DAILY WORKER JAN 16 1955 STATINTL
Approved For Release 2000/08/24 : CIA-RDP70-00058R [redacted]

Germany Was Rearmed

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By ADAM LAPIN

PRESIDENT Eisenhower offers a magic and soothing formula. He wants to build up anew a great German military force—but he says he can do it so as to "avoid the danger of a revival of German militarism." He says the new German army he proposes will be a boon to "peace and freedom."

The words are alluring, but they aren't new. The formula is enticing, but it was tried once before. And it led straight to the holocaust which was World War II.

Consider the story of German rearmament between two wars. It will sound familiar and ominous. For it is a twice-told tale.

After World War I German military might seemed hopelessly shattered. The Versailles Treaty prohibited production of airplanes, tanks and submarines. The dread German General Staff, directing mechanism of the most powerful force in Europe, was outlawed. Germany was allowed only a supposedly puny army of 100,000 men.

It was not until March 16, 1935, that Adolf Hitler formally renounced the Versailles limitations on German rearmament. But less than two and a half years later, in November 1937, Hitler gathered his military leaders in the Reich Chancellery and told them:

"The rearming of the army, the navy, and the air force, as well as the formation of the Officers' Corps, is practically concluded. Our material, equipment and armaments are modern. . . ."

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GERMAN rearmament did not start with the formal denunciation of the Versailles Treaty in 1935. If rearmament was enormously spurred by Hitler's Nazi regime, it started as soon as World War I was finished. The Versailles limitations proved meaningless.

German militarism was built into the very fabric of German capitalist society. A powerful German military caste, with its roots deep in the German Junker class of landed aristocracy, had been nutured since the days of Frederick the Great.

When the German militarists developed a tight alliance with the I. G. Farben, Krupp and other monopolies, there emerged an aggressive menace to world peace which would strike again and again in Europe. And when this combine of militarists and capitalists received the friendly blessings of U. S., British and French financial and government leaders, it was able to move unchecked until it was defeated, at least temporarily, in World War II.

French men and women demonstrating outside the Assembly against ratification of the Paris Pact to create a new German Wehrmacht as part of NATO.

The military quickly combined with reactionary industrialists and with government officials to put down the first revolutionary socialist uprising after the war. Then they got down to the business of rebuilding German armed forces.

Gen. Hans von Seeckt, in charge of the postwar army, quickly got around that 100,000 limitation. He organized a number of secret, illegal formations known as the "Black Reichswehr" in the eastern areas bordering on Poland. Police forces and frontier guards were organized along military lines so as to keep the officer corps intact.

Military aviation was prohibited by the Versailles Treaty. So a wartime flier was put in charge of civil aviation in a so-called Office of Air Transport. And a secret flying group of trained officers was set up within the Reichswehr, as the German army was called.

Submarines were also prohibited. But the Navy Ministry started [illegible] in Spain and another in Finland. Navy officers perfected techniques for speedy assembly of U-boat parts. U-boat personnel was trained in Finland and Spain—and within Germany itself a U-boat school was set up under the guise of an anti-U-boat school.

ESSENTIAL to German rearmament was an understanding between the military clique and the big industrialists. A secret memorandum of German army ordinance, made public at the Nuremberg war crimes trial, dated Jan. 16, 1926, stated:

"After several attempts at cooperation with industry which did not attain the desired aim, we have now succeeded in bringing together for our purposes the prominent members of the Reich Association of Industry."

Krupp began to develop submarines in Holland through a dummy Dutch company in 1922, and made arrangements in 1921 for the Swedish Bofors plants to manufacture guns according to Krupp design. Soon afterwards Krupp and other companies making [illegible] were back at business making weapons within Germany itself.

There is an old joke that the Krupp armaments works made baby carriages which, if taken apart could be put together only as machine guns. Brig. Gen. Telford Taylor, U. S. war crimes prosecutor notes that the joke is "not too far-fetched."

Taylor cites the boast of Gustav Krupp that "to the surprise of many people, Krupp began to manufacture products which really appeared to be far distant from the previous work of an armament plant. Even the Allied snooping commissions were duped. Padlocks, cash registers, track repair machines, trash carts and similar 'small junk' appeared really unsuspicious."

Taylor notes that "the Krupp and Wehrmacht documents produced at Nuremberg reveal that the standard guns and tanks used by the German Army upon the outbreak of war in 1939 had been developed by Krupp under the Weimar regime before the Nazis came to power."

"After the assumption of power by Adolf Hitler," Krupp wrote, "I had the satisfaction of being able to report to the Feuhrer that Krupp's stood ready, after a short warming-up period, to begin the rearmament of the German people without any gaps in our experience."

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KRUPP was kidding himself with his boast about duping "the Allied snooping commissions." Allied inspectors left Germany in 1927. But even before that the secret German rearmament was no real secret.

A duPont official reported that in 1925, Allen Dulles, then a State Department official and now head of the Central Intelligence Agency, said he was "aware that powder and other munitions were continually shipped out of Germany with the connivance of the Allies, since the resulting sale of munitions swelled the reparations fund."

This connivance also had another objective. It was part of a long range strategy stated by Herbert Hoover in a letter on Aug. 17, 1921:

"The whole American policy during the liquidation of the Armistice was to contribute everything it could to prevent Europe from going Bolshevik or being overrun by the armies."

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like Standard Oil, General Electric and duPont.

Cartel arrangements had the unique advantage for the German military of promoting their own armament program—while holding back industrial processes in the U. S. which became essential in World War II.

Thus Standard Oil turned over important secrets on manufacture of synthetic rubber to the I. G. Farben chemical trust—but refrained from pushing synthetic rubber development in the U. S.

Dr. Oscar Loehr of I. G. Farben was asked after World War II, by a U. S. official:

"So IG was able to suppress completely the synthetic rubber production in the United States, was able to use an American company, Standard Oil, to protect IG's patents in the case of war between the United States and Germany and . . . undermined the military potential of the United States . . . Is that right?"

"These are the conclusions which seem to disclose that IG impaired the military strength of the United State," Dr. Loehr replied. "Yes."

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THE GERMAN military clique was aided by its close alliance with the big German monopolies—but also by the aid it received from U. S. and British industrialists and from the tacit support for the rearmament program by leading Western European and U. S. politicians.

There remained the obstacle of the German people themselves, of powerful opposition to war from the unions, the Communist Party and many other groups. The German militarists early started coping with this problem by making political alliances with the most reactionary groups in the country—and specifically with the burgeoning Nazi movement.

The German army refused to act to suppress the right wing Kapp putsch of 1920, and important army officers early lined up with Nazis. Gen. Walter von Reichenau was one of the first of the General Staff to line up with Hitler. Gen. Werner von Blomberg was another of the high command who soon followed.

Gen. Kurt von Schleicher, one of the last of the pre-Hitler Chancellors, and Gen. Paul von Hindenburg, who appointed Hitler as Chancellor, played key roles in paving the way for Hitler's rise to power.

While the German military developed differences from time to time with Hitler, and had doubts about some of his military adventures, these were not to come until later. The German militarists needed Hitler to suppress domestic opposition and to spur their plans for world conquest—just as Hitler needed the generals and admirals to execute these plans.

Even this triple alliance of German industrialists, generals and Nazis which soon built Germany into a great military power did not trouble those in the U. S. and elsewhere who still entertained dreams of sicking the Nazis on the Soviet Union, and hailed the Munich sellout to Hitler as "peace in our time."

As late as March 1939, John Foster Dulles, himself a lawyer for powerful German cartel interests, stated:

"Only hysteria entertains the idea that Germany, Italy and Japan contemplates war against us. . . ."

It took only a few months before the German juggernaut was unleashed—not against the Soviet Union, but against Western Europe. The military might U. S. interests helped build up was turned against the U. S.

German militarism and imperialism would not remain docile puppets of the Western powers—but struck first at what they considered to be the soft spot of Western Europe and pursued their own objectives of conquest at terrible cost to the entire world. It took a great war costing millions of lives and all of the power of the grand alliance of the U. S., the Soviet Union and Great Britain, to defeat rampaging Nazi Germany.

There the story should end—except that it seems to be starting up all over again.

Again we are told that defeat of the "Soviet menace" requires German rearmament.

Again we are told that German militarism will be safely controlled—and that it will be confined to a nice, safe little army (like that supposedly docile army of 100,000 after World War I).

Again German generals are busily plotting behind the scenes.

Again Krupp and I. G. Farben are preparing to manufacture implements of war—to repeat that dread joke about turning baby carriages into guns.

But this time there are few in Europe who believe German militarism can be contained or controlled. A powerful movement is arising to demand an end to the new plan for German rearmament.

Specifically, this meant rebuilding German military power—for war against the Soviet Union. It was to this end that Western policy towards Germany was largely directed after World War I.

It was to this end that the Dawes plan to rebuild the German economy was drafted by leading U. S. bankers and industrialists, among them Owen D. Young, head of General Electric. Under the Dawes and later the Young plan, billions in loans were poured into Germany—much of the funds being secretly used by German industrialists for the rearmament program and for supporting the Nazi movement.

German rearmament was also aided directly by the British Imperial Chemicals and the French Schneider armaments trust—both with close ties with German industry—and by U. S. corporations

Krupp in the dock at Nurenburg but he was released by U.S. government permission and is now building an atomic pile for the new Germam Wehrmacht.

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