

Preparations For The Polish War

(Confidential)

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Systematic penetration of the Polish State by German espionage many years before the invasion is related in the accompanying instalment of the story of German Communications Intelligence. Success of several large intercept stations and the solving of Polish air net encryption in 1925 made the Polish Air order of battle available.

No doubt a number of books, articles, and other publications will appear on the war between Germany and Poland, which began in the morning hours of 1 September 1939. They will cover the course of the operations, the history of events preceding the war, and many details. We do not intend to speak of all these things here, but shall deal with a part of the history of the preliminaries of this war into which relatively few people had any insight.

The question as to when the preliminary history of this war against Poland began is difficult to answer, since this preliminary period is longer than is generally assumed. We can state with certainty that the earliest beginnings of preparation for war against Poland go back to the period of 1923. From then on there began a systematic penetration of the entire Polish state by the German espionage service using so-called "confidence men."

The first part of this work consisted in a current coverage of all events in Polish official agencies, in the armed forces, in the government, in industry, in transportation, and in all other branches of public life. The second part of this activity of the "confidence men" or the German counter-intelligence service consisted in infiltrating and under-mining the morale of the people and the military power of resistance of the Polish State in a practical way.

Army of Agents Enlisted

The basis for this work was exceptionally

favorable in the Poland of those days. A great many Germans had become Polish citizens, although they were not at heart in sympathy with the Polish state. It was now a question of enlisting these people for the work by playing on their feelings as Germans. In the counterintelligence group of the Ministry of Defense a special section "Poland" was set up at that time within the framework of Section I. This unit had existed before, it is true, but its intensive work began about 1923. From here on it endeavored to spin a net of agents and "confidence men" over all Poland. This was done partly from Berlin directly, but partly through the counterintelligence offices at Koenigsberg, Frankfurt, and Breslau, and from their advanced branch stations of which there were a number. Use was also made of the cooperation of various private organizations for gathering information, and of official and semi-official agencies which were made available for the purpose. The work started off rather quickly and well, so that after some two years there was hardly a place of any size in Poland where there was not a confidential agent of the German espionage service, or at least a purveyor of information.

At the beginning of 1926 the espionage service against Poland was greatly intensified. It is not known what the reasons were, but in any event a considerable increase in spy activity began about that time. It may be that several accidents contributed to this, since shortly before this, the German counterintelligence serv-

ice had succeeded in enlisting some very useful agents. Among them was a man who worked in the Regulations Office of the Polish War Ministry. From 1926 on photographs of Polish service regulations were received in Berlin from this man. Two other people were in the so-called D.O.K. (Corps Areas) and from these photographs were received constantly of tables of organization, service instructions, summaries of formations, strength summaries, etc. As a result German espionage was very fully informed respecting every branch of the service and nearly every troop unit. Regulations and instructions for maneuvers likewise came into German hands in this manner. The first important shipment from the confidential agent in the Polish Ministry of War was a lengthy set of instructions for the Polish air force which was then holding its first large scale exercises.

Deserters From the General Staff

Occasionally the German espionage service was lucky in that deserters from the Polish armed forces came over and told all sorts of things. Among them there were also officers, even officers of the general staff; thus, for example, in 1930-1931 in the course of seven or eight months, three officers of the Polish general staff appeared in Berlin and laid most welcome information on the table.

Along with this exploration of Poland purely by means of espionage, the Germans also carried on a very active radio intercept service against this country. For this purpose, the intercept stations in Koenigsberg, Frankfurt on the Oder, and Breslau were available. Fully half of the commitment was against Poland, and they intercepted all Polish diplomatic radio traffic as well as the traffic of the army and the air force. We shall speak about successes with the diplomatic radio traffic later. For the moment we shall describe Polish military traffic.

Most fruitful in this regard were the German successes against the Polish air force. This had been under development since 1922, and by the beginning of 1926 had essentially completed its structure from an organizational standpoint. For the weather service, the starting and landing service, and for the entire administration of the Polish air force, a net of high

powered radio stations had been set up, of which the Poles made liberal use. These stations (there were ten in all) were covered by the German intercept service day and night, and every transmission was carefully noted and passed on to the evaluation center of the German intercept service in Berlin. A considerable portion of the information was enciphered. However, at the end of 1925 the Germans succeeded in solving the cryptographic system; with this they now got a wonderful insight into all that was happening with the Polish air force. Nothing remained secret. They even knew every single Polish plane with its type, serial number, and individual number, and they gained this knowledge in the simplest manner imaginable.

Each Plane Noted

The Poles announced by radio every start and every landing of a plane, with a statement of the direction of the flight, the time of starting or landing, the type, the serial number, and the individual number of the plane - all this in plain text. Hence if a plane of the Polish air force flew, for example, from Lemberg to Lida with an intermediate landing in Warsaw and returned by the same route to Lemberg, the plane was reported not less than eight times by radio. On the average there were some 60 to 80 of these landings reported daily. All the planes mentioned were entered in a card catalog and at the expiration of a few months one had a complete survey of the stock of planes, together with the momentary assignment to one of the six Polish air regiments. Soon the Germans also knew the condition of each plane and after a few years they knew precisely, (using coefficients of depreciation) the degree of serviceability of the individual machines.

In contrast to the army, where the Poles made little use of radio-telegraphy, the Polish air force worked very diligently in this field. On many days hundreds of telegrams could be intercepted. Especially lively was this traffic before and during Polish maneuvers in which the air force participated and also at pure air maneuvers. The results were so informative that these maneuvers could be followed as exactly at the map table as if one were present as an eyewitness.

With regard to the Polish army radio

service, German successes were not quite so abundant for - as already mentioned - the army was very reserved in its use of radio. Only at exercises and maneuvers could any insight be gained.

The first German work in this field was with the Polish maneuvers near Lida in 1929, the course of which could be reconstructed almost completely.

To be sure, the question remained open whether the value of disguise of Polish radio traffic in the army might not be problematic, and be valid only in peacetime; the Polish radio service cloaked itself in an excess of security at the expense of the transmission of information. In case of war the urgent necessity for means of communications would come into the foreground and there was danger that then the whole system of radio camouflage would be upset. This system was extremely complicated. Every radio station worked always with three different call signs simultaneously and also on its own wave lengths. Both call signs and wave lengths changed daily, sometimes even twice a day. It called for a great deal of skill to pick out any relatively certain relation under normal conditions. It was inevitable that war conditions with all their accidental factors, disturbances, and disquietudes would severely try this system. In 1928 the Germans began collaborating with the Lithuanians. The man in charge of intelligence in the Lithuanian Ministry of War had given unofficially his consent for this collaboration, and soon there was an exchange of information between the two secret services. Of course, they were not too frank on either side and only revealed as much as they thought advisable in view of the situation. Later there was also cooperation with Esthonia; in the main, however, this was directed against the Soviet Union, just as the cooperation between the German and Finnish intercept services was directed solely against Russia.

Diplomatic Traffic Read

In regard to the cryptanalytic activity carried out by the Germans against Poland, it may be stated that a large part of the diplomatic exchange of information between the Polish Government and its representatives abroad could be read. This gave excellent insight into the activity of Polish diplomacy and into the relations be-

Of course, the Poles had set up an intercept service against Germany. They had a very good base for this since the Danzig Corridor gave them the chance to encircle East Prussia and also to work successfully against the main portion of Germany. But, in contrast to the French and Czech intercept units, this was so organized and knew how to disguise itself so completely that nothing became known in Germany about this service until 1931. Neither its organization, its practical operation, nor the scope of its results was known. In 1931 a Polish sergeant, who had worked for several years in the Polish intercept service and most recently in the Polish intercept station in Graudenz, deserted. He reported to the German counterintelligence and in his interrogations revealed very valuable details regarding what was going on in the Polish intercept service. Now the entire organization and technique of the service became known in Germany. Moreover he was in a position to state which German radio circuits were monitored by preference, and which German cryptographic systems had been solved or were being worked on by the Polish cryptanalytic service. He gave valuable hints as to weaknesses in the German radio service as seen by the enemy.

Along with the interception of Polish radio traffic, the German intercept service was naturally concerned with checking on Polish wire connections leading out of Poland. The Polish Corridor gave a favorable base for this. Danzig, too, was wonderfully adapted for getting at the Polish wire net. It goes without saying that the telephone conversations of the Polish embassy in Berlin and of all Polish consular representatives were listened to and evaluated by the Germans.

Intensified Spying in '34

A new intensification of the entire German spy service began in 1934. From now on there ensued, along with straight spy activity, an undermining of the powers of resistance of the Polish armed forces. A gigantic network of agents and "confidence men" was built up. The recruiting of these people was not always carried on in a very nice manner but pressure and coercion were employed. All offices of the Polish armed forces, police, railway, or post were now

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infiltrated by "confidence men" who were working for the German espionage service. Reconnaissance of our fortifications was carried on with great zeal. The reward paid by the Germans for such services was surprisingly small, and many very valuable reports were settled for with sums of less than 100 German marks. It may be said that from 1934 on virtually nothing regarding the Polish armed forces and national defense remained hidden from the German spy service. Every troop movement, the organization, equipment, and armament of military units, all plans, and mobilization measures were reported currently.

The so-called VDA (Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Auslande - /People's League of German Culture Abroad/ played a special role in this work. A central office was set up in Berlin for this organization which might be compared with a government ministry. From here thousands of connections radiated into foreign countries and especially into Poland; from here under the protective cloak of purely cultural service for Germans abroad an enormous spy activity was carried on.

The reconnaissance of Poland was again strengthened beginning in 1936 and from the end of 1938 increased to a regular drum fire.

Change in Zero Hour

It is generally known that the war against Poland began at 0545 hours on 1 September 1939. It may be less well known that the attack had been planned for 27 August and that all preparations had been made for that date. Late in the evening of 26 August it suddenly occurred to Adolph Hitler to put off the time for the attack. What induced him to make this change is not clear. Perhaps his astrologer was responsible, or one of his well known whims. In short, about ten o'clock in the evening telephones began to ring, teletypes began to rattle, radio stations to function, and a flood of thousands of orders tried to reach the advanced units in time to take account of a new situation and to prevent the troops from launching an attack. The fact that it was possible to get these orders through in time was a masterful performance of the German communication system.

Without doubt the Polish communication

service must have noticed this activity in the German communications net. It must have been a very serious warning for the Poles. Any specialist knows what such a change of decision means in modern warfare in an age where there is an intercept service. This naive change in the plan long since precisely fitted together with all the dangers inherent in such a change was the first indication of the primitive quality of Hitler's thinking in regard to military matters.

Data Available for Bombers

It is not necessary to depict the course of the campaign against Poland; competent people will discuss this thoroughly, insofar as it has not not already been done. The focal point of the commitment on the German side lay with the air force. Its work was facilitated by the fact that the spying on Poland had yielded such precise data that the German bombers could work with precision. The Polish air force was practically eliminated in a very short time. Lt. General Kesselring, who had prepared the plans, the training, and the commitment of the young German air force had been appointed commander of Air Fleet Number One against the Poles. He belonged to the type which ruthlessly abuses power and by brutal methods he now accomplished what he had prepared for over the years.

Three weeks sufficed to settle Poland completely from a military point of view. But with that, the fate of the Poles and particularly of the Polish Jews was by no means settled, since the real suffering of these people was only now beginning. On this subject we cannot report more in detail within the limits of this work. I recall from those days the broadcast of the Vatican in which it was said: "The terrors and unpardonable excesses against a helpless and now homeless people, the Poles, are confirmed by reports of eyewitnesses, and cannot be repudiated. The worst thing is the cynical suppression of everything which religious activity leads one to expect, and this on the part of one of the most pious people of Europe."

At that time, when negotiations for surrender were being conducted in the command car of General of the Infantry Blaskowitz with representatives of the Polish armed forces, the leader of the Polish delegat-

(Continued on page 16)

WAR IN THE ETHER
(Cont'd from page 11)

ion said: "Remember," gentlemen, the fortunes of war can turn." On the German side that was regarded then as a peice of incredible insolence. At that time they still had no idea of the frightful manner in which these words were to be fulfilled for Germany a few years later.