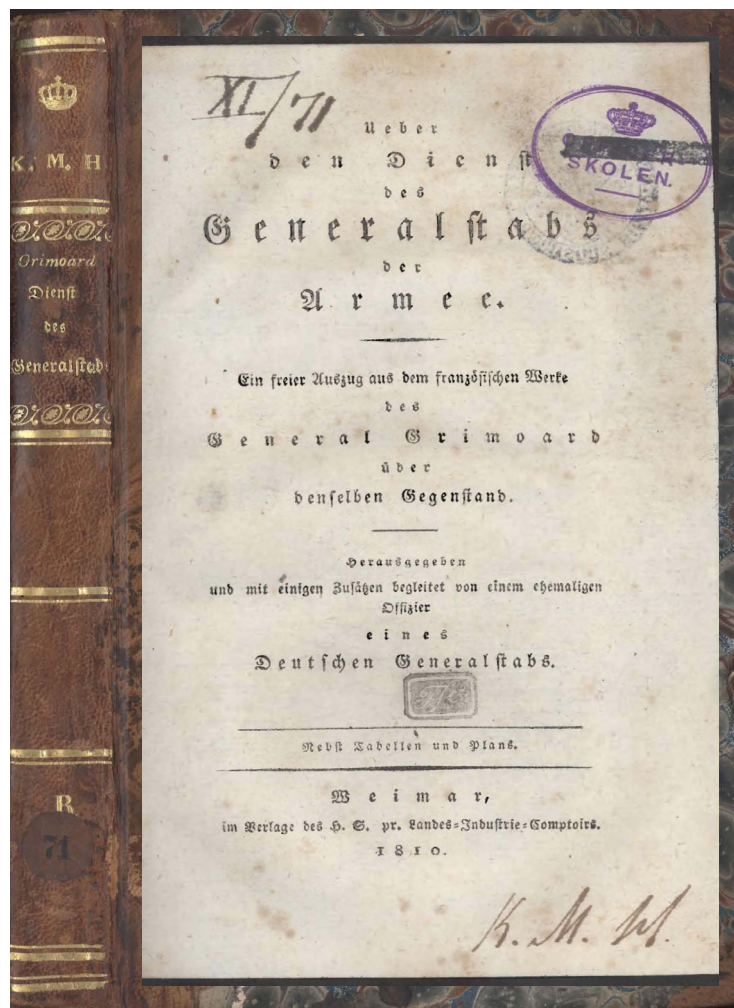


The French Napoleonic Staff View of HUMINT

As translated from German by Rick Sanders



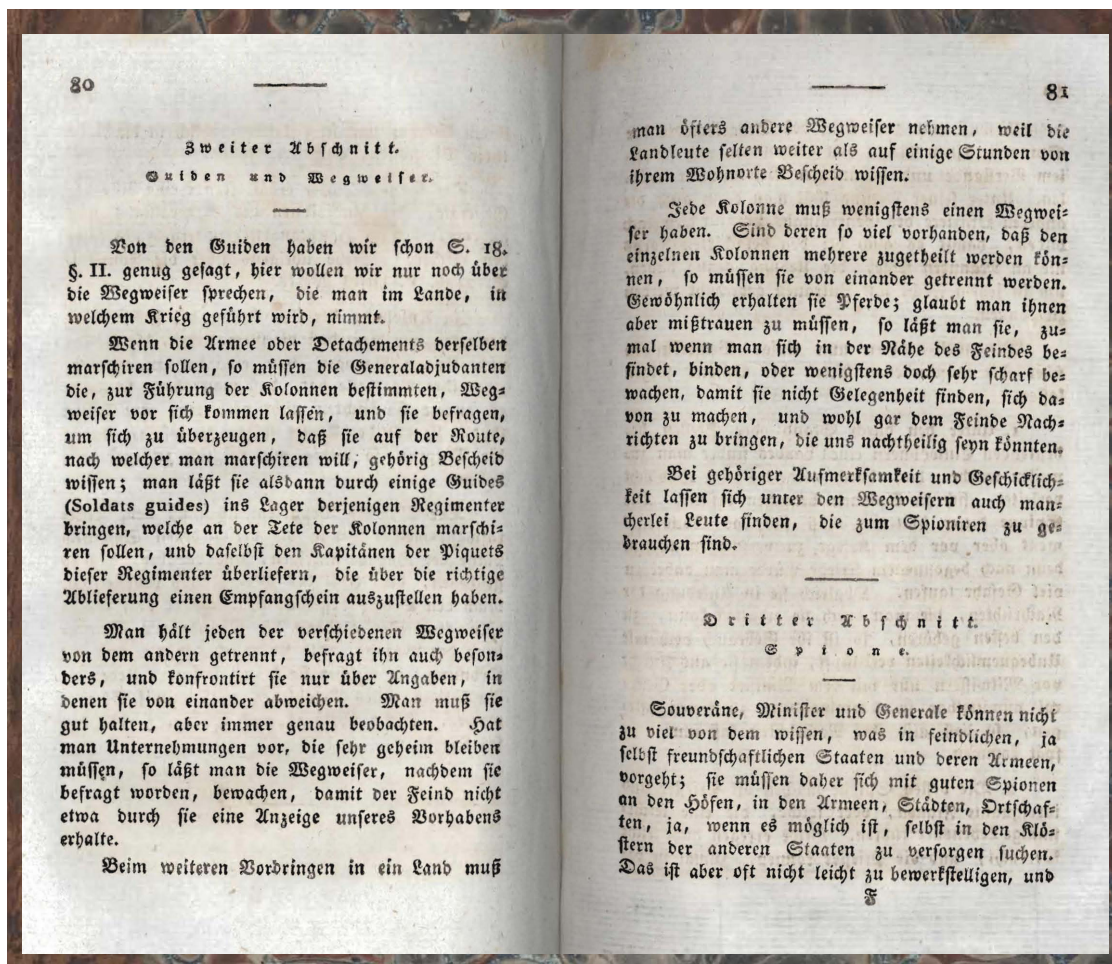
Translated in the following pages is a chapter from a book first published in Paris in 1809. Written by one of Napoleon's generals, Philippe Henri de Grimoard, the book is about service on the general staff and is entitled *Traité sur le service de l'état major général des armées: contenant son objet, son organisation et ses fonctions, sous les rapports administratifs et militaires [Treatise on Service in the Army General Staff: Reflections on its Organization and Functions, in Administrative and Military Respects]*.

The book was translated into German in 1810 by a former officer of a German General Staff and published in Weimar, Prussia. The German title translated into English reads *About Service on the General Staff of the Army: a Liberal Extract from the French Work by General Grimoard on the Same Subject*.¹ The following English translation is of the third chapter, "Spies," from the German version. In 1810, Prussia had been conquered by Napoleon, and its army subordinated to that of France. During the past 200 years, language and terminology have changed, but many of the principles of human intelligence, HUMINT,

seem to have remained constant. The translator, however, does not advocate any particular aspect of Grimoard's advice on espionage and asks readers to bear in mind how prevailing

¹ Ueber den Dienst des Generalstabs der Armee—Ein freier Auszug aus dem französischen Werke von General Grimoard über denselben Gegenstand, herausgegeben und mit eigenen Zufügen begleitet von einem ehemaligen Offizier eines Deutschen Generalstabs, Weimar, im Verlag des H. G. pr. Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1810, pages 81–85.

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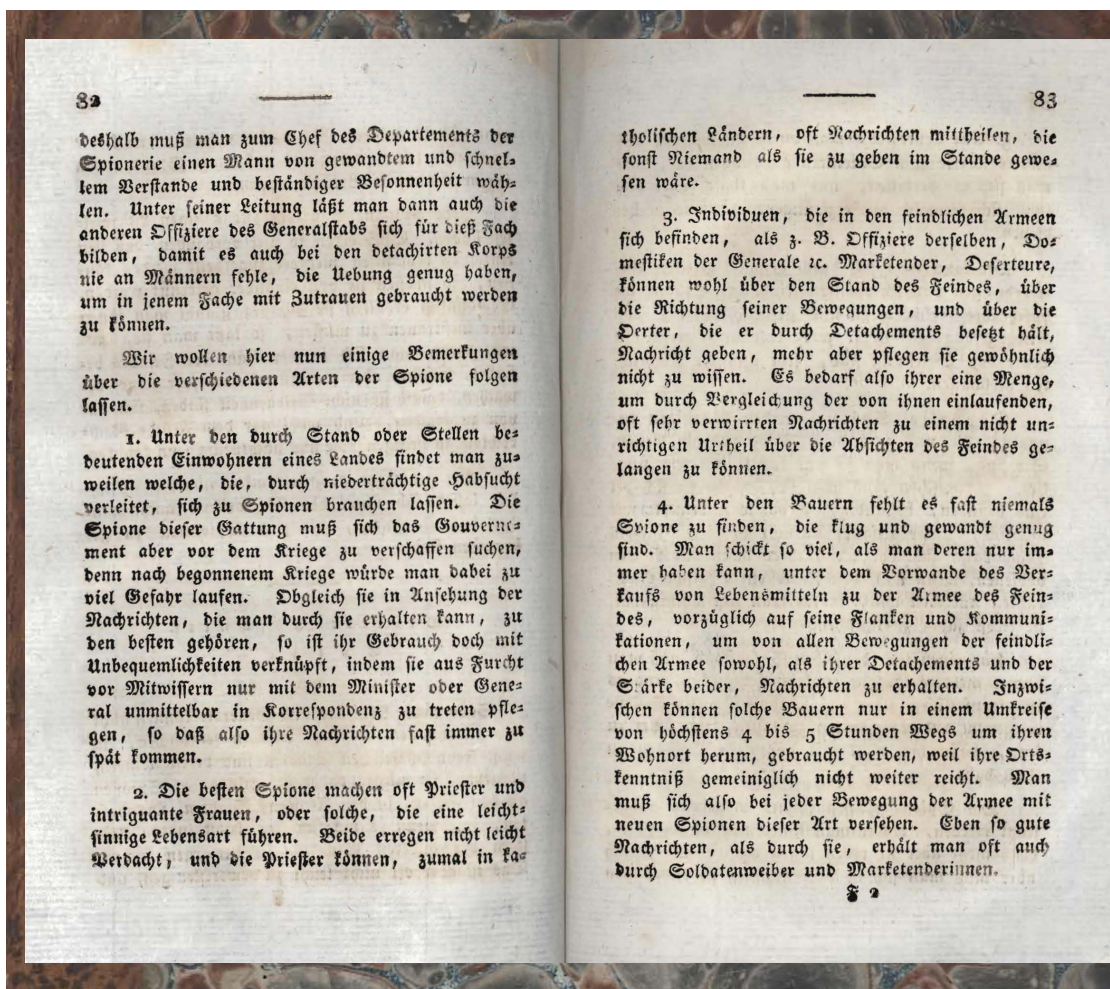
European views on religion and gender in the early 19th century differ from today. The original German translation is in CIA's Historical Intelligence Collection. The whereabouts of the French original is unknown.—R.S.

Third Chapter—Spies

Sovereigns, ministers and generals can never know too much about what is going on in enemy and even friendly states and their armies. They must therefore try to equip themselves with good spies in the courts [of the nobility], in the armies, cities, towns, and if possible, even in the cloisters of the other states. But that is often not easy to bring about, and therefore, one must choose as the chief of the espionage department, a man who is clever and understands quickly and who has steady level-headedness. Under his leadership, one can then train other officers of the General Staff on this subject. Then there will never be a lack of men in the detached corps who have enough practice to be used with confidence in the subject.

Now we want to make a few comments about the various kinds of spies.

1. Among the most important inhabitants of a country (because of rank or position), one can find some who suffer from base greed and can be used as spies. The government has to try to obtain spies of this type before a war because there is much danger involved once war has started. Even if it appears that the information they can provide is among the best, their use also has drawbacks because, out of fear of exposure, they can only be in direct correspondence with the Minister or general, so their information almost always comes too late.

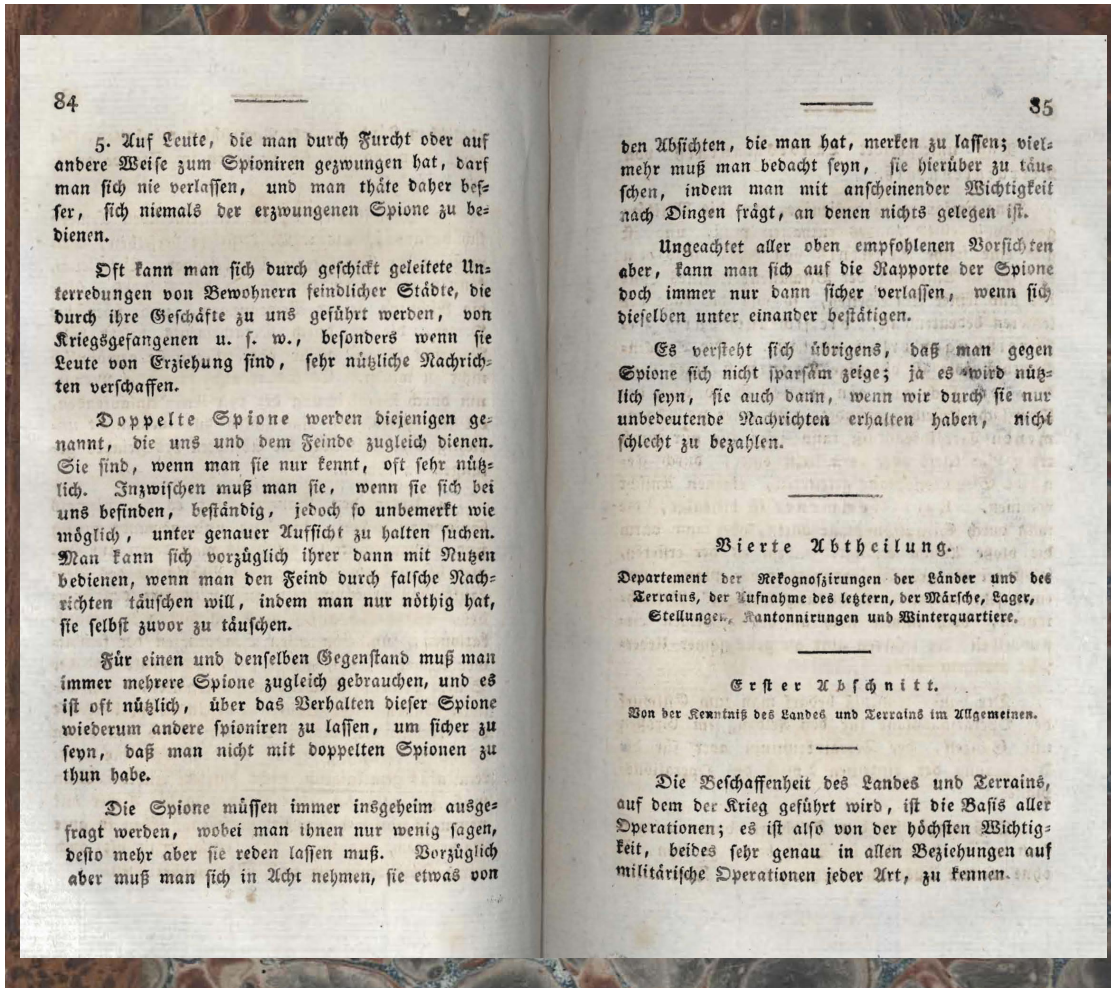


2. The best potential spies are often priests and intriguing women, or those who have a frivolous lifestyle. These people do not easily draw suspicion and the priests can, especially in Catholic countries, often provide information which no one else can provide.

3. Individuals who are in the enemy army, such as its officers, officers' servants, marketers, and deserters, can indeed provide information on the condition of the enemy, on the direction of its movements, and on the places its detachments are occupying, but usually they won't know more. One therefore needs a lot of them so one can compare the incoming and often very confusing information so that one can come to the right conclusion about the enemy's intentions.

4. One can almost always obtain spies among the peasants who are intelligent and clever enough. One sends as many of them as one can have under the pretext of selling provisions to the enemy's army, especially on its flanks and lines of communications to obtain information above all on enemy movements as well as its detachments and the strengths of both. However, such peasants can only be used in an area of only four to five hours away from their homes because their knowledge generally does not extend farther. One must therefore obtain new spies of this sort with each movement of the army. One can also obtain equally good information as they can provide, from soldiers' wives and camp followers.

5. One can never rely on people who are forced to spy out of fear or other means, and one would be better off to never use coerced spies.



One can often obtain very useful information by carefully led conversations with residents of enemy cities, who come to us because of their business, from prisoners of war, etc., especially if they are educated people.

Doubled spies [double agents] are those who serve both us and the enemy. They, when recognized, are often very useful. In the meantime, one must constantly and as discreetly as possible keep them under close observation when they are among us. They can then be especially useful when one wants to deceive the enemy with false information, in that one only needs to deceive them.

For the same reason, one should use several spies at the same time, and it is often useful to have other spies to spy on the actions of them to ensure one is not dealing with double agents.

Spies must always be questioned in secret, whereby one should tell them little and let them talk a lot. One must be especially careful to let them notice something of one's intentions; one must be more careful to deceive them by asking about things of seeming importance which are not important.

In spite of all of the previously suggested cautions, one can indeed only safely rely on the reports of the spies if they can confirm one another's information.

Also it is evident that one should not be too thrifty with spies; thus it would be useful to not pay them poorly even when we receive only insignificant information from them.

