

The German System of Espionage

The following is one of the series of articles being supplied by the department of militia and defence:

In view of reported cases of German espionage in Canada, and of the excitement produced in various centres throughout the Dominion by the movements of supposed spies, it is interesting to know something of the scale upon which the German system of espionage is known to be organized in the theatre of war in Europe, which is, of course, the very heart centre of the system.

At the start, it is well to recall the fact that the excellence of the German intelligence system, which contributed so powerfully towards the German success in the Franco-German war of 1870, was the result of an elaborate spy system, carefully organized within the borders of France during peace time.

After the conclusion of the 1866 campaign against Austria, Stieber, minister of police in Prussia, who was to Bismarck and Von Moltke what Fonche was to Napoleon, was sent on a secret mission to France. His aim and object was the organization within the boundaries of France of a spy system preparatory to the pending war. Stieber, in all, between 1866 and 1869, made four journeys through the length and breadth of France, by the end of which time, aided by very able assistants, he accomplished far reaching results.

He strewed France with 20,000 paid German spies, and organized a complete espionage system in the parts of France which covered the possible theatre of war. These spies were organized territorially under four inspectors, having headquarters at Brussels, Lausanne, Geneva and Berlin, and responsible to two lieutenants of police, who in turn reported to Stieber.

A peculiar feature of the system instituted by Stieber at that time, and still maintained, were the "fixed posts." The ordinary idea of a spy is one who is sent to travel in a foreign country in some disguise, and who returns to his own country with information thus acquired. But this traveling spy suffers very great disadvantages. Like every traveler in a foreign country, without any *raison d'etre* for being there, he is the object of suspicion. He has no time to get thoroughly into touch with useful channels of information.

He is closely watched, and directly he begins making enquiries as to this, that and the other, the previous suspicions become certainties, and his mission results in failure.

But the spy in the "fixed post" is on an entirely different footing. He attracts no attention, since he lives as an inhabitant of the place he is in, and moreover plies some trade, which gives him a very good reason for being there.

Under the cover of this trade he can make inquiries without incurring the suspicion of the authorities and has ample time to get into touch with anyone whom he thinks capable of giving him useful information.

The German spies in France were, and still doubtless are, of all grades and professions, and of both sexes, including farmers, market gardeners, agricultural laborers, vine growers, railway porters, shopkeepers, commercial travelers (a very useful and frequent disguise), waiters and waitresses in cafes, hotels and canteens, newspaper reporters, telegraph operators, female domestics, etc.

Among other duties assigned to the director of the German spy service during the war of 1870 were the following:

(a) Information in regard to the situation, strength and movements of each group of the hostile army.

(b) In regard to the age, character and reputation of all hostile commanders.

(c) In regard to what was going on, and the state of public feeling in the districts the German army was about to traverse and the resources of those districts.

(d) To procure in each of these regions persons capable of furnishing useful information.

It is known that, in spite of French vigilance, the Germans have maintained and perhaps elaborated the espionage system established that in 1890 Stieber, still at that date minister of police in Germany, was sent through France and subsequently established a branch of the German secret police to deal with "political actions." This term it was explained included the destruction of the strategical railways in France on the outbreak of war, so that the French mobilization might be retarded. But this part of the scheme miscarried, thanks to the vigilance of the French intelligence agents.

In a book entitled, "The German Spy System in France," translated from the French of Paul Sanoir and published recently in London, from which most of the facts herein contained are taken, it is explained that German espionage in France interests itself in everything and everybody possessing in any capacity a particle of authority or celebrity. A specialty is made of the characters, habits, capacities, etc., of individual officers of the French army; but every species of information that can be of any use in a military or political sense comes under the notice of the German spies.

Information as to telegraphs, telephones, railways, highways, bridges, cul-de-sacs, forage, provision and supplies, shipping, hospitals, barracks accommodation, water supplies, discontented people, and citizens susceptible of monstacy temptation is particularly sought.

According to Mr. Sanoir, there are a

present some 15,000 spies in "fixed posts" in France.

How perfect a spy system has been introduced by the Germans into Canada is not stated, but it is known that there have been German spies in Canada within the past five years, and that some of them have been identified and tracked by the military and police authorities.

For obvious reasons the Canadian military and civil authorities are silent as to what is known officially about German spies and espionage in Canada; but that there are agents of the hostile powers in Canada ready to forward every scrap of important news bearing upon Canada's participation in the present war is admitted.

Owing to the military censorship imposed upon the cable and wireless telegraph services, it is difficult for the German agents in Canada to get their reports across the Atlantic ocean promptly, but in the absence of a censorship over the land wires and mails, communication of a sort is open through the mails, to neutral countries.

Meantime patriotic Canadians who are the repositories of information which might be useful in any war to the enemies of the empire will do well to keep such information to themselves and take every precaution to prevent it from obtaining general circulation or from reaching the ears of possible agents of the German intelligence service.