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SOVIETS REPORTED USING UNDERGROUND BASE AT RASTENBURG

The following article from Stockholms-Tidningen was signed by a T. Norwid, who occasionally writes for this newspaper. The article is copyrighted by Stockholms-Tidningen.

Hitler's large underground headquarters at Rastenburg (now Ketrzyn) in former East Prussia is rapidly being renovated and reconstructed by the Soviets, according to reliable reports which have reached Sweden from this isolated region.

Poles living in nearby cities who have contact with the Soviet and Polish military forces there are convinced that the greatly intensified military activity in old East Prussia is still another sign that the USSR is preparing for war and is building up a powerful military base at Rastenburg.

When the Germans retreated from East Prussia in 1945, the German Army headquarters at Rastenburg was left intact. It is claimed that the advancing Red Army scarcely noticed anything special about this region where the "brain" of the German Army was located during the war. Seen from the surface, it was only an area of lakes and forests which covered the gigantic underground city measuring 38 kilometers long and 3 to 5 kilometers wide.

This region is crossed by the railroad which runs from Kaliningrad (Koenigsberg) to Bialystok. The underground military city is equipped with a communications system which is completely electrified. There are three electric power plants which function independently of each other and water tanks and a water system supplying the underground shelters, barracks, officers' quarters, and the luxurious staff rooms.

All parts of the headquarters are connected by telephone and also by a pneumatic dispatch tube system. There are also large military warehouses, garages, and underground hangars, all at a depth of at least 30 meters below the surface.

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It took the Germans 6 years to construct this military city, the best camouflaged underground city in the world. Hitler stayed there much of the time during the Russian campaign. The headquarters had direct wire connections with Berlin, a very powerful radio station, and a radar system. There are a number of airfields scattered around the area which are connected with the actual headquarters by underground passageways.

The present day USSR-Polish boundary cuts across the region over the underground city so that one part of it lies in Poland and the other in the USSR. The city which gave its name to the area Rastenburg lies in Poland.

On retreating from East Prussia, the Germans did not destroy the underground city, but mined the whole area. The German generals were obviously so deluded by propaganda that they entertained hopes of returning. The mining was done in a particularly diabolical way, and the Soviets' first attempts to enter the headquarters were unsuccessful, with many casualties resulting. They decided, therefore, in 1946, to block off the whole area and totally depopulate it.

In 1950, though, the Soviets in the East Zone got hold of some military personnel, headed by Maj Erich Guse, who had participated in the mining of the headquarters. These were immediately arrested and taken to Rastenburg. With their help, the mine clearing was accomplished in 6 months and by early 1951 the headquarters was considered to be relatively free of mines. A number of installations, however, were blown up during the mine-clearing process.

Airfields were the first to be put in working order.

Slave laborers furnish most of the manpower at Rastenburg, and their attitude is one of desperation because they expect to be liquidated after the work is completed so that the secrecy surrounding the base will be maintained.

The headquarters with the surrounding area has now been made into a joint Polish-Soviet military district which, on the Polish side of the boundary, extends to localities lying south of the Masury Lake Region, primarily Lake Sniardwy. The area which is exclusively under USSR control comprises the triangle of territory lying between Rastenburg, Frohbork (Frauenburg), and Orneta.

The reconstruction program is progressing at a very rapid rate, and Soviet commissions consisting of high-ranking military personages often visit the place. In November 1952, Marshal Rokossovskiy inspected the area.

According to reliable witnesses, all types of Soviet and Polish troops are stationed around the area, including jet fighter units. The underground magazines are being expanded and filled with war material. Underground storage tanks for liquid fuel are being constructed with special rapidity.

The roads and the old German training areas are crowded with military vehicles and heavy trucks. The Polish Army is engaged in organizing two new armored divisions and one air squadron.

What the Soviets are doing in their area of East Prussia is not known, but judging from the large number of jet planes in the air and the frequent parachute maneuvers, there is also considerable activity going on on the Soviet side of the boundary.

That the Soviets long ago decided to utilize this area as the nucleus for a military base directed at Western Europe was already evident from the actions of the Soviet occupation troops stationed there in 1945 and 1946. Small cities which lay within a radius of several tens of kilometers from Rastenburg were

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eliminated according to plan by the Soviets, especially during the first half of 1946. The principle followed was that of completely obliterating the center part of each city, which constituted the economic basis for the bourgeoisie class. The outskirts, with their residential areas, were left standing.

Not in a single case did the Russians destroy the German barracks which also were located on the outer edges of the cities. They were damaged during the war, but are now being rebuilt again everywhere.

Those portions of Poland which now adjoin the USSR on former East Prussian territory constitute an isolated and desolate country. No heavily trafficked lines of communication lead there and no direct roads connect it with central Poland. The region is inaccessible to travelers and no ordinary persons are permitted to go there without special passes issued by the security authorities.

Even as late as 1950 there were almost no troops in the Polish portion of this region. From all indications, Soviet-Polish cooperation in this area is complete and the troops of both countries are under one command. The Polish-Soviet boundary has, practically speaking, been erased.

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