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BLASKOWITZ, Johannes. GO	2029	I	

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Extract from Interrogation of Generaloberst Blaskowitz,
CCPWE Nr. 32/DI-43, dated 28 Jul 1945;

"Another incident which might have hampered his career occurred in Dec 39 when he decided to send his Deputy C/S (Oberquartiermeister) Colonel Jaenecke to von Brauchitsch to report on the raids and deportation of Jews conducted by the SS in Poland. [...] Blaskowitz's report became a matter of general knowledge among the Officer's Corps in the Western Zone. Therefore, in spring 40 von Brauchitsch summoned all Army chiefs stationed in the West to Koblenz. Source was also present. Von Brauchitsch took up only general subjects. However, in the evening Himmler made a thirty-minute speech in which he sought to give the reason for his drastic action in Poland, though he did not justify them. Actually Himmler never mentioned Poland by name during his speech, but referred to "occupied areas". Yet since Poland was the only one at that time it was very apparent that he was referring to it."

[Source: David Irving, file:
U.S. Army Interrogations, vol. I,
p. 198]

Copy:

W. J. Murray

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HISTORICAL INTERROGATION REPORT

SOURCE : Col. Gen. Johannes BLASKOWITZ, Comdr of the
8th Army in Poland; Comdr in Chief East 1940;
Comdr 1st Army in France 1941-44.

DATE : 8 September 1945

PLACE : USFET - MISC

INTERVIEWERS: Brig. Gen. R.C. Brock ; Dr. George N. Shuster

C O N T E N T S

- I. The Polish Campaign
- II. The French Resistance Movement

I. THE POLISH CAMPAIGN

QUESTION : How far did the non-aggression pact with Russia lead to the war with Poland or affect that war ?

BLASKOWITZ: The war with Poland would probably have come regardless. The agreement with Russia simply accelerated matters. At the outbreak of the war I did not know that the Russians would also have a hand in it and that we would meet them in Eastern Poland. Nobody told the Generals about any political agreements. Russia's entry into the war was a surprise for me. I heard all of a sudden that the Russians were on the move.

QUESTION : Did you calculate on the Poles withdrawing ?

BLASKOWITZ: No, although militarily they ought to have retreated to the Bug river. It is always a hard military decision to have to make, to sacrifice ground. Again the Poles had to consider their war industry. They had a highly developed war industry in the San region. They also reckoned that they could attack our flank and hence have an opportunity to carry the war to Germany. We always considered this possibility. We kept waiting for pressure on this flank and were very much relieved when we observed the evacuation toward Warsaw. I

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went beyond my actual orders and made a rapid advance. By thus occupying the railroad lines I brought their entire transport system to a standstill and the Poles had either to attack or proceed on foot. They then retreated into the forests so as to launch an attack from there. It struck me that we had taken very many prisoners and I could not understand where they all came from. We also got 100,000 PWs north of the Vistula and again did not know from where, until I then ascertained that they all came from the strong Posen Army. My flank was very deep and my first Division was also much exposed.

The Polish border fortifications in the West, to our surprise, were poor and obsolete. Near Warsaw they were a First World War construction. The suburbs of Warsaw had been incorporated into these fortresses and hence these suburbs became main defense zones. For this reason we became involved in difficult street fighting. I had 150 batteries of artillery set up in these suburbs and fired on the city. I was later informed by the Polish commander that he had been ordered by his Commanding General to hold Warsaw. It was clear to me that they had no idea of the general situation.

I knew General von Fritsch very well personally. I know that he took over a division at the beginning of the Polish campaign. In this position he was seriously wounded in the back of the head during a Polish ambush and died of loss of blood. I could well imagine that he sought a soldier's death.

QUESTION : Were the fortifications of the West Wall very strong? Do you think that they would have been impregnable?

BLASKOWITZ: I visited the West Wall once in August 1938 and inspected the fortifications from the Moselle to as far as Karlsruhe. They were quite good, very strong and up to date. The West Wall had the following advantages: 1) Separate installations were constructed, main strong points; 2) they were very well adapted to the terrain all along the line; they were not in a single line but in waves; 3) they had the proper depth, and were diagonally as well as lineally planned.

QUESTION : Was the construction of the West Wall in any way connected with the Maginot Line, or influenced by it?

BLASKOWITZ: Certainly we learned about it. One could also even see descriptions and reproductions in the newspapers. Then we were aided by the experiences of a four year war of position. I was in fact the first to have rear trenches constructed in the last war.

QUESTION : Were the Poles not well equipped?

BLASKOWITZ: No. With the Poles it was certainly a matter of men and money. For a young country Poland had achieved much. A lot of settlement had taken place in the new territories. They had built railroads in Upper Silesia, had to construct new ports etc. Later on they would have got around to the fortification of the country. Secondly, I doubt whether fixed fortresses are congenial to the Polish mentality. The Pole is a soldier of movement for example at Kotnow he came up with quite large cavalry formations. They were good men but could make no headway against my cordoning forces.

QUESTION : Was there any Fifth Column in Poland?

BLASKOWITZ: No, I never came across any. Of course there were Germans there but they were all very much intimidated. Again, the whole campaign ended too rapidly. We were only held up by refugees who had been driven out onto the main roads by senseless evacuation orders. We had to chase these people into the fields to open up the roads. Then the Pole carries everything he has with him, family, goods and livestock. In that way we weren't hungry either. There was an abundance of cattle. The only battle the Poles waged

according to plan was the Battle of Kotnow. It lasted three days and really had us held. We doubted very much whether we could hold or not. We kept asking ourselves how we should fare when we thrust through the border position. I was amazed that everything went so fast and so smoothly. I was very surprised too when nothing happened at the Warta.

QUESTION : What did you learn from the Polish campaign? Did you change any of your doctrines as a result of it?

BLASKOWITZ: Yes, a greater spreading out of the infantry and the independent employment of armored units. I had to act very carefully with regard to the infantry. I had newly organized divisions without reserve divisions. The cadres were from the 100,000 man Army. All the other officers and NCOs were old combat veterans of the last War. I had Landwehr divisions. These people had had no maneuvers and adhered to their old type of fighting.

Our artillery units were still horse-drawn. The motorizing of the technical units was only carried out after the Polish campaign.

The main thing we learned was how to fight with armor.

Our officers were all excellent. They were derived from the 100,000 Man Army in which had been introduced the plan of attaching officers to different units successively. Hence an officer knew immediately what was going on when he came into a new branch. He could hence also get a good general picture. We also had air liaison officers in the front lines and enjoyed excellent cooperation from the Air Force.

We could not have fought if the Czechs and Poles had been together, or if the French and British had fought at the same time as the Poles.

The Czech is a very good soldier. He is tough, abstemious, intelligent, calmly-calculating yet fanatical. The Czech Army was a good Army. They would have been harder to beat than the Poles.

No, I had no idea of the Invasion of Bohemia. When I drove out in the morning, my chauffeur asked me how long we would be on the road and for how many days he should prepare, I told him we would be back by evening, so I had no presentiment of what was really happening. We had an agreement with the Government and I did not interfere in government matters, but simply saw to it that security was guaranteed. Everything was very calmly received by the population too. We also had no cases of sabotage.

QUESTION : Did you enter Poland because it was planned to conduct war later against Russia?

BLASKOWITZ: No. The Polish campaign was a purely Polish matter. Russia had an unusually strong garrison in Poland. She had also demanded the so-called free zone or "No man's land". The Russians felled the woods for miles so as to have a good opportunity of observation. I don't know if the Russians wanted to erect this into a jumping-off point but it is a possibility.

II. THE FRENCH RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

QUESTION: Did the French Resistance Movement give you much trouble?

BLASKOWITZ: Such things are never very pleasant. It led to unpleasant incidents even earlier but after the invasion it became especially noticeable.

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I also never had enough troops in order to fight them effectively. I had "rolling commandos" set up. These are the best thing in an occupation. If anything goes wrong they are immediately rushed to the spot. I organized it on the lines of fire-fighters. If there was a big "fire", I sent a strong detachment. These commandos had all to be highly mobile, well armed and of course, all motorized.

I had security guards on the main highways, railroads and bridges. A smoothly functioning signal setup is essential to such commando tactics. The Luftwaffe had to be similarly organized. We could, for example, issue orders from the air.

After the invasion, of course, the resistance got out of hand. For then there was trouble brewing in every nook and corner. The French could have done nothing on their own; that is absolutely certain.

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