

Original article

German preparations for the war in the light of documents of the Polish military intelligence (1933-1939) – selected aspects

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the Treaty of Versailles the provisions concerning the issue of limitation of the armed forces were imposed on Germany. These provisions were unilaterally terminated by Germany two years after Adolf Hitler had come to power. There was introduced general and compulsory military service. On 21st May 1935, Hitler – as the Fuhrer and Reich Chancellor – signed the secret Reich Defence Law, which gave the Wehrmacht command wide powers to expand the army. Thus, the intensive development of the German army was initiated.

After the Nazi Party came to power in Germany, gaining new information by the Polish military intelligence became increasingly difficult. It was connected with the expansion of the German counter-intelligence services, especially the Gestapo, as well as the police supervision over the German society. Through good operational work of the Polish intelligence the Polish side already before the outbreak of the war was relatively well familiarized with the particular phases of the overall German army's armaments, as well as the German operational doctrine and methods of warfare.

KEYWORDS

Wehrmacht, Second Republic of Poland, Third Reich, military intelligence

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Introduction

The Treaty of Versailles, especially its Part V, ordered the Germans to reduce the number of the armed forces to 100,000 soldiers and forbade the introduction of the obligatory conscription. Moreover, it was not permitted to equip the army with tanks and war crafts and also the equipment of the Navy was limited and its number was re-

duced to 15 thousand people. The General Staff was resolved and there was introduced a ban on the erection of buildings and war fortifications. Germany never accepted those terms. The plan for the expansion of the German army, called the Schleicher Plan [1, p. 64]¹, was developed already in the mid-30s of the twentieth century. It contained information on the development of that army in the first years of the rule of Adolf Hitler. As Wladyslaw Kozaczuk wrote – “owing to the successful action of the Polish military intelligence, which had been penetrating the Third Reich highest military institutions for many years, a complete set of documents making up the Schleicher Plan became the possession of the Polish General Staff. At the end of 1934 this complete document was submitted to the representatives of the General Staff of the French army” [1, p. 63].

The provisions of the Treaty were unilaterally terminated by Germany two years after Adolf Hitler had come to power. The Act of 16 March 1935 introduced general and compulsory military service. The Wehrmacht was established in the place of the professional Reichswehr. “This afternoon – as we read in Capt. W. Steblik’s report – the government of the Third Reich announced a new military statute of Germany, thus introducing the general obligation of military service and establishing the composition of the army for peace time: **12 corps and 36 divisions**” [2, p. 253].²

“The new German army with the air force and navy will reach 400-450,000 people. This move of the Reich ultimately negated Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. The Reich is considered completely independent in military terms” – we read further in this report [2, p. 254].

On the same day, the proclamation showing the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles and explaining the need to increase the German armed forces was issued to the German nation. On 21 May of the same year, Hitler as *Fuhrer* and Reich Chancellor signed the secret Reich Defence Law, which gave the Wehrmacht command wide powers to expand the army.

Observation of German armaments by the Polish military intelligence

The actions of the German authorities were observed and analyzed by the diplomatic services of all countries accredited in Berlin, including the Polish diplomats. In military terms, these tasks were implemented by military attaches [2, p. 12]³. After the Nazi Party came to power in Germany, gaining new information by the Polish military intelligence – Section II of the General Staff (from the end of 1928 – the Supreme Staff), popularly known as “Two”, became increasingly difficult. It was connected with the expansion of the German counter-intelligence services, especially the Gestapo, as well

¹ The plan aimed primarily at increasing the combat power of the army and, if necessary, tripling its efficiency. The reorganization of the army was to take place in three stages: I = 1 April 1933-31 March 1934, II = 1 April 1934-30 March 1935, III = 1 May 1935-30 April 1936.

² The Capt. W. Steblik’s Report from Berlin of 16 March 1935 on the introduction of the general conscription in Germany, addressed to the Head of the Division II of the General Staff.

³ The military attache in Berlin was Lieutenant Colonel. Witold Dzierzykraj-Morawski until April 1932, and Major/Lieutenant Colonel Antoni Szymanski from April 1932.

as the police supervision of the German society. In connection with the expansion of the Reichswehr, "Two" considered it as quite a substantial issue to obtain data on mobilization, training, organizational and technical matters, primarily those supported by documents. These matters were raised by, among others, P. Kolakowski and A. Szymanowicz [3; 4].

For instance, in the years 1932-1933, the Branch No. 4 in Katowice had about 70 agents, of whom about 30 were located in German civil – military organizations [3, p. 154]. The management of the Department "West" had high requirements for the operation of the Branches (No. 3 in Bydgoszcz and No. 4 in Katowice). The Department pointed out that "the messages they deliver, taken as a whole, are useful and systematically figured out, however, they do not cover all the issues, for example the organization of the regiment, especially heavy artillery, and barely did they address the fields of training and mobilization (...). The Branches acquire much information from the press. On the other hand, they do not have serious contacts that would provide information covering a wider range of issues" [5].

In this paper the authors present some aspects related to the organization, training, weapons and equipment of the Wehrmacht until the outbreak of the World War II. The actions of the German military authorities in this regard were initially of secretive nature and the executed undertakings were masked by all means.

Practically, the preparations for the expansion of the army began in the middle of 1933. Firstly, the care was taken to select officers and non-commissioned officers. For this purpose, twenty-three regional military commands were created on 1 October 1933. They recruited volunteers to professional military service, but also had a secret mission to form one mobilization division, the Grenzschutz Unit and units envisaged in the mobilization plan, designed in 1932 under the Schleicher Plan [See: 1, p. 92-3]. These commands were in fact hidden staffs of divisions under establishment. In those circumstances, on 21 October 1933, the Inspector General recommended to Col. Teodor Furgalski, the then Head of the Division II of the General Staff, and Maj. Antoni Szymanski, the military attache summoned from Berlin, to develop a study on the current state and armament capabilities of Germany. "Major Szymanski concluded that Germany will be ready for a war in at least 10 years' time, i.e. not until 1944" [10, p. 22-3]. We currently know that these forecasts could not prove to be true in the face of Germany's efforts towards the circumvention of provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. After all, at a later point in time, while conducting his intelligence activity Col. Szymanski revised his assessment of the possibility of Germany's militarization.

Expansion of the German army after the Nazi Party seized power

Interception units⁴ were created within German infantry battalions and were composed of: 1 non-commissioned officer and 20 privates; they were equipped with listening devices, searchlights, two heavy anti-aircraft machine guns, and were intended to possess anti-aircraft guns. Furthermore, information about the organization of heavy

⁴ Today, they can be called the reconnaissance units.

machine-gun squadrons (prohibited for Germany by the Treaty of Versailles) appeared in the press. Thus, this confirmed the intelligence information about the existence of clandestine heavy weapon squadrons in cavalry regiments. Szymanski also wrote that only one question required further clarification whether there existed separate antitank and mine-throwers platoons or antitank guns and mine-throwers platoons [2, p. 21-2].

In addition, the attache informed about conducting various technical tests and experiments. He reported that successive enterprises emerged to produce new flame-throwers. It was noted that automotive troops were re-formed into artillery and armored units. And the winter period was used by automotive troops for "practical technical studies" [2, p. 23].⁵ It should be emphasized that our attache's analyses were comprehensive and he gained quite detailed and relevant information on training directions of the German troops.

Even though this was only the beginning of 1933, the comprehensive approach and the search for systemic solutions were clearly seen in the implementation of the German armed forces development concept. A number of conclusions could be identified from these reports, first of all, that the work was carried out on the motorization of land troops, their technologization and the expansion of artillery subunits. In this report, we read that "the conversion of transport dyons (squadrons) into artillery formations performed by the German army is getting more difficult to keep it confidential" [Cf. 2, p. 24].⁶

Maneuvers served the purpose of checking commanders' skills while commanding troops operating in the field as well as improving the chain of command in any army, also in the German one. The attache informed in his report about such autumn maneuvers on a grand scale. They were to take place in the central Germany in Thuringia in 1933. "The participants will include, on the one hand, the infantry division (6th), on the other hand – the cavalry division (3rd) reinforced with the motorized infantry regiment (12th). Vehicles – he wrote – were to be delivered for the 12th infantry regiment through emergency requisition of civilian vehicles" [2, p. 24].

At the same time, the higher command staffs were created. There were established two front headquarters and seven division commands. This confirmed the hypothesis of the intelligence service about the possibility of tripling the number of German troops in the first stage of mobilization [2, p. 37].⁷ In the period May-September, the Reichswehr conducted nineteen specific maneuvers. About four weeks were devoted for battalion exercises. The same amount of time was devoted for regimental exercises and grouping of engineering troops. In contrast, "great pioneering exercises" (today

⁵ As Szymanski wrote – "Exercises were conducted in the Bavarian Alps, where in the frost of -25 degrees, columns of vehicles camped in the open field all night in order to balance the mobility of machines. After several-hour immobilization, the engines started in a few minutes, and the machine travelled along challenging mountain roads (with the gradient of 30-35 degrees) in 40 cm snow. The interest of the Germans taken in fighting led in mountain conditions is disproportionately large".

⁶ One of the local radio plays in Bavaria was devoted to Lt. Col. V. Leeb, on the occasion of his leaving the Lansberg Garrison, who, as was stated on the radio: "...made his mark in the city for artillery training of transport columns...".

⁷ Major Antoni Szymanski's Report of 1 July 1933.

we would call them experimental exercises) were planned to take ten days [2, p. 38-41]. This information clearly indicates the high intensity of exercises aiming at synchronization of individual sub-units and units.

During this period, the military attaches were shown only five-hour training of two reinforced infantry regiments. The most striking was – as the attache wrote in his report – that the infantry was equipped with weapons from the World War I (the old types of machine guns, gas masks). Whereas foreign officers were kept away from the artillery that probably already had new guns. In general, as Major A. Szymanski noticed, “both in terms of the form of the conducted maneuvers but also criticism, they sought to highlight the lack of the German army, deprived of air forces, armored vehicles, heavy artillery” [2, p. 69].⁸ The very opposite was true – all the time the training of troops was perfected and new equipment and weapons were introduced.

The year 1933 was devoted to the reorganization of infantry, artillery and cavalry units. The German press confirmed the establishment of special squadrons (platoons: heavy machine guns, anti-tank weapons, mine-throwers, communication and pioneer team) in cavalry regiments. The artillery carried out experimental firing with heavy guns. Moreover, the existence of tank sub-units was acknowledged. And engineering maneuvers on the river Weser confirmed that they had units specialized in chemical warfare. In the training process, particular attention was paid to “meeting engagement, delaying actions and river crossing”. Also many mountain exercises were realized. The SA units were involved in the maneuvers and exercises, which significantly affected their relatively weak military progress, but the propaganda effect was greater. The divisions and regiments conducted their own experiments on the weapons and combat modernization. Infantry had many experimental units as well. The intensive training of non-commissioned officers was organized in order to train reservists. It was believed that six weeks were the enough long period to train infantry recruits.

The strength of the army increased probably to 130,000. Germany’s requirements rose as to endeavoring to achieve the army size of 300,000 one-year military service soldiers. These demands had tactical character. Undoubtedly, Germany intended to cause a breach in the military clauses of the Treaty. The author of the report concluded that “the restoration of German military power was launched” [Cf. 2, p. 97-104].

In the mid-1934 the cavalry units started to be resolved and their personnel was sent to motorized troops, to motorized reconnaissance troops and anti-tank artillery. Starting from August of that year, in addition to volunteers, non-commissioned officers and professional privates from infantry divisions were compulsorily conscripted to secretly formed air force units [Cf. 1, p. 94].

In 1934 the German army size continued to grow and reached the number of 200,000 soldiers. According to specialists, the existing headquarters without major problems would meet the challenge of increasing the army by up to 100%. It was predicted that in the fall of that year the army could reach the manning of 300,000 people. It was in-

⁸ The Report of 1 October 1933.

dictated by the conscription of recruits and contracting military service for 18 months as well as the beginning of training candidates for future reserve officers.⁹

The turning point in the militarization of Germany was the abovementioned Act of 1935 introducing qualitative changes in this regard. After that date the changes occurred rapidly. The open arming of the Reich began in March 1935. The occupation of the militarized zone in the Rhineland took place. On 1 November 1935 the strength of the German army was to be equal to 500,000 soldiers, including 150,000 professional soldiers, and in 1936 already 550 thousand. However, in 1937 it was expected to reach the number of 610,000 soldiers, including about 200,000 professional soldiers [Cf. 2, p. 280].¹⁰ At the beginning of 1935 the Branch in Katowice announced the creation of six new infantry regiments in: Wrocław, Swidnica, Glogow, Gorlitz, Cross and Dresden. Moreover, the Branch's area of responsibility included new artillery, cavalry and engineering, communications and transport units [3, p. 157-8].

The information provided by the officers of "Two" in their reports clearly indicated the Germany's efforts aiming at having the modern army quickly reconstructed, with the requirements of the expected battlefield taken into account. Thus, in the reports we read about numerous organizational and training undertakings, maneuvers and experimental exercises. There were cases that assessments and opinions of military attaches differed significantly from the moderate reports of civilian diplomats, who wanted to see positive elements in the activities of the German authorities'.

The Civil War in Spain

During the war in Spain, the Polish intelligence teamed up with the Frankists, since the main thing for the Polish side was the access to Soviet weaponry. What is more, they carefully observed the equipment, training and combat capabilities of the German Condor Legion fighting on the side of Gen. Franco. Almost 20,000 German soldiers performed military service there in the years 1936-1939. They were fighter pilots, crews of bombers and reconnaissance aircrafts, artillerymen, armored forces' soldiers, signalmen and military instructors. They treated it as the testing ground for people and military equipment, for example aircrafts, anti-tank guns, howitzers and artillery equipment. Some of them were first used in the armed struggle. Germany had an excellent opportunity to review and verify the tactics of military operations [7, p. 27].

In June 1939, the Division II presented most likely the final analyzes of the Spanish Civil War [8, p. 362], but proposals resulting from them related mainly to issues of the use of troops and cooperation between different types of forces. However, conclusions on the training and weaponry were drawn as well. They included the following conclusions on issues of interest to us:

⁹ Citing Lt. Col. A. Szymanski's Report of 1 October 1934: The commander of the city of Wrocław, Col. von Raben, sent a declaration to the students of the University of Wrocław, which notified that the army would enroll 5-7000 students at the age of 21 and would train them for reserve officers. Training would last for one year, from 1 October 1934 to 1 October 1935.

¹⁰ Lt. Col. A. Szymanski's Report of 28 March 1936.

- well-trained infantry armed with anti-tank equipment should stop any advance of tanks,
- tanks with a weight of less than 8 tons are not suitable to develop an attack,
- minimal armor plating of a tank conducting an attack was set at 15 mm,
- tanks conducting an attack should have a gun, not only machine guns [8, p. 363].

These statements were of great importance for the Polish side, especially in terms of armored equipment, since during the period under review German tanks largely failed to meet the requirements of offensive weapons (in the opinion of Division II officers); it concerned mainly PzKpfw I (ca. 40% of the total number of tanks) and, to a lesser extent, PzKpfw II (35%). Lessons learned in this respect were not confirmed in 1939, as the Germans used armored equipment to offensive operations at full scale, notwithstanding its imperfections.

Occupation of Bohemia and Moravia by the Wehrmacht

After the occupation of Zaolzie Silesia by the Polish Army, the intelligence work in the territory of Czechoslovakia came to a standstill. Despite the possibility of the seizure of the country by the Third Reich, about which “Two” received reports, the Sub-Department Czech subordinated to the Department “East” continued intelligence activity on this direction, although it should have been the responsibility of the Department “West” performing tasks on the German direction. The organization did not positively affect the quality of intelligence work in Bohemia. The Branch No. 5 in Lviv, the main task of which was to reconnoiter Kiev and Odessa military districts of the Red Army, also conducted the intelligence activity in Czechoslovakia [9, p. 572-3].

However, the Polish intelligence was quite well versed in different types of weaponry belonging to the equipment of the Czechoslovak army. According to the reports of the Division II, most of the artillery subunits were motorized. In addition, the Czechoslovak air force had dozens of airports all over the country.¹¹ Such a large number of them stemmed from the fact that the Czechoslovak military doctrine envisaged their use by Allied Air Forces during any armed conflict [9, p. 580-1].

The Wehrmacht crossed the borders of Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939 at 6.00 without encountering resistance. Before that, during the meeting with Hitler, seeing no prospects of effective resistance to the Germans, President Hacha had agreed to surrender. The operation of taking Czechoslovakia was realized by the Wehrmacht remaining in peacetime establishment – without mobilization or creation of new commands [10, p. 306-7, 309].

Yet the German XIII Corps¹², which entered Czechoslovakia from the southwest, faced difficulties. These arose from the heavy snowfall forming large drifts on the roads. The Staff of the Corps sent telegrams to the General Staff with a request for the supply of

¹¹ P. Kolakowski states that there were about 100 of them, while M. Zgorniak determines their number at “30 operating ones and 32 under construction”.

¹² The head office of the Staff of the Corps was in Nuremberg.

the relevant equipment for clearing snow from roads, which was subsequently delivered from all over Germany, among others, from East Prussia [10, p. 306-7, 309].

After seizing Bohemia, large quantities of arms and military equipment fell in the hands of the Germans. Moreover, they removed a significant part of the equipment from Slovakia, leaving there only weapons for several divisions. The Polish attache in Prague – Lt. Col. Bronislaw Noel, in the conversation with one of the senior German officers, learned that the war material “constituted complete, modern equipment for up to 35 infantry divisions, not including military equipment” [11]. The Germans took over 1.5 thousand aircrafts alone. Lt. Col. Szymanski wrote that these aircrafts were to be partially used in aviation schools, however, the majority of them – as unsuitable for requirements of the Germans – were to be “used as a raw material” [2, p. 409].¹³

After the occupation of the Sudety region by the Wehrmacht, the Division II began to develop the comprehensive report “Sudety Action”, which was finally completed in February 1939. The document consisted of a political part and a military one under the name of “Main Study of Military Action”.¹⁴

In his subsequent report to the Head of the Division II, Lt. Col. Antoni Szymanski informed that after the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, the German military authorities were not satisfied with the organizational state of large armored and motorized units. The Commander-in-Chief of German forces in Czechoslovakia, General Ludwig Beck, considered deficiencies in commanding from the battalion (squadron) to the division level and weak combat power of infantry and artillery units in armored and light divisions as the most important shortcomings in the operation of German armored and motorized divisions.

Lt. Col. Szymanski predicted that as a result of those experiences Germany would reform light motorized divisions modeled on armored divisions and increase transport capacity of motorized divisions by creating for them special transport columns allowing for their transport over longer distances. These changes would also simplify the system of training and command of large armored and motorized units [2, p. 410].¹⁵

After the occupation of Prague, Germany conducted works at a rapid pace aimed at improving the road network by widening roads and aligning too sharp turns along the boundary line of the newly created Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia with Poland. Newly improved traffic routes also bypassed some localities that could slow down the march of the troops. There was also communication provided in this area, as well as

¹³ Lt. Col. A. Szymanski’s Report on the military and political situation in Germany in the first half of 1939, addressed to the Head of the Division II of the General Staff of 28 June 1939.

¹⁴ This part of the document contained observations on the occupation of the Sudety region by the Wehrmacht from the military point of view, which had been presented earlier, during the course for senior commanders of the Polish Army in Rembertow at the end of November 1938.

¹⁵ Lt. Col. A. Szymanski’s Report on the military and political situation in Germany in the first half of 1939, addressed to the Head of the Division II of the General Staff of 28 June 1939.

fortified facilities and multiple rows of barbed wire. Germany made similar preparations after the occupation of Austria along the border with Czechoslovakia [2, p. 419-20].¹⁶

German preparations for the war against Poland in Lt. Col. Szymanski's reports from the last months of peace

In the mid-April 1939 the Independent Situational Department foreseen in the event of a war became operational. It was formed by Major Jan Lesniak (previously the Head of the Independent Department "Germany"). In July, additional officers of the Department "Germany" were assigned to the Department and the work continued on the basis of the twenty-four hour duty. The Department received incoming reports and telegrams and on their basis information messages were prepared. Maj. Lesniak received tasks from superiors as well [12, p. 141].

As Lesniak later remember – "The last few weeks [before the outbreak of the war] passed at intensive work on memos and reports incoming daily. Also on the preparation of messages, syntheses of situations and special reports for the Army Chief of Staff and large units" [13].

As regards this period, quite interesting is information provided by above cited Lt.-Col. Antoni Szymanski, especially as his observations and predictions, in particular on the German strategy and tactics, proved to be right in the early campaigns of the World War II.

On 31 October 1938 in his report about the situation in Germany, addressed to the Head of the Division II, Antoni Szymanski stated that Germany had an advantage over France and Great Britain in the number of aircrafts, and quickly sought to double their number. As for *Kriegsmarine*, this was where he saw, first of all, the greatest emphasis on having as many submarines as possible. The "relatively sudden and violent" building of fortifications in the west of the Reich was considered by him as the important event of 1938, since, in his opinion, it was to force Western countries, especially France, to abandon military actions against the Germans and secure the possibility of launching an attack in another direction, mainly by taking advantage of owned large motorized units and air forces. Furthermore, the fast development of highways – as Szymanski noted – allowed for the efficient movement of troops [2, p. 364-7].¹⁷

In the report from the mid-May 1939, Lt. Col. Szymanski reported on numerous emergency mobilization exercises that took place in the second half of March 1939, giving a few examples. Moreover, he noted the intensified training of reservists, as well as the reduction of the period of their training in backup/alternate units to 6-8 weeks. Another important element recognized by the Polish officer was the reorganization of

¹⁶ The development of Commander of 15th Infantry Regiment, Lt. Col. A. Szymanski, exercising the function of the military attache at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Berlin in the years 1932-1939 entitled "From the German war preparations against Poland in the period 15 March 1939-1 September 1939", addressed to Gen. Sikorski.

¹⁷ Lt. Col. A. Szymanski's Report on the situation in Germany in 1938, addressed to the Head of the Division II of 31 December 1938.

large German armored and motorized units in terms of supplementing certain combat elements¹⁸ and improving their technical and transport efficiency. He added that the Germans were not satisfied with the previous experience with these units. This could indicate that they were trying to overcome shortcomings that had occurred during the occupation of Czechoslovakia and Austria [2, p. 392-3].¹⁹

In the report at the end of June 1939 Szymanski emphasized the accelerated pace of development of the land forces of the Reich in respect of training and reorganization. Quite significant in this process was the training of a large number of the lower command staff. In the first half of 1939 Germany initially did not create new battalions (squadrons) or regiments, but expanded the manning of companies (batteries, squadrons). Lt. Col. Szymanski predicted that in the second half of 1939 the formations would be detached from among them, on the basis of which new units would be established [2, p. 402-3].²⁰

Szymanski predicted that the accelerated development of the land forces of the Reich would affect the combat value of units, and in particular, shortcomings could occur primarily at the lower levels of command, but also on higher ones – regiments' commanders and above. Therefore – as he claimed – the Germans would not manage to “take advantage of the extensive military and technical equipment, which would become increasingly important especially in artillery, technical and communications units”. He also saw the clear development direction of motorized forces, thereby the expansion of fast large units, which were dealt with by the Staff of Gen. Heinz Guderian. This was connected with the rapid development of the automotive industry and the communication network [2, p. 404-5].

According to information received by Szymanski about training, all kinds of forces and, above all, infantry, was focused on – as he put it – “rapid offensive actions”. They would rely on “not paying attention to the resistance of the enemy and advancing forward at the expense of even the greatest victims”. While a few echelons were preferred as for the tactics in large infantry, motorized and armored units. The task of the first of them was to reach “the enemy's deepest defense zone”, while the latter – the ultimate destruction of the first line of enemy's defense. What is more, Szymanski noticed “first of all, the very offensive attitude of land forces” of Germany in cooperation with air forces, which the Germans used during exercises and tactical games [2, p. 406-7].

Lt. Col. Szymanski devoted some space in his report to the German air forces as well. He stated that the aviation industry was already working to their full potential, producing 800-900 aircrafts per month. The pilot training was at that time held at the maximum capabilities of aviation schools. Szymanski estimated that in the mid-1939 Germany might have had about 5-5.5 thousand aircrafts and approximately 7 thousand qualified pilots in the first line. He observed, however, a high accident rate. Over the

¹⁸ Szymanski did not specify what elements they were to be.

¹⁹ Lt. Col. A. Szymanski's Report on the military and political situation in Germany, addressed to the Head of the Division II of 15 April 1939.

²⁰ Lt. Col. A. Szymanski's Report on the military and political situation in Germany in the first half of 1939, addressed to the Head of the Division II of the General Staff of 28 June 1939.

year 1938 more than 400 people were killed in air accidents, and only in the second half of this year approximately 700 aircrafts, including training ones, were broken. However, the German air forces could boast about successes as well. Lt. Col. Szymanski reported the world record in speed of 746 km/h achieved on the He 112 fighter aircraft [2, p. 408-9].

Conclusion

Through good operational work of the Polish intelligence the Polish side already before the outbreak of the war was relatively well familiarized with the particular phases of the overall German army's armaments, as well as the German operational doctrine and methods of warfare. This information was published in comprehensive secret information messages and special publications issued periodically by the Division II of the General Staff.

The German armaments, as well as the organization of large German units and combat tactics, were certainly known to commanders and staffs of particular armies of the Polish Armed Forces, as quite a lot of developments on this subject appeared in military publications, and also particular departments of the Ministry of Military Affairs and headquarters received relevant information messages from the Division II of the General Staff.

Despite the relatively good recognition of the German army on the eve of German aggression in 1939 – its strength, assembly areas, presumed major directions of attack, weaponry and combat capabilities, this knowledge, however, did not affect significantly the course of the Polish campaign. A great advantage on the German side contributed to the result of the war.

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All authors declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions


All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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Biographical note

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Niemieckie przygotowania do wojny w świetle dokumentów polskiego wywiadu wojskowego (1933-1939) – wybrane aspekty

STRESZCZENIE

Traktat wersalski narzucał Niemcom m.in. ograniczenia dotyczące liczebności i uzbrojenia niemieckich sił zbrojnych. Niemcy starały się obchodzić je bardzo dyskretnie, w tym również dzięki współpracy ze Związkiem Sowieckim. Sytuacja zmieniła się diametralnie po dojściu do władzy Hitlera, który już w 1935 r. wprowadził ustawę zwiększającą, wbrew traktatowi wersalskiemu, liczebność armii niemieckiej, a także wprowadzającą zakazane rodzaje uzbrojenia. Od tej pory nastąpił jawny i gwałtowny rozwój armii niemieckiej oraz przemysłu zbrojeniowego, co z wielką uwagą obserwował polski wywiad wojskowy. W kolejnych latach powstawały raporty polskich służb wywiadowczych na temat powiększającego się niemieckiego potencjału militarnego i jego możliwości w trakcie zajmowania przez wojska III Rzeszy Austrii, Czech czy Kłajpedy. Niektóre z tych raportów bardzo trafnie przewidywały, jak będzie wyglądała strategia i taktyka Wehrmachtu w zbliżającym się konflikcie zbrojnym.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Wehrmacht, II Rzeczpospolita, III Rzesza, wywiad wojskowy

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