

**WHEN DAWN CAME, THEY... WEREN'T SLEEPING.
"THE SOVIET PREEMPTIVE STRIKE" AND THE GERMAN
REPLY OF JUNE 22, 1941 (I)**

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Abstract

Despite the internal turmoil meant to strengthen the social, economic and political regime lay down in October 1917, after the end of the Civil War, the USSR continued to establish itself externally as a great center of power in the international relations arena, harboring immense geopolitical ambitions. The Moscow regime would gradually normalise international relations, after 1922, but without settling the debts of the Czarist state and without relinquishing its lead as a world revolution hub. On the one hand, the USSR will continue to maintain "normal" diplomatic and commercial relations with other powers and will also control the activity of communist parties in other countries via the Comintern, the ultimate goal of such parties being to destabilize the existing governments with which the USSR maintained "normal" relations. The pinnacle of this policy of "peaceful coexistence", inaugurated by the Peace of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918), was reached on August 23, 1939, through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union engaged until June 22, 1941 in a race against time in order to consolidate their political, economic and military positions in areas of peak strategic and geopolitical interest. Has June 22, 1941 sparked the early confrontation between the two geopolitical options that marked European and world evolution throughout the twentieth century? The answer to this question continues to breed numerous and fierce historiographical controversies.

Keywords: Stalin, USSR, Hitler, Germany, the Red Army, Moscow, Berlin.

Mobilizing for a "Grand Plan"

The Anschluss (March 12, 1938), the Munich Agreement (September 28-30, 1938), as well as the signing of the German – French non-aggression pact of November 6, 1938, by Georges Bonnet and Joachim von Ribbentrop, were interpreted by Moscow as being "a sign that Hitler was being allowed to

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have, more or less, his full swing in the East" (Werth, 2000, p. 95), thus, by the end of 1938 the risk of establishing an "imperialist front" against the USSR was quite tangible. Given such context, the soviets would be forced to open to supplementing their openings towards Germany, and at the same time carrying out negotiations generated by the policy of collective security, with the Western democracies. On April 17, 1939, the soviet ambassador, seconded in Berlin, would disclose to the Secretary of State von Weizsäcker that the soviet policy "had never strayed from the right track" (Fontaine, 1992, p. 128) and that "Russia saw no reason to cease normal relations with Germany, relations which could be subject to a continuous improvement" (Fontaine, 1992, p. 128). After the dismissal of Maxim M. Litvinov, on May 3, 1939, from the head of soviet diplomacy and his replacement by Vyacheslav M. Molotov, the two sides continued to explore each other with renewed intensity in order to conclude a non-aggression pact which would eventually be agreed on August 23, 1939. On the morning of August 24, 1939, the United States Ambassador in Moscow, L. Steinhardt, would message the State Department: „I have been informed in strict confidentiality that a full understanding was reached yesterday evening on the settlement of territorial issues in Eastern Europe, according to which Estonia, Latvia, Eastern Poland and Bessarabia have been recognized within the sphere of vital soviet interests" (Țurcanu, 2004, p. 179). On August 19, 1939, the French news agency HAVAS would publish a text received from Moscow, via Geneva, from an "absolutely trustworthy" source, which specified that on August 19, 1939¹ Stalin provided a statement before the Political Bureau, in order to motivate negotiations with Hitler² and the forthcoming conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. „We must do everything in our power for this war to last as long as possible, for the purpose of exhausting the two camps. Namely, for this reason we must agree to sign the pact proposed by Germany and to operate in such a way that this

¹ The French version of this speech text was translated and published in Russian, in Moscow, in 1994 (see: Bushueva, *Priklinaia – Poprobuie Poniati* in „Novy Mir", no. 12, 1994, p. 230-237). This document was found in the Center for the Preservation of Historical-Documentary Collections, formerly the Special Archive of the USSR, f. 7, op. 1, d. 1.223. T. Bushueva would confirm, in October 2002, during a phone conversation with David E. Murphy, former deputy and then chief of the CIA station in Western Berlin (1954-1961), that the Special Archive contained documents sent back to Moscow by the occupying Soviet Group of Forces in Germany. The Russian original, if it exists, has never been found.

² Russian historian V.I. Dashichev argued that V.M. Molotov stated, on the night between August 23 and August 24 1939, that the excellent Soviet – German political relations of the time were due to Stalin's speech at the 18th Congress of the CP (b) of the Soviet Union in March 1939. Historian V.I. Dashichev wrote: "The decision on convening the 18th Congress was adopted during the Central Committee plenary of January 1939. Namely, the political line of the Congress was defined in January. Therefore, the radical U-turn in Stalin's policy concerning Germany occurred prior to March 1939" (Apud Ion Țurcanu, *op. cit.*, p. 174).

war, once started, will continue for a long time. We will have to intensify our propaganda work in all warring countries in order to be ready at that point, when the war will end" (Petrencu (ed.), 2004, pp. 24-26), stated Stalin before the members of the Political Bureau of the CC of the CP (b) of the USSR.

The Soviet Union denied, on November 30, 1939, the existence of such a text and for many centuries even denied the very existence of a Political Bureau meeting on that day. Russian military historian, General-Colonel Dimitry A. Volkogonov only confirmed the fact that such a meeting took place 54 years later in an article of the *Izvestia* newspaper (January 16, 1993), making, on such occasion, serious and important decisions on the future development of international relations. The text sent by the *HAVAS Agency* accurately rendered Stalin's political reasoning concerning peace and war, in terms of accepting the German proposition given that it was essential for the future war to last as long as possible for the two camps to be exhausted.

The decisions made on August 19, 1939 would be embodied by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (August 23, 1939), the entry of soviet troops into Poland (September 17, 1939), the Soviet-Finnish war and the annexations occurring in the summer of 1940 (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and the province of Hertza), as well as in preparing what the Russian historiography following 1991 defined as the "Soviet Preemptive Attack", also known as operation "Storm"³. Referring to the existence of a USSR „**Grand Plan**" for war, historian Mark Solonin stated: „All versions of the Grant Plan coincide both in terms of content, as well as in terms of text formulation. Thirdly, all versions, without exception, represent the plan of an offensive operation beyond the USSR state borders, while Germany is invariably indicated as the main enemy. Military actions on its own territory weren't even assessed as possible scenarios in the unfolding of war events" (Solonin, 2012, p. 160).

³ In *Krasnaia Zvezda* of July 30, 1993, the Ministry of Defense in Moscow confirmed the existence of a signal called "**Storm**", yet he provides a completely different explanation: "The *Storm* signal has indeed been established, but it means something completely different. Upon its receipt, the division commanders of the cover armies were to open the "red envelopes". These envelopes contained orders regarding the measures to be taken for occupying battle positions in order to repel the enemy offense, in case of aggression" (Apud Victor Suvorov, *Umbra Victoriei*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 158). The USSR Minister of Defense, Marshal D.T. Yazov admitted in the *Voenno Istoriceskii Jurnal* (no. 5/1991, p. 13) that: „The preparation of initial operations was based on the idea of a strong response attack while subsequently transitioning to a decisive offense on the entire front. This plan was also subordinate to the strategic deployment system of the Armed Forces. Strategic defense and other offense variants were practically omitted from discussion" (*Ibidem*, p. 168). For Viktor Suvorov's views and their impact on the Russian and world public opinion, as well as for the opinions of historians and servicemen, see: Aleksandr Gogun, 1941. *URSS ca agresor. Receptarea tezei în Europa de Est*, în „Magazin istoric”, Anul XLV, serie nouă, nr. 6 (531), iunie 2011, pp. 5 – 8.

According to the statements of Viktor Suvorov, included in the volumes dedicated to the 1941 war, the effort to mobilize the economy and Soviet army for war had become obvious since August 19, 1939. One must mention that a consolidation process of the Soviet Government to the detriment of the CPSU had been carried out during the 1936 – 1939 period, as a consequence of developing the *Soviet Military and Industrial Complex*. During the secret mobilization following August 19, 1939, the main focus was on developing the most technically complex troops and arms: tanks, airborne troops, artillery and aviation. The structures of future divisions, armed corps and armies were developed during the secret mobilization, without soldiers, at the time. On January 1, 1941, the Red Army comprised of 4,207,00 people, and by June 22, 1941, the Soviet military manpower had reached 5,500,000 people, along with the proper security, escort, frontier, operative troops, units and large units of commandos, fleet and aviation units of the NKVD. The Soviet President for the Industry of Defense of the USSR and of the State Planning Commission, Nikolay Voznesensky provided, on February 1941, a program for preparing the Soviet Union economy for war. This program included a summary of the following four points: „a) war with the Western capitalist countries is inevitable, thus measures were needed in order to prepare for the war; b) take all measures to strengthen the army; c) transfer the unsure population, as well as the industrial enterprises through the Western regions of the country towards the East; d) take measures to organize and develop industry and agriculture in Eastern USSR regions”⁴.

By June 22, 1941, approximately 6,000,000 collective farmers and workers were evacuated from the Western regions of the USSR, being relocated towards the East, of which 200,000 people would be regimented yearly for the 20 soviet divisions in the Vladivostok region. A number of 20 cities of 150,000 workers each would be established in Central Siberia, while „stand-in industries” for the ones in the West would be created in the Soviet Far East, being represented only by buildings similar to the factories in the West, without installations, designed to house the installations in the West in case of evacuation. 60 mills were built for population needs and for developing a sugar industry to the East of the Ural Mountains.

Referring to the immense Soviet war effort, undistinguishable for many Western observers of the time, Viktor Suvorov believes that during the transition from secret to open mobilization, the active divisions of the Red Army did not intend to establish a border barrier and lay in waiting, therefore the final part of the mobilization operation did not aim a border deployment,

⁴ Academia Română/Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, *Documente SSI privind spațiul sovietic. 22 august 1939 – 23 august 1944*/ed. Cristian Troncotă, Alin Spănu, București, 2004, p. 239.

but rather a devastating surprise offense (Rusnac, în „Magazin istoric”, iunie 2011, p. 9–13). Whole generations of Red Army officers would train in the USSR Military Academies believing that the “side taking the initiative, aided by the element of surprise, oftentimes shatters the will of the enemy by these actions and creates better conditions for itself” (Suvorov, 1998, p. 104).

During the period following the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the number of Soviet infantry divisions would rise to over 300, the number of tank divisions to over 100 and a further 10 artillery brigades for the Soviet General Command Reserve would be established, each comprising of two artillery regiments each with 66 mouths for every regiment, including 107 mm guns, as well as the 152 mm ML-20 and the 203 mm B-4 howitzer guns, reactive projectile launchers and BM-8 and BM-13 multiple launch rocket systems. During the 1939 – June 1941 period, the Red Army was equipped with a number of 82,000 state of the art guns and mine launchers, of which the 122 mm M-30 howitzer. By January 1, 1941, the Red Army was equipped with over 20,000 tanks, of which the majority were T-26 and BT light tanks, yet the full equipping of the 29 Soviet mechanized corps required a necessary of 3,654 KV tanks and 12,180 T-34 tanks⁵.

Seeking Strategic Interests

The Red Army only entered Eastern Poland on September 17, 1939, according to the agreement of August 23, 1939, to provide protection for the Ukrainian and Belarusian brothers, as the note forwarded by Moscow to the Polish ambassador stated. In order to accurately define the demarcation line on Polish territory between Germany and the Soviet Union, von Ribbentrop made a second visit to Moscow (September 27 – 29, 1939). Pursuant to the new agreement, Germany would accept that Lithuania, placed under the sphere of influence of the 3rd Reich, would pass within the Soviet sphere, receiving in exchange from the Soviet sphere the Lublin region and the territory East of Warsaw. As the Western democracies and Germany engaged in what was called as the “Phoney War”, on October 14, 1939, Stalin asked Finland to concede 2,760 square kilometers, offering in exchange 5,530 square kilometers, respectively the provinces of Repola and Parojorpi, so as to avoid Finland being used as a trampoline for a German assault on Russia.

The Soviet – Finnish war (November 30, 1939 – March 12, 1940) proved to be a useful opportunity to assess the fighting capacity of the Red Army, of its organization and mobilization, as well as of the ability to make the

⁵ By June 1, 1941, the Red Army was equipped with 19,540 tanks (without taking into account the T-37, T-38 and T-40 light scout tanks) and 3,258 armored cars equipped with guns. 1,358 KV and 3,014 T-34 tanks would be built during 1941. In 1942, the Soviet tank industry would produce 24,718 tanks, of which: 2,553 KV tanks and 12,527 T-34 tanks.

"impossible, possible"⁶. The Soviet commanders, attending on April 17, 1940 a conference of the Soviet General Staff conference, underlined the fact that the ultimate victory in the war against Finland had already been too great and insisted that the battle organization needed to change, and the training and stimulation of troops needed radical improvements, the decision-making process required decentralization, various field regulations and manuals needed rewriting, considering the lessons of this war and what had already occurred on the fronts of World War Two. The deficiencies found during the campaign in Finland would also occur during the campaign in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (June 26 – 28, 1940). Considering what the Soviet/Russian historians define as the Soviet "preemptive attack", the two campaigns proved useful opportunities to assess the battle capacity of the Red Army⁷.

Given the development of operations on the Western front, after May 10, 1940, the USSR managed to take control of the territories promised within the secret additional protocol, respectively to annex Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the Hertza Region (June 28, 1940), Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, therefore, by the end of this process, Stalin had recovered all the territories lost by Russia at the end of World War One, while "The Allies had paid – concludes Henry Kissinger – their final of a series of tranches from the expenses caused by the exclusion of Germany and the Soviet Union from the Peace Conference of 1919" (Kissinger, 1998, p. 324). The Vienna arbitration (August 30, 1940), the entry of German troops into Romania (October 12, 1940) and the assault of Italian troops over Greece (October 28, 1940) represented evident signals of the fact that the Axis had become extremely dangerous for the geopolitical and geostrategic plans of the Soviet Union. Signing of the Tripartite pact (September 27, 1940) was perceived as the event which was to become the most menacing to the security of the USSR given that Stalin was not even informed of such negotiations.

⁶ Following the extremely tense discussions between Stalin and the head of the GRU, Aviation Lieutenant General Ivan Iosifovich Proskurov, on the one hand, as well as between the head of the GRU and the Soviet Generals who commanded the Red Army units during the Finland campaign (1939 - 1940), the subservience of GRU was transferred from the People's Commissar of Defense to that of the Soviet General Staff. See: David E. Murphy, David E. Murphy, *Enigma Barbarossa. Ce știa Stalin*, Editura Militară, București, 2013, p. 71 – 85.

⁷ The OKW and OKH were taken by surprise when new units (80 infantry divisions, 80 infantry brigades, 10 tank brigades, and 25 cavalry divisions) of the Red Army appeared on the battlefield near Moscow, in December 1941. By April 1942, the Abwehr would identify 425 infantry divisions, 100 infantry brigades, 75 cavalry divisions, 60 motorized divisions and 80 mechanized brigades belonging to the Red Army, of which 325 large infantry units (250 divisions and 75 brigades), 55 cavalry divisions and 35 mechanized divisions were located on the Romanian-German front. German intelligence officers estimated that the Soviet aviation constantly disposed of 2,000 aircraft, although it had lost 400-500 planes on a monthly basis, while a number of 50-60 poorly trained and organized divisions, of which 40 were located in the Rostov – Stalino region and 20 in the Moscow region were formed behind the front

The discussions between Hitler and his Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vyacheslav M. Molotov, in Berlin, during the November 12-13, 1940 period, represented a new German and Soviet version of the "Monroe Doctrine" for the whole of Europe and Africa, doubled by a division of colonial territories between them. "The so-called European balance of power – Staling argued, in July 1940, before Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in Moscow – did not only oppose Germany, but also the Soviet Union. As a result, the Soviet Union would take all measures to prevent the restoration of the old balance of power in Europe" (Kissinger, 1998, p. 327). In diplomatic terms, the "all measures" formulation also included the threat of war, which meant that the Soviet-German conflict was going into its final stage, which would also affect Romania, given the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of our country.

When he became aware of the prospects generated by the Soviet menace, Hitler changed Germany's strategic defense mechanism, preparing the counterattack which historians would come to name "the preemptive strike". On September 7, 1940, the head of the 3rd Section of the Abwehr (Counterintelligence) received a document from Hitler's Headquarters, with the mention "Top Secret" stipulating that "Our Eastern territories are to be occupied within the following four weeks by strong military troops. By the end of October, the orders marked on the attached map will already be carried out. These orders must not give Russia the impression that we want to launch an assault over the East. On the other hand, Russia will realize that the presence of strong and well trained German detachments in Poland and Bohemia – Moravia indicates the fact that we are ready at any moment to defend our interests in the Balkans from a potential Russian offense with strong military troops" (Bassett, 2008, p. 233).

The SIS informed the Government in Bucharest on the fact that, following the deployment of troops occurring in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, both during the legionary rebellion (January 1941), as well as thereafter, "one clearly observed the offensive preparations made by the Soviet Union for the purpose of occupying the whole of Moldavia and the rest of Bukovina" (Troncotă, în „Arhivele Totalitarismului”, 1994, p. 94). Moscow's firm position in negotiating with Berlin was due to the fact that the Soviet General Staff had concluded the strategic deployment plan for the next stage, which included the execution by the Soviet forces of two strikes: the main one on the Warsaw – Berlin axis, and a secondary one, through Romania, to capture the oil resources and to go over the top in the Balkans. "We had applied a state of alertness since November 1940. Then, Pavel Zhuravlev and Zoya Rybkina initiated the operational file (*Liternoe delo*) entitled *Zateia* (*The Risk*), which collected the most important information on German movements against Soviet Union interests all in one place. This file was regularly presented to Stalin and Molotov and they would try to use the information in their policy to calm Hitler and collaborate with him" (Sudoplatov, 1995, p. 120).

Information Failure or Strategic Surprise?

The leaders of Kremlin received 84 warnings regarding operation "Barbarossa", Lieutenant General Philipp Ivanovich Golikov, who had become the head of the GRU by July 27, 1940, stated after the war that "the Soviet military intelligence tested and capitalized on numerous sources of classified information, including from Germany" (Petrov (ed.), 1968, p. 181), but which were not taken into account. The first warning came on August 27, 1940 from the GRU residence in Paris. "The Germans have renounced their offense against England. Apparently, preparations for such a situation are still carried out, yet they are meant to hide the movement of German troops towards the East, where a number of 106 divisions are deployed" (Murphy, 2013, p. 299), messaged the GRU officers to Moscow.

The GRU residence in Berlin sent 23 reports warning on the intentions of German preparations for an attack on the USSR. On December 29, 1940, the GRU source, codename *ARIETS* (Rudolf von Scheliha, councilor for the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs) informed on the fact that he had found out "from very high circles" that Hitler had ordered the beginning of preparations for war against the USSR which was to commence in March 1941. *ARIETS* returned with new information, in detail, on January 4 and February 28, 1941. "The assault commencement date was provisionally established for May 20. An envelopment offense is likely to be planned for the Pinsk area, with a force of 120 German divisions. One of the preliminary measures includes the deployment of Russian speaking officers and NCOs for various commandments. In addition, broad gauge armored trains are being built, similar to the Russian ones" (Murphy, 2013, p. 90), reported *ARIETS* on February 28, 1941. On May 9, 1941, Major General Vasily I. Tupikov, who was a military attaché of the USSR and legal resident of the GRU in Germany, communicated a possible Wehrmacht operation plan against the USSR, which showed that „the defeat of the Red Army would be completed within a month or a month and a half, with Germany reaching Moscow's meridian" (Murphy, 2013, p. 91).

Important information was also provided by the GRU residence in Helsinki which on June 15 and 17, 1941 communicated that the number of German troops in Finland was continuously growing and that the Finnish were increasing their military security measures. The GRU people in London, Paris, Vichy and from Switzerland provided extremely important and explanatory information on the Germans' offensive intentions. The GRU agents in Romania, *AVS* (*Kurt Völkisch*, press officer with the German Embassy in Bucharest) and *LTsL* (*Margarita Völkisch*), provided information on the fact that on March 1, 1941, "a lot of people were talking about an imminent German assault on the USSR" (Murphy, 2013, p. 98). The agent codenamed

KORF (GRU Colonel Mikhail S. Sharov, undercover as a representative of the TASS Agency) informed Moscow on the fact that a German major living in the house of a sub-source declared that the Germans had completely altered their plans and that they were heading East, against the USSR. On April 23, 1941, GRU was informed that the Red Army was to be demoralized right from the onset, from the first strike, and that "one or two aerial raid will prove Russia's inability..., at the start of the war, in May" and that „all would be over by June" (Murphy, 2013, p. 100). On June 7, 1941, the GRU residence in Romania messaged that: „The officers of the Romanian General Staff firmly argue that, pursuant to the unofficial statements of Antonescu, war would start soon between Romania and the USSR" ((Murphy, 2013, p. 101). The reports of GRU officers and agents in Prague, Sofia, Belgrade and Budapest completed the overview of the Wehrmacht's intention in relation to the Red Army and the fact that despite the events in Greece and Yugoslavia, "preparations for X-Day had not been abandoned, only postponed" (Murphy, 2013, p. 109). On May 5, 1941, Richard Sorge sent a message from Tokyo: „Germany will start the war with the USSR by mid-June 1941" (Murphy, 2013, p. 114), and on May 15 communicated the date of the German attack: June 20 – 22, 1941.

Foreign intelligence (NKGB) of the NKVD lack a unit to assess the information and distributed the information to receiver, each being tasked with assessing the reports and their implications for their field of activity and responsibility. In May 1941, after assessing the NKGB reports, GRU concluded that the number of German troops on the border was significantly increasing. GRU asked NKGB for improved accuracy in identifying the German units and the nature of their displacements. NKGB residencies, mostly from Germany, but also from the rest of occupied Europe provided numerous information on the German preparation to invade the USSR (Blaga, in „Historia", october 2011, p. 64 – 68).

On April 2, 1941, Harro Schulze-Boysen (codenamed STARSHINA in the NKGB files) informed Moscow that: „Aerial forces would focus their attacks on the railway nodes in central and western USSR, on the power plants from the Donetsk basin and on the air industry factories around Moscow. The air bases near Cracow, in Poland, would be the main starting points for the aircrafts targeting the USSR. The Germans believe that the weak point of the Soviet air defense is their ground support and hope that, through a few heavy bombardments of the airfields, the enemy's operations would quickly be thrown into disarray" (Murphy, 2013, p. 127).

Rudolf Hess's flight to Great Britain (May 10, 1941) completely dumbfounded the NKGB in Moscow, therefore the head of the Department for Germany within INO (External Intelligence) of the NKGB, Pavel M. Zhuravlev ordered his assistant, Zoya Rybkina "Message Berlin, London, Stockholm, America, Rome. Try to clarify the details of this proposal" (Murphy, 2013, p. 132). The Soviets seemed to be misinformed on Hitler's true intentions. However, the warnings regarding the imminent threat of a German attack had

become overwhelming by the start of summer 1941. "I repeat: nine armies comprising of 150 divisions will begin their offensive in the early morning of June 22, 1941" (Murphy, 2013, p. 301), messaged Richard Sorge one June 13, 1941. On the same day, the GRU agent in Sofia, Boevoy, reported: „According to Zhurin's information (member of the Bulgarian Superior Military Council), Führer decided to attack USSR until the end of this month" (Murphy, 2013, p. 301). Willy Lehmann, a GRU agent infiltrated within the Gestapo (codename BREITENBACH), informed, on June 19, 1941, that „his Gestapo unit had received an order according to which Germany would invade the USSR at 3.00 AM, on June 22, 1941" (Murphy, 2013, p. 129). On May 5, 1941, the NKGB residence in Warsaw, led by Peter I. Gudimovich (codename IVAN), informed that: „The military preparations in Warsaw and throughout the General Government were being carried out in plain sight, and that the German officers and soldiers were speaking with absolute openness about the imminent war between Germany and the Soviet Union, as if it were a matter already decided. (...) Between April 10 and April 20, German troops were driven eastward, through Warsaw, without respite, day and night" (Murphy, 2013, p. 134).

Highly relevant information on the German intent was also provided via the 2nd Counterintelligence Directorate branch of the NKGB as a result of observing activities and intercepting the communications the Axis' diplomatic and military corps on a mission in Moscow. Furthermore, the 1st Department (Railways) of the General Directorate for Transportation (GTU) of the NKVD collected information about the German troops stationed in Poland, about their displacement directions and their deployment districts. GTU agents had identified a group of Ukrainian volunteers near Lublin, another regiment of volunteers undergoing training near Warsaw, the construction of new airfields, the traffic of special construction trains carrying construction materials and bomb squads, the arrival of French and Belgian rail tankers containing gasoline, the placement of fuel warehouses concealed in the woods near the border, as well as land triangulation activities before establishing the artillery firing positions. „Starting with June 1, 1941, all railway employees would be fired in Peremyshl and Zuraw; transportation services will be fully operated by [German] military units" (Murphy, 2013, p. 153), reported the Lvov District Directorate of the NKGB on June 12 1941, the source of the information being the work of GTU agents. The General Directorate of Border Guards (GUPV) of the USSR NKVD confirmed via numerous reports addressed to the higher forums in Moscow that the situation on the Soviet-German frontier is far from being calm. Soviet radio surveillance and airborne espionage had identified the inflow of German troops towards the Soviet border. Soviet intelligence services had recorded the fact that, between the end of August 1940 and mid-December 1940, the number of Wehrmacht divisions marching towards the USSR border had increased from 5 to 34.

By the end of February 1941, the number of German divisions had increased to approximately 70, reached 87 by May 1941 and decreased to 80 by June 1, followed by another increase to 123 by June 1941. No less than 80 German reconnaissance flights were conducted above Soviet territory between the March 27 and April 18 1941 period. On April 22, 1941, the Soviets officially protested against such provocative actions. Their protests were fruitless and, by the end of May 1941, another approximately 180 such flights were carried out, which allowed to Luftwaffe to complete the reconnaissance of each airport or military base in the Western Soviet Union.

On June 11, 1941, Stalin was informed that on June 9 the German embassy in Moscow had received instructions from Berlin to „*house*” secret documents (burning) and „*for the women and children to depart discretely*” (evacuation). On March 1, 1941, the USSR ambassador in Washington, Konstantin A. Umanski, received a summary of the information held by the USA Government in this regard. In April 1941, the American Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, again provided ambassador Umanski with the results of Japanese diplomatic communications decrypted, including a telegram from Moscow received on March 19, which reported a spectacular change in the Soviet-German relations, as well as two telegrams from Berlin which outlined Germany’s preparations for war with the USSR. On March 22, the Soviet Government received a memorandum of the US Army Intelligence Service which predicted, based on the decryption of Japanese traffic, a German attack on the USSR within the following two months. Seven days after Hitler signed the directive authorizing the “Barbarossa” Plan, an accurate summary of the plan was included in an anonymous letter addressed to the Soviet military *attaché* in Berlin.

Marshal G.K. Zhukov recalls in his memoirs the fact that the head of GRU, on March 2, 1941, Lieutenant General Phillip I. Golikov provided the leadership of the USSR and the General Staff a report detailing the possible directions of German troop strikes in case of an assault on the USSR. GRU indicated May 20, 1941 as the date when the German offense would commence against the Soviet Union. „What we overlooked regarding our information - admitted Pavel A. Sudoplatov – was the qualitative force of the Blitzkrieg tactics. We believed that when the war would erupt, the Germans would first try to take possession of our regions in Ukraine, rich in food products and raw materials. We knew their military and strategic games, their strategy of requiring additional economic resources for a prolonged engagement. This was the grave mistake: the GRU and NKVD failed to warn the General Staff that the goal of the German army, both in Poland, as well as in France, was not to seize territory, but to destroy the military power of the enemy army” (Sudoplatov, 1995, p. 120).

Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign Office informed Ambassador Ivan M. Maisky on June 10, 1941 on the recent redeployment of German forces in the East, providing the data and precise

locations of each individual division. On June 13, 1941, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, summoned Ambassador Maisky to inform him that the reports obtained during the last 48 hours regarding the concentration of German troops could be aimed at a war of nerves or an attack against the Soviet Union. In April 1941, the Vice President of the Skoda factories, who had provided services for the GRU, reported, based on contacts with superior officers in the German army stationed in Czechoslovakia, a massive redeployment of the Wehrmacht towards the soviet border and that his factory had been ordered to cease the delivery of weapons to the USSR, because war had been scheduled for mid-July. „Although our intelligence discovered Hitler’s intentions of attacking the Soviet Union – writes Pavel A. Sudoplatov – the reports were, to a certain extent, contradictory. They did not include assessments of the German tank or air unit potential, nor their capacity to break through the defense lines of the Red Army, deployed along the Soviet – German borders. Therefore, the force of Hitler’s strike came as a surprise for our military leadership, including for Marshal Georgy Zhukov, head of the General Staff of the Red Army at the time, who admitted in his memoirs that he had not foreseen an enemy capable of launching a simultaneous large scale offensive, with tank formations, in several directions” (Sudoplatov, 1995, p. 120).

At the beginning of June, 1941, the German ambassador in Moscow, Count von der Schulenburg, invited the USSR minister to Berlin, while on a visit in Moscow, during a private breakfast held in private at his residence. Ambassador von der Schulenburg would tell ambassador Vladimir G. Dekanozov: “It is possible that the current event is unique to the history of diplomacy, but I will disclose our number one state secret... Hitler made the decision to start the war against the Soviet Union on June 22. You may ask why I am doing this. I was raised in the spirit of Bismarck, who was always against a war with Russia” (Andrew and Gordievski, 1994, p. 187).

Despite all these warnings, the official relations did not cool. In January 1941, the Soviet Union purchased the Polish district of Suwalki from Germany for the amount of 7,500,000 dollars in gold, while in April 1941, the Soviet deliveries of raw material to Germany reached their pinnacle since the signing of the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact: 208,000 tons of grain, 50,000 tons of oil, 8,300 tons of cotton, 8,340 tons of metal. The USSR also delivered 4,000 tons of latex acquired from the Middle East and shipped to Germany via the Trans-Siberian train. Marshal G.K. Zhukov would write the following regarding the “surprise” attack of the Wehrmacht: „The chief menace for us was not the fact that the Germans crossed the border in a surprise attack, but the fact that we were taken by surprise by the strike force of the German Army; that we were taken by surprise by their superiority of six to eight times our forces in crucial points; that we were taken by surprise by the momentum of their troops’ concentration and by the force of their assault” (Simonov, K. *et comp.*, 1991, p. 51).

(To be continued)

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