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On the night of August 31/September 1, 1939, the German Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service) staged a series of fake border incidents along the German-Polish frontier in Upper Silesia designed to give Nazi Germany an excuse for invading Poland. The most prominent of these provocations was the seizure of the German radio station in the town of Gleiwitz (*above*), five kilometres from the border, by a band of seven 'Polish rebels' who proceeded to broadcast a message of Polish insurrection.

Far less known are two other incidents staged that same night: an attack by 'Polish soldiers and rebels' on the German custom-house at Hochlinden, 20 kilometres south of Gleiwitz, and the other by 'Polish terrorists' on the forestry station near Pitschen, some 100 kilometres to the north-west. The following morning, with the German press headlining these three 'acts of Polish aggression'. Hitler declared war on Poland, thus unleashing the Second World War.

# THE GLEIWITZ INCIDENT

On August 11, Hitler met with Professor Carl Burckhardt, the League of Nations high commissioner in Danzig. He did not mince his words: 'If there's the slightest provocation, I shall shatter Poland without warning into so many pieces that there will be nothing left to pick up.' He added that where his generals may have been hesitant in the past, he was now having difficulty holding them back.

German preparations for aggression were stepped up. The Nazi party 'Rally of Peace', scheduled to begin in Nuremberg on August 15, was cancelled. The Wehrmacht mobilised an additional 250,000 troops and its headquarters were moved to Zossen. The aging battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* sailed into the port of Danzig to a cheering crowd on a 'goodwill visit' (see *After the Battle* No. 65).

On August 22 Hitler gathered his armed forces commanders on the Obersalzberg to announce his plans for the invasion of Poland: 'I will give propagandistic cause for the release of the war, indifferently whether convincing. The winner is not asked later whether he said the truth or not.' Assured of Russian neutrality and confident of Western

weakness, Hitler decided that 'Fall Weiss' would proceed on August 26.

Hope for peace between Germany and Poland faded as the world's attention turned to the ratification of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23/24. Within 12 hours of signing, Germany was only thinly veiling

By Dennis Whitehead

its plans for a partition of Poland between herself and the Soviet Union. A mobilisation order was issued across England. The world would be at war.

**Right: Today, Gleiwitz is Gliwice in Poland — the result of the westward shift of that country as a consequence of the Potsdam Agreement of 1945 — but the town's radio station has remained exactly the same . . . except for the swastika eagle on the forecourt pole which has been replaced by a Polish eagle.**



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The mastermind behind the staged border incidents: SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Sicherheitspolizei and Sicherheitsdienst. Two months after the fake provocations, Heydrich's two security organisations, one a state organisation, the other a Nazi party body, would be combined into the all-powerful Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA, Reich Main Security Department), of which Heydrich would remain the head until his assassination by Czech secret agents in Prague in June 1942 (see *After the Battle* No. 24).



Heydrich's main associate in planning and executing the 'Tannenberg' provocations was SS-Oberführer Heinrich Müller, the chief of the Gestapo. Müller was also the driving force behind the scheme to plant dead bodies — referred to as 'Konserven' ('canned goods') — which were to be dressed up as Polish soldiers or Polish insurgents and left behind at the scene of the provocations as additional evidence of Polish aggression. (This picture shows him in his later rank of SS-Gruppenführer.)

#### OPERATION 'TANNENBERG'

Determined to wage war on Poland, Hitler needed a pretext that would allow him to start it. If Germany could provide proof of Polish aggression against Germany, this would leave England and France without grounds for a declaration of war against her. Hitler decided to fabricate these acts by staging a series of fake incidents along the German-Polish border on the night directly preceding his invasion of Poland.

While he had briefed his military chiefs on the operation, Hitler turned to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler for action. In early August, he had ordered Himmler to begin preparations for war with Poland. Himmler, in turn, assigned SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, the 35-year-old head of the both the Sicherheitspolizei (Sipo, State Security Police) and of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD, the Nazi party's intelligence service), the task of implementing the plans.

Heydrich was pleased with the job. In fact, the idea to stage counterfeit border incidents had come from himself. He and Himmler had been prompting it to Hitler and the Führer — the only one who could approve of such provocations — had latched on to the idea. Equally important for the ambitious Heydrich, Hitler's order gave his rapacious security apparatus total command over the operation and relegated the Wehrmacht and its intelligence branch, the Abwehr headed by Heydrich's rival, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, to minor supporting roles.

Heydrich lost no time in getting plans into motion. Together with his principal subordinate, SS-Oberführer Heinrich Müller, the chief of the Gestapo (Secret State Police), he selected a group of SS officers that would be involved in the covert operation. They were:

SS-Obersturmbannführer Otto Hellwig,

the commander of the Sicherheitspolizei-Schule (Security Police School) at Berlin-Charlottenburg;

SS-Standartenführer Hans Trummler, commander of the Grenzpolizei-Schule (Border Police School) at Pretsch an der Elbe;

SS-Oberführer Otto Rasch, chief of the Sicherheitspolizei and SD in Upper Austria based at Linz; and

SS-Oberführer Herbert Mehlhorn, formerly with the SD-Hauptamt, but now assigned to assorted SS missions abroad and currently based at Pressburg (Bratislava) in occupied Slovakia.

The selection of Mehlhorn was remarkable for Heydrich did not at all get on with him. Totally different in character, the two men had fought out many conflicts in the past, so much so that Heydrich himself had been behind Mehlhorn's transfer out of the SD. However, Mehlhorn was an excellent organiser, and so Heydrich wanted him in on the team.

On August 8, Heydrich and Müller called Hellwig, Trummler, Rasch and Mehlhorn to a first meeting in Heydrich's office at No. 102 Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin. Heydrich's chief adjutant SS-Hauptsturmführer Kurt Pomme and some other SD functionaries were also present.

Welcoming his subordinates with the words 'Gentlemen, you will by now have become aware yourselves that a war with Poland is inevitable', Heydrich proceeded to disclose his plans for the subterfuge. Stressing the need for absolute secrecy, he announced that the fake border incidents would run under the code-name Operation 'Tannenberg'.

The proposed scheme elicited little protest from the SS officers, with one exception: SS-

Oberführer Mehlhorn. His objections were not quite unexpected for his nickname within the SD was 'Bedenkenrat' (Councillor of Worries, i.e. one who always raises concerns about everything). At this first meeting, Mehlhorn lived up to his reputation by immediately voicing doubts about the operation. He stated that it would create a responsibility for Germany that would be hard to bear in the face of history; and, on a more practical level, that such operations were the responsibility of the Wehrmacht, not of the SS. Mehlhorn's trepidation caused Heydrich to ponder eliminating him from the planning team but in the end he kept him on board.

Discussing the force needed to stage the provocations, it was decided to set up a company-size force of about 250 men, all SS members, of middle age, militarily trained and capable of speaking Polish. The task of getting together this force was given to Hellwig. Orders immediately went out to the SS districts along the Silesian border seeking recruits for special duty requiring knowledge of Polish language and customs.

So far, Heydrich had not yet decided on the exact locations where the border incidents would take place, but he knew someone would be able to give him good advice: SS-Sturmbannführer Dr Emanuel Schaefer, chief of the Gestapo in the Upper Silesian town of Oppeln. Schaefer, an old friend of Heydrich, knew the border region like the back of his hand. He had grown up in the area and had taken part in the German-Polish frontier battles in the 1920s. On August 8, Schaefer received a phone call from Heydrich's adjutant, SS-Hauptsturmführer Neumann, requesting him to come to the airstrip at Neustadt the following day — alone and in civilian clothes. He was asked not to inform anyone as it concerned a top secret matter.





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SS-Oberführer Herbert Mehlhorn was appointed overall co-ordinator of the 'Tannenberg' operations. Born in Chemnitz on March 24, 1903, Mehlhorn was a trained lawyer. He had been a leading executive at Sicherheitsdienst headquarters until 1937 but had fallen out with Heydrich who had him transferred out of the SD to SS postings abroad, and by August 1938 he was stationed in Pressburg (Bratislava) in occupied Slovakia. Valuing him for his organisational talent, Heydrich recalled him to Berlin for 'Tannenberg', but their renewed association lasted only three weeks, Heydrich acrimoniously relieving Mehlhorn of his command after the chaotic false start of the operation on the night of August 25/26. Soon after, Mehlhorn became chief of civil administration in the Reichsgau Wartheland, the Poznan district of occupied Poland annexed by Germany, a function which he combined with that of vice-president of the district administration of Minden in north-west Germany. As Gau bureaucrat, he was co-responsible for the elimination of the Jewish ghetto of Lodz in early 1944. In November 1944, he was on the staff of the SS-Oberabschnitt Südost (SS District South West) in Breslau. Never called to justice for his acts during the war, he died in Tübingen on October 30, 1968.

Heydrich lost no time in appointing commanders for the various parts of the operation. Overall co-ordination would be in the hands of Mehlhorn, who would install his command post in Schaefer's Gestapo headquarters at Oppeln. Hellwig would lead the 'Polish attackers' at the Hochlinden custom-house, while Trummler would head the 'defence' there. Rasch was placed in charge of the 'Polish attack' on the Pitschen forestry station.

The Hochlinden and Pitschen units were assigned identical code-words for action: 'Kleiner Auerhahn' (small wood grouse) was the alarm to prepare; 'Grosser Auerhahn' (large wood grouse) would order the men to move into position; and, finally, 'Agathe' would signal the start of the attack.

Two operational headquarters would be set up, one in Schaefer's Gestapo office in Oppeln and one in the Polizei-Präsidium (Main Police Headquarters) in Gleiwitz. Direct telephone and telegraph connections were established between Heydrich's Berlin



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SS-Standartenführer Hans Trummler led the 'German defenders' at Hochlinden. Born in Friedrichsroda on October 24, 1900, a lawyer by training, Trummler joined the Nazi party and the SA in 1928. In 1934 he became director of the SA school in Leipzig and, switching to the border police, by 1939 was commander of the Grenzpolizei-Schule at Pretsch an der Elbe. Immediately after 'Tannenberg', he served as a unit commander in Einsatzgruppe zbV, one of the SD mobile killing units employed in the Polish campaign. Promoted to SS-Oberführer in November 1941, he was appointed to command the new Sicherheitspolizei-Schule in Fürstenberg in Mecklenburg in January 1942. In June 1944 he became chief of the Sicherheitspolizei and SD in the Wiesbaden district (combining this with the same position for the Westmark (Lorraine) district from September-December 1944). In early April 1945 he took command of a Kampfgruppe made up of SD personnel which fought in Bavaria and was responsible for the massacre of five civilians at Altötting on April 28. Convicted for war crimes by a US Military Court (for ordering the killing of two captured American airmen) in March 1947, he was hanged at Landsberg Prison on October 22, 1948.

office and these two command posts. From Gleiwitz there would be further telephone lines to forward stations closer to the assault areas. For Hochlinden this was the police station at Gross Rauden (Schaefer would take up station in the customs commissioner's office there during the time of the attack) and for Pitschen the customs office at Sandhäuser. Radios would not be used. All coded commands would be issued by telephone by Heydrich personally. However, as the Hochlinden and Pitschen assault teams would by then have moved to forward bases, it was decided that motor despatch riders would be employed to take the coded orders to them. Despatch riders would also be used if further contact was needed after the task forces had departed for attack.

As the raid on the Hochlinden custom-house was planned to look like it was carried out by Polish military troops, Heydrich needed Polish Army uniforms and equipment. This is where he needed help from Admiral Canaris' Abwehr, which had a store

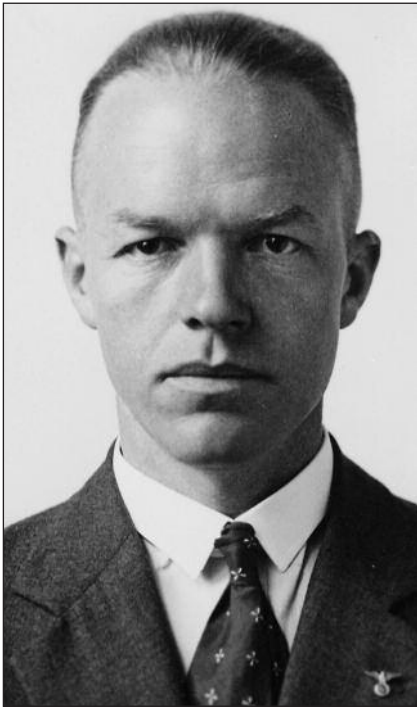


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SS-Obersturmbannführer Otto Hellwig was assigned to lead the 'Polish attackers' at Hochlinden, but was ignominiously relieved by Heydrich after he badly botched up during the aborted first attempt on the night of August 25/26. Born in Nordhausen on February 24, 1898, Hellwig had served in WWI and fought with the Freikorps Rossbach in 1919. Having become a policeman during the Weimar era, he joined the NSDAP in 1933 and the SS in 1935, being appointed chief of the Gestapo in Breslau. In 1937, Heydrich selected him to command the new Sicherheitspolizei-Schule at Berlin-Charlottenburg. Like Trummler, he served as a unit commander in Einsatzgruppe zbV in the Polish campaign, September-November 1939. In March 1941 he was appointed commander of the Sicherheitspolizei and SD in the Stettin district. In October 1941, he became SS- und Polizei-Führer (SS and Police Leader), first in Shitomir in the Ukraine, then from May 1943 to July 1944 in Bialystok in Poland. By now an SS-Gruppenführer, in January 1945 he became Höherer SS- und Polizei-Führer Nordost (Higher SS and Police Leader North-East) in Königsberg, East Prussia, which he remained until the end of the war. He died in Hannover on August 20, 1962.

of Polish equipment taken from Polish deserters. Unwilling to appeal directly to his rival Canaris, Heydrich asked his superior Himmler to have an order issued to the Abwehr by Hitler himself. On August 17, Himmler, Heydrich and Canaris met with Hitler at the Obersalzberg, where the latter instructed Canaris to provide 150 Polish uniforms for 'an enterprise of SS-Reichsführer Himmler'.

Canaris tried to get out of the order by complaining to his superior, Generaloberst Wilhelm Keitel, the chief of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW, Armed Forces High Command), but Keitel said there was nothing to be done about it as it was a Führer's order. Thus rebuffed, Canaris complied and the uniforms, along with accessories, were supplied to the SD-Amt III (Ausland) — Heydrich's own foreign intelligence service, led by SS-Brigadeführer Heinz Jost — who passed them on to the 'Tannenberg' commanders. It would remain the Abwehr's only involvement in the operation.



BA OPG-RICHTER



BA SS-O

*Left: SS-Sturmbannführer Dr Emanuel Schaefer, chief of the Gestapo in Oppeln, was the one who put Heydrich on the track of the locations suitable for the planned border provocations. Born in Hultschin on April 20, 1905, Schaefer grew up in Rybnik (two kilometres from Hochlinden) and as a student fought to put down the Polish rebellions of 1919-23, so he knew the area well. A policeman since 1926, he had joined the SA and the Nazi party's Sicherheitsdienst in 1933, the SS in 1936 and the NSDAP in 1937. Immediately after Gleiwitz, he commanded SD-Einsatzgruppe II in the Polish campaign and then became chief of the Sipo and SD in Kattowice. In January 1942 he was appointed commander of the Sipo and SD in Serbia, which he remained until December 1944, when he was temporarily transferred to serve as the SD chief in Belgium during the Ardennes offensive. He ended the war as Sipo and SD commander in Trieste. After the war, he lived under a false name until he was discovered in 1951 whereupon he was brought to trial by a German court which sentenced him to 21 months imprisonment. A new trial in 1953 handed down six and a half years imprisonment for war crimes in Serbia of which he only served three. He died in Cologne on December 4, 1974.*

*Above: SS-Oberführer Otto Rasch led the attack by 'Polish rebels' on the Pitschen forestry house. Born in Friedrichsruh on December 7, 1891, Rasch served in the Imperial Navy in the First World War. Having completed a double university doctorate, he joined the Nazi Party in 1931 and the SS in 1933. He was burgomaster of Radeberg and from 1936 mayor of Wittenberg. In 1937, he switched to the Sicherheitspolizei, becoming chief of the Gestapo, first in Frankfurt-am-Main, then in Linz in Austria. In 1939 he served stints as head of the Sipo and SD, first in Kassel (February-May), then Prague (May-June), then Linz (June-October), then Königsberg, where he remained until November 1941. From June to October 1941, he commanded Einsatzgruppe C, the SD mobile killing unit in the Ukraine, responsible for the murder of 80,000, among them the 33,771 Jews killed at the Babi Yar massacre near Kiev in September 1941. After serving as commander of Sipo and SD in the Kiev district, in April 1942 he returned to civilian life, becoming director of the Kontinentaler Öl AG oil company. Arrested in 1945 and prosecuted for war crimes, he was released from trial in February 1948 due to Parkinson's disease and he died in Wehrstedt on November 1, 1948.*



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*Above: Schaefer's Gestapo headquarters in Oppeln was used as operational command post for the 'Tannenberg' actions, overall co-ordinator Mehlhorn and — after the latter's relief from command on August 26 — Gestapo Müller taking over Schaefer's office for the purpose. Oppeln is today Opole in Poland and the building at No. 43 Von-Moltke-Strasse (today Ulitsa Tadeusza Kosciński) is now a police school. *Left:* A second operational command post was set up in the Polizei-Präsidium (Main Police Headquarters) in the Teuchertstrasse in Gleiwitz. This is where Mehlhorn was stationed on the night of the first failed attempt on August 25/26 and where Franz Honiok, the 'canned goods' for the radio station, was held imprisoned during the hours before the attack. The huge complex on what is today the corner of Ulitsa Zygmunta Starego and Ulitsa Tadeusza Kosciński in Polish Gliwice is now in use as No. 106 Military Hospital.*



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Assembly and training of the 'Tannenberg' force took place at the Sicherheitsdienst-Schule Bernau, an SD training school hidden in the woods 25 kilometres north-east of Berlin (see the map on page 2). Often referred to as the SS-Führer-Fechtschule (SS Officer Fencing School), it featured seminar rooms, an auditorium and a sports hall (opposite, centre), an outdoor

swimming pool and accommodation rooms for students (opposite, top right). This was the first Sicherheitsdienst academy to be set up but it was followed by other SD schools later created at Berlin-Charlottenburg, Fürstenberg, Schloss Grünberg near Nepomuk, Zella-Mehlis, Pretsch-an-der-Elbe and Prague.

Meanwhile, the recruitment of the 'Tannenberg' personnel was underway. Suitable candidates received a call-up telegram from the Gestapo, Police or Sicherheitsdienst, ordering them to report for duty at the SD-Hauptamt in Berlin. No further explanation was given.

Assembly and training of the force would take place at the SS-Führer-Fechtschule (SS Officer Fencing School) Bernau, a Sicherheitsdienst training school tucked away in the woods at Bernau, 25 kilometres north-east of Berlin. Its director, SS-Sturmabführer Karl Hoffmann, was Heydrich's former fencing teacher, and Heydrich had personally selected it as a training ground for the operation. In mid-August, Trummler and Hellwig paid an unannounced visit to the school, inspecting the building and its grounds. The following day, Heydrich's chief adjutant phoned Hoffmann to inform him that his school would be used as training facility for a top-secret SS operation involving a force of between 120 and 250 men and that he was to take care of their billeting.

The first recruits arrived at Bernau on August 16, driven there in closed trucks. Their number quickly grew to some 364 men. They had to sever all connections with the Reich. They were required to sign secrecy pacts under threat of death and detention of family members. None were allowed to carry any personal effects. All mail was censored and only a cover address, Potter & Mühl, Berlin, could be used.

The men were divided into three platoons and for the rest of their stay practiced military drill. Due to the closeness of the autobahn and a country road, training was initially done in the school's gymnasium, but after the arrival of grey-green uniforms of the German border police, the drill was carried out outdoors.

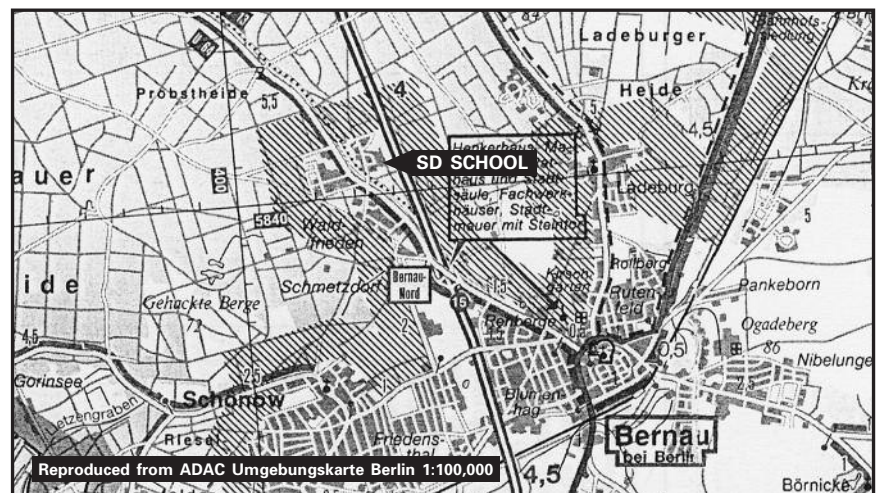
On August 19, two trucks loaded with the 150 Polish uniforms and equipment from Canaris arrived at the school. About 40 of the men received a kitbag containing a uni-

form and accoutrements and were issued with Polish Army carbines from the First World War. On orders from Trummler, they received a Polish Army-style crew cut and several of the officers and NCOs grew beards and whiskers which were commonplace in the Polish Army. Several of the recruits had actually served in the Polish Army and these were employed to instruct the others in Polish Army drill and regulations.

The remaining men, who were to act the part of 'Polish insurgents', received what the SD called 'Räuberzivil' ('rogue clothing') — black boot trousers and typical Polish civilian jackets and caps — together with Polish cigarettes, matches, letters and bills for stuffing into their pockets to prove their Polish origins. The whole group would spend evenings rehearsing and singing Polish songs. None of the men knew of their mission but they were made aware that it was of the highest order. They thought of themselves as a 'Himmelfahrtskommando' (Suicide Squad).

During one of the beer evenings in the school's canteen Hellwig asked school director Hoffmann whether he would not like to participate in the upcoming operation. Hoffmann agreed, and Hellwig soon secured the necessary authorisation from Heydrich for Hoffmann to join the force.

On August 20, Heydrich and Hellwig flew to Upper Silesia and carried out a final reconnaissance of the Hochlinden terrain. Later that same day, Reichsführer-SS Himmler himself arrived at Gleiwitz airfield together with his Chief-of-Staff, SS-Gruppenführer Karl Wolff, to make a personal inspection visit to Hochlinden, the site where the most-dramatic action would take place. Heydrich and Oppeln Gestapo chief Schaefer accompanied them. Schaefer later recalled seeing Himmler nodding knowingly in conversation with Heydrich, the need for secrecy so high that he was instructed to refer to Himmler as 'doctor' rather than by his rank.





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Before it became a Nazi training centre, the Bernau facility had been the national cadre school of the Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, the German trade unions federation. Built in 1928-30 on designs by architects Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer, it is a prime example of Bauhaus architecture — a modernistic style abhorred by the Nazi ideology — so it is rather ironic that it would later serve as a Nazi academy. Seized by the SA on May 2, 1933, it initially served as a cadre school for the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labour Front) before becoming a Sicherheitspolizei school in 1936. After the war, the Red Army used it as a hospital and from 1947 to 1991 it served as a training academy for the East-German Freie Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Trade Unions Federation). With the demise of the GDR, it fell to the Land Brandenburg, which used it to train public servants but from 1989 it stood empty and disused. Taken over by the Berlin Handwerkskammer (Chamber of Handicraft) in 2002 and completely restored and refurbished to its original design, it now serves as a conference centre.



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Meanwhile, Heydrich and Gestapo chief Müller were making plans for another refinement of their wicked scheme. They had con-

jured up the idea of leaving dead bodies of concentration camp inmates, dressed to look like Poles, behind at the various mock battle scenes as further evidence of the Polish aggression. The idea was first broached by Müller at the planning conference of August 8, where it had been demurred as ‘unpractical’ by most of the other SS men present, but Müller had carried on nonetheless. The concentration camps fell partly under Gestapo jurisdiction so he would have no trouble procuring suitable candidates from there. The selected persons would be first drugged into near-unconsciousness for the drive to the scene and then shot dead at each site. Müller had thought up a sardonic code-name for the death candidates: they would be referred to as ‘Konserven’ (canned goods).

#### TROUBLE NOTED

Meanwhile, international tension was mounting by the day. On August 24, the *New York Times* described ‘warlike preparations’ as Hitler took the first step toward incorporating Danzig into the Reich when the Danzig Senate passed a law declaring: ‘The Gauleiter (Albert Forster) is the supreme head of the State of the Free City of Danzig.’ The August 25 edition carried a photograph showing thousands of Danzigers lining the docks, hands raised in Nazi salute, greeting the arrival of the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein*.

Associated Press had already reported a German patrol crossing the Polish-East Prussian border near Ilawa in north-eastern Poland and AP correspondent Alvin J. Steinkopf noted increased activity in Berlin and along the Polish frontier in his August 26 dispatch: ‘Germany shut herself off from the world for seven hours last night and early today as she made apparently last-minute preparations “to deal with Poland”, ready for any action on the part of the Poles or anyone else.’ Increased troop movements were reported in the vicinity of Gleiwitz and that an entire floor of Gleiwitz’s largest hotel was taken over by staff officers. Steinkopf’s dispatch was broken off midway.

Sensational reports of abuse of Germans at the hands of Poles were fodder for the Nazi press. The Polish government was kept busy denying atrocity stories such as the alleged slaughter of 23 Germans in the neighbourhood of Lodz and eight others in the vicinity of Bielsko, which were described as ‘pure invention and falsehood’. A story datelined from Vienna on August 26 stated that the atrocity stories of Silesia bore a resemblance to the same stories coming from the Czechoslovakian crisis of the year before. The report pointed to a photograph published in the *Neueste Nachrichten* showing the ‘horrors of the Polish terror’ but which presented a wintertime scene — presumably in August.



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**SS-Sturmbannführer Karl Hoffmann, the director of the Bernau school, was temporarily attached to the ‘Tannenberg’ force. He participated in the first failed attempt at Hochlinden on the night of August 25/26 and, after Hellwig had been removed of command as a result of it, was appointed to take his place as leader of the ‘Polish’ attackers. Born on July 31, 1902, Hoffmann later became commander of one of the other SD schools, the SD-Funkschule (Radio School) at Grünberg Castle near Nepomuk and, after this was closed in April 1943, switched to military service, ending the war as commander of SS-Panzergranadier-Regiment 39 of the 18. SS-Freiwilligen-Panzergranadier-Division ‘Horst Wessel’.**

It appears Heydrich and Müller arranged this part of ‘Tannenberg’ separately from the rest of the operation. They mentioned it to the other sub-commanders but, knowing they disagreed or disapproved, did not involve them in the preparations for it.

About August 20, two Gestapo officers arrived at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, 30 kilometres north-west of Berlin, and, together with officers of the camp’s Politische Abteilung (Political Department, the Gestapo branch of the camp’s SS administration) selected 10 to 12 inmates, both political prisoners and career criminals, from the records. Told to report at the camp gate, these men were put in isolation cells in the camp prison block. A few days later, they were collected from the camp, hand-cuffed, and driven off in black saloon cars, the later note on their camp registry card just reading ‘Aktion Konservendose’ (Action Tin Can). Some went direct to the Gestapo prison in Breslau, where they were locked up in isolation cells, there to await their final fate. Others were first taken to the Gestapo main headquarters at No. 8 Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse in Berlin, where they spent a short time in the basement cells before being transferred to the Breslau prison too.



On August 24, the forces that were to carry out the provocations at Hochlinden and Pitschen were driven from Bernau to forward bases in Upper Silesia. The task force for the assault on the Hochlinden custom-house was billeted in the town of Ehrenforst, 30 kilometres north of their target area. The men were

quartered in one of the village taverns, the Gasthof Bielitzer on Hauptstrasse. Ehrenforst is today Slawiecice in Poland, a name derived from the village's older German name Slaventsitz. Unfortunately, the old Bielitzer tavern of 1939 no longer exists, its place having been taken by a modern replacement.

#### FALSE START AT HOCHLINDEN (Night of August 25/26)

On the afternoon of August 23, Hitler issued orders for 'Fall Weiss' to commence at 4.30 a.m. on the morning of the 26th. Immediately, Heydrich sent an order to Naujocks at Gleiwitz and to Hellwig, Trummler, Rasch and Hoffmann at Bernau to make final preparations for their missions. That night, the men stationed at the Bernau SD school celebrated their forthcoming operations with beer and song. Speaking to the assembled officers, Hellwig said: 'A piece of world history is made, comrades, at this table'.

At 5 a.m. next morning, August 24, the 350 men of the Suicide Squad piled into 30 closed SS trucks, which in addition carried an army kitchen crew and supplies. The men of Hellwig's company were dressed in Grenzpolizei uniforms; their Polish uniforms and kit had been packed and were carried in the trucks, while Rasch's commandos were already wearing the 'rogue costumes' they would use in the Pitschen attack. The men were forbidden to look outside the enclosed vehicles or to speak with anyone outside of their group.

The column drove 450 kilometres through Breslau to Oppeln, where it split up. The group under Rasch, destined for the forestry house attack and comprising some 130 men in ten trucks, continued 60 kilometres north-east to Pitschen, where they settled in the Gasthof Wyrwich, a family inn on the edge of town with a large brewery yard enclosed by a wall. The rank-and-file and the NCOs slept

in the attics of the buildings in the yard, their leaders in the guest rooms. The whole compound was sealed off. No guest was allowed to enter the restaurant and its window shutters were closed day and night so that passers-by could not see in. None of the SS men was allowed to leave either the restaurant or the yard. The following morning, the object of their mission — to stage a fake Polish raid on a nearby forestry house — was finally disclosed to the men. Some of the officers left the inn to survey the area of attack.

The 20 trucks containing Hellwig's group of some 220 drove 45 kilometres south-east to Ehrenforst, a small village about 30 kilometres from their operational target Hochlinden, where they made station for the night. The men were billeted in a hall of a local tavern, the Gasthof Bielitzer, while the officers stayed in Schloss Ehrenforst, the castle belonging to Prince Hohenlohe-Öhringen, which was located in a park across the road from the inn. Like at Pitschen, the men were completely sealed in, guards being posted at every exit of the inn. Shortly after, Trummler arrived with the force of Grenzpolizei cadets from his school that were to provide the 'German defenders'. They too were billeted in the village.

A major worry of the 'Tannenberg' commanders was that their actions would accidentally set off a real fire-fight with regular Wehrmacht troops, thousands of which stood poised along the border ready for the invasion of Poland. However, measures had

already been taken to prevent such a collision. On the 24th, Mehlhorn was visited in his Oppeln hotel by a Wehrmacht general who had come to delineate the sectors that would be made free of troops during the 'Tannenberg' action. He gave his assurances that his troops would stand down and by the afternoon of the 25th they had been withdrawn. At Pitschen, the stand-down was easily arranged for the attacking unit here was the SS's own Leibstandarte-SS 'Adolf Hitler'.

Likewise, customs officials and border guards in the area had also been ordered to cease operations for the duration. The personnel of the custom-house at Hochlinden received orders to vacate the building (their families who lived in the nearby housing block were ordered to evacuate to the rear) and a platoon from the local border guard company of Grenzschutz-Regiment 68, which had just taken up position at Hochlinden, was ordered to withdraw. At Pitschen, which was not close to any frontier post, the local border patrol was scheduled in such a way that it would not be near the forestry house during the hours of the raid.

As for the forester, it is very likely that he was informed of the upcoming raid on his house (he was a member of the SS, so Rasch probably reckoned he could be trusted with a secret). He took care to have his wife stay with friends in town during the night of the raid.

In the afternoon of August 25, the 'Tan-



Left: Task force commanders Hellwig and Trummler and the unit's other officers took more luxurious quarters in the Schloss Ehrenforst, the 18th-century castle in the park across the road from the Bielitzer tavern. It belonged to the noble family of



Hohenlohe-Öhringen, well-known captains of mining and industry in Upper Silesia. The castle suffered serious damage during the battles of 1945, and its ruins were completely destroyed by fire in 1948. Right: Today only the side portal remains.



nenberg' unit commanders received the first indication of an imminent attack when motorcycle messengers delivered a sealed envelope with a letter giving the first code-word: 'Kleiner Auerhahn' — the signal to prepare for action. The letter added: "Grosser Auerhahn" probably to be expected from 2 p.m.' Mehlhorn, the overall co-ordinator, who was at his operational command post at Oppeln, received an order from Heydrich telling him to move to the other command post, the Police Headquarters in Gleiwitz, there to await the further operational orders.

The second code-word, 'Grosser Auerhahn' — the signal for the units to move into position — arrived that evening. Rasch's team at Pitschen and Naujocks' team at Gleiwitz were billeted only a few kilometres from their respective objectives and did not have to travel far. However, it was different for Trummler's and Hellwig's teams at Ehrenforst, for their target area, Hochlinden, was still 30 kilometres away. At 10 p.m. Hellwig and his NCOs were convened in the Schloss Ehrenforst where Trummler announced that the men had to be ready to depart in 30 minutes. Aktion Hochlinden and 'Fall Weiss' were underway.

Around 4 a.m., the men boarded their transport. Trummler's 'German defenders' were already wearing their border police uniforms. In Hellwig's group, the 'Polish insurgents' were already dressed in their 'rogue costume' but the 40 'Polish soldiers' carried their Polish gear in kitbags aboard the vehicles. Unable to see outside, the men literally travelled in the dark as they were driven down to the frontier at Hochlinden. Reaching the target area, a sentry directed the trucks off the road and into a wooded area. Trummler was already there, and he ordered Hellwig's men to change into their Polish uniforms.

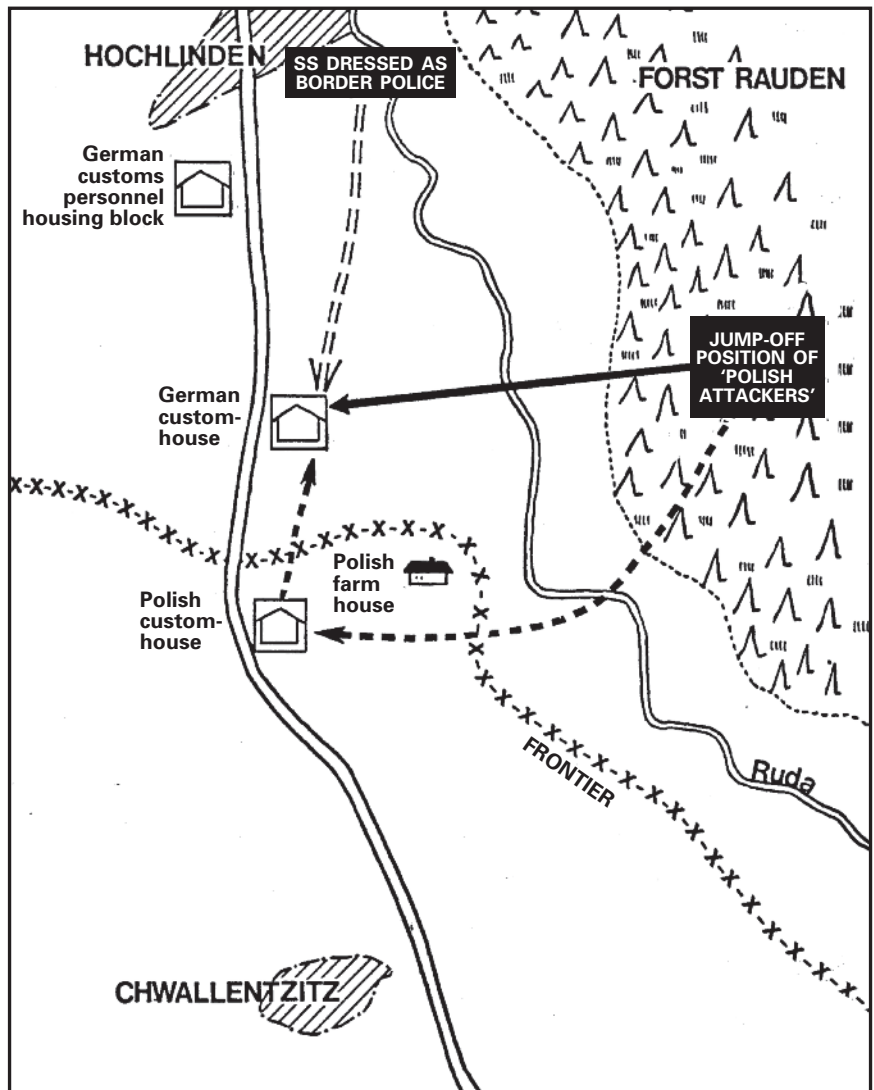
As the trucks had pulled off the road, the men inside had got a glimpse of about eight to ten black Mercedes, curtains tightly drawn, standing parked one behind the other at the roadside in the direction of Hochlinden. Spotting the line of official cars, the men wondered who or what they carried. Had some top Nazi, perhaps even the Führer himself, come to observe their action? Would they be filmed?

However, the cars did not carry Hitler or any other VIP Nazi but the 'canned goods', the concentration camp prisoners whose corpses would be left behind at the mock battle scene dressed in Polish uniforms. In preparation for their easy transfer to the scene, the prisoners had been drugged into near-unconsciousness by one of Heydrich's personal physicians, Dr Strassburger (who would later receive an Iron Cross for his actions on the Polish frontier). Gestapo chief Müller had personally come along to deliver the goods.

The 'Polish' attackers moved off, led by Hellwig who was dressed in the attire of a Polish captain. Hoffmann, the director of the Bernau school, went with this group. Marching silently through the wood and across the Ruda valley in pitch darkness, they hid in a clump of bushes about 500 metres from the Polish customs office. At the same time, Trummler's German defenders took up their positions north of the German custom-house.

As both Hochlinden groups steeled for action, none were aware that Hitler had rescinded his attack plan. At 8.30 p.m. that evening (August 25), the Führer had called off the war. Two significant events occurred at the last minute to give Hitler pause: Great Britain signed a mutual protection agreement with Poland and Mussolini had notified Hitler that he could not support a wider war; his adventures in Ethiopia and Spain had drained his resources.

The Wehrmacht divisions and most other



The attack on the Hochlinden custom-house. The map shows both the aborted action on the night of August 25/26, when Hellwig's 'Polish attackers' force went in too soon and was only just recalled in time, and the second attack on the night of August 31/September 1, carried out by a smaller force which did not enter Polish territory.



The terrain of the Hochlinden border incident as seen from the Polish side. The Polish custom-house has gone but it stood where the house on the extreme right is now. The village of Chwalecice (Chwallentzitz in German) lies behind the photographer. Today the area between the two former custom-houses is covered by the northern end of a large reservoir, the old road now running on a causeway bordered on two sides by water.

ATB



ATB

**The target of the Hochlinden provocation: the German custom-house. Completed in the summer of 1939, it was a brand-new building at the time of the 'Tannenberg' incident. Although no longer a customs office, it remains virtually unchanged.**

units that stood poised along the Polish frontier learned of Hitler's change of plans in time, but some did not. At Mosty, in German-occupied Slovakia, a Wehrmacht commando unit dispatched by Keitel and Canaris went in as planned and briefly held a Polish rail station, only to be repulsed by Polish troops when they attempted to seize the strategically important railway tunnels in the nearby Jablunka Pass. Their radio failed to receive the message calling off the attack. They retreated with two wounded (see *After the Battle* No. 79).

Another group that went in too early was Hellwig's 'Polish' attack group at Hochlinden. Heydrich in Berlin was about to send a message to Mehlhorn in Gleiwitz to call off the 'Tannenberg' actions when, to his shock and surprise, he received a message from Hellwig saying that the attack had begun. Heydrich was horrified. How could this be, when the code signal for the start of the attack — 'Agathe' — had not even been given out?

Enraged, Heydrich immediately sent an urgent message to the operational command post in Gleiwitz to stop the attack: 'Ihr seid wohl verrückt geworden!' (You must have gone crazy!), he telegraphed. When Mehlhorn saw Heydrich's message, he at once dispatched a motorcycle messenger from Gross Rauden to Hochlinden to break off the operation.

On reaching the frontier, the despatch rider — in German uniform — raced right out in the open to catch up with the 'Polish' attackers to deliver the message to Hellwig. By then part of Hellwig's men had already advanced 200 meters into Polish territory. They immediately and silently withdrew to the German border.

Hellwig had made a fatal mistake: he had confused the code-word 'Grosser Auerhahn' — the warning to get in place, with 'Agathe' — the final order to attack.

However, Hellwig had still not understood. On regaining German territory, he

told his force to make ready for battle against Polish troops. (He had obviously not realised how nonsensical it was to have troops in Polish uniforms engage Polish forces.) Mehlhorn in Gleiwitz was appalled when the despatch rider returned with a communication from Hellwig — written a slip from an SS message pad — that he had deployed for battle against the Poles and just ordered to his troops to open fire on approaching Polish trucks. Exasperated, Mehlhorn immediately sent the messenger back with an unequivocal order to Hellwig to instantly evacuate his positions, break off any fire-fight and return to his billets.

Hellwig withdrew to the debussing area in

the wood, where he met Trummler and his force. Trummler bitterly reproached his fellow officer for his disregard of orders, saying 'You have made a real mess of it'. The trucks quickly returned the men to Ehrenforst while 'Gestapo Müller' and his mysterious black saloons withdrew in another direction.

Things had gone horribly astray at Hochlinden, but elsewhere Heydrich's cancelling order reached the SD teams in time. Naujocks and his men at Gleiwitz had not even left their hotel, and Rasch and his crew at Pitschen returned to their billets at the Wyrwich inn within half an hour of their departure.



ATB

**The building that housed the families of the Hochlinden customs personnel survives as well, a few hundred metres closer to Hochlinden. In preparation of the fake attack, the Sicherheitsdienst had ordered the customs officers to go off duty and their families were instructed to evacuate to the rear. Our picture is looking south from the village towards the Polish border. The German custom-house is beyond the rise, in a fold of the terrain, on the left side of the road. Hochlinden is today Polish and named Stodoly — a suburb of the municipality of Rybnik.**



BA RS

#### COMMAND CHANGES AND REVISION OF PLANS

Heydrich immediately called for an investigation into the botched job and the miscommunication. The commanders involved — Mehlhorn, Hellwig, Rasch and Schaefer — were called to Heydrich's Berlin office immediately on the 26th. Heydrich launched a vicious attack upon Mehlhorn and Hellwig, relieving both of them on the spot. Mehlhorn had been a thorn in Heydrich's side from the very beginning with endless questions and doubts about the operation and Heydrich was glad to get rid of him. His task of overall co-ordination was handed to Gestapo chief Müller.

Hellwig was taken off the Hochlinden operation and replaced by Trummler. The transfer of command was embarrassingly carried out in a formal ceremony in front of the entire Hochlinden force in the courtyard of the Ehrenforst castle. Hellwig's task of leading the 'Polish' group was assigned to SS-Sturmbannführer Hoffmann of the Bernau school (who had participated at Hochlinden as a member of Hellwig's force). Hoffmann received his assignment personally on the Gleiwitz airstrip where Müller arrived to appoint him and then immediately fly away.

Heydrich was equally furious with Abwehr chief Canaris for the inquiry into the botch-up had produced another, quite unsuspected piece of news: border guards at Hochlinden had reported that on the night of August 24/25 — one night before the failed action — a group of ethnic Germans had crossed the border and destroyed the Polish customs office at Chwalecice with hand-grenades. This made one part of Heydrich's plan — to have part of the 'Polish' force capture the Polish custom-house and use its telephone to alert the Polish frontier troops — impossible. Interrogated by the police, one of the participants stated that they had acted 'on orders of the Abwehr', leading Heydrich to suspect that Canaris, resentful of his reduced role, had tried to sabotage the SD's frontier action. (The involvement of the Abwehr in the destruction of the Polish border station could never be proven and its seems certain that it had nothing to do with it. In all probability, the foray was an impromptu action by local Nazi activists.)

SS-Sturmbannführer Alfred Naujocks led the team that staged the attack on the Gleiwitz radio station. Born in Kiel on September 20, 1911, Naujocks was trained as a metal-worker. He joined the NSDAP in 1931, the SS in 1933 and the SD in 1934, where he began work in SD-Amt VI (Foreign Intelligence), specialising in forged documents and political assassinations. In March 1938, in the run-up to the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, he secretly supplied arms to the Slovak Hlinka Guard rebels. Two months after Gleiwitz, on November 8, 1939, he masterminded the kidnapping of British secret agents Richard Stevens and Sigmund Payne Best at the Dutch border in the so-called Venlo Incident (see *After the Battle* No. 11). In 1940, by now in the RSHA Amt VI-B (Foreign Intelligence, Western Europe), Technical Section, he was involved in the initial efforts at counterfeiting of the British currency, later known as Operation 'Bernhard.' In January 1941, by now an SS-Obersturmbannführer, he fell out of favour with Heydrich who had him arrested, demoted and sent to the Eastern Front, where he served in the 1. SS-Panzer Grenadier-Division 'LSSAH'. Released from military duty due to a nervous breakdown in September 1942, he was assigned to the economic department of the German military government in occupied Belgium, where he participated in hunting down resistance fighters. Promoted to SS-Obersturmführer, in December 1943 he was sent to Denmark to command the so-called Petergruppe, an SD terror group responsible for the murder of some 50 Danish partisans and numerous bomb attacks. Returning to Belgium in the autumn of 1944, he deserted and surrendered to a pair of American GIs in the Ardennes on October 19. His affidavits given to his American interrogators were used in the Nuremberg Trial. In 1946, due to be tried for his own actions, he escaped from his POW camp and went to live in Hamburg as a businessman, first under a false name but from 1962 under his own. He was convicted in Denmark but never served a sentence. He died in Hamburg on April 4, 1966.

As a result of the inglorious false start, Heydrich and Müller revised their plans for Hochlinden. The assault there would now take place with fewer men — about 60 — and they would not enter Polish territory. With the curtailment of the Hochlinden strike, the assault on the Gleiwitz radio station and the broadcast calling for an uprising had become the centrepiece of Operation 'Tannenberg'.

A few days later, Müller called Naujocks to his operational command post at Oppeln to discuss the upcoming action. He explained that he was not happy with the fact that there would be no Polish dead left behind at the scene of the raid, like had been planned for the other actions, and he proposed to Naujocks to leave behind a corpse in Polish uniform. Naujocks explained that this would be illogical as his raid was supposed to be by Polish civilian rebels. Müller reacted: 'OK, you'll get him in civvies'. He explained that, on receipt of the agreed code signal, the raid was to start at 8 p.m. and he would deliver the 'canned goods' between 8 p.m. and 8.10 p.m.

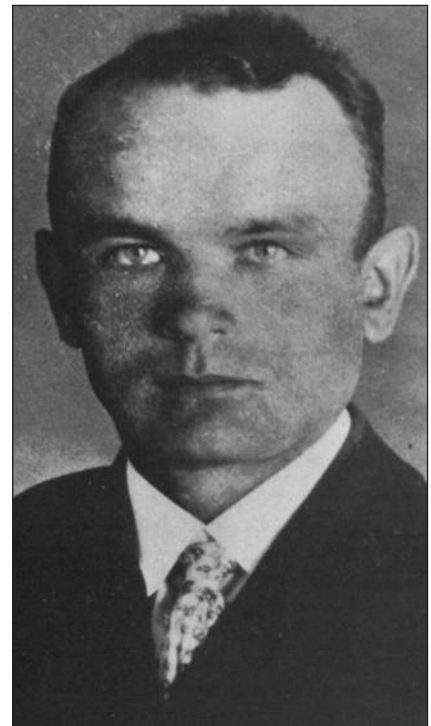
Müller realised that he could not simply use one of the concentration camp prisoners as 'canned goods' at Gleiwitz. He needed to find a person that could be actually identified as a Polish insurgent or, at least, as a pro-Polish activist. A search through Gestapo files soon turned up a suitable candidate. Franz Honiok was a 41-year-old ethnic German sympathetic to the Polish cause. He had fought alongside Polish nationalists in the Upper Silesian rebellion of 1921, and had even lived in Poland from 1923 to 1925. Now

**Right: Franz Honiok — 'the first man to be killed in the Second World War'. Born on March 21, 1898, Honiok was an ethnic German sympathetic to the Polish cause — the ideal victim for Gestapo Müller's plan to plant the dead body of a 'Polish rebel' at the Gleiwitz radio station as further proof of Polish aggression. Honiok was picked up by the Gestapo in his home town of Hohenlieben (today Lubie in Poland) on August 30 and kept incarcerated until he was needed. Drugged into near-unconsciousness, he was then driven to the radio station, laid down on the ground and shot.**

a salesman of agricultural machines, he lived in the village of Hohenlieben near Peiskretscham, north of Gleiwitz. He seemed ideal for the part.

On August 30, two Gestapo officials in civilian dress arrived at Hohenlieben and unobtrusively arrested Honiok. He was first taken to the police barracks at Beuthen and then to the Gestapo station at Oppeln, where he was held anonymously in the file room. The following morning, August 31, he was transferred to the Gleiwitz police headquarters and incarcerated in the cells.

That afternoon, Hitler decided to go ahead with the invasion of Poland. Shortly before 1 p.m. the OKW passed the orders to all military commands re-launch 'Fall Weiss'. The start of the attack was set for 5.45 a.m. the following morning, September 1.



Right: The Haus Oberschlesien hotel in the centre of Gleiwitz, where Naujocks and his men stayed for over two weeks (August 12-31) waiting for the coded message that signalled the start of their action to seize the radio station. The Haus Oberschlesien on Wilhelmstrasse was also the venue of Heydrich's meeting with Schaeffer on August 9, when he visited Upper Silesia to discuss and reconnoitre suitable sites for the frontier provocations.

**ASSAULT ON THE GLEIWITZ RADIO STATION  
(Night of August 31/September 1)**

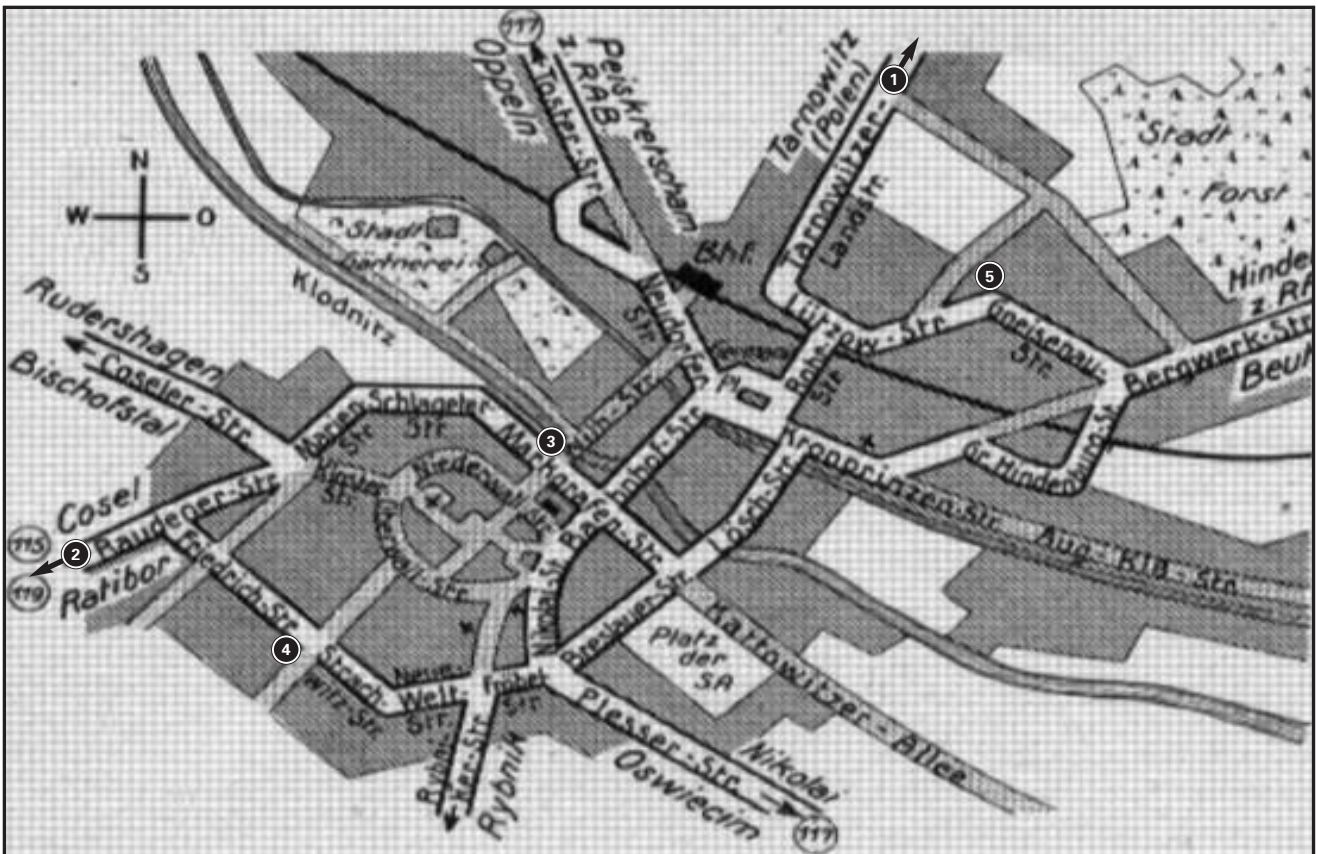
By August 31, Naujocks and his small team had been waiting for action in the Haus Oberschlesien hotel for over two weeks. Finally, at 4 p.m. that afternoon, the telephone in Naujocks' room rang. It was Heydrich, recognisable by his high-pitched voice: 'Please call back'. Naujocks immediately returned the call to hear only the code signal for attack: 'Grossmutter gestorben'.

Naujocks at once called his men together and, for the first time, disclosed their mission, telling them they were to stage a mock Polish raid on the Gleiwitz radio station. He also informed them that a dead body would be left behind at the scene. Shortly after, the last member of the intruder squad, the announcer who was to deliver the broadcast in Polish, arrived at the hotel and joined the team.

That afternoon, as a final preparation for the attack, Heydrich took measures to insure that the police guard at the radio station would not interfere with the foray. Since August 20, the German postal authorities had had a detail of 13 men guarding the station. On August 28, this had been replaced by a seven-man detail from the Gleiwitz Schutzpolizei. Now, the Schutzpolizei commander was instructed to withdraw his men from the site. They were to be replaced by a detail from the Sicherheitspolizei. No expla-



Totally reconstructed after the war, the former hotel is today the Gliwice Municipal Building, housing the offices of the Mayor and Town Council, its current address being No. 21 Ulitsa Zwyciestwa.



Town map of Gleiwitz showing the main locations in this story; [1] Gleiwitz radio station; [2] the old original radio station; [3] Haus Oberschlesien hotel; [4] Polizei-Präsidium; [5] Polizei-Revier No. 4 police station.

# DER FALL GLEIWITZ

DEFA

**THE MOVIE.** In 1961, the East-German state film production company DEFA produced a feature film on the Gleiwitz affair. It was no coincidence that it was made in the same year the Berlin Wall went up, the East German propaganda authorities having chosen the historical precedent of 1939 to show the world how border provocations could easily lead to war. Directed by award-winning director Gerhard Klein and titled *Der Fall Gleiwitz* (The Gleiwitz Case), it was released in 1962. Although its storyline is not correct in every detail, it provided a minute reconstruction of the planning and execution of the raid. More importantly, the attack itself was filmed in the actual Gleiwitz radio station, the East German film-makers having received the free use of the facility in neighbouring Poland. Thus, in the absence of historical photos, stills from the movie allow us to illustrate the attack.

nation for this sudden and unusual relief was given other than that it was 'on orders from Reichsführer-SS Himmler'. The ordinary policemen were ordered off duty at 1 p.m. and the Sicherheitspolizei detail, one officer and three men, arrived at 4 p.m. They walked turns between the station compound main gate and the radio tower, but kept mostly to the guardroom that had been set up in the administration and housing block by the main gate.



DEFA

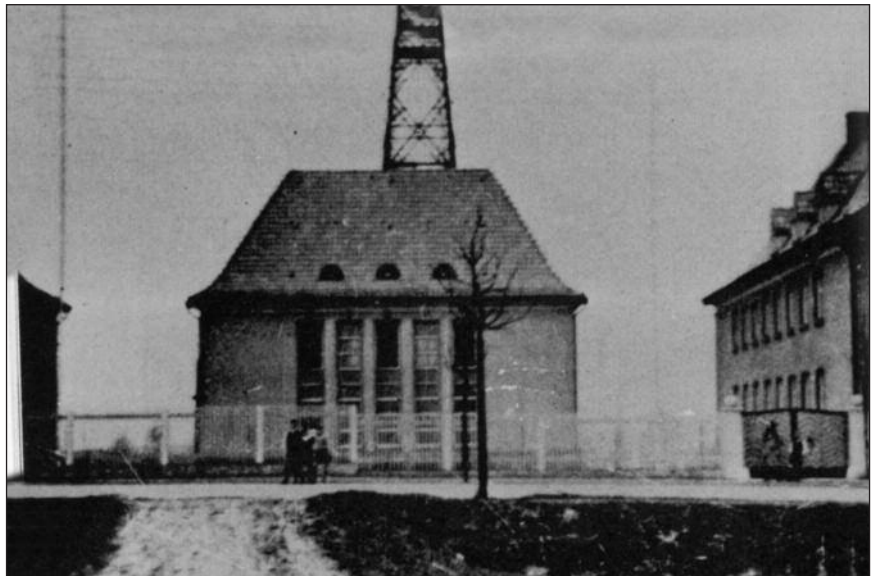
**THE MOVIE.** The film shows Naujocks (played by Hannjo Hasse) reconnoitring the broadcasting station in the guise of a radio technician sent to check up on some technical problem. Here he is seen leaving the transmitter building. In actual fact, Naujocks scouted out the station disguised as a street-hawker and did not enter the building's interior but only took note of the outside and of the way the site was guarded.

It was a pleasant late summer's evening, an hour after sunset and an hour before the rise of the waning moon. Two black saloon cars quietly pulled up to the front of the radio station which was lit up. The property was surrounded by a two-metre-high wire mesh fence topped with barbed wire, with three gates opening on to the street, which were normally locked for the evening. The right-hand gate, furthest away from the guardroom, was unlocked this night.

Eight o'clock was a time when most households were listening to their radios. News broadcasts were filled with the atrocity stories telling of the persecution of ethnic Germans at the hands of the Poles. As Hitler said in one of his broadcast speeches, Germans were treated 'with a bloody terror and driven from their homes'. Often the programs would begin and end with the martial tune *The March of the Germans in Poland*. But, on this night, there was only music.



ATB



The radio station on Tarnowitzer Landstrasse was built by the German Ministry of Post in 1934-35 to replace an earlier radio station that had been put up in 1925 but had become obsolete within ten years. The new station featured an 8kW transmitter which broadcast on a medium wavelength of 243.7 metres (1231 kHz). The 111-metre wooden tower, built by the Lorenz Company, had an internal vertical aerial with a seven-metre-tall extension mounted at the top to obtain the ideal condition for broadcasting. The coverage (radius) was only around 100 kilometres during the day, but at night the signal could be heard as far away as London, Paris and even New York. This was possible because medium waves can

reflect from the ionosphere, just like a mirror. The new station broadcast the programme of Radio Breslau, which was received through a communication cable via the old radio station. This old station on Raudener Strasse (today Ulitsa Radiowa) in the west part of the city was kept in use as a studio to produce local Gleiwitz programmes that supplemented the Breslau programme. The entire compound of Reichssender Gleiwitz, which included the transmitter building, two housing and administrative blocks and the radio mast, was surrounded by a two-metre-high fence. The side fronting the street had three gates. Tarnowitzer Landstrasse is today named Ulitsa Tarnagorska.



DEFA

**THE MOVIE.** Naujocks and his team of six arrive at the station (left) . . . and one member is seen jumping the gate (the one furthest to the right) and opening it for the others (right).



DEFA

In actual fact, the gate was left unlocked by the Sicherheitspolizei detail that arrived to take over guard duty at the site a few hours before the raid.



DEFA

**THE MOVIE.** The intruders run past one of the housing blocks . . . to the side entrance of the transmitter building.



DEFA

Seven intruders, dressed in typical Polish civilian clothing and armed with machine-pistols and revolvers, emerged from the cars. Naujocks assigned two men to stay at the gate to receive the 'canned goods'. The others rushed through the unlocked gate and toward the side door of the transmitter building. This gave access to the station's engine room. Rushing in, the men swung left, through another door and up a short flight of steps, which they knew led to the broadcasting room.

Three employees were on duty inside the building that evening — Nawroth, the chief telegraphist; Kotz, the machinist; and Foitzik, the night watchman. Also present was one of the members of the Sicherheitspolizei guard detail. As the men burst in, Foitzik, dressed in his blue uniform, stood startled atop the short staircase leading to the broadcasting studio. He could barely speak before he was overwhelmed. 'Hände hoch!' (Hands up!), one of the intruders shouted. The policeman quickly

raised his hands. Foitzik was grabbed and his head smashed into the wall, nearly killing him. Their hands were bound behind their backs and they were taken to the cellar, the unconscious Foitzik being dragged down. One intruder was left to guard the side entrance and two others rushed into the broadcasting room. The remaining men looked for others in the building, and found Nawroth and Kotz. They, too, were beaten, bound and dragged into the cellar. One intruder was assigned to guard them.



ATB



ATB

Karel Margry spent a fascinating day in June 2008 visiting the station and taking the comparison photographs.

Once the raiders had the station personnel secured in the cellar, they had little time to accomplish their mission. The broadcast had to be hastily made and then, just as quickly, they had to leave. However, they were faced with two unexpected problems — they couldn't get the line working and they could not find a microphone.

As the engineer from Radio Berlin struggled with the switchboard equipment, Naujocks and the other man frantically searched for a microphone. Naujocks decided to question the station personnel. One by one, they were brought up from the cellar and subjected to pistol whips, but little was got out of them. Foitzik and Kotz did not know how to operate the broadcasting equipment, only Nawroth had the knowledge. He said spoken broadcasts could only be done via a line with the telephone exchange.

Naujocks team did not know it but they had come up against a major flaw in the planning of the raid. Gleiwitz was not a station broadcasting its own programme, it was only a relay transmitter passing on the programme of Radio Breslau on the same frequency. Moreover, the land line connecting Gleiwitz with Radio Breslau was not in this station, but located about four kilometres away in Gleiwitz's telephone exchange. It was impossible to establish an independent connection with Breslau from the facility on Tarnowitzer Landstrasse.



Entering the station's generator room, the men swung left, through a door . . .



. . . up the short flight of stairs, where they met and overwhelmed Foitzik . . .



. . . and into the broadcasting control room. They came in through the door in the glass wall on the right.



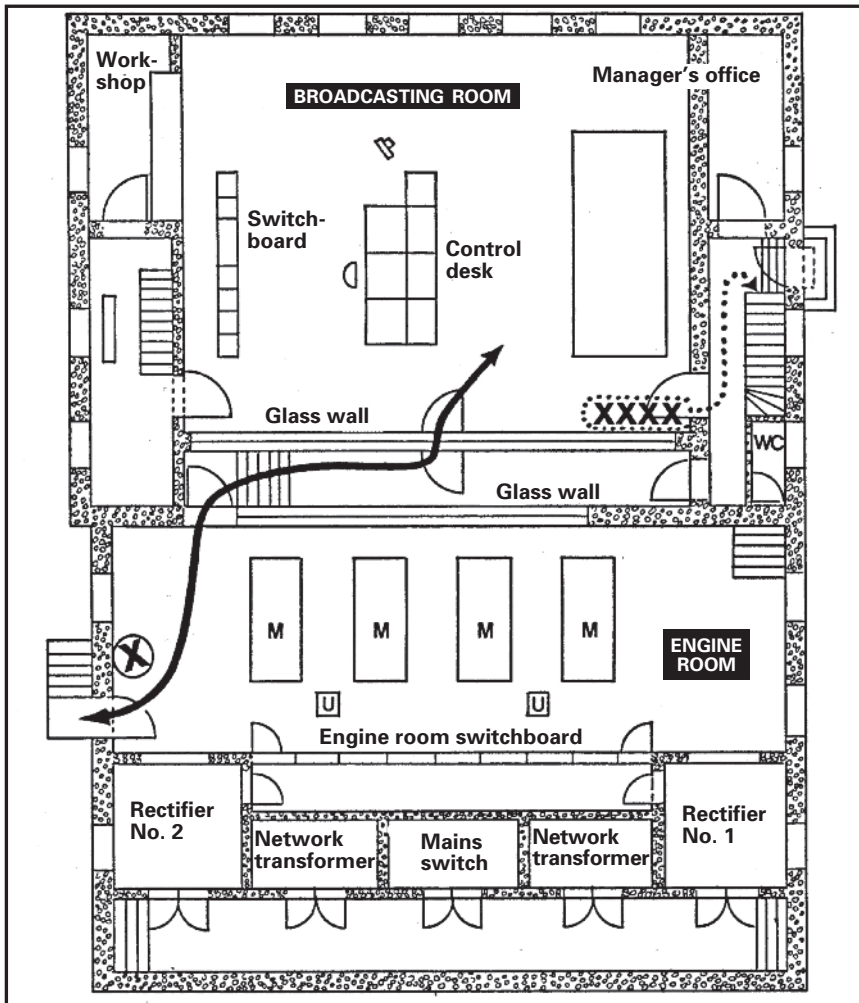
THE MOVIE. Naujocks (with rifle) and his men as they burst into the control room.



Left: Overpowering the three surprised staff members and the single Sicherheitspolizei sentry, the intruders bundled them down the vestibule stairs . . . to the basement corridor (centre).



THE MOVIE. The four captives in the cellar where they were made to face the wall, guarded by one of the intruders.



Plan showing the intruders' route in and out of the transmitter building. [XXXX] shows the route of the four captives down into the cellar. [X] is the spot where the 'canned goods' — the dead body of Franz Honiok — was left behind.

Whether Nawroth co-operated or not is unknown but the intruders finally found a microphone, the one used only for storm warnings to the local Gleiwitz area. (If a storm came up, regular programming transmitted from Breslau would be interrupted for the gale warning and then the station would cease operation and ground the antennae.) Likewise, they managed to generate the signal used for the storm warnings. The switching-off of the modulator line from Breslau caused an engineer from that station to telephone Gleiwitz to inquire what was

wrong. One of the insurgents answered the call, curtly said 'technical trouble', then put down the receiver.

However, with the controls at hand, Naujocks' engineer could do no better than a broadcast to the local Gleiwitz area. Naujocks' speaker took the microphone and began his prepared speech:

'Uwaga! Tu Gliwice. Rozglosnia znajduje sie w rekach polskich . . .' — 'Attention! Here is Gleiwitz, the radio station is in Polish hands . . .'

As the speaker delivered his political dia-

tribe, gunshots were fired into the ceiling and shouts and other noises made, all designed to create the impression of a frenzied raid going on.

Hardly anyone heard the message but the noise caught the attention of the wife of station manager Klose, who was listening to the radio. The Kloses lived on the station premises, in one of the two housing blocks alongside the forecourt. Frau Klose alerted her husband that something was wrong. Klose walked across to the station to have a look, entering by the front door. As he came in, one of the men inside pointed a pistol at him. Reacting swiftly, Klose withdrew, slammed the door behind him and ran away to alert the police and inform the chief of the telephone exchange. Throughout all this, the remaining three members of the Sicherheits-polizei guard detail did not react but kept to their guardroom.

Despite the interruption (which in fact only enhanced the authenticity of the raid), the speaker continued his broadcast.

Meanwhile, Müller's 'canned goods' men had arrived to deliver the near-dead body of Franz Honiok that was to be left behind as evidence of the attack. Earlier that evening, at the Gleiwitz police prison, an SS-Sturm-führer (wearing a white smock over his uniform to look like a doctor) had injected Honiok with a drug that made him semi-conscious. Still able to walk, he was put in the front seat of a black Opel and driven to the radio station. Another vehicle carrying a police Inspector and two Gestapo men in civilian clothes went ahead. The two cars parked on the dirt road that ran beside the station compound. The Inspector and his two companions walked across to the station gate, where they exchanged the password 'Konserve' with the two men left by Naujocks, then the Inspector returned to fetch the prisoner. By then, Honiok could no longer move, so the Inspector carried him from behind and under his arms to the transmitter area. He was not yet dead for he could still occasionally raise his head up. Honiok's lifeless body was laid down just inside the side entrance of the radio building.

Meanwhile, Naujocks' speaker had finished his broadcast. In all, it had lasted about four minutes. With nothing more to do, the intruders left as quickly as they had entered. The entire attack had taken only 17 minutes.

As he was getting away, Naujocks saw the body of the 'canned goods' lying by the side entrance. As he later told his interrogators: 'His head was bloody and his whole face was smeared with blood. Whether he was still alive, I cannot say. I had little time to examine him more precisely.' He presumed that the blood came from a gunshot wound to the back of the head but the man appeared to be still breathing.



THE MOVIE. Naujocks finds the microphone in a control room cupboard . . . and his Polish speaker begins his insurgent broadcast.





DEFA

**THE MOVIE.** Meanwhile, the Gestapo's 'canned goods' team have arrived to deliver the semi-unconscious body. In actual fact,



DEFA

their car never entered the compound itself but stayed parked outside, while one of the operatives carried Honiok in.

On completion of their action, Naujocks and his men returned to the Haus Oberschlesien. Naujocks telephoned Heydrich to report on the successful achievement but, to his surprise, found his superior fuming and in rage. Heydrich had tuned in to the frequency and been listening expecting to hear the interruption of the programme but, so he raged at Naujocks, he had heard nothing irregular.

Meanwhile, back at the radio station, events were still in progress. As they were standing with their face to the cellar wall, the four captives in the basement heard a single pistol shot ringing out from the generator room. Shortly after, they noted that their guard had gone. Machinist Kotz, his hands still bound, ran over to manager Klose's house to say that the intruders had left. He and Klose ran back to the transmitter building and, as they entered, found an SD officer (almost certainly one of the 'canned goods' men) who reacted by pointing his pistol at them. Klose and Kotz identified themselves and were then allowed to free the other three captives in the cellar.

Ten minutes later, two policemen arrived at the station. They had come cycling up from Polizei-Revier Nr. 4, the police station on nearby Lindenstrasse, less than two kilometres from the radio station, and been sent off by Oberleutnant Böhm, the station commander, who had heard the inflammatory speech on the radio. They were followed shortly by Böhm himself and several others from his station and by the raid squad from the main police headquarters, one officer and five men, which had been alerted by manager Klose's phone call. They all found the Gestapo already in presence. The latter prevented the ordinary policemen from entering the transmitter building. Nonetheless, several of them saw a glimpse of the dead man (Honiok) lying by the side door just inside the generator room, one knee drawn up, a small gush of blood having run from his chest.

Directly after the raid, an order came in at the Gleiwitz police headquarters that the investigation at the radio station was a matter of the Gestapo. The Kriminalpolizei, who would normally do such an inquiry, were only required to send a photographer to record the scene of crime. The photographer, Kriminalsekretär Arkadius Solms, exposed about a dozen pictures of Honiok's corpse and also searched for and lifted several fingerprints. He was still developing the glass negatives when, at about 1 a.m., an order came to hand in both finished and unfinished negatives to the Gestapo. The material was rushed to the Gleiwitz airfield, where Gestapo chief Müller stood waiting impatiently for them, the engines of his aircraft



DEFA

**THE MOVIE.** The semi-comatose victim is laid down against the rear outer wall of the transmitter building.



ATB

**In actual fact,** Honiok was dumped just inside the building, beside the entrance to the engine room (see the plan on page 18).



**THE MOVIE.** The film shows Alfred Naujocks shooting the 'canned goods' with his rifle — which is also the ending of the film. In actual fact Honiok was not shot by Naujocks but by one of the members of the Gestapo team that came to deliver Honiok to the radio station. However, this was not known when *Der Fall Gleiwitz* was made in 1961. In fact, it was the very release of the movie that caused West German authorities

to begin a judicial inquiry into the case and to investigate whether Naujocks and his team members could be prosecuted for murder. Naujocks died in 1966 before he could be brought to trial, but the concerted effort to track down surviving participants and witnesses has subsequently led to the conclusion that he was not responsible for killing Honiok. Nevertheless, the inquest was unable to identify who the gunman was.

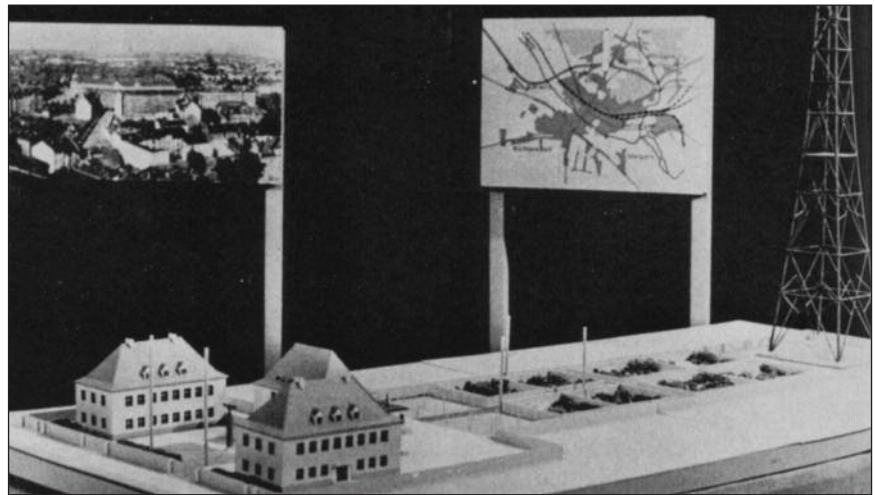
already running. Müller flew back to Berlin with the photos and the first reports from Gleiwitz and Pitschen (the action at Hochlinden was still underway), landing just in time before the outbreak of war curtailed all civilian flying.

It appears that Heydrich and Müller were not satisfied with Klose's photos, for the following day, September 2, another police photographer, Kriminalbeamte Bernhard Meyer, was sent to the radio station to take a new set of pictures of the crime scene. Müller's 'canned goods' men must have stayed at the station a little longer, for the scene found by this second photographer was quite different from what it had been the previous day. Firstly, Honiok's body had been moved from its place by the side entrance to a new location in the control room, bloody smears across the floor leading to it. Secondly, there was now a second dead body in the building, about three to four metres away from the other one. Both men were lying on their belly with arms stretched apart and face to the ground.

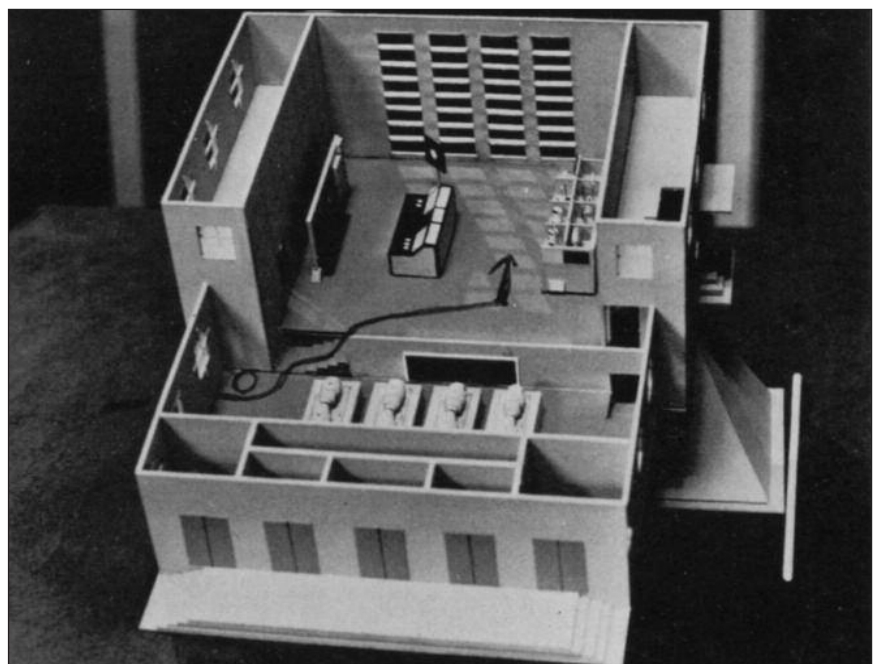
(The identity of this second corpse is still a mystery. An early theory assumed that he was the member of Naujocks' team who had been guarding the captives in the basement, who supposedly had been late in getting away and been shot by the SD man as he was making his way out. Another theory is that it was the Polish speaker, unscrupulously shot by Müller's henchmen after he had outlived his use. Yet another speculation is that he was one of the 'canned goods' concentration camp inmates, brought to the site the day after. Whatever his identity, his presence in the control room on the day after is confirmed by witnesses.)

Meyer took two photos, each one showing both corpses, and they were immediately whisked away for delivery to Berlin. The Gestapo also took Meyer's camera which they never returned.

**This inquiry, carried out by SS-Standartenführer Arthur Nebe, chief of the Kriminalpolizei (a body of Heydrich's Sicherheitspolizei) and finished within three days of the incident, naturally confirmed that the intruders had been Polish insurgents. This scale model of the transmitter building was another one produced for Nebe's farce inquest. The arrow (drawn in after the war) shows the route in of the intruders and the circle (a later addition too) indicates where the body of Franz Honiok was left.**



The scale model of the Gleiwitz radio station produced to illustrate the Nazis' own official police investigation into the 'Polish act of aggression against German state prop-





ATB

The fake assault on the Pitschen forestry house went in at the same time as the one at Gleiwitz. The SS task force had been billeted in the Wyrwich tavern in the town since August 24, waiting for the signal for the attack to begin. The officers were

assigned the guestrooms while the men slept in the buildings in the tavern's yard, which was also where their trucks were parked. The whole place was sealed off, with no one being allowed in or out.

#### PITSCHEN

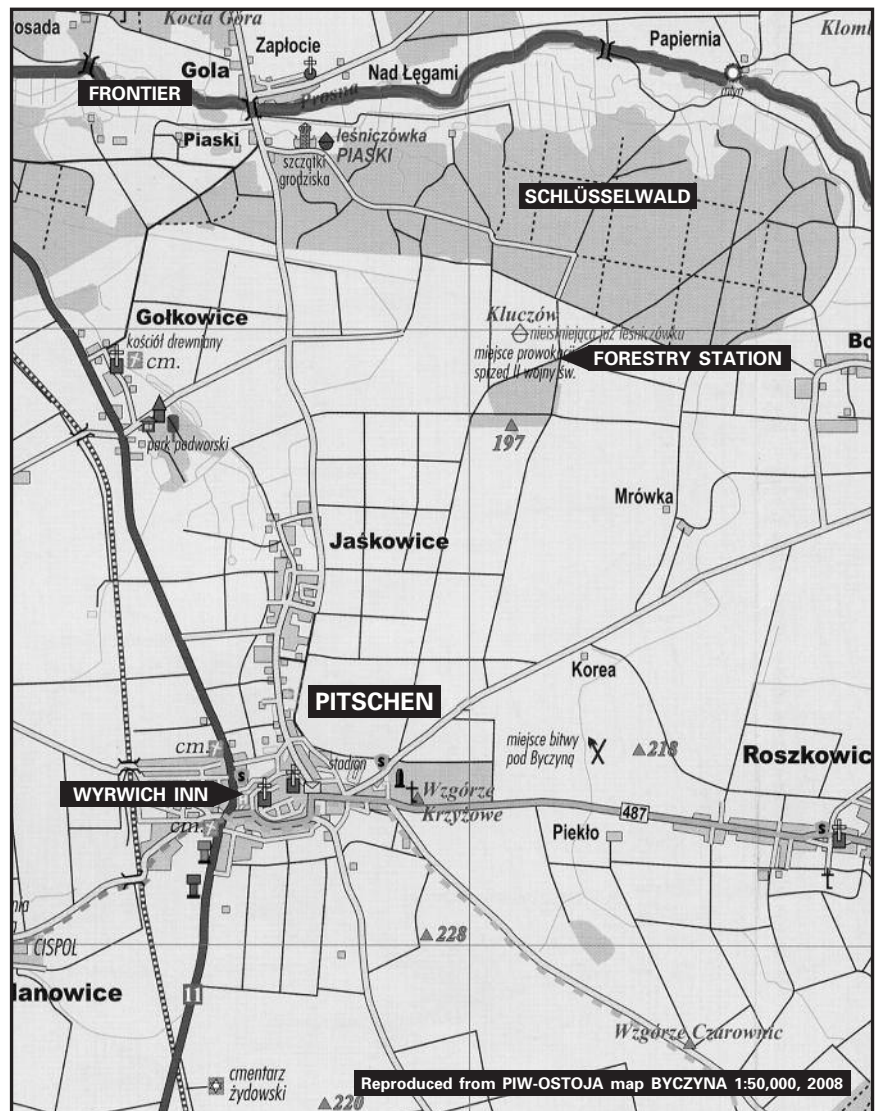
The 'Agathe' code signal for the Hochlinden and Pitschen assaults to commence was given out at 8 p.m., the time that Naujocks began his foray at Gleiwitz. At 7 p.m. that evening, Rasch had checked in at the Wyrwich tavern in the town, where his men had been billeted for the past week. He arrived in civilian clothes, but now changed into his SS uniform and instructed his men to prepare to march. Not all 130 men were to participate, only about half of them. Before leaving, he ordered 40 litres of tea with rum to be ready for 10 p.m., their expected time of return.

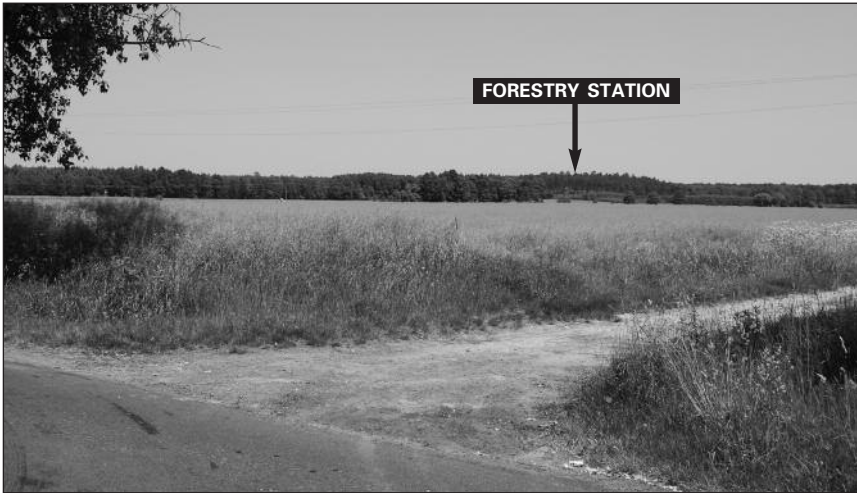
Their target, the forestry station, lay on the edge of a wood just three kilometres north of the town. Dressed in their 'rogue clothes', they drove to an assembly position in the wood and then, about 8 p.m., began making their way on foot to the forestry house speaking loudly in Polish and singing Polish songs. As they arrived at the house, they fired shots into the air and, breaking in, proceeded to destroy the kitchen furniture, smearing a half-bucket of ox blood to give the illusion of a bloody fight. The forester, who was in on the game, telephoned the burgomaster that his station was being attacked, probably by Poles, and then the line was cut. The burgomaster alerted the frontier guard at Sandhäuser but by the time they reached the site later that evening, the intruders had gone.

No 'canned goods' were left at the forestry house since the location was so remote but Rasch's men dug a fake grave to give the impression of a fallen fighter. (Later, only rubbish was found in the hole.)

Punctually at 10 p.m., the group returned to the tavern where they celebrated their victory with tea and rum, while also mourning the loss of a comrade, no doubt to convince the innkeeper of the bodiless grave they left behind.

**Right: Pitschen is now Polish and named Byczyna, but the old inn where Rasch's men were billeted still stands. It is located at the western end of the old town, on the corner of Basztowa and the N11, the busy highway connecting Poznan with Kluczbork.**





ATB

**From Pitschen it was only a short drive for Rasch's men to their objective, the town's forestry station on the edge of the Schlüsselwald wood. This is the view of the Schlüsselwald from the minor road leading north out of Pitschen. The counterfeit insurgents would have approached the station from the left.**

### HOCHLINDEN

The attack at Hochlinden had been set to start at 4 a.m. (September 1) so, when the 'Agathe' signal came in at 8 p.m., there was still plenty of time. In the wake of the August 26 mis-cue, the 'Polish' force had been reduced to a third — about 60 men: 40 'soldiers' and 20 'insurgents'. Different from the first attempt, the 'Polish soldiers' had already changed into their uniforms at the Ehrenforst base. At 11 p.m., the men boarded their trucks to be driven down to their target area, where they arrived about midnight. Again, they saw the mysterious black cars waiting by the side of the road. Trummler read out a special order from Heydrich specifying once more how the attack was to be carried out, then the two groups deployed for action. The 'German defenders' and the Grenzpolizei cadets under Trummler took up their positions some distance north of the German customs office and the 'Polish' group, now led by Hoffmann, circled round to advance on the building from the other side, creeping to within 100 meters of it.

At precisely 4 p.m. Hoffmann fired several pistol shots, signalling the start of the assault. His men charged forward, firing shots into the air and roaring cheers, curses and commands, all in the Polish language. Trummler's border police force fired a few return shots, aimed well high. Reaching the building, the mock attackers struck windows, broke in the door, and fired shots through the façade and roof, which sent roof panes flying through the air. Inside, taking cover on the floor, were an SS NCO in civilian clothes and a police Hauptmann, who cried, 'Stop shooting!' Hoffmann ordered his men to cease fire and told them to demolish everything inside the building with their rifle butts. Seeing his men hesitant to destroy German state property, Hoffmann and his NCOs started the job themselves, whereupon his men joined in and thoroughly wrecked the interior. Then Trummler's border police advanced and took the 'Polish attackers' prisoner, thus putting an end to the mock action. The 'prisoners' were marched to Hochlinden village and loaded onto trucks, which returned them to their quarters in Ehrenforst.

Meanwhile, unnoticed by Hoffmann's men, Müller and crew had planted the corpses of six concentration camp prisoners at the scene. Drugged into unconsciousness, the victims had been driven down to Hochlinden and been killed there with shots through the head, chest or back. They were dressed in Polish uniforms and put down in positions consistent with their wounds. One

of Hoffmann's men, SS-Unterscharführer Josef Grzimek, later testified: 'Upon leaving the German customs office, we were stumbling in the darkness. I bent down and saw several motionless men on the ground wearing Polish uniforms and — what particularly surprised me — bearing shaved heads. I was frightened and knelt down since I believed these were my comrades. When I tried to lift one up, he was already perfectly rigid. This was the same with the others. While we first believed them to be comrades, we noticed that none of us were missing. This made us wonder but we knew nothing officially of this affair.'

Flash photos were taken of the corpses and immediately despatched to Berlin. Shortly after, Trummler's border police cadets, who had remained behind at Hochlinden, loaded the corpses onto a closed truck, which carried them off to Ehrenforst. Their condition worsened as they were kept in the truck overnight. The following afternoon, a squad of 20 Bernau men was detailed to return to Hochlinden and bury the six dead in a part of the forest. (The bodies were later exhumed in response to a complaint lodged by the local mayor to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt and reburied in unmarked graves, the location of which was not recorded and has now been lost.)



ATB

**The Pitschen forestry station had formerly been the main house of a large estate known as Gut Kluczow, which included all 250 hectares of the Schlüsselwald. Only lightly damaged in the fake attack of 1939, the building was completely destroyed by fire after the war. The place where it stood is today just an empty plot on the edge of the forest, and all that is left to mark the site are the trees that surrounded the house.**

### WAR

As early as 10.30 p.m. on August 31, German radio broadcast the first reports of border incidents along the German-Polish frontier, among them an armed Polish take-over of the Gleiwitz radio station. Soon after, further reports mentioned provocations in the area of Kreuzburg (which referred to Pitschen) and at Hochlinden.

At the same time, the German quasi-official news agency, the Deutsche Nachrichten-Büro, began spreading stories of the Polish attacks to all Berlin news bureaus, which were soon repeated in the foreign press. Late on August 31, the BBC broadcast: 'There have been reports of an attack on a radio station in Gleiwitz, which is just across the Polish border in Silesia. The German News Agency reports that the attack came at about 8 p.m. this evening when the Poles forced their way into the studio and began broadcasting a statement in Polish. Within a quarter of an hour, says reports, the Poles were overpowered by German police, who opened fire on them. Several of the Poles were reported killed, but the numbers are not yet known.'

The *New York Times*, under the heading 'Border Clashes Increase' reported on September 1: 'The most serious is reported from Gleiwitz. At 8 p.m., according to the semi-official news agency, a group of Polish insurrectionists forced an entrance into the Gleiwitz radio station, overpowering the watchmen and beating and generally mishandling the attendants. [They] broadcast a prepared proclamation announcing themselves as "the Polish Volunteer Corps of Upper Silesia speaking from the Polish station in Gleiwitz". The city, they alleged, was in Polish hands. The Gleiwitz incident is alleged here (Berlin) to have been the signal for a general attack by Polish franc-tireurs on German territory.'

'Two other points — Pitschen, near Kreuzburg, and Hochlinden, north-east of Ratibor, both in the same vicinity as Gleiwitz — were the scenes of violations. Fighting at both places [is] still underway. Polish insurrectionists and soldiers are alleged to have stormed the Hochlinden custom-house, which was recaptured by Germans after a battle lasting for an hour and a half. In the Pitschen incident a band of 100 Poles, including soldiers, were surprised two kilometres on the German side of the frontier.'

At 10 a.m. that morning (September 1), Hitler announced the start of the war in an address to the Reichstag:



ATB

The former Reichssender Gleiwitz is today no longer an active radio transmitter. The property of the Polish State Post since 1945, it broadcast the programme of Radio Kattowitz until 1955 and from 1956 to 1989 was used to jam Radio Free Europe. During this time, the facility was also used as a production and test site of telecommunications equipment. Purchased by the municipality of Gliwice in 2002, it now houses the Museum of Radio History and Media Art, which opened in 2005, its exhibition in the transmitter

'This night for the first time Polish regular soldiers fired on our territory. Since 5.45 a.m. we have been returning the fire, and from now on bombs will be met by bombs. Whoever fights with poison gas will be fought with poison gas. Whoever departs from the rules of humane warfare can only expect that we shall do the same. I will continue this struggle, no matter against whom, until the safety of the Reich and its rights are secured.'

The shooting war had in fact begun earlier than 5.45 a.m. In the pre-dawn hour of 4:47 a.m., the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* opened fire on Danzig's Westerplatte fortress (see *After the Battle No. 65*). At the same time, the Luftwaffe launched the opening attack upon the Polish town of Wielun, destroying about 75 per cent of buildings in the town centre and killing 1,200 civilians. At 8 a.m. the Wehrmacht launched its offensive near Mokra where the Polish Army on horseback held off the Germans.

Hitler did not specifically mention Gleiwitz or the other 'Tannenberg' operations in his Reichstag speech but he did cite frontier incidents: 'Recently in one night there were as many as 21 frontier incidents. Last night there were 14, of which three were quite serious.'

#### AFTERMATH

Criminally conceived, but amateurishly planned and chaotically executed, Heydrich's fake border incidents could hardly be called a resounding success. The Hochlinden attack had failed to lure regular Polish troops across the border into Germany, as had been hoped; few of the local villagers had heard the fire-fight and none had seen the 'Polish prisoners' that had been taken there; the attack on the Pitschen forestry station had scarcely been noticed at all; and hardly anyone in Germany or abroad had heard the insurgent broadcast from Gleiwitz.

Although they were shrewd enough to keep silent about it, Heydrich and Müller knew well that their grand actions had in fact been ineffective failures. Calling Trummler and Hoffmann to Berlin to report on the Hochlinden action the day after, Müller told his two subordinates that he was dissatisfied with them because it had 'not made enough noise nor caused much of a stir'.

When Naujocks reported to Heydrich in his Berlin office that same day, the latter was



ATB

building naturally concentrating heavily on the events of 1939. The 111-metre tower — currently the tallest free-standing wooden construction in the world — today carries some 50 different aerials for the Gliwice Rescue Emergency centre, mobile phone networks and other communication systems. Made of impregnated larch wood that is particularly resistant to vermin and weather conditions, conscientiously maintained, protected and checked every year, it will be in service for many years ahead.

still in a furious state and accused Naujocks of lying about the radio transmission. He and others in Berlin, he said, had tuned in to the Breslau frequency but heard nothing. Heydrich had still not understood that Gleiwitz was only a local station that could not be received in Berlin; had still not grasped that the failure was due to his own pedantic planning.

The scene of crime pictures of the 'Polish dead' taken at Gleiwitz and Hochlinden were never published or used propagandistically. They disappeared and have never been seen again.

The 'Konserven' not used by Müller — three men — were returned to Sachsenhausen camp about ten days later. They were kept in strict isolation until May 11, 1940 — the day after Germany's invasion of the West.

No trace was ever found of Franz Honiok, the first man to be killed in the Second World War. After rumours arose that he had participated in the Gleiwitz raid, a member of the mounted police in the Hohenlieben area discreetly asked the Honiok family for his whereabouts. Obviously afraid, the family never even posted him as missing.

The Hochlinden and Pitschen teams were brought back to Bernau and there dismissed after another pledge of secrecy. Nonetheless, there was discussion in Berlin over how to dispose of the men. Some wanted them sent to concentration camps and killed so that their secret would go to the grave with them, but this was prevented by Hoffmann who threatened to appeal to Heydrich. Many of the Bernau men were immediately assigned to the Einsatzgruppen, the special mobile SD units that were sent into Poland in the wake of the Wehrmacht troops to round up and kill Jews, Communists and other anti-Nazi opponents. Almost all held to their original promise of secrecy.

SS-Standartenführer Arthur Nebe, chief of the Reich criminal police, was assigned the task of investigating the evidence of Polish aggression. Nebe wrapped up his enquiry on September 3 — the day Britain declared war on Germany — finding in favour of the Reich's military reaction to the 'Polish aggression' of August 31. His findings would form the basis of a White Book published by the German Foreign Ministry in December

1939. Heydrich would later entertain foreign guests with a scale model of the Gleiwitz radio station built for Nebe's investigation, complete with electricity and sound effects, proudly standing alongside telling them: 'Yes, this is how the war began'.



ATB

Plaque at the station entrance.

The true nature of the border incidents around Gleiwitz only became known after the war, and they have remained a cause célèbre ever since. The very first details came to light at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, notably during the session on December 20, 1945, when the prosecutor submitted an affidavit given by Alfred Naujocks a month earlier. Herbert Mehlhorn disclosed more details in an interview with the German magazine *Stern* in 1952. Naujocks covered his tracks with the assistance of author Günter Peis in his boldly-titled *The Man who Started the War*, published (in English only) in 1960. The first in-depth research into the affair was done by German historian Jürgen Runzheimer of the Munich-based *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* who published his findings in a groundbreaking article in the *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* in 1962. Then in 1963, the Prosecution Counsel of Hamburg and, from 1966 Düsseldorf, in an attempt to bring to trial the Gestapo men responsible for the murder of the 'canned goods', traced and took statements of as many surviving participants and witnesses as could be found. Although the culprits for the murders could not be identified, the official inquiry added much new information, which Alfred Spiess, the Chief Prosecutor at Düsseldorf, together with author Heiner Lichtenstein published in book form under the title *Unternehmen Tannenberg* in 1979.