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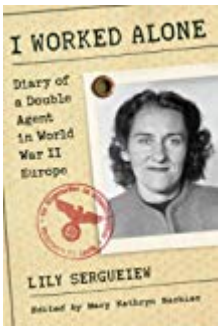

Lily Sergueiew. *I Worked Alone: Diary of a Double Agent in World War II Europe.* Edited by Mary Kathryn Barbier. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014. 320 pp. $39.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7864-9613-6.

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Published on H-War (January, 2017)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

I Worked Alone: Diary of a Double Agent in World War II is the memoir of Nathalie "Lily" Sergueiew, a French woman who served as a double agent for the British in the second half of World War II. A wanderer and travel writer, Sergueiew begins her memoir in Beirut where, in the summer of 1940, she was stunned to learn of the German invasion and defeat of France in six short weeks. Sergueiew was determined to return to Europe and enter the German Secret Service (*Abwehr*) so that she could undermine it from within as a double agent for the Allies.

During the war, Sergueiew kept diaries and notebooks, which became the base for a memoir she wrote in the late 1940s, titled *I Worked Alone: Diary of a Double Agent*. Although parts of the memoir were published in French and English in the 1960s, this is the first publication of Sergueiew's original and complete memoir with only minor edits by historian Mary Kathryn Barbier, who acquired the text in 2010. In her preface, Barbier notes that the memoir she acquired was translated but it remains unclear whether Sergueiew or someone else was responsible for the translation. There are numerous spelling and grammatical errors throughout the memoir, which at times hampers the readability, flow, and clarity of the text. One frequently wishes that Barbier had taken a heavier editorial hand.

The memoir is organized into seven parts and zigzags from Beirut to France to the supposedly neutral countries of Spain and Portugal and eventually to England, where Sergueiew worked—somewhat contentiously—for British intelligence for just over six months. The bulk of the journey concerns Sergueiew's long struggle to actually get to England, which she finally was able to do in November 1943. Her chronicle offers an intricate (if sometimes overly detailed) portrait of intelligence operations and tactics during World War II, as she takes the reader through the various challenges of espionage, including her extensive training in Morse code, ciphering, microphotography, and secret writing.

Notably, what stands out about the espionage activity recounted in the book is its remarkably slow pace and frequent tediousness. This is not the fast-moving, simultaneously exciting, and unsettling world of secret meetings in dark alleys and nightclubs portrayed in popular spy films. Sergueiew's path to becoming a double agent was continually stalled by obstacles, ranging from bureaucratic delays caused by the mess of visas, passes, and other paperwork required in German-occupied France to incompetent German officials, perennially late for meetings and appointments and often unclear about the rules of their own administration. With a large cast of characters, Sergueiew paints a picture of a disorganized, even bumbling German intelligence operation in occupied France and thereby helps to complicate historical conceptions of the German occupation regime as monolithic, all-encompassing, and highly efficient.

Sergueiew's documentation of her time as a double agent also offers insight into a growing body of scholarship concerning women and espionage during wartime.[1] Though the back-cover copy states that Sergueiew "confidently seduced the German Intelligence Service into employing her as a spy," the memoir fundamentally contradicts this stereotype of the hypersexualized female spy. Indeed, German intelligence officials, as portrayed by Sergueiew, do not appear to have been roped in by her "feminine wiles" but were convinced of her intelligence, intrepidness, and willingness to learn. Given the relatively small circle of female spies during World War II, Sergueiew's matter-of-fact, business-like account of her time as a double agent contributes to the critical work historians are doing to unpack women's espionage and resistance activities and tease apart myths from realities.[2]

Sergueiew of course may have had her own reasons for omitting any discussions of intimate connections with the Germans, given that she would have experienced firsthand the treatment meted out to collaborators in postwar France, particularly women accused of having had relationships with German occupation forces.[3] Sergueiew offers a more nuanced understanding of collaboration than one might expect, motivated at least in part by the cognizance that her own activities could be misconstrued as collaboration. In 1941, while at a restaurant with her Austrian handler, Major Kliemann, and his French mistress Yvonne Deldaise, she saw a German captain holding hands with "one of these women whom one would not like to call French" but she immediately questioned her hasty judgement: "What right have I to throw the stone at the woman, when I am seated between Yvonne and Kliemann?" (p. 42).

It is these snapshots of the broader historical context of war and occupation—and its many complications and contradictions—that are particularly compelling and revealing. The invasive and inescapable realities of war on daily life are ever-present in Sergueiew's memoir. As the German occupiers pilfer wine, liquor, stockings, and underwear, Sergueiew recounts the steadily mounting shortages of fuel and basic foodstuffs as well as an increasingly bleak, distrustful social environment, in which "everybody keeps to his corner" (p. 94).

Perhaps most striking are the (admittedly few) entries related to the persecution of the Jews in France. In June 1942, Sergueiew observed that Jews were now required to wear the Yellow Star. Her only comment is one of personal annoyance. She had spotted a queue and joined it, hoping to "get something interesting," when in fact the line-up was for Jews to obtain their newly required patches. She had "waited twenty-five minutes for nothing" (p. 59). A month later, Sergueiew offered a more empathetic voice as she witnessed the deportation of "foreign Jews," or Jews without French nationality: "The Jew hunt is systematic" and is accompanied by "scenes of horror" that only seem to multiply (p. 61). These passages,

while brief and fleeting, jolt the reader into remembering that Sergueiew's espionage-focused world was also one in which the Holocaust was ongoing.

The memoir exposes both the devastating powers of the German occupation as well as the moments it began to crack. In early 1943, Sergueiew encountered a group of adolescent German soldiers who were about to set off for the eastern front, already in receipt of their equipment and skis. This is the best the German army had to offer: "And that's what 'they' are sending to the Russian Front: boys aged 14, a pair of skis and no knowledge how to use them" (p. 86).

I Worked Alone is first and foremost a memoir about espionage in World War II. However, its primary strengths lie in those moments where the context of war and occupation enter, often unassumingly, into the narrative, thereby giving the book a broader usefulness and significance beyond espionage studies.

Notes

[1]. Historians in a wide variety of fields have exposed and continue to uncover the roles of women in intelligence activities during periods of conflict and war, including but not limited to the British Civil War and American Civil War as well as World Wars I and II. While this literature is too vast to list, sources on women's espionage activity in the First and Second World Wars include: Elizabeth P. McIntosh, ***Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS***, repr. ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009); Katie Pickles, ***Transnational Outrage: The Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell*** (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Tammy Proctor, ***Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War*** (New York: New York University Press, 2003); and Sophie de Schaepdrijver, ***Gabrielle Petit: The Death and Life of a Female Spy in the First World War*** (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). There are also numerous biographical accounts of Mata Hari, the classic female spy of World War I who worked for French and German intelligence until the French executed her in 1917. Two of the more recent biographies include Philippe Collas, ***Mata Hari: Sa véritas histoire*** (Paris: Plon, 2003); and Pat Shipman, ***Femme Fatale: Love, Lies, and the Unknown Life of Mata Hari*** (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2007).

[2]. In German-occupied Belgium, for example, the number of women varied from one espionage network to another, but they typically made up between 10 and 20 percent of the membership, though rarely in a leadership capacity. See Emannuel Debruyne, ***La guerre secrète des espions belges: 1940-1944*** (Brussels: Racine, 2008), 309; and Fabrice Maerten, "La Résistance, facteu r d'émancipation des femmes? Le cas du Hainaut," ***Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent***, no. 4 (1998): 174.

[3]. The final pages of the memoir, in fact, recount the postwar legal investigation of Yvonne Delidaise, a French woman with a German mother who was the mistress of Sergueiew's handler in the German Intelligence Service, Major Kliemann, and one of Sergueiew's closest contacts. Although Yvonne's exact fate is unknown at the end of the memoir, the violent treatment of French women accused of having had intimate relationships with members of the German occupation forces in the postwar period is well known. See Alain Brossat, ***Les tondues: Une carnaval moche*** (Paris: Éditions Manya, 1992); Claire Duchen, "Opening Pandora's Box: The Case of Femmes Tondues," in ***Problems in French History***, ed. Martyn Cornick and Ceri Crossley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 213-232; Megan Koreman, ***The Expectation of Justice: France 1944-1946*** (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), esp. 108-113; Corran Laurens, "'La Femme au Turban': Les Femmes Tondues," in ***The Liberation of France: Image and Event***, ed. H. R. Kedward and Nancy Wood (Washington, DC: Berg, 1995), 155-179; and Fabrice Virgili, ***Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France*** (New York: Berg, 2002).

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Citation: Stacy Hushion. Review of Sergueiew, Lily. *I Worked Alone: Diary of a Double Agent in World War II Europe.* H-War, H-Net Reviews. January, 2017.

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