

## BEHIND POLAND'S DEFEAT

By MIECZYSLAW M. NOWINSKI

THE Thirty Days War between Germany and Poland, when Hitler overran his eastern neighbor, smashed her defenses, wiped out her airdromes, and cut her army of more than 1,000,000 men into ribbons, is still an urgent subject for discussion in military circles everywhere. How was it possible for a nation of 32,000,000, with a well-trained army, first-class military equipment, and a small but up-to-date air force, to melt away before the German attack as if it had had no more strength than another Ethiopia? No military expert expected Poland to succeed single-handed in driving back the Nazis, but there were few tacticians who did not believe that Polish resistance would be longer and the defeat less humiliating.

Yet within twenty-four hours after Hitler launched his *Blitzkrieg* 75 per cent of the Polish planes were destroyed — most while still in their hangars. The Nazis forestalled aid from the British and French air corps by destroying virtually every Polish airfield equipped to

receive and service military planes. Had Allied aircraft been sent to Poland they would have found that Polish air facilities had ceased to exist. In the first days of the war the German army destroyed Polish communication lines and railroad bridges behind the Polish vanguard. Army transport trains operating on secret schedules were located by the Germans and bombed in their terminals. Mobilization centers and concentration points, presumably known only to the Polish High Command, were known to German aviation. Munitions dumps and oil reserves to the last isolated gasoline depot were singled out and blasted. . . . How was this miracle of efficiency achieved? The answer has been given me in detail by high Polish officials, and I supplemented their revelations with independent investigation.

The perfection of the German advance can only be explained by saying that the Nazis were in possession of the most complete information about Polish plans and military secrets. And that is the

answer. Poland was carefully prepared for the "kill" over a period of years. Nothing was left to chance. Behind the destruction of the country is a story of organized espionage without modern parallel for completeness and scale.

The precision of the German Intelligence in Poland amazed even the heads of the British Secret Service. It was conducted on a mass basis, modeled on the system of the world-famous spy, Wilhelm Stieber, who organized German espionage in 1866 prior to the Bohemian campaign and prepared the ground for the rapid conquest of France during the Franco-Prussian War. It was estimated that Stieber had 30,000 spies operating in France in 1870. In September, 1939, the Nazis had in Poland at least 20,000 agents imported from Germany. These professional efforts were supplemented by the amateur work of some 700,000 Polish citizens of German origin who wanted to return to the Reich and who were engaging in systematic spying activities for the Germans. Practically one out of every thirty inhabitants of Poland was a German agent, constantly on the alert and in touch with Germany.

At Marshal Pilsudski's funeral in 1934 an unusual number of high Nazi dignitaries represented Ger-

many. I recall the puzzled expressions on the faces of thousands of Poles who watched the funeral procession with its German officers on all sides. But that was merely the beginning.

The period of "better relations" which Pilsudski had inaugurated — out of necessity — with Germany was officially sealed by a non-aggression pact. This was supplemented by a special treaty regulating the press. Expression of all anti-Nazi sentiment was banned from Polish newspapers. Mention of the persecution of the Polish minority in Germany disappeared. During this happy honeymoon the frontiers were flung open to German visitors, and thousands of Germans paid visits to "relatives" across the border. Hordes of business agents and official representatives swarmed over Poland. Automobile salesmen especially were plentiful. German auto agencies sprang up in the most out-of-the-way places and every Polish peasant who applied was given a long demonstration ride which, according to police records, almost always led to and from a vital military sector. For every car sold in Poland during these years at least two salesmen were kept on duty. Before last year's annual automobile race through Poland a large corps of

engineers was dispatched from Germany to "inspect" the roads. Their inspection was so thorough that when Hitler's motorized detachments swept over Poland they were not delayed for lack of knowledge about a single detour.

The German tourist organizations *Kraft durch Freude* and *Freude durch Kraft* jammed the Polish State Railways with tourists until even that proverbially poverty-stricken railroad began to show a profit. These tourists — each complete with little camera — scattered over Poland, taking photographs wherever they went. How humble German citizens on vacation could each take literally hundreds of pictures surprised the Polish authorities who did not know that the films were provided by the German Intelligence.

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In accordance with international regulations, no photographs were supposed to be taken in flight on the Berlin-Warsaw air line, operated jointly by the Polish *Lot* and the German *Lufthansa*. Inept as were the Polish government police they could not fail to discover that a steady stream of aerial photographs were pouring into Germany. Perfunctory denials were given to

their protests, and in order to avoid friction cameras would occasionally be destroyed by dropping them from the German planes after they had performed their function. Again and again the Polish Intelligence Service complained to Foreign Minister Beck about the large-scale photographic activities of his new Nazi friends, but he was unable to stop them.

Perhaps the crassest act of espionage ever performed was undertaken by the German Ufa film company. After consultation with the Polish authorities, this organization was permitted to make a propaganda picture of Poland. Several motorized production units roved the country for four months, using countless reels of film to photograph everything of "patriotic" interest. They penetrated fortifications, military encampments, and airdromes. Polish artillery performed for them and air squadrons maneuvered before German lenses. More than 1,000,000 feet of film was taken, but the picture was never produced. It had an exclusive premiere in the private offices of the German secret service.

The Germans are known to be fond of Nature. Yet even for these admirers of birds and dachshunds, the number of pigeon fanciers among German Poles was remark-

able. The Polish authorities, after observing the activities of these pigeon enthusiasts, decided that in the areas adjacent to Germany it was necessary to limit the possession of carrier pigeons. On several occasions, the visits of Goebbels, Hess, and other important Nazis were suddenly announced and before the Poles could fathom the purpose of the surprise journeys, an army of Gestapo agents would arrive for the ostensible purpose of protecting the route of the Nazi dignitaries. The same procedure was followed when Marshal Goering periodically participated in the boar hunts in the Bialowierza forests. These Gestapo agents, having *carte blanche* to take what photographs and ask what questions they wished, supplemented the permanent Nazi espionage.

The laws which were later passed prohibiting German landowners from occupying large estates adjoining the German border were never enforced. In a few instances these landowners transferred titles to the name of some amenable Pole, but for the most part not even this precaution was deemed necessary. During the war, when Polish soldiers invaded these estates, they found not only cement gun emplacements and complete radio transmission stations,

but also landing fields for German planes and reserves of gas and oil.

Germany started the invasion of Poland only after every mile of Polish terrain had been mapped and every foot of Polish defenses charted. On the first day of the German campaign the Nazi air force bombed twenty-one key cities and villages in Poland. The effectiveness of the bombardment suggests that the German fliers not only had complete maps of the area but were receiving detailed advice from local informers. The bombing of Leczyca, in the district of Lodz, is an example of Nazi thoroughness. This town, with a population of 10,000, did not appear to be of any military importance. Apart from its miniature garrison of one hundred and fifty soldiers there was no ostensible reason for the Nazis to pay any particular attention to it. Yet squadron after squadron of German planes swept the small city, giving it the questionable distinction of being the most intensely bombed area for its size in the world.

Polish officers asked themselves why the Nazis were dropping hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of bombs on such a singularly unimportant objective. The seventeenth air raid told the tale. The Germans succeeded in exploding

one of the largest secret munition dumps in Poland, known only to a few of the highest Polish officers. The German Intelligence had learned far in advance of the strategic importance of little Lezcyca. So certain were they of their information that sixteen unsuccessful bombings did not prevent them from coming a seventeenth time to bomb the hidden reserve.

The same accuracy prevailed in bombing of railroad terminals. Military trains do not operate on a timetable schedule and destinations are known in advance only to a small section of railroad personnel. Yet the bombing of Polish terminals was generally done when military transports were at the stations. On September 5 an army transport left the Central station en route to the front. At 11:20 that morning the terminal was bombed. Fifteen minutes later, when the transport was due at the Praga station across the river, that terminal was bombed. By some good fortune the train escaped damage and continued on its journey. Four hours later, when it arrived at a small village east of Warsaw, German planes appeared and destroyed the village, the terminal, and the departing train. There is evidence to substantiate the view that German spies traveled in army trains

and informed German fliers of the routes by short wave radio.

Essential information not obtained through espionage activity was presented practically as a gift by vain Polish officers to the Germans. Their irresponsible boasting and display of secret equipment was a standing joke in more restrained military circles. When the war started no troop concentration was possible in Poland, while reserve troops found it impossible to reach their respective units. The Polish military was a shambles of confused troops isolated from each other and facing the organized fire of Germans wherever they turned. The German general staff knew more about the Polish army than the majority of Polish generals.

During the World War a British spy managed to serve for three years as an officer on the German High Command, as assistant to General Ludendorff, while a German agent acted as British censor in London. But these were, after all, minor exploits compared to the espionage state-within-a-state which the Nazis maintained in Poland. Poland collapsed like a wooden structure whose inside has been devoured by termites. The Nazi agents did their job with unsurpassed thoroughness.

## COMMON-LAW WIVES

By ANTHONY M. TURANO

UNDER the old Common Law, as it was once understood in some states of the Union, a woman could have herself adjudged a wife by simply proving that her lover promised to marry her and that she thereafter permitted the marriage to be consummated without awaiting the wedding ceremony. The physical union was the legal equivalent of the nuptial contract. Although this curious doctrine is no longer applied by the courts, the same kind of judicial chivalry is still to be found in at least twenty-six states and jurisdictions, where common-law marriages are recognized, and where a genuine case of monogamy may overtake a man willy-nilly, without his having given so much as a nod of assent to any official, or even to the woman who has decided to rope him. Indeed, a bachelor may annex a wife through the careless diction of his correspondence. According to a ruling handed down in 1916, a humble postman had unwittingly usurped the function of a parson, and two lonely hearts pal-

pitating independently in Missouri and Minnesota had been welded for life by the simple exchange of *billet doux* and reply. On the death of her letter-perfect husband, the lady took her correspondence to a Federal court, which granted her the full financial returns of widowhood.

But the typical common-law marriage is seldom based upon any written instrument. Calling his favorite feminine acquaintance aside, John may say to her in words of the present tense: "Listen, Mary, I take you now as my legal wife, according to the Common Law; do you accept me as your husband?" Mary may reply affirmatively in words of her own choosing. A tighter matrimonial knot could not be tied by a college of cardinals. Since no gentleman will embarrass a lady with such a proposal in public, these nuptials are supposed to take place almost invariably without witnesses. But after listening to conflicting evidence, mostly about the subsequent behavior of the parties, the courts