



The Armed Forces of Poland in the West 1939-46: Strategic Concepts, Planning, Limited Success but no Victory! (Helion Studies in Military History)

Michael Alfred Peszke

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This monograph focuses on the strategic concepts, planning and the limited success of the Polish military, leading up to the British Guarantee of March, 1939 and then throughout the Second World War. The monograph discusses the valuable contribution of the Polish Military to its two Western allies, France and the United Kingdom leading up to the war, and the respite they received due to Poland's spirited defense that degraded German offensive capability by at least half a year. Recreated in France, the Polish Military conceptualized a liberation policy of encouraging both France and the United Kingdom to undertake a Balkan Strategy to Poland's freedom. Polish relations, with Hungary in particular, and Romania, while British relations with Greece and Turkey, made this a promising policy option. In early 1941, Britain did send troops to aid Greece and the Poles were also about to send their Middle East-based force to Greece. This Balkan "strategy" was strongly shared and espoused by Churchill and on the British planning table till late Summer 1944 when the Americans prevailed in landing forces in the south of France, rather than pushing north in Italy and possibly putting forces across the Adriatic into friendly Croatia and Slovenia. This American policy was undoubtedly due to the pressures of finalizing the European war as soon as possible to get on with the war against Japan, and possibly also influenced by the American foreign policy of accommodating Stalin, who did not want Western Allies in his bailiwick. One of the minor successes was an air supply link to the Polish Underground Forces but its capacity did not meet the needs or expectations. Attempts to reconcile with the Soviets failed to materialize any benefits to the Polish cause, but Polish forces extracted from the Soviets by agreements between Churchill and Stalin, were prized by the British and strengthened British capability in the Middle East. Following the Tehran Conference Polish strategic planning became irrelevant as at the same time the actual strength of the Polish Armed Forces and their professionalism increased. When in early 1945 Churchill asked his staffs for a possible military operation to push the Soviets back out of Poland - Operation Unthinkable, the Polish military in the West and potential clandestine forces in Poland became a major asset. This plan was not supported by the Americans or the important segment of the British coalition Government - the Labor Party, and further events in 1945 lead to the decline in influence once enjoyed by the Polish military in the West. Michael Peszke was born in 1932 in Deblin Garrison, Polish Air Force Academy, where his father was on the faculty. He left Poland on September 17 1939 following the German and Soviet Invasions. In July 1941, after an Atlantic crossing at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, he joined up with his father who was Polish liaison officer in RAF Training Command, and then in the Air Force planning Section of the Polish Commander in Chief in London. These experiences and many talks with his father led to a lifelong interest in and research into Polish military history and numerous publications. On arriving in the UK he enrolled in Saint Joseph's College, Dumfries, followed by two years at John Fisher School in Purley, Surrey, and in 1950 was accepted to Trinity College, Dublin University and its School of Medicine, qualifying in 1956. Postgraduate studies followed in the United States. The author retired from academic life in 1999 and is Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington, Connecticut, USA; Emeritus Member of the American College of Psychiatrists; Distinguished Life Member of the American Psychiatric Association; Member of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America; Member, Royal United Service Institute, London.

REVIEWS

The role of the Polish Armed Forces in exile during World War II has received fairly good coverage in the literature of the war. Much less attention has been given to the development of Polish national policy, strategic thinking and long term planning. So this work is much less about fighting, than about planning, organizing, politicking and diplomacy....a good read for anyone with an interest in the Second World War.
Nymas Spring 2015

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