

CHAPTER XI

POLAND, DANZIG AND MASURENLAND : 1939-1945

A. GENERAL

1. Poland was invaded by the Germans on September 1st, 1939, and in three weeks it had been conquered. On September 17th, 1939, Soviet Troops entered Eastern Poland; this was followed by a Treaty between Germany and the Soviet on September 28 which settled the German Soviet frontier in Poland. The Germans acquired an additional 21 million people, Russia 14 million and Lithuania 500,000; thus occurred the fourth partition of Poland.

2. The German occupying authorities incorporated the western and northern parts of Poland in the Reich, making the former voivodeships of Poznan and Lodz and the southern portion of the voivodeship of Pomerania into what they called the Warthegau or Varta District. Similar steps were taken with the rest of Poland, half becoming incorporated Eastern territories, and the remainder consisting of the voivodeships of Kielce and Lublin, part of the Warsaw district (including Warsaw), Cracow and half of the district of Lwow making up the Gouvernement Général.

3. As mentioned in Chapter VIII Resettlement Policy of the Nazi Government, persons of German ethnic origin were resettled in the incorporated eastern territories while the Gouvernement Général was used as the dumping ground of all undesirables. Hans Frank was made the Governor-General of the Gouvernement Général. No Quisling government was ever established in Poland.

4. It has been estimated that nearly nine million Poles were uprooted by Germans and were either moved into Germany proper as slave labourers, were deported into the Gouvernement Général, or were sent to the concentration camps along with the Jews. Of the concentration camps in Poland the most notorious were Oswiecim (Auschwitz), Treblinka, Chelmno, Belzec and Sobibor.

5. The first transports to Germany of compulsory labour were in October 1939, and the first confinements to concentration camps were early in 1940. At the same time German citizens from the Reich proper were resettled in the Incorporated Eastern Territories. Registration of ethnic Germans in Poland began at approximately the same time.

6. It has been stated that Poland received the worst treatment of any of the German occupied countries. As an example, from October, 1943, to the time of the Warsaw uprising, it has been alleged that there were approximately 8,000 public executions in Warsaw alone.

7. Several Partisan movements grew up in 1940/41, which operated mainly in the Gouvernement Général areas. The Germans conducted severe reprisal actions as a result of their acts of sabotage, etc., and many hundreds of people were killed by public execution.

8. After the capitulation of Poland, it is estimated that nearly one million persons moved eastward into Russia. In addition some persons left Poland by way of Rumania to the Middle East. Under the terms of an agreement made between Marshall Sikorski and Stalin a number of men of military age were to be released from Russia and allowed to go to the Middle East where they were to form a Polish Army. These men were

allowed to bring a certain number of dependents with them. As a result of the agreement approximately 112,000 persons crossed into Persia in 1942, of whom 72,000 were military personnel, and 40,000 were civilians. The military personnel joined the others who had gone to the Middle East earlier and became the Army of General Anders. The civilians were received in various countries of temporary asylum and many were to be found after the war in British East and Central Africa and in the Middle East amongst other countries.

9. Certain commanders remained with the Soviet Union and formed a Polish Army to fight by the side of the Russians. Later the Russian group of Poles formed a rival government-in-exile to the one in London, which had been hitherto the only Polish government-in-exile. This government had the advantage of having several divisions in Poland, and were *de facto* in occupation of it. As a result this Committee established its seat at Chelm in Poland (July 1944). The Soviet Government recognised the Chelm Committee which was later installed at Lublin as the Provisional Government of Poland.

## B. POLISH REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

10. The majority of Polish refugees who are encountered by field eligibility personnel do not present many difficulties in that they are ordinary slave labourers who were deported to Germany. There are, however, certain special groups which might and who should be mentioned here :—

- (a) Persons of Polish origin habitually resident in pre-war Germany, who in most cases are German citizens. In addition there are the so-called autochthonous Poles who lived in the territory formerly German and now Polish. They are all German citizens.
- (b) Persons who came to Germany as a result of registering on the Deutsche Volksliste.
- (c) A few Poles and foreigners who were living in Poland and who served in the German Waffen SS units or volunteered for the Wehrmacht.

## C. DANZIG

### 11. GENERAL.

(a) By the terms of the Treaty of Versailles Danzig was made a Free City, that is a self-governing city although it was incorporated economically into Poland. This was created by the Allies in order to give the landlocked Polish State a port on the Baltic Sea. However, it was felt an outright gift of it to Poland could not be made because, to quote from President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" Danzig was "indisputably German". The grant was greatly resented by Germany at the time who claimed it as a German city and thus caused friction from the very beginning. Consequently, the Danzigers never ceased hoping that they would ultimately be returned to the Reich.

(b) As early as May, 1933, the Danzig Nazis won the local elections and became the majority party in the government. By 1939 they were clamouring vociferously for its reintegration with Germany.

(c) In April, 1939, Hitler demanded the city as well as the right to build an extra-territorial east-west highway and a railway across the Polish corridor. Poland refused and the situation remained deadlocked until Germany invaded Poland on September 1st, 1939.

#### D. MASURENLAND

12. Masuria (from which the dance Mazurka is derived) is in the southern part of the former Duchy of Prussia. It was occupied in the 13th century by one of the German orders and colonised with peasants from the neighbouring principality of Masovia. The majority of the inhabitants speak Masurian (a Polish dialect strongly influenced by German).

13. The Versailles Treaty of 1919 provided for plebiscites in Prussian Silesia and amongst the Masurians of East Prussia. The plebiscite which was held in Masuria in the districts of Allenstein and Marienwerder (Oletzko) on July 11, 1920, under the supervision of an Inter-Allied Commission resulted in a 98% (Alenstein) and a 92% (Marienwerder) vote in favour of union with Germany.

#### E. ELIGIBILITY STATUS OF ABOVE GROUPS

14. All Poles who have German citizenship are outside the mandate of IRO. Poles habitually resident in Germany are *prima facie* outside the mandate depending, of course, on the merits of each case.

15. Eligibility status of persons on the DVL lists is discussed in Section 1 of Chapter VIII.

16. Poles who voluntarily assisted the enemy forces in their operation are excluded under paragraph 2 (b) of Part II of the Constitution.

17. All Danzigers who are of German origin (and it should be remembered that the overwhelming majority were Germans) are outside the mandate of IRO under the terms of paragraph 4 of Part II of the Constitution. Danzigers of Polish origin are to be considered as *prima facie* within the mandate other factors being equal.

18. Some Masurians have applied to IRO for assistance claiming that they are Polish refugees. All Masurians in Germany are excluded from IRO on the ground that they are in their country of citizenship. Many of them were transferred to Germany under the terms of the Potsdam Agreement.