TNA KV 2/3542.

³³SIS to Blunt (MI5), London, December 21, 1940, TNA KV 2/3542; Cheney (MI5) to 'D' Branch of MI5 (Protective Security), London, December 30, 1940, TNA KV 2/3542.

³⁴Olsson, "Beyond Diplomacy," 339–340, 343–344.

of Eberhard Schrott, who had previously worked for the Abwehr's counterintelligence section in Oslo. Schrott became 'a very important source' of intelligence for the Abwehr on Gothenburg's harbour and the Swedish-Norwegian border.³⁵

In October 1940, Swedish counterintelligence received further information from the Gothenburg police about Fock's connections to espionage. According to detective Nils Trägårdh, in mid-August 1940, Fock had given information to a German, Heinrich Ahlrichs, about British espionage and sabotage plans in Sweden.³⁶ Like his colleague in Stockholm, Trägårdh did not assess the reliability of the information or Fock's personal credibility. In September 1941, Fock 'admitted openly' that he worked as a double agent. He claimed in an interrogation that the British had offered him work as a captain of a small vessel which was intended to be used as a 'mothership' for eight British submarines. The Abwehr, Fock argued, had employed him as a captain of a ship destined to Britain on an espionage mission with German radio experts on board disguised as crewmembers. Söderström reported that in the turn of 1939–40, Fock had worked closely with the Gestapo in Bremen and acquired personal benefits in exchange for services to the Germans.³⁷ These are further unverifiable stories, and neither Söderström nor Trägårdh attempted to assess the reliability of Fock's statements. It sounds particularly odd for someone to confess in an interrogation that he is a double agent. Nevertheless, it is possible that Fock cooperated with German authorities in Bremen. Indeed, as Robert Gellately has argued, many foreigners forwarded information to the Gestapo at the city's docks and factories.³⁸

In sum, details about Fock's activities surfaced when his apprehensive business partner went to the police in May 1940. However, much of the information the Swedish police obtained emanated from Fock in interrogations without verification from other sources. This was problematic because reliability depends on an informational consensus of 'varying' and 'numerous sources', which also fits in the 'framework of pre-existing information'.³⁹ During the Second World War, this ideal was extremely difficult to achieve; as the comment from Commandant Stephens shows, the security officials themselves knew this well. The case at hand illustrates the difficulties security officials faced when investigating individuals who navigated around different intelligence and diplomatic services seeking to attain personal gain or other rewards. Fock was just one of these individuals and wartime Stockholm was a magnet for them. Wilhelm Agrell has branded these types of information traffickers as 'espionage entrepreneurs',⁴⁰ who, in the case of Sweden, included journalists, consuls, businessmen, seamen and intelligence officers.⁴¹

³⁵S. Olsson, "Beyond Diplomacy: German Military Intelligence in Sweden 1939–1945," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 24 (2011): 345; Pryser, *Tyske Hemmelige Tjenester i Norden*, 80, 97, 227.

³⁶Trägårdh (Gothenburg Police) to Sandell (Stockholm Police), Gothenburg, October 7, 1940, RA SÄPO P1223/1.

³⁷T. Söderström, Promemoria, September 8, 1941, RA SÄPO, P1223/2. Allegedly, the Gestapo had given money to Fock with the intention of purchasing a ship, *s/s Pioneer*, that was to be used in this mission. Fock also contended that his association with the Germans had begun to develop while he had been detained in Bremen in the turn of 1939–40.

³⁸R. Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy* (Oxford, 1990), 62.

³⁹Rescheher, *Espionage*, 9.

⁴⁰W. Agrell, "Sweden and the Dilemmas of Neutral Intelligence Liaison," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29 (2006): 637.

⁴¹Suonpää, "Swedish Counterintelligence," 430–431.

Prisoner of war investigations at Bad Nenndorf

The interrogation of two Abwehr officers, Ahlrichs – who forwarded information about Fock to the Gothenburg police in October 1940 – and Gerhard Addicks, at the CSDIC (Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre, Western Europe) in January 1946 proved essential in furthering the UK's security establishment's understanding of Fock's movements and activities during the war.⁴² Allied interrogators questioned Ahlrichs at the British interrogation centre in Bad Nenndorf in the British occupation zone. The centre first opened in Diest, Belgium, in November 1944 where it operated until the centre's subsequent relocation between June and September 1945 to Germany. The CSDIC's staff comprised of officers from the Camp 020 and MI19.⁴³ Ahlrichs was arrested in Hamburg on 16 July 1945 and he was transferred to Bad Nenndorf on 19 October. The final report on his case appeared on 12 January 1946. In order to understand the implications of Ahlrichs's statements, it is important to consider the significance the (unnamed) interrogators attached to them. The 'Preamble' of the report described Ahlrichs and the reliability of his testimony in the following manner:

After some initial prevarication, Prisoner has shown himself willing to disclose the information in his possession. Where it is open to immediate rough check, the information which he has given appears to be reliable. Prisoner's weakness lies in chronology rather than in facts, although the latter are themselves wrapped in a certain woolliness. At the same time, it must be admitted that Prisoner showed ability and imagination in his career. His survival in the starchy but fluid naval atmosphere at Amt Abw I M, despite his status as a Merchant Navy "outsider", is testimony thereof. Unlike the majority of his kidney, who now seek not only to ingratiate themselves with the Allies, but also "to work for them", Prisoner has a measure of pride and no illusions. He awaits a decision on his future, if not with confidence, at least with some dignity.⁴⁴

Allied post-war interrogation reports are reasonably reliable source materials for historical research because the German POWs gave statements voluntarily, Allied interrogators approached the prisoners' testimonies critically, and the interrogators possessed extensive knowledge of the German society.⁴⁵ Consequently, they were able to pose detailed questions and reported information accurately. Unlike the Swedish detectives Söderström and Trägårdh, CSDIC investigators carefully assessed and reported the significance and trustworthiness of the information they received from Ahlrichs. This difference was perhaps due to different bureaucratic cultures, especially with regard to intelligence reporting. Another explanation might be that the Swedish detectives in question operated in a completely different context and mainly reported raw data. In comparison, the CSDIC interrogators' information was presented in the form of a 'final report', which had been constructed over the period of several months and involved in-depth study of a large variety of different sources. Swedish detectives and British interrogators were at a different stage of the intelligence cycle – the Swedes in information collection and reporting raw data, the British reporting the finished product. However, as Arthur Hulnick has argued, the different stages of the cycle cannot be demarcated very

⁴²SIS to Irvine (MI5), London, January 20, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁴³Hoare, "Introduction," p. 22; Graham Smyth, "Loathsome People: British Informers in the Nazi-Occupied Channel Islands," *Journal of Intelligence History* (2022): 12.

⁴⁴CSDIC (WEA), "Final Report on Ahlrichs," Bad Nenndorf, January 12, 1946, TNA KV2/1173.

⁴⁵Zagovec, "Talking to the Volksgemeinschaft," 322.

clearly.⁴⁶ As this case illustrates, security officials are engaged in different stages of the cycle simultaneously. The national difference may also have been caused by dissimilarities in training. While (as far as I am aware) Swedish police training during the 1930s and the 1940s seems to be an understudied subject, some research exists on the evolution of training in Britain during the war. According to Christopher Andrew, British interrogation methods and training improved considerably ‘thanks chiefly to the establishment’ of the CSDIC; this perhaps partly explains the British interrogators’ more methodological approach to assessing the quality of information acquired in interrogation,⁴⁷ in comparison to their Swedish counterparts.

This had not always been the case. In the beginning of the war, there were no training courses for the interrogators and, as one of the leading CSDIC interrogators, Harold Shergold, has pointed out, everything had to be learned ‘the hard way – by experience’.⁴⁸ According to an MI5 report detailing the operations of the London Reception Centre (LRC) established in January 1941, the initial method for singling out possible undesirables among the refugees from the Continent had been to run ‘a finger down a list [of names] to see if any “struck a chord” from memory’.⁴⁹ The British gradually abandoned this technique with the establishment of the LRC.⁵⁰ Shergold also contended that ‘direct interrogation’ of the suspects at the CSDIC developed into a very successful strategy.⁵¹

Against this background, it seems likely that details presented in Ahlrichs’s interrogation report are fairly accurate. However, as we shall see below, some inconsistencies did exist. As his statements completely transformed the UK’s security agencies’ conceptions of Fock’s activities during the war, and because Ahlrichs was Fock’s handler, it suffices to explore Ahlrichs’s own background and career in the Abwehr in some detail. The Abwehr recruited Ahlrichs in late autumn 1939. His first task was to collect intelligence on Britain, Eire and Britain’s Caribbean colonies. He also analysed shipping reports from Norway detailing the cooperation between the Royal Navy and the Norwegian Navy in convoy traffic. In March 1940, Ahlrichs became the chief of the Kiel and Hamburg sub-branches of the German Naval High Command, the Oberkommando der Marine. With the new job, his duties expanded. Ahlrichs was now responsible for handling confidential agents (such as Fock); vetting agents prior to their despatch to assignments; interrogating neutral seamen before their repatriation; and examining captured documents. Fock had operated as one of the twenty-six confidential agents in Ahlrichs’s network.⁵² In the ‘Final Report on Ahlrichs’, the section describing Fock’s activities was the most extensive one; if measured by the amount of space dedicated to deal with Fock, he unquestionably had caused more concern to his handler than other agents and informants in the same network.

⁴⁶A. Hulnick, “What’s Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle,” *Intelligence and National Security* 21 (2006): 959–979.

⁴⁷C. Andrew, “The Modern History of Interrogation” in C. Andrew and S. Tobia (eds), *Interrogation in War and Conflict: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Abingdon, 2014), 3.

⁴⁸Shergold cited in Andrew, “Modern History of Interrogation,” 3.

⁴⁹“Report on the operations of B1D and B1D-UK (London Reception Centre) in connection with the interrogation of aliens and British subjects arriving in the UK during the Second World War,” cited in Hoare, “Introduction,” 16.

⁵⁰N. West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909–1945* (London, 1981), 116–117, 170, 203; C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London, 2010), 250–251.

⁵¹Andrew, “Modern History of Interrogation,” 4.

⁵²CSDIC (WEA), “Final Report on Ahlrichs,” Bad Nenndorf, January 12, 1946, TNA KV2/1173.

The interrogation reports of Ahlrichs and Addicks provide some clues on Fock's recruitment, but the sources are inconsistent on this question. Ahlrichs's statement indicates that towards the end of 1939, Fock himself had contacted Abwehr officers in Swinemünde (present-day Świnoujście in north-western Poland) and offered to work for Germany. After this, Fock met other Abwehr officers who 'recruited him for I M work'.⁵³ This was naval intelligence. On the contrary, Addicks had argued during another interrogation that he had recruited Fock to work as a V-Mann (confidential informant) at the end of 1940.⁵⁴ How do these details compare with the overall framework of the Abwehr's recruitment policies? What do they say about Fock's motives? British sabotage and propaganda organisation, Special Operations Executive's (SOE), training manual from November 1943 shows that the Abwehr had several recruitment strategies and target groups. In the main, they recruited Nazi party members, prisoners at the concentration camps, and seamen. The Auslands Organisation (AO), an agency that functioned as a link between Germany and German sympathisers in different countries, recruited party members. Recruiters at concentration camps promised freedom for the prisoners on the condition that they started to work for Germany. Labour exchanges in ports were recruitment centres of seamen. Threats of violence and blackmail often accompanied recruitment.⁵⁵ Thus, ideology, coercion and circumstances were important in the Abwehr's recruitment strategies.

How did this larger scenario play out in the context of the present case? If Fock volunteered to work for the Germans, as Ahlrichs's statement suggests, then it is conceivable that his motive was mostly ideological. However, as often is the case with intelligence and espionage history, this was not necessarily so. In fact, it is often difficult to identify a single motive. For example, the motives of those who started working as agents for German intelligence in Vichy France ranged from ideology and money to a longing for an adventure.⁵⁶ These categories are applicable generally, as they have featured as the main motives for spies throughout history and practically irrespective of the historical context in which they operated.⁵⁷

The sources clearly indicate that at least two of the motives – ideology and money – also guided Fock during and after the war. When interviewed at the Turku/Åbo police station in Finland in January 1942 in connection to a travel permit application, Fock stated that he was a Nazi by political conviction and that he had many contacts in 'these circles'. He was, in particular, 'an enemy of the Jews and free masons', reported the Finnish State Police detective who interviewed him.⁵⁸ In October 1944, the Swedish Defence Staff (Försvarsstaben) regarded Fock as a 'German agent' who worked for the German intelligence service Büro Cellarius in Helsinki.⁵⁹ Another Swedish memorandum on German intelligence activities in Finland indicated that Fock worked for the Kriegoorganisation Finnland. However, Fock's name does not appear under the heading 'Gestapo' in Finland,⁶⁰ and thus, the question concerning his connection to the secret

⁵³CSDIC (WEA), "Final Report on Ahlrichs," Bad Nenndorf, January 12, 1946, TNA KV2/1173.

⁵⁴SIS to Irvine (MI5), London, January 20, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁵⁵*How to Become a Spy: The World War II SOE Training Manual* (New York, 2015).

⁵⁶S. Kitson, *Hunt for Nazi Spies: Fighting Espionage in Vichy France* (Chicago, 2008), 27–41.

⁵⁷See, for example, B. Porter, *Plots and Paranoia: A History of Political Espionage in Britain, 1790–1988* (London, 1989), 19.

⁵⁸Korpimaa to Valpo Central HQ, January 21, 1942, RA SÄPO, P1223/2.

⁵⁹Sandell's handwritten note dated October 30, 1944, RA SÄPO, P1223/1.

⁶⁰P.M. ang. den tyska underrättelseverksamheten i Finland, October 30, 1944, RA SÄPO P2479.

state police remains an open one. Against this background, it seems likely that Fock's ideological conformity with Nazi Germany was at a considerable level and that this political affinity also translated into practical cooperation with German state agencies. The prospect of financial gain also motivated Fock, who apparently managed to swindle the Abwehr (and perhaps the Gestapo) for large amounts of money. In addition, Stockholm's police had him under surveillance in the summer of 1943 on suspicion of smuggling precious stones into Sweden.⁶¹ Fock was repeatedly in trouble with the law, sometimes in matters that had nothing to do with the war or espionage.

Ahrlrichs's interrogation yielded some details about the tasks Fock performed for the Abwehr. His statements suggest that in the first weeks of 1940, Fock provided intelligence on shipping he had obtained in the Netherlands and Belgium.⁶² How plausible was this? Swedish wartime police records indicate that in the period from September 1939 to January 1940, Fock had visited several port cities in the Baltic and the North Seas, including Frederikshavn, Rotterdam, Copenhagen, Trelleborg, Porsgrund, Helsinki, Rauma, Sassnitz, Swinemünde and Hamburg. He had also been to Berlin.⁶³ It seems possible that he at least had had the opportunity to obtain information in the ports. It is more difficult to show that he actually then went on to report information to the Germans. Ahrlrichs certainly argued that he did. Quoted verbatim in the interrogation report, Ahrlrichs stated that the intelligence Fock provided was 'always highly interesting, sometimes fantastic, and unfortunately looked upon as genuine' by the German Directorate of Naval War (SKL). Ahrlrichs also claimed that Fock had been sent (presumably by the Gestapo) from Kiel to several missions to Copenhagen 'where he was to obtain information about certain Jews'.⁶⁴ Had Fock also worked for the Gestapo, the above details suggest that he would have operated as an 'official informer'. They were an 'elite group' who enjoyed 'a certain degree of freedom in travelling around Germany and throughout Europe on surveillance missions'.⁶⁵

It seems unquestionable that Fock, motivated by ideology and money, worked for the Abwehr. However, despite the many references that hinted at his work for the Gestapo, with the primary sources available, the answer to this question remains unknown. Significantly, the Fock case illustrates that there existed substantial differences in the ways in which wartime Swedish police detectives in Stockholm and Gothenburg and the post-war Allied investigators at Bad Nenndorf approached interrogation reporting and reliability-assessment. The former refrained from giving any indication in their reports vis-à-vis how they perceived the information retrieved; the latter clearly spelt out their reflections regarding the credibility of the interrogees and information gathered from them. This case illustrates that by following an investigation process of a complex individual who travelled across various jurisdictions, it is possible to conduct comparative research on the working methods of the security officials and intelligence agencies of different states.

⁶¹See, P. M. ang. övervakning av finske medborgaren Torsten Fock. Lördagen den 26 juni 1943; P. M. ang. övervakning av finske medb. sjökaptanen Torsten Fock. Fredagen den 1 juli 1943, both in RA SÄPO P1223/2. According to Ahrlrichs's estimate, Fock had cost the Abwehr 25,000 Swedish Krona and 30,000 Reichsmark.

⁶²CSDIC (WEA), "Final Report on Ahrlrichs," Bad Nenndorf, January 12, 1946, TNA KV2/1173.

⁶³T. Söderström, Protokoll, hållet vid förhör å kriminalavdelnings station den 5 juli 1940 med finske medborgaren, sjökaptanen Torsten Fock, RA SÄPO P1223/1.

⁶⁴CSDIC (WEA), "Final Report on Ahrlrichs," Bad Nenndorf, January 12, 1946, TNA KV2/1173.

⁶⁵C. Hall, "An Army of Spies? The Gestapo Spy Network 1933–45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 44 (2009): 255–266.

Immigration control in Grimsby and Hull

In the turn of 1946–7, a third group of interrogators – immigration officers – emerged to investigate Fock, when he arrived in the British port of Grimsby seeking to purchase a ship. Immigration authorities seldom interviewed foreign nationals at length at the port of entry,⁶⁶ but, as Fock’s name appeared in the Home Office Suspect Index (H.O.S.I), he was ‘specially questioned’ about his activities during the war.⁶⁷ The Suspect Index was created in 1914 for cataloguing outlaws and deserters, but it ‘quickly expanded’ to contain swindlers, spies and enemies of the crown. The list’s main function was to prevent the entry of suspects and enemies, but it was also ‘an instrument for labelling groups and individuals for monitoring purposes’.⁶⁸ The Suspect Index’s management involved different state agencies. In this case, the UK’s immigration control, MI5, SIS and Special Branch attempted to determine whether Fock had worked as a German agent. They (erroneously) concluded he had not. After interrogating him, the Grimsby immigration officer stated that Fock had been ‘more intent during the war of safeguarding his own person and monetary interest in shipping than anything else, and there would appear to be no evidence from his statements that he had gone out of his way to assist the Germans’.⁶⁹ MI5 noted that ‘Fock has come over here to buy a ship’ and ‘his business is . . . undoubtedly genuine’. Based on this information, the Immigration Office granted him temporary shore leave.⁷⁰ Despite his name appearing on the Suspect Index, there was perhaps nothing unusual about this decision. Under the Aliens Order (1920), which was amended only in 1953,⁷¹ foreign nationals were refused entry to the United Kingdom only if they were mentally ill, unhealthy or unable to support themselves financially.⁷² British immigration control released Fock as he was in Britain conducting what seemed to the officials as perfectly legitimate business.⁷³

Some days later Fock was again interrogated at the port of Hull, where the Immigration Office came to the same conclusion as their counterpart in Grimsby: ‘it is not considered likely he worked for [the Germans] in any way, as he is first and foremost a man of business’. Immigration officer Samuel Coombes explained that ‘so far as the U. K. is concerned, alien’s interrogation by an I.O. and the undersigned, did not confirm any suggestion that he had been a German agent’.⁷⁴ Special Branch similarly reported that Fock ‘was more concerned during the recent war in safeguarding his monetary interests

⁶⁶R. Miles, “Nationality, Citizenship and Migration into Britain, 1945–1951,” *Journal of Law and Society* 16 (1989): 429.

⁶⁷Joss (Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police) to Superintendent and MI5, Grimsby, December 12, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁶⁸Y. Berda, “Managing ‘Dangerous Populations’: How Colonial Emergency Laws Shape Citizenship,” *Security Dialogue* 51 (2020): 562.

⁶⁹Dooley (Grimsby Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector of Immigration, Grimsby, December 7, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁷⁰Dooley (Grimsby Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector of Immigration, Grimsby, December 7, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542; M. Hobkirk, “Note of Phone Message re Arrival at Grimsby of Fock, Torsten,” December 9, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542; Coombs (Hull Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542. Coombes wrote two separate reports on Fock on 11 December 1946. Both of them were indexed using the same index number H/20.749. The first report (marked henceforth with an asterisk*) was slightly shorter than the second one, which had a section on Fock’s alleged work for British intelligence during the war.

⁷¹See, “Aliens Order (Detentions),” *House of Commons Debate*, July 30, 1953, vol. 518, cc. 200–1 W.

⁷²Miles, “Nationality,” 429, 430–431.

⁷³Dooley (Grimsby Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector of Immigration, Grimsby, December 7, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁷⁴Coombs (Hull Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.*

in shipping than anything else'.⁷⁵ Based on the information from different sources, the Home Office proposed that Fock's entry in the Suspect Index should be cancelled.⁷⁶ Similarly, MI5 concluded that according to 'his own statement', Fock 'would appear to have [had] a fairly unexceptional record'. The Security Service also recommended removing his name from the Suspect Index where it had featured since December 1940.⁷⁷ Moreover, British immigration control and Special Branch attached suspicion to neither Fock's character nor his trustworthiness. The '[a]lien was perfectly willing to talk and did not attempt to "hedge" any awkward questions', stated one immigration officer.⁷⁸

On these occasions, UK security officials categorically accepted Fock's own explanations regarding his wartime conduct and believed that he was nothing more than an ordinary businessman. In addition to the certain laxness in the officials' handling of the case, there might be other explanations for the fact that a proven Nazi agent was allowed to enter the UK. Although registration and statistical techniques developed considerably during the war,⁷⁹ particularly from 1941 and 1942 onwards,⁸⁰ this incident illustrates the difficulties involved in data sharing in an age of predominantly non-electronic databases and archiving systems. It was undoubtedly rather demanding to construct a profile of possible offenders when information was stored in paper files in different geographical and institutional locations. In fact, non-computerised information management techniques continued within the MI5 in some cases until the mid-1970s.⁸¹ British authorities in Bad Nenndorf had established already almost a year prior to Fock's arrival to Grimsby and Hull that he had worked as an Abwehr agent during the war. Furthermore, several agencies of the British security apparatus had the information in the latter half of 1940 that Fock was 'reportedly ... a Nazi agent', 'a probable German agent', and a man of 'doubtful reputation'.⁸² Indeed, these assumptions possibly had led to the decision to include Fock's name on the Suspect Index in the first place.

Yet, as the British authorities perhaps perceived Fock as a minor player and thus of low priority in the turn of 1946–7, they were side-tracked in the investigation and draw flawed conclusions about his wartime activities. This was an example of asymmetrical information. Although the CSDIC and other agencies already had the information that Fock had worked as a German agent, that information was not available to immigration authorities in the UK mainland. However, it is perhaps understandable that intelligence information from 1940 was not readily accessible after the war to immigration officers in UK ports owing to the fact that MI5's information system had then been 'on the verge of collapse' because of the large

⁷⁵Joss (Special Branch) to Superintendent, Grimsby, December 12, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁷⁶Dudley (Home Office) to Hobkirk (MI5), London, January 3, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁷⁷Irvine (MI5) to SIS, London, January 14, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542; SIS to Corin (MI5), London, December 4, 1940, TNA KV 2/3542. Fock's name was removed from the Black List in June 1948.

⁷⁸Coombs (Hull Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.* See also, Joss (Special Branch) to Superintendent and MI5, Grimsby, December 12, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁷⁹See, for example, S. Milton, "Registering Civilians and Aliens in the Second World War," *Jewish History* 11/2 (1997): 79–87.

⁸⁰A. Black and R. Brunt, "Information Management in MI5 before the Age of the Computer," *Intelligence and National Security* 16 (2001): 163.

⁸¹Black and Brunt, "MI5," 187.

⁸²SIS to Corin (MI5), London, December 4, 1940; SIS to Bardwell (Royal Navy), London, July 2, 1940; Bardwell to Corin, London August 7, 1940; SIS to Blunt (MI5), London, December 21, 1940; Cheney (MI5) to D Branch of MI5 (Protective Security), London, December 30, 1940, all in TNA KV 2/3542.

amount of information that was flooding in.⁸³ It is possible that information produced by the MI5 and SIS in 1940 had been buried under heaps of paper or been misplaced. Nevertheless, Fock was undoubtedly also very skilful in fabricating convincing stories to deceive the interrogators.

This Fock's personal attribute opens an opportunity to explore the interrogees' conduct when being questioned. Suspect behaviour is an interesting and long-established area of criminological research,⁸⁴ but – beyond brief mentions – the theme seldom features in historical contexts.⁸⁵ In historical settings, the topic often appears with reference to 'third degree' interrogation methods and human rights violations,⁸⁶ which, of course, are important and legitimate subjects of historical research. Suspect behaviour is explored next using the concept of 'survival strategy' developed here in an attempt to understand Fock's interrogation statements in particular, and more generally, suspect behaviour in historical interrogation situations. How did Fock convince the British Immigration Office, the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service, and Special Branch in 1946–7 that he had not worked as a German agent during the war? Fock came up with four survival strategies.

The first of them was *self-victimization* – the portrayal of himself as a victim of the Gestapo. Fock claimed that the German secret state police had harassed him about his connections to the British. The Gestapo had stopped his ship in December 1939, told him to watch his steps as well as accused him of being anti-Nazi and pro-British.⁸⁷ The second survival strategy was *flattery* – the representation of himself as a longstanding friend of Britain and the Allies as well as an admirer of the British way of life. Fock claimed to have formed a keen affection for British democracy and the British Empire during his five-year spell working as a seaman on Australian ships. The third survival strategy was *self-aggrandisement* – the insistence that he had forwarded to the British information of security value during the war, namely that he had given to the Naval Attaché Poland in Stockholm details of the concentration of German warships and landing craft in the Kiel Canal. According to the interrogation reports, Fock had given the impression that 'within a day or two' of his conversation with Captain Poland in December 1939, 'Mr. Winston Churchill mentioned in a broadcast that the British Government were aware of this'.⁸⁸ This referred possibly to the conditions in the Kiel Canal.

How credible are these statements when placed in the historical context and juxtaposed with information from other primary sources? As mentioned above, with the available source material, Fock's Gestapo connections remain inconclusive. Thus, we must treat his references to the secret state police with caution. In the context of the interrogation, his allusions to being an admirer of British democracy also appear as mere lip service. The reference to the Kiel Canal seems fantastical. In effect, Fock claimed that he had forwarded intelligence to the British, which somehow contributed to the first two air raids of the war. In any event, Fock constructed the story carefully. His account tied

⁸³Black and Brunt, "MI5," 191.

⁸⁴See, for example, S.M. Kassir, S.C. Appleby and J. Torkildson Perillo, "Interviewing Suspects: Practice, Science, and Future Directions," *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 15 (2010): 39–55.

⁸⁵See, for example, R. Overy, *Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands, 1945* (London, 2000); K.R. Allen, *Interrogation Nation: Refugees and Spies in Cold War Germany* (Lanham, 2017).

⁸⁶See, R. Blakely, "British Torture in the 'War on Terror,'" *European Journal of International Relations* 23/2 (2017): 243–266.

⁸⁷Coombs (Hull Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.*

⁸⁸Coombs (Hull Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542; Dooley (Grimsby Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector of Immigration, Grimsby, December 7, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542; citation from Coombes to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

faultlessly with a significant event of the Second World War: on 5 December 1939, Royal Air Force bombers had attacked the German fleet in Wilhelmshaven, and on the following day, there was a second raid, now, on the Kiel Canal. As we have seen, Swedish police records from 1940 corroborate Fock's story so far as the 'services' to the British government referred to the ship business Fock discussed with Poland and Binney. Fock never mentioned to Swedish detectives that he had provided intelligence to the British on the Kiel Canal at the end of 1939, although he did affirm in the interrogation in early July 1940 that his ship had been icebound in the Canal in 25–27 January 1940.⁸⁹ That was almost two months after the British air raids. Nevertheless, perhaps owing to this experience, Fock managed to describe realistically the conditions of the canal at the time, and in this way, succeeded in convincing the security officials who interrogated him.

The fourth further survival strategy was appeals to *ideological congruence*. Fock portrayed his own political outlook as anti-Russian and anti-Soviet. This approach was sensible as the Cold War was at the time of his interrogations in the turn of 1946–7 truly commencing. Indeed, in September 1946, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) concluded in a memorandum assessing the global spread of communism that communism was 'the most important external political menace confronting the British Commonwealth and Western democracies'.⁹⁰ Immigration officers reported that Fock 'does not like Russians or their propaganda' and that he 'detested the Russians no less than he did the Germans'.⁹¹ They also argued that Fock 'warmly declared that he had never been pro-Russian and in fact hated communists more so than the Nazis'.⁹² These arguments probably resonated well with Coombes, Joss and Dooley in an atmosphere where communism 'represented a critical and ongoing threat to British values'. There were fears of communist penetration into the civil and intelligence services and trade unions as well as fears of fifth column activity.⁹³ Coombes reported that 'it is almost certain that Fock was not working for the Soviets'.⁹⁴

Four 'survival strategies' can thus be delineated based on the Fock case: self-victimization, seeking favour by flattery, excessive self-aggrandisement, and appeals to ideological congruence. Fock represented himself as a victim of Britain's worst wartime enemy, attempted to create an emotional bond to the interrogators by praising their country's social institutions, gave an outlandish account of his near-heroic effort to help Britain at the start of the war, and expressed blunt anti-Sovietism. Although far-reaching generalisations cannot be drawn on the basis of just one case, these suspect strategies differ even contradict empirical evidence presented in current research on criminal psychology. According to the conventional wisdom in this field, 'guilty suspects' (what Fock indisputably was), often seek to keep their stories simple in order to avoid detection.⁹⁵ In Fock's case, the reverse seems to have been true. He did not keep his stories simple but rather sought to inundate the interrogators with complicated, rather bizarre and minute details about his undertakings. Indeed, Sergeant Joss of Special

⁸⁹Protokoll, hållet vid förhör å kriminalavdelnings station den 5 juli 1940 med finske medborgaren, sjökaptenen Torsten Fock, RA SÅPO P1223/1.

⁹⁰JIC memorandum cited in Deighton "Britain and the Cold War," 119–120.

⁹¹Dooley (Grimsby Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector of Immigration (Hull), Grimsby, December 7, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁹²Joss (Special Branch) to Superintendent and MI5, Grimsby, December 12, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁹³Deighton, "Britain and the Cold War," 123.

⁹⁴Coombes (Hull Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, Hull, December 11, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.*

⁹⁵M. Hartwig, P.A. Granhag & L.A. Stömwall, "Guilty and Innocent Suspects' Strategies during Police Interrogations," *Psychology, Crime & Law* 13/2 (2007): 214–215.

Branch, who was present during Fock's interrogation at the Grimsby immigration office reported that 'Fock is an imposing type of man, somewhat bombastic and exceedingly talkative, especially with regard to money and his business ventures'.⁹⁶ To be sure, as Professor of Philosophy Nicholas Rescher has suggested 'burying a secret under a mountain of information is a promising pathway to concealment'.⁹⁷ This was evidently Fock's aim and he realised it with some success. Fock was a fairly typical agent or a spy as he was rather narcissistic; he over-emphasised his own irreplaceability and significance possibly in order to elevate his own self-worth,⁹⁸ and survive in difficult situations.

One circle closed in January 1947. When the information gathered about Fock at Bad Nenndorf reached London, the SIS learned that the British Naval Attaché who had been in contact with Fock in Stockholm in 1940 was Henry Denham, not 'George Benham'.⁹⁹ The SIS confirmed that Fock had offered to work for the British in December 1939, and again in 1942, 'but his offer was never accepted'.¹⁰⁰ MI5's J. H. Adam informed the Home Office that 'unfortunately the story [Fock] told to the C.I.O. [in] Hull is not true. He did approach a Capt. Denham (not Benham) Naval Attaché, but was not employed to do any work'.¹⁰¹ Adam's statement was not entirely accurate. As we have seen above, the eavesdropped telephone conversation from the summer of 1940 clearly indicates that Poland (not Denham) offered to pay for Fock's trip to Stockholm and that Binney at least intended to use his services for purchasing ships. This is yet again another example of asymmetrical information and a reminder of the importance of the thorough knowledge of case histories. It took seven years or so for the MI5 and SIS to obtain information regarding Fock's contacts with British officials in Stockholm during the war, and even then, all the facts were not reported correctly. Of course, it is possible that Fock had contacted Denham, but there is no evidence of this in the Swedish surveillance reports on Fock.¹⁰²

Years later, in 1955, Fock reappeared on the radar of British intelligence. When on board a Soviet passenger ship, *s/s Beloostrov* that cruised between Leningrad, Helsinki, Stockholm and London, Fock contacted a British immigration officer and offered information about Soviet espionage. The incident report stated that it 'appears that one of our more recent aircraft carriers, together with attendant ships, was sighted in the distance and [Fock] had observed certain members of the crew taking elaborate shots of the carriers with large cine-cameras which were equipped with powerful telephoto lenses.' The crewmembers were operating from the lower windows and 'appeared to be under orders to do so'. Fock also reported to the immigration officer that he spoke and understood Russian well, but the crew of the *Beloostrov* were not aware of this. This allowed him to listen to their conversations in secret. Immigration officer Rawbone reported that Fock had also insisted that 'a hidden microphone system existed on board'.¹⁰³ After reading the incident

⁹⁶Joss (Special Branch) to Superintendent, Grimsby, December 12, 1946, TNA KV 2/3542.

⁹⁷N. Rescher, *Espionage, Statecraft and the Theory of Reporting: A Philosophical Essay on Intelligence Management* (Pittsburgh: UPP, 2018), 152–153.

⁹⁸See, Kitson, *Hunt for Nazi Spies*, 37–38.

⁹⁹SIS to Irvine (MI5), London, January 20, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542.

¹⁰⁰SIS to Irvine (MI5), London, January 20, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542.

¹⁰¹Adam (MI5) to Home Office Aliens Department, London, January 27, 1947, TNA KV 2/3542. Emphasis is in the original.

¹⁰²For example, "P. M. ang. övervakningen av kaptenen Torsten Fock den 3 juli 1940," RA SÄPO, P1223/1.

¹⁰³Rawbone (Immigration Office) to H.M. Chief Inspector, London, June 27, 1955, TNA KV 2/3542.

report, MI5's Peter de Wesselow pointed out that 'in view of Fock's record, information from him cannot be considered reliable' and nor did the 'item appear very interesting'. De Wesselow found it more significant that Fock was attempting 'to ingratiate himself with the British authorities in a context which has some bearing on intelligence matters'.¹⁰⁴ The SIS informed de Wesselow that Fock was living in Vaxholm, Sweden, 'as a refugee, busily seeking anti-Russian contacts to whom he could offer his services'. According to the SIS, their 'source described [Fock] as a double-crosser and strongly advised us to have nothing to do with him'.¹⁰⁵ This source was not identified.

At the end of July 1955, more details on Fock's adventures on s/s *Beloostrov* emerged. A young British female student at the London School of Economics (LSE) had contacted the Hull Constabulary about a Finnish sea captain who had approached her on board the ship. Fock had said 'in confidence' that 'he had managed to smuggle a number of precious stones out of the country'. Reporting the incident to the Police Liaison Staff, Hull's Chief Constable, Sydney Lawrence, argued that the case was potentially significant as 'experience shows that people engaged in smuggling goods will often traffic in information'. He continued that 'if the crew of the "*Beloostrov*" knew of Fock's activities, they would certainly begin to consider whether he might not be pressed into service in the Soviet cause'.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Information about Fock's movements and contacts emerged from three different interrogation environments – Swedish police stations, an Allied interrogation centre in Germany, and immigration offices in UK ports – and in three different temporal contexts. Wartime interrogations in Stockholm and Gothenburg showed that Fock had contacts in Britain and Germany and that he was working for German military intelligence. These details were confirmed in unconnected post-war POW investigations in Germany, but did not lead to Fock's detention. Owing to intra-jurisdictional information asymmetries, after the war, the UK immigration control, MI5, SIS and Special Branch were not able to detect that Fock was a former Nazi agent and he was admitted into the country. The deficiencies in information management perhaps arose because of insufficient knowledge of the case history, technological difficulties related to manual information-management systems, and misperceptions regarding the suspect being investigated. These types of difficulties were not evident in wartime investigation of the case in Sweden. However, there were differences in the ways in which Swedish detectives in 1940–41 and CSDIC interrogators in 1946–47 assessed and reported intelligence information. The former did not assess/report the reliability of information obtained whereas the latter were very meticulous in this regard. This difference may have arisen from differences in bureaucratic cultures, security officials' training and/or historical context in which the officials operated. On the grounds of the case studied in the present article four suspect 'survival strategies' in interrogation can be outlined: self-victimisation, seeking

¹⁰⁴De Wesselow (MI5) to SIS, London, July 25, 1955, TNA KV 2/3542.

¹⁰⁵SIS to de Wesselow, London, July 25, 1955, TNA KV 2/3542.

¹⁰⁶Lawrence (Hull City Police) to Holmes (Police Liaison Staff), Hull, July 29, 1955, TNA KV 2/3542.

favour by flattery, excessive self-aggrandisement, and appeals to ideological congruence. It seems that these were rather successful strategies because Fock managed to talk himself out of difficult situations and avoided serious allegations being turned into convictions for espionage. Importantly, this case has shown that, in terms of methodology, the tracing of the investigation process is very effective in intelligence and policing history. Of particular interest are cases which take the historian across jurisdictions and temporal contexts permitting the comparative study of the evolving practices and bureaucratic cultures of intelligence agencies of different states.

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