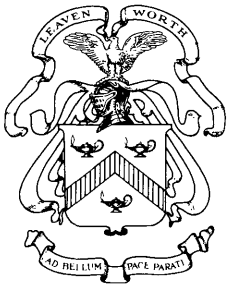
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THE GERMAN CAMPAIGN IN POLAND (1939)

BY

ROBERT M. KENNEDY

MAJOR, INFANTRY

UNITED STATES ARMY

MAY 2 9 1996

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY APRIL 1956

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For explanation of abbreviations used, see SR 320–50–1.

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FOREWORD

The Office of the Chief of Military History of the Department of the Army is currently preparing a series of studies on German military operations in World War II against forces other than those of the United States. These monographs will cover German operations in the Balkans, in Russia, in Finland, in Norway, and in France and the Low Countries. The brief Polish-German struggle in late 1939 was the first of these operations in order of occurrence.

These campaign studies are being made available to the General Staff and to the Army schools and colleges as reference works. They will also prove of value to all who are interested in military affairs.

PREFACE

The German attack on Poland precipitated World War II, making the Polish campaign one of particular significance to the student of the 1939–45 conflict. The lessons learned by the German Army in its operations in Poland were put to use in the later campaigns against the western Allies, the Balkan states, and the Soviet Union. Poland also formed the testing ground for new theories on the use of armored forces and close air support of ground troops. The complete destruction of the Polish state and the removal of Poland from the map of eastern Europe were grim portents of the fate of the vanquished in the new concept of total war.

The purpose of this campaign study is to provide the United States Army with a factual account of German military operations against Poland, based on source material from captured records currently in the custody of The Adjutant General, Department of the Army; monographs prepared by a number of former German officers for the Historical Division, United States Army, Europe; and such Polish accounts as were available. Since no other pamphlet in the series will discuss the expansion of the German Armed Forces and the various diplomatic events that preceded the outbreak of hostilities, these are included in part one of the study.

Two preliminary drafts of the study and a series of questionnaires were distributed to a committee of former German general officers for reply and comment on their part in planning and operations, and to fill gaps in the official records. These former German officers included Generaloberst Franz Halder, Chief of the Army General Staff through the period of the Polish Campaign, Generaloberst Hans von Salmuth, General der Artillerie Walter Warlimont, General der Infanterie Guenther Blumentritt, and General der Infanterie Kurt von Tippelskirch. The replies and comments of these surviving key participants are referred to in the footnotes and are available in the author's file in the Office of the Chief of Military History for study by interested researchers.

An enormous source of German material exists on this opening campaign of World War II. Time and personnel considerations presently make impossible any detailed study of such significant features of the Polish Campaign as German experiences with irregulars and guerrillas in the rear areas, contacts with the Red Army at division and lower

command levels, and the establishment of a security force to police the occupied area and provide a buffer against a possible Soviet attack from the rear while the main German armies were engaged in the 1940 campaign in western Europe. This vast store of unexplored documents and untranslated books, articles, and other writings still presents a challenge to the serious researcher who desires to obtain more comprehensive information on the matters which could be touched upon only briefly in the scope of this study.

This study was written by Maj. Robert M. Kennedy, under the direction of the chief of the Special Studies Division, Office of the Chief of Military History. Appreciation is expressed to all who participated in the preparation of this study.

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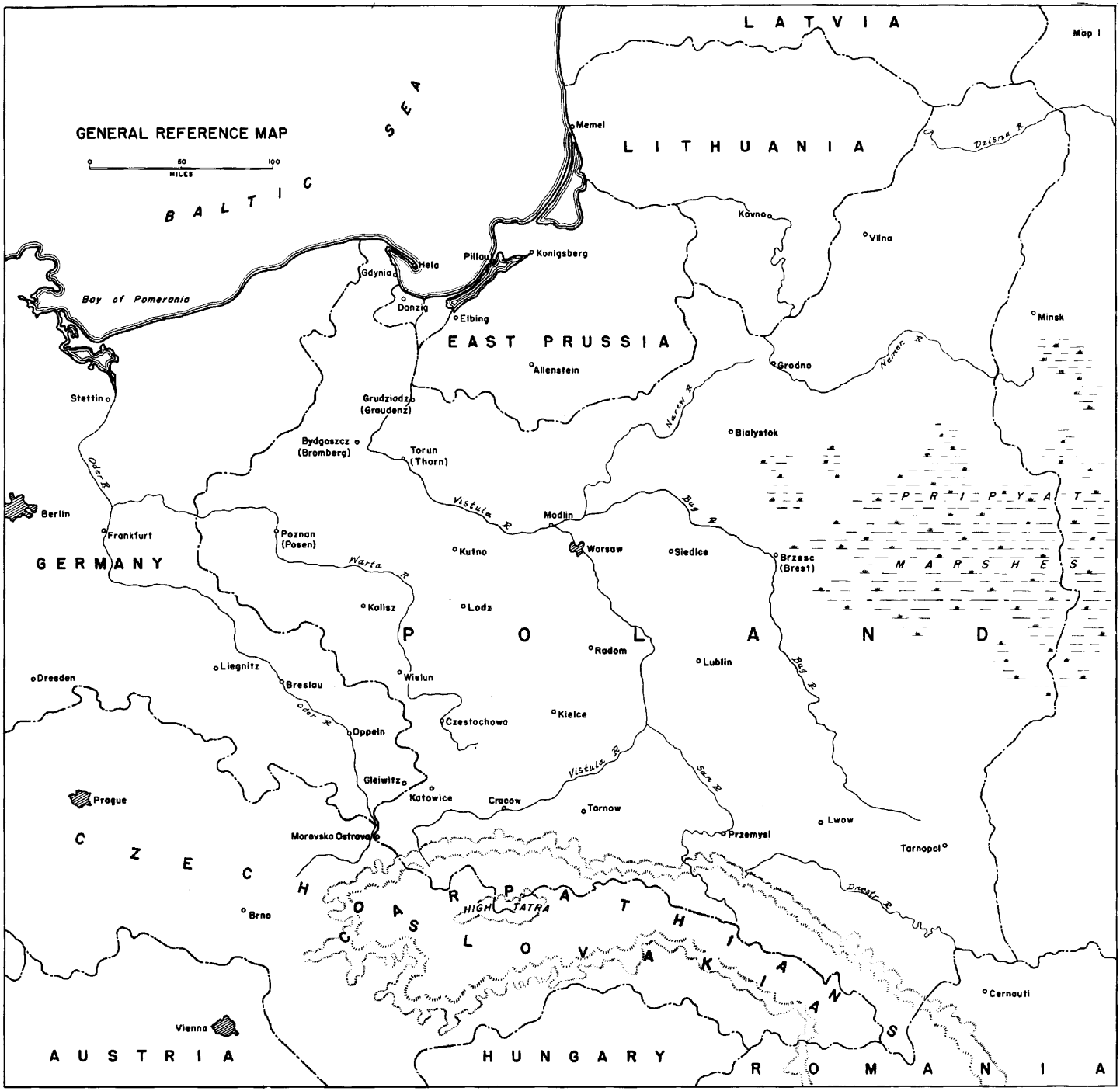
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Credit.
Figure 1—Mr. Julius Weber.
Figure 2—Gen Hubert Lanz, *Gebirgsjaeger* (Bad Nauheim, 1954).
All others are from Department of Defense files.


Map I
GENERAL REFERENCE MAP
0 50 100
MILES
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
BALTIC SEA
Memel
Dvina R.
Kovno
Vilna
Minsk
Bay of Pomerania
Hela
Pillau
Konigsberg
Gdynia
Danzig
Elbing
EAST PRUSSIA
Allenstein
Grodno
Neman R.
Narew R.
Stettin
Grudziodz (Graudenz)
Bydgoszcz (Bromberg)
Torun (Thorn)
Bialystok
Oder R.
Vistula R.
Bug R.
PRIPYAT MARSHES
Berlin
Frankfurt
Poznan (Posen)
Modlin
Warsaw
Kutno
Siedice
Brzesc (Brest)
GERMANY
Warta R.
Kalisz
Lodz
POLAND
Radom
Lublin
Dresden
Liegnitz
Breslau
Wielun
Oder R.
Oppeln
Czestochowa
Kielce
San R.
Gleiwitz
Katowice
Cracow
Tornow
Lwow
Prague
Moravska Ostrava
Przemysl
Tarnopol
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
HIGH TATRA
CARPATHIAN MTS.
Brno
Dneistr R.
Cernauti
Vienna
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA

PART ONE

THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT

Chapter 1

Polish-German Relations to March 1939 [1]

General

The Polish state temporarily ceased to exist when the territories of the once-powerful Kingdom of Poland were divided among Prussia, Austria, and Russia in three partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795. Nationalist aspirations were not extinguished, and determined factions within Poland's former frontiers and in exile waged a persistent struggle for the restoration of independence in the century and a quarter that followed.

Polish support was sought by both the Allies and the Central Powers in World War I. The Allies announced as one of their war aims the reestablishment of an independent Polish state. The Germans, occupying the country with the Austrians after driving out the Russian armies, set up a Polish Government on 5 November 1916 in an effort to gain the favor of the nationalists. The Allied offer had a greater appeal to the Poles, and the Polish National Committee in Paris, the strongest exile group, under Ignace Paderewski, identified itself with the Allies.

The Polish Republic was proclaimed by nationalist leaders at Warsaw on 3 November 1918, as it became obvious that the Central Powers were about to suffer a military collapse. Executive power was assumed by the Regency Council, the government organized two years before by the German occupation authorities. The Regency Council promptly called upon Jozef Pilsudski, the military leader who had led Polish troops in Austrian service against the Russians, to assume the leadership of the new republic. Pilsudski was invested ·ith the powers of a military dictator and immediately invited Pader·ski and other Polish leaders in exile to return. A coalition governnt was formed under Paderewski on 17 January 1919.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material for this chapter was taken from William L. Langer, *Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston, 1952).

The new Polish state commenced its existence in the midst of ruin and poverty. Its territory had been the scene of heavy fighting between the Central Powers and the Russians in the opening stages of World War I, and the German and Austrian occupation forces had systematically exploited the country in the several years that followed. The end of the war found Poland's factories destroyed or idle, its livestock decimated, and the nation's economy in a state of chaos. Reconstruction and economic recovery in Poland were to take far longer than was the case with most other World War I participants.

Poland's northwestern and western borders were fixed by the Treaty of Versailles between Germany and the Allies on 28 June 1919, and its southern frontier by the Treaty of St. Germain between the Allies and Austria-Hungary on 10 September 1919. The Treaty of Riga (Latvia), 18 March 1921, ended a successful campaign by the newly established state against Soviet Russia and determined Poland's eastern and northeastern frontiers.

The Versailles Treaty and the Rise of Hitler

The territorial clauses of the treaty between Germany and the Allies provided Poland with a land corridor to the Baltic Sea and the site of the future port of Gdynia, at the expense of the prewar Reich. This arrangement isolated the province of East Prussia from Germany, disrupted much of the Reich's economy, and placed thousands of Germans in the Corridor within the borders of the new Polish state. Danzig, a major port at the mouth of the Vistula and populated almost completely by Germans, was made a free city, with a League of Nations commissioner and its own elected legislature. Poland was permitted to control Danzig's customs, to represent the Free City in foreign affairs, and to keep a small military force in the harbor area. A plebiscite was to be held to determine the frontier in parts of Upper Silesia, but the poles secured several of the more desirable areas by force in a sudden rising on 18 August 1919. Despite heated German protests, these areas were incorporated into Poland. Later plebiscites divided other areas along lines corresponding to the wishes of the local population. A Polish-French treaty of alliance on 19 February 1921 was designed to maintain the territorial arrangements that had been made and to provide France with an eastern counterweight to future German expansion. [See *map 2.*]

Germany was preoccupied with internal troubles and reduced to the position of an inferior power in the several years that followed. The Reich was beset with inflation until 1923 and plagued with unemployment in the general depression after 1929. In 1933 Adolf Hitler became chancellor and brought a new revolutionary system of government to the Reich.

Hitler's National Socialist regime quickly assumed complete control over Germany's national life and future. A dictatorship was created and opposition suppressed. An extensive armaments program, expansion of the small armed force permitted the Reich under the treaty, and public construction work brought Germany a measure of economic recovery and improved the country's military posture. Germany soon regained a semblance of the position it had held as a European power before its defeat in 1918.

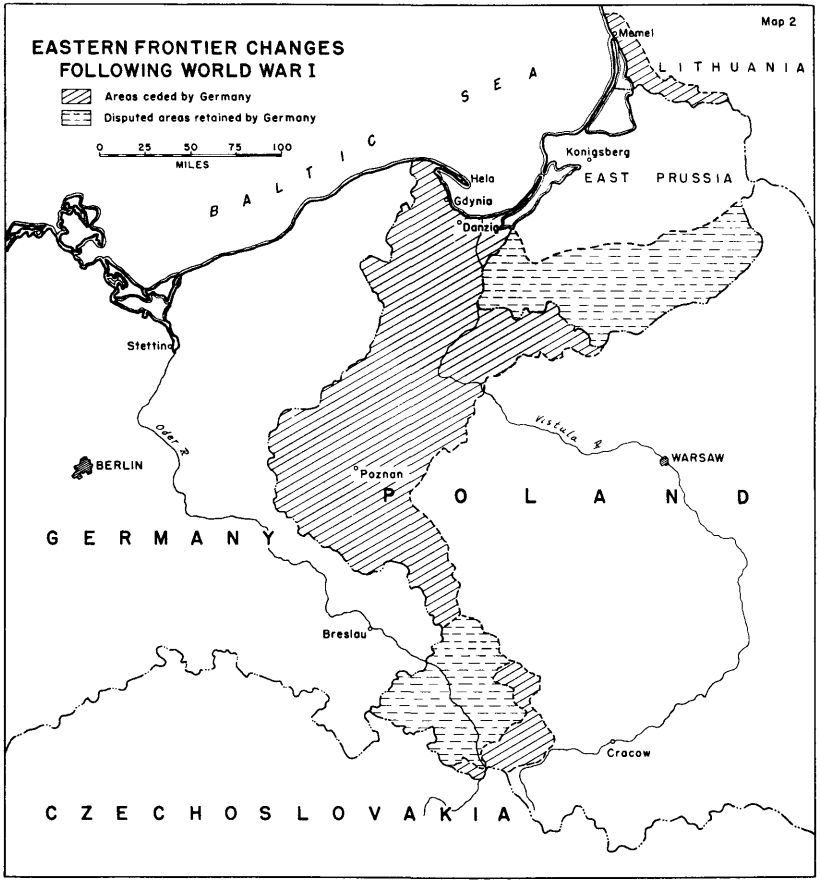
The former Allies presented an obstacle to whatever plans Hitler may have had to recover the territories taken from Germany. Their armed forces had not been modernized or equipped with great numbers of the latest weapons, but these countries collectively controlled an industrial and military base stronger than Germany's. Britain had the preponderance of seapower and could rely upon the population and material resources of its world-wide empire for support. France had the largest reservoir of trained manpower in western Europe by reason of its conscription program. Moreover, France had made defensive arrangements with Romania and the postwar states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, in addition to its alliance with Poland.

Britain and France were reluctant to engage in an armed conflict with Germany to compel compliance with the territorial changes made at the time of Allied victory which were not absolutely essential to their own vital interests. Hitler estimated correctly this sentiment of the former Allied nations, and his foreign policy became a game of bluff. But to minimize the risks of an armed conflict while he executed his first designs in Europe, the German dictator felt it necessary to effect a rapproachment with Poland.

The Polish-German Nonaggression Pact

On 26 January 1934 the Polish and German Governments announced the signing of a pact binding both to the arbitration of differences. The agreement was to be in effect for 10 years, unless renounced 6 months in advance by either of the contracting parties. In his justification of the agreement to the German people, Hitler claimed that he had entered into the pact to prevent the crystallization of bad feelings over the boundaries into a traditional enmity between the Germans and Poles. Relations with Poland had been bad at the time the National Socialist government was established, and Hitler desired to better these relations in the interests of peace.

On 30 January 1937 Hitler reaffirmed the importance of the Polish-German pact to the assembled Reichstag, declaring it instrumental in easing tension between the two countries. However, since making the original agreement, Germany had reintroduced conscription and greatly expanded its Army. An Air Force had been organized, new



warships constructed, and an underseas fleet created. Germany had remilitarized the Rhineland in March of the preceding year, and National Socialist agitators were stirring up trouble in Austria and Czechoslovakia, both soon to feel the pressure of Hitler's demands.

The Austrian and Czechoslovak Crises

Hitler gave the Poles no cause to doubt his intentions through the remainder of 1937 and into late 1938 During that time, he was fully occupied in his machinations to gain control of Austria and of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland area that had been part of Austria prior to World War I and was inhabited by a German-speaking population. The Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Kurt Schuschnigg, was forced to take the National Socialist Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart into his cabinet as Minister of the Interior, giving Seyss-Inquart control of the police.

Hitler accelerated his war of nerves, and in March 1938 Dr. Schuschnigg, reluctant to bring on war, resigned in favor of Seyss-Inquart, and German troops marched into the country. The Republic of Austria was dissolved and its territory incorporated into the Reich.

The annexation of Austria increased considerably the German threat to Czechoslovakia. Konrad Henlein's Sudeten German Party within the country claimed to represent Czechoslovakia's three million ethnic Germans and clamored for autonomy and union with the Reich. Hitler's threatening attitude caused the Prague government to order full mobilization in September 1938. War appeared imminent.

British and French attempts to enlist the support of the Soviet Union were unavailing. On 29 September the former Allies and the pro-German Italians met with Hitler at Munich to hear his claims. Czechoslovakia was not represented at the meeting, but an agreement was reached granting the German leader's demands. The Czechoslovak government, urged by Britain and France, accepted the stipulations laid down by Hitler; the alternative undoubtedly would have been war, without British or French support. The pact was hailed in the west for attaining "peace in our time."

By the provisions of the agreement, Czechoslovak forces evacuated the Sudeten areas between 1 and 10 October. Scheduled plebiscites were not held, and Germany took control of areas with a total population of 3,500,000, of whom 700,000 were Czechs. Fortifications which would have made a German invasion difficult if not impossible at the time were turned over to the German Army intact.

Poland took advantage of the opportunity to gain the remainder of the Teschen industrial area, seized by Czechoslovakia at the time Czechoslovakia and Poland were formed. Polish troops moved into the Teschen region on 2 October, taking control of 400 square miles of territory and a population of 240,000 of mixed Czech and Polish origin. On 2 November Hungary took 5,000 square miles of southern Slovakia, an area Hungary had lost to Czechoslovakia in 1919, with a population of 1,000,000. Both Polish and Hungarian acquisitions were condoned by Germany and Italy.

Within Czechoslovakia itself, there was another deep encroachment on the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity. A strong separatist movement in Slovakia forced the government to grant autonomy to the Slovaks, under Joseph Tiso, and the name of the State was changed to Czecho-Slovakia. Territorial losses and establishment of a large autonomous area within a weak federal system combined to make Czecho-Slovakia a rump state, almost powerless to repel invasion. Tiso and a number of other leaders were quite frank about their close ties with Germany.

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The Revival of German Claims Against Poland

The Czechoslovak question settled temporarily, Hitler was free to turn his attention to Poland. On 24 October 1938 Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Reich Foreign Minister, made a series of requests that reopened old Polish-German wounds and precipitated a new crisis. The German proposals involved the return of Danzig to Germany, with Poland assured railway, port, and other economic facilities. Poland was also to permit the construction of an extraterritorial road and railroad across the Corridor. In return for these concessions, Germany would guarantee the Polish-German frontiers and extend the nonaggression pact as long as 25 years.

Pilsudski had warned his countrymen years earlier that the German attitude toward Danzig would be an indication of Germany's true intentions toward Poland and Polish public opinion would never condone the surrender of Poland's sovereignty in part of the Corridor. The diplomatic world was not surprised when Poland firmly rejected the German offer.

In March 1939 a series of significant events in Czecho-Slovakia strengthened the German position in the controversy with Poland. These events began with the dismissal of Tiso from office by the Prague government for allegedly scheming to take Slovakia out of the federal union. Tiso was supported by Hitler, and President Hacha was summoned to Berlin and induced to place Czecho-Slovakia under German protection. Slovakia was granted full independence and Carpatho-Ukraine was annexed by Hungary. Bohemia and Moravia, all that remained of the truncated Czechoslovak state, were occupied by German troops on 15 March. A German official was appointed Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, with President Hacha retained as the nominal Chief of State. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. A day later Tiso requested that Hitler also place Slovakia under German protection, and agreed to grant German troops passage to certain frontier areas. This arrangement would enable Germany to use Slovak territory as a base of operations against Poland from the south in the event of hostilities.

The establishment of the protectorate and Hitler's proclamation in Prague that Bohemia and Moravia belonged to the German *lebensraum* (living space) made obvious to the world the extent of National Socialist ambitions. For the first time Hitler had gone beyond his irredentist claims and swallowed up an area with a predominantly non-German population. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, hitherto an advocate of appeasement, stated two days later that this latest acquisition had raised the question of German

domination of the world. From this point British determination to contain Hitler gained support.

On 23 March 1939 Lithuania acceded to German demands for the Memelland, a small strip of former Reich territory along Lithuania's southwestern frontier. The following day Germany and Romania concluded an economic agreement whereby the Germans would acquire almost the entire product of Romania's extensive oil industry, partially resolving a pressing problem for the conduct of military operations by the German Armed Forces.

On 31 March Chamberlain addressed the British House of Commons, stating that Britain and France would assist Poland in the event Poland were attacked. The British and French Governments had reached an understanding, and Britain was to act as spokesman for the two nations. The issue of peace or war was left for Germany and Poland to decide.

Hitler would not permit much further delay in arriving at a solution of the territorial controversy favorable to Germany. The Poles, for their part, were determined to reject all German demands, since it was apparent to them that any concession would mean the fate that had befallen Czechoslovakia. This was the state of relations between Germany and Poland at the end of March 1939.

Chapter 2

German Military Developments to March 1939

The Treaty Restrictions

The military clauses of the Versailles Treaty in 1919 limited the German armed forces establishment to a small organization of long-term volunteers. Conscription and universal training were prohibited, and major offensive weapons, such as aircraft, tanks, and submarines, were not permitted. The new German military organization could therefore be little more than a police and coastal patrol force, incapable of carrying out any aggressive action outside the Reich. Even as a defensive organization, the postwar armed forces would require considerable reinforcement to protect the Reich in the event of war with one or more of its stronger neighbors.

The Army was allowed a total of 100,000 men, including 4,000 officers. Noncommissioned officers and privates were to be enlisted for 12 years, and officers were to be required to serve for a period of 25 years. A further stipulation by the Allies provided that no more than 5 percent of the officers and enlisted personnel could be released yearly by reason of termination of their period of service. These various requirements and the prohibition against conscription and universal training effectively prevented the formation of a reserve of any size. No field pieces larger than 105 mm were to be used, with the exception of a few fixed guns of heavier caliber in the old fortress of Koenigsberg, in East Prussia. The detailed organization and armament of all units formed had first to be approved by the Allies.

The Navy was authorized 15,000 men, including 1,500 officers. Six obsolete battleships, 6 light cruisers, 12 destroyers, and 12 torpedo boats were permitted the fleet, with 2 battleships, 2 cruisers, 4 destroyers, and 4 torpedo boats in reserve. The building of ships displacing over 10,000 tons was prohibited. A further restriction limited naval guns to a maximum of 280 mm (approximately 11 inches).

Arms and munitions industries and factories producing military equipment were reduced in number to the minimum essential to maintain authorized stocks. No troops were to be permitted in a demilitarized zone extending 50 kilometers (approximately 31 miles) east of the Rhine. Allied control commissions were to be allowed to in-

spect arms factories and the Army and Navy for compliance with the treaty and the Reich defense laws enacted in conformity with its provisions.

The Reichswehr [1]

It devolved upon the German Republic under President Ebert to create as effective an armed force as possible within the framework of the restrictions imposed by the Allies. Meanwhile, a temporary military organization existed under a reichstag law of 6 March 1919. Ebert called upon Generalleutnant Hans von Seeckt to head a commission to study the matter and submit recommendations on which the organization of the postwar force could be based.

Seeckt's recommendations were adopted, with some modifications and changes, and the new organization, created by the Defense Law of 23 March 1921, was called the *Reichswehr* (Reich Defense Force). Its two services were the *Reichsheer* (Army) and the *Reichsmarine* (Navy). The predominant part played by the land service gave many the impression that the *Reichswehr* and Army were identical, and the tiny Navy received little attention.

The nominal Commander in Chief of the *Reichswehr* was the President. Actual authority, however, was normally exercised by the Minister of Defense, a cabinet officer and coequal of the Ministers of the Interior, Justic, Foreign Affairs, and other members of the President's official family.

Commanders for the Army and Navy were prohibited by the Versailles Treaty, so the senior officers of the two services held positions analogous to that of Chiefs of Staff, responsible directly to the Minister of Defense. In practice, the Chiefs of Staff directed planning, operations, and training, and the Minister of Defense restricted his activities to representing the *Reichswehr* before the Reichstag and performing similar ministerial functions.

A large number of officers and noncommissioned officers with World War I experience were available to command and cadre the small postwar force at first, but emphasis soon came to be placed on the procurement of younger men. Forced to make do with what they had, the military leaders proceeded to develop an elite force, and numerous incentives were offered in order to acquire a high type of personnel. Enlisted pay was raised and barracks conditions were improved. Strict discipline gained the *Reichswehr* the respect of the civilian population, and relations with the local inhabitants in garrison and port areas were usually excellent. Upon discharge *Reichswehr* personnel were given priority in obtaining civilian positions

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section was taken from *Die Reichswehr* (Cologne, 1933); and H. Franke, *Handbuch der Neuzeitlichen Wehrwissenschaften, Band I, II, III, and IV* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1937).

with the government, or were granted financial support up to a maximum of three years while readjusting to civilian life. Men with more than 10 years service could receive training for a civilian occupation while still in uniform.

Another important morale factor for the *Reichsheer* was the policy of recruitment on a local basis. Each unit of battalian size or larger had its permanent station and recruited the bulk of its personnel from that general region. Personnel assignments were relatively stable and individuals remained in units composed largely of men from their home areas. A similar arrangement for the *Reichsmarine* would have been impracticable, though personnel were rotated to sea and shore assignments on a regular schedule.

The *Reichswehr* adopted the traditions of the disbanded units of the old imperial forces, e. g. the 1st Company of the 9th Infantry took charge of the battle flags of the 1st Prussian Foot Guards. Tradition was carried to an extreme with the 1st Infantry, which adopted the old 43d Infantry's traditions—the bass drum in the regimental band was carried in parades on a cart drawn by a St. Bernard dog, a privileg the 43d Infantry had won by capturing a dog-drawn drum from the Austrians at the Battle of Koeniggratz in 1866. A memorial honoring the parent unit was installed in each barracks square, and ceremonies held before it on official holidays. Survivors of the old units and the families of members who had been killed in battle were contacted and invited to the memorial services. Where possible, older officers and men still in the military service were assigned to the *Reichswehr* unit which was to carry their old unit's tradition. Another effective means of promoting organization spirit was the assignment of a band to every battalion-sized and larger unit, with fifers and drummers down to the company.

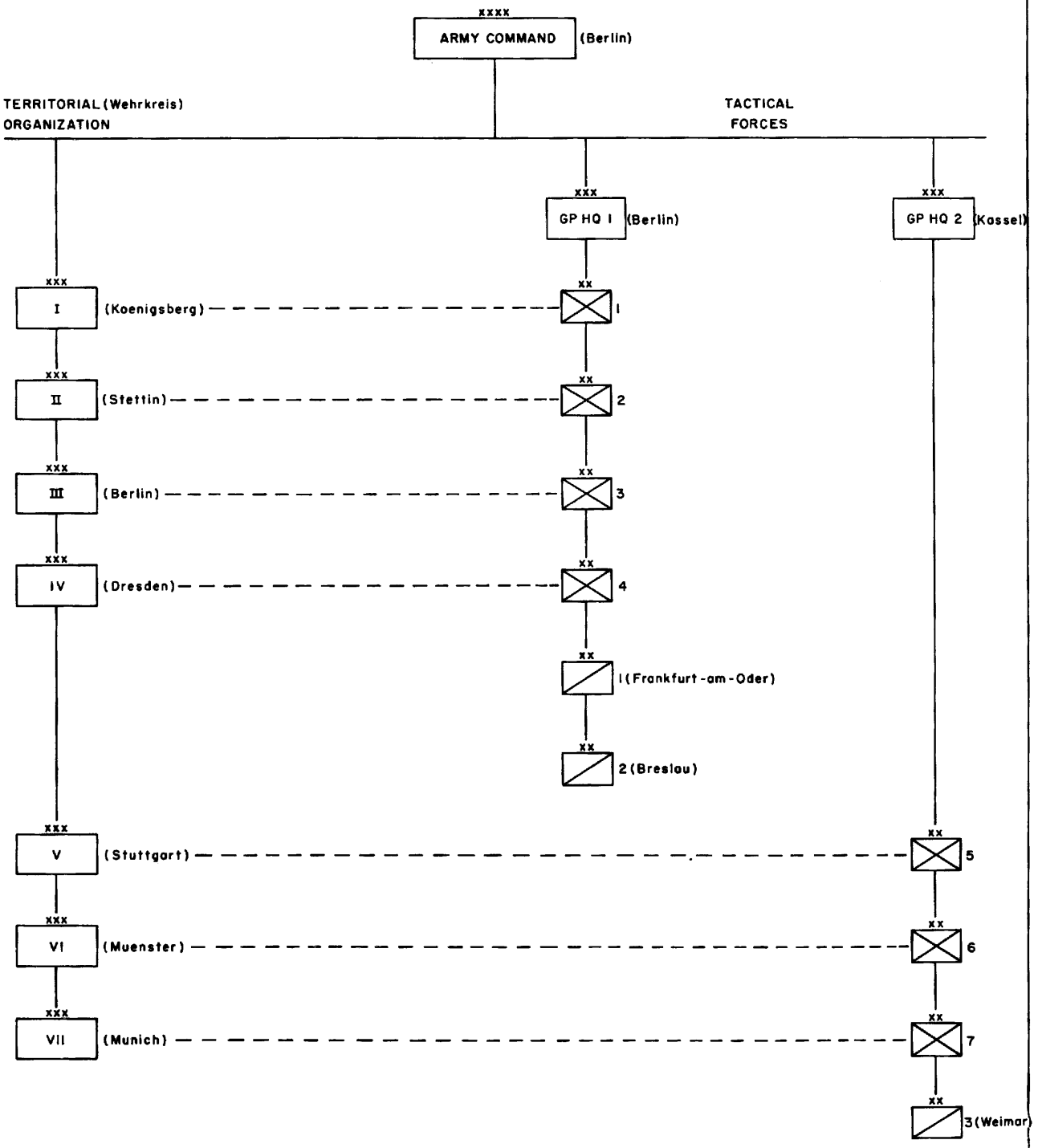
The Army [2]

The Chief of Staff of the Army was known as the Chief of the Army Command (*Chef der Heeresleitung*). The most important of the five sections of his staff was the *Truppenamt*, an all-encompassing organization with many of the functions of the Imperial General Staff, which had been disbanded in compliance with the Versailles Treaty, though this did not preclude General Staff appointments at lower echelons of command. The headquarters of the Army Command was in Berlin.

The tactical forces of the *Reichsheer* comprised seven small infantry and three cavalry divisions, the former numbered 1 through 7 and

[2] Unless otherwise noted, the material on the organization of the *Reichsheer* was taken from Burkhart Mueller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer (1933–45), Band I, Das Heer bis zum Kriegsbeginn* (Darmstadt, 1954), pp. 14–20.

CHART I - ORGANIZATION OF THE REICHSHEER, 1921



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the latter 1 through 3. The strength of the infantry division was approximately 12,000 men, with three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment of three light battalions, and small reconnaissance, signal, engineer, transportation, and medical battalions. The cavalry division had six small cavalry regiments and an artillery battalion, and a total strength of 5,300 men.

The commanders of the infantry divisions had a dual responsibility, since they were territorial commanders as well; their staffs also functioned in two capacities. The area commands of the *Reichsheer*, known as *Wehrkreise*, were seven in number, designated by Roman numerals I through VII, and covered the entire territory of the Reich. The *Wehrkreise* were charged with recruiting, logistical support of tactical units within their areas, and general housekeeping functions.

The seven infantry divisions were distributed one to each of the seven *Wehrkreise*, the numbers in each case being identical, e. g. the 7th Infantry Division was assigned to *Wehrkreise* VII, with headquarters in Munich, the capital of Bavaria. The infantry divisions, in accordance with the policy of local recruitment, were drawn almost entirely from the *Wehrkreise* in which they had their home stations, e. g. the 7th Infantry Division was composed of Bavarians. The three cavalry divisions, though their headquarters were situated in one *Wehrkreis* or the other, were drawn from a wider area, e. g. the 3d Cavalry Division, with headquarters at Weimar in Thuringia, included one cavalry regiment composed of Bavarians. [See *chart 1.*]

The divisions were controlled by two *Gruppenkommandos* (group commands). *Gruppenkommando 1*, in Berlin, controlled the divisions in northern and eastern Germany; *Gruppenkommando 2*, in Kassel, the divisions in southern and western Germany. The two group commands were responsible to the Chief of Staff of the *Reichsheer*. The *Wehrkreise* were also responsible directly to the Chief of Staff of the *Reichsheer*, maknig the group headquarters purely tactical commands.

The training of the *Reichsheer* was one of the most important imprints left by General von Seeckt, who became the first Chief of Staff and remained in that position until 1926. The time spent on the school of the soldier and close order drill was reduced once discipline had been established. Emphasis was then placed on field training. Seeckt believed that the mobility lost in the trench warfare of World War I could be regained by the infantry-artillery team with tank and air support. Trucks were made into mock tanks for training purposes by the addition of cardboard and wooden superstructures. Such passive air defense measures as camouflage were stressed. Former tank officers were assigned to the supply and transportation services, and 180 flying officers of World War I were distributed throughout the

Army in various other capacities. A core of 3, later 15 air specialists was assigned to the headquarters of the Army Command.

The small number of troops, the dispersal of units in garrisons from East Prussia to Bavaria, and budgetary considerations restricted maneuvers and large-scale exercises. Consequently, to train commanders and staffs from battalion level upwards a type of realistic war game exercise was adopted. Commanders and staffs, all available signal troops, and a skeleton force of infantry, artillery, and engineers participated. Troops were present only in sufficient numbers to establish front lines, but the headquarters functioned as in a tactical situation. Many of the deficiencies of the Imperial Army's communication system were corrected in the course of these exercises, and a number of future army and army group commanders and staffs had the opportunity to experiment with new theories and techniques.



Figure 1. Troops of the Reichsheer's 11th Infantry Regiment in training, 1934.

General von Seeckt's policy required military personnel to refrain from engaging in political activities, giving credence to the belief that the Army represented the German nation and not the administration in office. Nevertheless, during Seeckt's tenure, there was considerable deference by political leaders to the *Reichsheer*. An icy, aloof individual, Seeckt spoke for the Army as a solid, determined block of 100,000 armed men and the ultimate government force.

In the first several years following its organization, the *Reichsheer* was committed to securing the internal stability of the Reich and maintaining law and order. To supplement the efforts of the *Reichsheer*, local militia were frequently organized for short periods

of time. However, these soon had to be disbanded upon the insistence of the Allied control commissions. By 1924 the situation in Germany had settled to the extent that the *Reichsheer* could perform its mission without assistance.

Gradually, as time passed, some restrictions on Germany's armed forces were relaxed or simply not enforced, and the *Reichsheer* organized additional signal and antiaircraft units and improved some of its artillery and other weapons. Seeckt and the government leaders also adopted the broadest possible interpretation of the restrictions included in the treaty, giving Germany various advantages not intended by the treaty writers, e. g. there was no prohibition against drawing up plans for improved weapons, so German designers prepared blueprints for various new guns and other armament.

Significant evasions of the treaty terms involved the establishment of military installations and armaments industries in the Soviet Union. The German government supported these arrangements, financed in large part by such industrial firms as the Junkers Aircraft Company. This evasion of the treaty terms was welcomed by the Russians, desperately in need of foreign engineers and technicians to build up their own air and tank arms and their chemical warfare service. In exchange for technical advice and the services of German experts, the Russians permitted the German Army to test weapons and equipment and to train cadres unhampered by the Allied control commissions.[3]

By 1930 the Army felt secure enough to proceed with the planning work started by Seeckt and to prepare for an expansion of its small force in the event of war. Should it be necessary for Germany to mobilize, the 7 infantry divisions of the *Reichsheer* would be expanded to 21. The millions of World War I veterans could be drawn upon to fill the 21 divisions, but these veterans were growing older and the German youth were receiving no military training aside from the *Reichsheer* and police forces. Arms and equipment would be available for approximately two-thirds of this force, but ammunition would be an insurmountable problem. In 1932 further studies were made for a gradual expansion of arms and munitions plant capacities to meet these needs.

In addition to its 21 infantry divisions, the *Reichsheer* on mobilization would comprise 3 or 4 cavalry divisions, 33 batteries of heavy artillery, 55 antiaircraft batteries, a small army air force, and a tank battalion. A medium battalion would be added to the artillery regiment of the infantry division, and the infantry regiment would be equipped with antitank guns. The plans for an increase in the size

[3] Helm Speidel, "Reichswehr und Rote Armee," *Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitzgeschichte,* vol. I (1953), p. 18.

of the German forces in the event of mobilization were interrupted by the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor.

The Navy

The Navy had more difficulty than the Army during this period in evading the treaty terms that reduced it to little more than a coastal patrol force.[4] Since the Versailles Treaty contained no prohibition against replacing old vessels, the Navy began a limited building program as soon as the internal political situation of the immediate postwar period had settled. However, new naval construction in German yards had to adhere closely to the limitations set by the Allies, with representatives of the Allied control commissions inspecting German port areas and the naval budget.

The Naval Command (*Marinelietung*) found a serious obstacle in those provisions of the Versailles Treaty that prohibited submarines to the German naval service; the problem of retaining highly specialized construction and maintenance personnel and training crews for the German underseas fleet of a later day was not simple of solution. Only a few naval engineers and technicians managed to keep busy in the submarine construction field on contract for the Japanese Government in the immediate postwar period.

A start was made in reviving submarine building in 1922 when the Navy subsidized a Dutch shipbuilding firm in The Hague and staffed it with German submarine engineers. The purpose of the firm was to build U-boats on contract for foreign governments, thereby keeping German construction personnel employed and giving submarine engineers the opportunity to experiment with new designs and technical improvements. Similar arrangements were made with shipbuilding companies in Finland and Spain. The building of a German-controlled torpedo factory and testing center in Spain allowed German engineers to develop new types of torpedoes, including the electrically controlled torpedo.

The 250-ton submarines built and tested in Finland were to become the prototypes of the *U–1* through *U–24*; the 750-ton boat built in Spain and eventually sold to the Turkish Government was to become the prototype of the *U–25* and *U–26*. In their experimental work, the German submarine engineers strove to simplify gear and equipment, in order to make easier assembly-line production of craft and the training of crews.

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[4] The information on the Navy's evasion of the treaty terms is taken from a printed memo by a Capt Schuessler, *Der Kampf der Marine gegen Versailles, 1919–1935*. Memo has been reprinted as Doc 156–c in *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal* (hereafter cited as *I. M. T.*) (Nuernberg, 1947), XXXIV, pp. 530–607.

The financing of these undertakings was accomplished at first with naval funds diverted for the purpose. Eventually, with their building success abroad, many of the Navy's enterprises became self-supporting. In 1927 a scandal brought a number of these covert naval activities to light and made necessary their curtailment. However, the Allied control commissions had been withdrawn earlier the same year, and many of the illegal undertakings being carried on in foreign countries could be shifted back to the Reich. Long before the abrogation of the Versailles Treaty, assembly lines to build 6 U-boats at a time were constructed at Kiel, and the component parts for 12 submarines made and stored. (Thus the first of the new underseas fleet could make its appearance less than six months after Hitler's announcement of rearmament in 1935.)

In addition to its activities in submarine construction, the *Reichsmarine* also managed to hold its position in the field of fire control equipment. A trainload of range-finders and technical equipment had been shipped into hiding at Venlo, Holland, at the time of the Armistice in 1918, and brought back in small lots. Later the Navy purchased a Dutch firm manufacturing precision instruments in Germany, to carry out experimental work on fire control and similar equipment unimpeded by the Allied Commissions.

A new type of armored cruiser, popularly known as the "pocket battleship," was developed during the replacement building program. This warship displaced 10,000 tons and had 11-inch guns in its main batteries, in compliance with the treaty limitations. The keel for the first of this class was laid down in 1929 and three in all, the *Deutschland* (1931), *Admiral Scheer* (1933), and *Graf Spee* (not launched until 1934) were built.[5]

Six light cruisers were also constructed or begun during this period, to replace the treaty cruisers. These were the *Emden* (1925), the *Koenigsberg* and *Karlsruhe* (1927), the *Koeln* (1928), the *Leipzig* (1929), and the *Nuernburg* (not launched until 1934). The *Emden* displaced 5,400 tons; the remaining five, 6,000 tons. All six cruisers had 5.9 inch guns in their main armament.

Two new battleships, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, were planned. (Some sources refer to these ships as battle cruisers.) Treaty limitations in this case were ignored. The two ships of this class were to displace 26,000 tons and mount 11-inch guns.

By 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor, the *Reichmarine* had a fleet of three old battleships of the pre-World War I period, the *Hannover* (1905), *Schleisien* (1906), and *Schleswig-Holstein* (1906). Work was soon to commence on the two new battleships. Two of the armored cruisers had been launched and one of them, the *Deutschland*,

[5] See: Alexander Bredt, *Taschenbuch der Kriegsflotten* (Munich, 1935 and 1940).

was almost ready for sea. Five of the new light cruisers were already in service, and the sixth was under construction. All of the treaty cruisers had been removed from the active list. Twelve destroyers had been built during the preiod 1926–28 to replace worn-out treaty destroyers, and a number of torpedo boats and tenders had been rebuilt and reconditioned.

The Covert Air Force

Military aviation was prohibited completely under the Versailles Treaty, and the direction of German civil aviation in the immediate postwar years was delegated to the Air Office in the Ministry of Transportation. The construction of civil aircraft was prohibited until 1922, then limited as to weight, ceiling, speed, and horsepower. Though it operated under a sharp disadvantage, German aviation managed to retain its proficiency in building and flying aircraft during the period of restrictions that followed. The interest of the German public in aviation matters was also kept alive in gliding clubs and similar air-minded associations.

In 1924 General von Seeckt succeeded in engineering the appointment of his own candidate, a World War I flying officer named Brandenburg, as head of the Air Office. Cooperation between the highly centralized German civil aviation organization and the *Reichswehr* was assured, and from this point on the development of German civil aviation was controlled and directed to a considerable extent by the military.[6]

Restrictions on flight training for military officers were relaxed as time passed. The small number of *Reichswehr* officers permitted to taking flying instructions for obtaining weather data or in preparation for the possible use of the *Reichswehr* in support of the civil police was increased from its ceiling of 5 per year to 72 in 1926.

The restrictions on German aircraft construction were also lifted in 1926. That same year several small corporations were amalgamated to form the Lufthansa, or government-sponsored airline. German aircraft were already flying on regular schedules to various countries in eastern Europe. A series of agreements with members of the former Allies soon permitted the Lufthansa to establish regular routes in western Europe. Night and all-weather flying techniques were improved, and German aviation reached a high point in technical development.

A small nucleus for the future German Air Force was formed within the Lufthansa organization shortly after its creation. By 1931 the "secret" air force had a total of four fighter, eight observation, and three bomber squadrons. Flight training was carried on in the four

[6] Walter Goerlitz, *Der deutsche Generalstab* (Frankfurt), pp. 365–66.

schools maintained by the Lufthansa, but tactical training was necessarily restricted.

Some progress in German military aviation was also made in the experimental installations in the Soviet Union during this period. A party of German aviation experts moved to the Soviet Union in 1924, and in 1926 a group of fighter and reconnaissance pilots began training in the vicinity of Moscow. Another air installation was later set up in the Caucasus Mountains area. In Germany, the *Reichsheer* studied the air forces of the other world power and planned measures for defense against possible air attack. Preoccupied with the defense, the *Reichsheer* felt that any future air force should be part of the army, and assigned missions in support of the ground forces. As a consequence, the aircraft and tactics developed in the Soviet Union reflected this thinking, and most of the German military air effort of the period was devoted to fighters and observation work.

Only a small number of pilots in all were trained in the Soviet Union. Some pilots had also been trained or had maintained their skill by flying for the civil airlines in Germany or abroad. However, there were still too few qualified flying personnel available for a new air force at the time Hitler organized his government. The *Reichsheer* concept of the air arm as an adjunct to the Army and the few aircraft types developed as a result of this policy helped little in forming a foundation upon which to organize an air force capable of operating in its proper sphere.

Germany was in a somewhat better position by 1933 insofar as production facilities were concerned. Messerschmitt was already producing light aircraft in quantity. The Focke-Wulf concern was established at Bremen; Junkers was developing one of Europe's largest aircraft factories at Dessau; Heinkel had a large plant at Warnemuende; and Dornier had had several successes in building aircraft factories aboard. With a little retooling the plants producing sports aircraft and commercial transports could build observation and liaison planes, troop carriers, and bombers. A little more work would be necessary to build fighters and attack aircraft. With the military influence throughout their development, many of the German commercial aircraft could be put to immediate military use if necessary.

The National Socialists in Power

Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor by the aged President Hindenburg on 30 January 1933 and the Enabling Act of the Reichstag on 23 March granted Hitler's National Socialist government dictatorial powers. To raise the Reich to what he considered its rightful place among the nations and to accomplish his foreign policy aims,

Hitler had to have a large and well-equipped armed force and the war industry to support it. Planning had already been accomplished for a wartime armed force to be formed by the expansion of the *Reichswehr*. Hitler decided to apply these plans to a peacetime expansion instead. The Army was to be increased to 21 divisions and a total strength of 300,000 men. At first the year 1937 was set as the target date for the completion of this program.

Hitler put an end to the military and industrial collaboration with the Soviet Union in the summer of 1933.[7] On 14 October of the same year Hitler's government withdrew from the disarmament conference then in progress and from the League of Nations. Henceforth, Germany was to follow a more independent path in foreign affairs, not allowing itself to be bound by such restrictions as the Versailles Treaty, which had already been violated repeatedly. Hitler then insisted on moving the target date for the expansion of the armed forces up to the autumn of 1934.

Meanwhile, a series of conflicts had arisen between the more extreme elements of the National Socialist Party's uniformed *Strumabteilungen* (SA), or Storm Troops, and the *Reichsheer*. Ernst Roehm, leader of the SA, advocated the absorption of the *Reichsheer* into his own uniformed force, to form an army more representative of the new National Socialist state. Hitler had to resolve the growing rift and decided in favor of the *Reichsheer*. On 30 June 1934 Roehm and several score others were executed without legal process of any kind as a threat to the security of the state. Needless to say, Hitler made use of this opportunity to rid himself of numerous political opponents as well as the embarrassing SA leaders.[8]

Hindenburg as President was still the nominal Commander in Chief of the armed forces. The President's death on 2 August 1934 was followed immediately by a major change in this organization of command. Hitler adopted the title of Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor (*Der Fuehrer und Reichskanzler*), and the office of President was abolished. The functions of the Presidency were absorbed into the new office, and Hitler became Chief of State and Commander in Chief of its armed forces.

All officers and men of the Army and Navy were required to swear a personal oath of obedience to the new Chief of State and Commander in Chief. This was a radical departure from the practice of swearing allegiance only to the state, as had been done under the German Republic. A similar oath to the Kaiser had been the custom in imperial times, but under the pre-World War I system of government the Kaiser had personified the state and people. Hitler's assumption of authority was approved by a national plebiscite on 19 August 1934.

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[7] Speidel, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[8] Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 413–21.

The tempo of rearmament was increased and the strength of the Army rose to 240,000 by the end of the year. Hitler's heir-apparent, Hermann Goering, was appointed to the newly created position of Air Minister and assumed control of the covert air force, which immediately began a period of rapid expansion. As his deputy, Goering selected Erhard Milch, director of the Lufhansa. Milch began immediately to increase the production of training aircraft. While Goering occupied himself with political matters, Milch did most of the planning work for the new air force. According to Milch's calculations, a period of 8 to 10 years would be necessary to build up an adequate nucleus for the new service. Political considerations were later to require an acceleration of this program. With his well-known passion for uniforms and display, Goering was appointed a General der Infanterie in the ground forces pending the unveiling of the new German Air Force.

The clauses of the Versailles Treaty that had disarmed Germany were publicly denounced by Hitler on 16 March 1935. The Fuehrer took advantage of the occasion to promulgate a new defense law that provided for an increase in the size of the peacetime Army to 12 corps and 36 divisions and reinstituted conscription. A subsequent law, of 21 May 1935, brought the Air Force into the open and established it as a separate service. The law of 21 May also set the period of training for conscripts at one year.[9]

The restriction of conscript training to one year was necessitated by a lack of cadre personnel. Fifteen months later the expansion of the armed forces would permit the extension of the period of service to two years. Conscription offices proceeded to register the class of 1914 (all men born in that year), veterans of World War I still within military age limits (18 to 45 years, except in East Prussia, where the maximum was set at 55 years), and the large mass of men of the classes 1901 to 1913 and too young to have had service in the Imperial Army. This large group of men born in the years 1901 to 1913 were to form a special problem. Few had had any military training, yet were in the age groups from which a large part of the reserve had to be drawn. Also, those born in the first few years between 1901 and 1913 were already becoming a little old to begin military training. As a result, a large proportion of these classes received two or three months of training and were assigned to those new reserve divisions which would be utilized for defensive service or in a security capacity, or to various support units.

An adequate population and industrial base existed to support an expanded armed force. The Reich's population prior to the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland was almost 70 million, and in-

[9] Franke, *op. cit., Band I, Wehrpolitik und Kriegfuehrung, Wehrgesetz B,* pp. 699–703.

creased by more than 10 million when these two areas became part of Germany. The Reich produced more than 22 million tons of steel yearly and over 200 million tons of coal. The country was highly developed industrially ,with large motor vehicle and tool plants, and had excellent transportation and communications systems. The merchant marine totalled more than 4 million tons, and port facilities were extensive.

The Wehrmacht

The expansion of Germany's armed forces and the creation of a separate Air Force were accompanied by a number of changes in the command organization. By the new defense laws, the *Reichswehr* was renamed the Wehrmacht (armed forces), and the *Reichsheer* became the *Heer* (Army), while the *Reichsmarine* became the *Kriegsmarine* (Navy). The Air Force was designated the Luftwaffe, with a distinctive uniform and organization. The *Truppenamt* was reestablished as the Army General Staff. Hitler assumed the title of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (*Der Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht*). The Minister of Defense became the Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (*Oberbefehlshaber der Wehrmacht*).[10]

Generaloberst Werner von Blomberg, Hitler's Minister of Defense, became the first Minister of War and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. The reorganization of the Army was accomplished largely by the Chief of Staff then in office, General der Artillerie Werner von Fritsch and the chief of the *Truppenamt*, Generalleutnant Ludwig Beck. In the reorganization Fritsch became the commander in chief of the Army and Beck chief of the reconstituted Army General Staff. The command of the Navy was retained by Admiral Erich Raeder, former chief of the Naval Command. The Air Force was placed under the command of Hermann Goering, in his new rank (and uniform) of General der Flieger.

The expanding services soon began to suffer acute growing pains. The *Reichswehr's* officers and noncommissioned officers were far too few to command and staff the large citizen force being raised although some relief was afforded by the incorporation of militarized police units into the Army with a large number of trained officers and noncommissioned officers. The Army was affected by the loss of many officers to the new Luftwaffe, and for some time much air staff work had to be accomplished by former ground officers not qualified as pilots or experienced in air operations.

The high and rigid standards established by the *Reichswehr* could not be maintained during this period of growth. Educational re-

[10] Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 422–23.

quirements for officers had to be lowered, and several thousand noncommissioned officers of the Reichswehr became junior officers in the Wehrmacht, while other thousands of Reichswehr privates (or seamen) became noncommissioned officers in the new force. The 4,000 officers of the *Reichsheer*, the officers trained in the Soviet Union, and the men commissioned from the ranks of the Army still could not provide a sufficient number of officers for the numerous new units formed. Thousands of World War I officers had to be recalled to active duty and bridged the gap to a certain extent, but several years would be required to provide a sufficient number of trained commanders and staff officers of the age groups young enough for full field service.

A production problem also existed. The manufacture of so many aircraft, tanks, artillery, and warships at the pace required by the rearmament program required more raw material and a larger trained labor force than Germany could immediately muster. Some concessions had to be made at the expense of one or the other of the three services, and the Navy was forced to curtail an ambitious program of shipbuilding to allow the Army and Air Force to forge ahead with tanks, artillery, and combat aircraft. Hitler's reluctance to antagonize the British also played a part in this decision. Work continued on a number of keels already laid and construction started on a few other major units, but most of the naval effort was devoted to producing small craft and submarines, which required less construction time than capital ships, and to training a Navy that more than doubled in size within a year.

A series of events that occurred much later during the period of expansion, in January and February 1938, placed Hitler in actual command of the three armed services and disposed of Fritsch and those other senior officers who had advised against the Fuehrer's military policy of bluff and bluster and preferred instead a steady growth and consolidation within the services. These events started with the marriage of Blomberg to a woman of questionable reputation. Blomberg, even though he was not among the active opponents of Hitler's policies, was forced by Hitler to resign his position as Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Scandalous charges later proved false were used as a pretext to force Fritsch out of his position as commander in chief of the Army.[11] The post of Minister of War was abolished, and from 4 February 1938 Hitler exercised supreme command through a new headquarters, formed from

[11] The details of the intrigues that ended with the dismissal of Blomberg and Fritsch are to be found in the following:

(1) Graf Kielmansegg, *Der Fritschprozess 1938* (Hamburg, 1938).

(2) Wolfgang Foerster, *Generaloberst Ludwig Beck, Sein Kampf gegen den Krieg* (Munich, 1953).

(3) Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 447–62.

Blomberg's staff and called the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), or High Command of the Armed Forces. General der Artillerie Wilhelm Keitel, according to a literal translation of the German title, became chief, OKW. Keitel was actually to hold a position similar to that of a chief of staff, but with little of the actual responsibility that the title implied. General der Artillerie Walther von Brauchitsch, commander of a *Heeresgruppenkommando*, as the old *Gruppenkommando* was henceforth to be called, became the successor to Fritsch. These events were followed by the retirement for reasons of health of a large number of senior officers, and the transfer of other officers to field duties. Hitler was determined to brook no opposition to his military policy and would accept no word of caution.

In his new post, Keitel became chief of Hitler's working staff and assumed the duties of the former Minister of War. Headquarters OKW was to expand its operations and planning staff into the *Wehrmachtfuehrungsamt* (Armed Forces Operations Office), under Col. Alfred Jodl from April to November of 1938 and Col. Walter Warlimont to August 1939.

Friction, not uncommon under Blomberg, increased considerably under this new command organization. No clear dividing line was established between the responsibilities of the joint armed forces command and the commands of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. General Keitel lacked the position and seniority of Blomberg and almost any activity of the OKW headquarters, particularly of its planning staff, the *Wehrmachtfuehrungsamt*, came to be regarded as encroaching on the responsibilities of the three services and met with resistance. The commanders in chief of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, freed from their common superior, Blomberg, soon began to circumvent OKW and to address themselves to Hitler personally, thereby strengthening the Fuehrer's control of military affairs.[12]

The New Army

Expansion

An extensive program to house the growing active Army was begun in 1935 and in the course of the next two years a large number of barracks were built. These barracks were usually designed to house a battalion or regiment, and were of brick or stone construction. Workshop and indoor training facilities were excellent. Firing ranges for small arms, and open fields and wooded areas for limited field exercises were usually situated within a few miles of the barracks proper. Accommodations at the large training areas were improved and expanded.

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[12] Ltr, Gen Warlimont to OCMH, 15 Apr 55. Author's file.



Figure 2. Typical barracks for the New Wehrmacht.

By October 1937 the active Army had 500,000–600,000 men under arms, and its tactical force consisted of 4 group commands and 14 corps, with 39 active divisions, including 4 motorized infantry and 3 Panzer (armored) divisions.[13] The cavalry divisions had been deactivated. One cavalry brigade was retained, but most of the cavalry regiments were reassigned as corps troops and some of the personnel transferred to the new Panzer force. Twenty-nine reserve divisions had been organized and could be called into service on mobilization. The number of reserve divisions would increase as men were released from the active Army upon completion of their period of compulsory training.

The number of *Wehrkreise* had been increased increased to 13 in the process of Army expansion. The status of the *Wehrkreis* was also raised. The relationship between the tactical corps and *Wehrkreis* of the Wehrmacht was similar to that which had obtained the tactical division and *Wehrkreis* of the *Reichswehr*. The corps commander functioned in a dual capacity as *Wehrkreis* commander in garrison, but relinquished his territorial functions to a deputy when he took his corps into the field. The XIV Corps had no corresponding *Wehrkreis* organization, since it was formed to control the motorized divisions throughout the Reich and had no territorial responsibility. The *Wehrkreise* were responsible directly to the commander in chief of the Army. In the tactical chain of command, the corps headquarters

[13] Mueller-Hillebrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 and 61.

were subordinated to the *Heeresgruppenkommandos*, which in turn were responsible to the Army's commander in chief.

The expansion of the active Army beyond the level of 12 corps and 36 divisions established by Hitler was ordered in the annual mobilization plan, which directed the creation of additional active and reserve units year by year. The creation of reserve divisions that could be mobilized on short notice increased the combat potential of the Army considerably and kept the trained manpower at a fair state of proficiency by participation in annual maneuvers and special troop exercises.

Two group commands and seven corps headquarters were activated in 1938. Three of the corps were frontier commands, with no territorial responsibilities aside from security, i. e. they had no corresponding *Wehrkreis* organization. All three were assigned to Germany's western defenses. These headquarters bore no numerical designations, but were known as Frontier Commands Eifel, Saarpfalz, and Oberrhein, for the Ardennes, Saar, and Upper Rhine frontier areas, respectively.[14] Of the other four corps headquarters, the XV and XVI Corps were formed to control the light and Panzer divisions, and the XVII and XVIII Corps became the tactical corps in Austria. Neither the XV nor XVI Corps had a corresponding *Wehrkreis* organization or territorial responsibilities. The commanders of the XVII and XVIII Corps, however, had a dual function as area commanders for the two *Wehrkreise* into which Austria was divided. Other active units organized included three infantry divisions, two Panzer divisions, four light divisions (small motorized infantry divisions, with an organic tank battalion), and three mountain divisions. Provision was also made for the organization of an additional 22 reserve divisions.

It was planned to convert the light divisions to Panzer divisions in the autumn of 1939 as sufficient materiel became available. The mountain division was an adaptation of the infantry division, equipped and trained for operations in mountainous areas and deep snow. The increase in the number of active divisions in 1938 can be attributed partially to the annexation of Austria in March, and the absorption of the Austrian Army into the Wehrmacht. The Austrian Army was reorganized to form one light, one panzer, two infantry, and two of the mountain divisions organized by the Wehrmacht that year.

The Sudetenland was incorporated into several existing *Wehrkreise* for military administration following its annexation to Germany in October 1938, and conscripts at first were absorbed into units being

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 46, 76–77, and 156.

formed by those *Wehrkreise*. One of the infantry divisions formed in 1938 was also composed largely of Sudetenland inhabitants.

As of March 1939 the Army had a total of 102 active and reserve divisions and 1 active cavalry brigade. The 51 active divisions, on the whole, were maintained close to full strength, and required only certain supply, medical, and transportation services to take the field. The total strength of the active Army was approximately 730,000: that of the reserve, about 1,100,000.[15] The variance in strength figures for an equal number of active and reserve divisions can be explained by the diversion of a large part of the reserve to form support, security, and training units, or to staff administrative headquarters, in the event of mobilization, i. e. a large proportion of reserve personnel would not be assigned to field divisions. Other reserve personnel would not be called up immediately upon mobilization because of employment in critical war industries. The 51 reserve divisions were all infantry divisions; their organization was similar to that of the active infantry divisions, though they lacked some items of equipment, armament in short supply, and certain units.

The Westwall

It was felt that the Reich had need of a ground defensive system to secure its western flank while its armies mobilized or in the event its armies were already engaged elsewhere and the French were to attack. Construction work on the Westwall (sometimes referred to is the "Siegfried Line") commenced in 1937. The original plan envisaged a 12-year project and the building of a defensive system the length of the German frontier facing France. A short time later Hitler directed an acceleration of the work and the extension of the Westwall to the north, to include the Luxembourg and Belgian frontiers and a part of the Dutch frontier in the Aachen area.

The Director of the Bureau of Roads (*Generalinspekteur fuer das deutsche Strassenwesen*), Dr. Todt, was made responsible for the construction project. Personnel assigned to the work included road construction crews grouped under a force identified after the director of the project as the Organization Todt, a large force of the German Labor Service (youths of premilitary age groups), Army engineers, and other troops. In contrast to the elaborate fortifications of the French Maginot Line, the Westwall was a series of smaller bunkers, tank traps and obstacles, and defenses distributed in depth. Adjacent bunkers could support one another with protective fire, and camouflage was extensive and thorough. The Luftwaffe supplemented this ground defensive system with one of its own to secure the border area to a depth of 30 miles against air penetrations.

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Mobilization

The assembly of forces at the time of the Austrian and Czech crises gave the German planners the opportunity to test their existing mobilization plans, which were found to be deficient in a number of respects. A special annex to the annual mobilization plan, issued 8 December 1938, superseded previous instructions and provided for the mobilization of the active and reserve forces of the Army by "waves." Four such waves were planned, and their mobilization could be accomplished almost simultaneously.[16]

Wave I would involve only higher headquarters, active divisions (numbered in the 1–50 block), and supporting units. The headquarters for 1 army group (Army Group C) and 10 armies (First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, Eighth, Tenth, Twelfth, and Fourteenth) would be formed from the existing *Heeresgruppenkommandos* and several of the active corps headquarters. Since only 6 group commands existed and 11 higher headquarters were planned, 5 corps headquarters would provide personnel for an equal number of army headquarters as well as their own headquarters on mobilization. The *Wehrkreise* would attend to the procurement and training of replacements for units of the tactical corps and divisions once the tactical commands left for the field.

Operational headquarters for the Army High Command would be set up within six hours of the time mobilization was ordered. Army Group C and the 10 army headquarters would be operational by the second day of mobilization. The active corps headquarters, the Panzer and light divisions, and the support units of the infantry divisions would also be mobilized by the second day. The remaining units of the active infantry divisions would be mobilized by the third day.

Wave II would include a number of corps headquarters to be organized from the reserve, with a cadre of active personnel, and 16 fully trained reserve divisions (numbered in the block 51–100), composed largely of personnel who had completed their period of compulsory training. The Wave II corps headquarters would become operational on the third day of mobilization and the Wave II divisions would be ready within four days of mobilization to move into the field with the active divisions.

Wave III would call into service 21 divisions (numbered in the block 201–250) consisting mostly of reservists with less training, including many individuals of the 1901–1913 classes and World War I veterans who had had one or more short periods of refresher training. These divisions were to assemble by the sixth day following mobilization.

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[16] *Besondere Anlage 2 zum Mob. Plan Heer, Kriegsgliederungen 8 Dez 1938.* H 1/309/2a. Captured Records Section (CRS), TAG.

The Wave III divisions would fill the vacuum caused by the departure of the active and Wave II divisions for the field, they would secure rear areas, and could be committed to combat operations in a restricted role.

Wave IV would include 14 divisions (numbered in the block 251–300) to be formed from training units within Germany; these divisions were to be formed by the sixth day of mobilization and would supplement the Wave III divisions. As of the seventh day a new headquarters, for the Replacement and Training Army (*Ersatzheer*), would be mobilized to assume responsibility for the Zone of the Interior, permitting the Army High Command to devote its attention to directing the operations of its armies in the field.

Personnel as well as units were designated for mobilization assignments. Certain officers and enlisted men of the active Army were to be assigned to reserve units as they formed. A number of active officers in *Wehrkreis* and station complement assignments would remain in the various garrison areas until their replacements, usually older reserve and retired officers, were familiar with their duties. The active officers would then rejoin their commands in the field.

Additional motor vehicles and horses would be required by the Army on mobilization. In accordance with standard German practice, the trucks and other motor vehicles of government agencies outside the armed forces, e. g. the extensive German postal organization; business corporations; and private owners were registered with the local *Wehrkreis* for military use. The same procedure applied to horses, to fill the extensive requirements of the reserve infantry divisions and support units. Both vehicles and horses would be requisitioned when reserve units were mobilized. The selection of vehicles and horses, however, could be accomplished only by procurement commissions.

Special reference should be made at this point to the mobilization assignment planned for Army Group C and the First, Fifth, and Seventh Armies. In the event of mobilization, *Heeresgruppenkommando* 2 at Frankfurt-am-Main would become Army Group C, to control the First, Fifth, and Seventh Armies in the defense of the Westwall. First Army would be formed by XII Corps and the Saarpfalz Frontier Command. Fifth Army would be formed by VI Corps and the Eifel Frontier Command. Seventh Army would be formed by V Corps and the Upper Rhine Frontier Command. The frontier commands would be responsible for security and garrison duties in the Westwall area pending mobilization. Corps headquarters and active and reserve divisions were designated for allocation to the army group, and would pass to the control of the army group and its armies upon orders mobilizing Army Group C and directing it to assume

responsibility for the western frontier. The code name for the military movements for this contingency was Plan WEST.[17]

Divisional Organization

The 5 Panzer divisions varied somewhat in their composition. The 1st, 2d, and 3d had 1 tank and 1 motorized infantry brigade each; the 4th Panzer Division had a tank brigade and only a regiment of motorized infantry; the 5th had a tank brigade and 2 infantry regiments. In addition, each Panzer division had a motorized artillery regiment with 2 battalions of 105mm howitzers; a reconnaissance battalion with motorcycle and armored car companies; an antitank battalion with towed 37mm guns; an engineer battalion; a signal battalion; and rear trains and services. The authorized strength of the panzer division was approximately 12,000 officers and men, the variations in organization accounting for some differences in personnel strength from one Panzer division to the other.

Each Panzer division had about 300 tanks, including all 4 types then in service. The Mark I vehicle was 2-man tankette, weighed approximately 6 tons, and mounted 2 machine guns. The Mark II tank was a 3-man vehicle, weighed 11½ tons, and mounted a 20mm gun; the Mark II and all heavier tanks had 1 or more machine guns in addition to their main armament. The Mark III model had a crew of 5, weighed approximately 24½ tons and had a 37mm gun. The heaviest tank of the period was the Mark IV, which weighed 26 tons, carried a crew of 5, and mounted a short-barreled 75mm gun. As planned, the 1st Panzer Division would have 56 Mark I, 78 Mark II, 112 Mark III, and 56 Mark IV tanks. The 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th Panzer Divisions would each have 124 Mark I, 138 Mark II, 20 Mark III, and 24 Mark IV tanks. This figure in tank strength, particularly for the Mark III, could not be reached in all cases by the time the Panzer divisions took the field against Poland.

The 4 light divisions also varied in their organization, e. g. the 1st Light Division had a motorized infantry brigade of 1 regiment and a motorcycle battalion; the 2d and 4th Light Divisions had 2 motorized infantry regiments each; and the 3d Light Division had a motorized infantry regiment and a motorcycle battalion. Each of the light divisions had an organic light tank battalion, and the 1st Light Division had an organic tank regiment. The 1st Light Division had a reconnaissance battalion, while the 2d, 3d, and 4th Light Divisions had reconnaissance regiments. The division artillery of the light divisions was the same as that of the Panzer divisions, i. e. 2 light battalions of

[17] *Heeresgruppenkommando 2, Ia Nr. 160/38 g. Kdos., 20 Dezember 1938.* 1922a. CRS, TAG.



Figure 3. Mark II Tank.

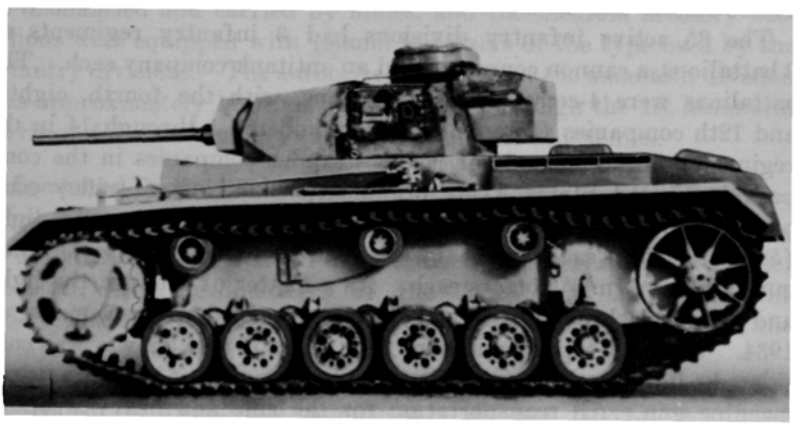


Figure 4. Mark III Tank.



Figure 5. Mark IV Tank.

towed howitzers. Engineer, signal, and other normal attachments were similar to those of the infantry and Panzer divisions; all were motorized. The strength of the light division was approximately 11,000 officers and men.

The 35 active infantry divisions had 3 infantry regiments of 3 battalions, a cannon company, and an antitank company each. The battalions were 4-company organizations, with the fourth, eighth, and 12th companies (companies were numbered 1 through 14 in the regiment) filling the role of heavy weapons companies in the comparable United States Army organization. The line (rifle) companies had a total of 9 light and 2 heavy machine guns and 3 light (50mm) mortars each; the heavy weapons companies, 8 heavy machine guns and six 81mm mortars each. As a matter of interest, the light and heavy machine gun were the same air-cooled weapon, model of 1934. With the bipod mount the MG 34, as it was known, was considered a light machine gun; with the tripod mount, it became a heavy machine gun. All transportation for the rifle and heavy weapons companies was horsedrawn. The cannon company had 6 light (75mm) and 2 heavy (150mm) infantry howitzers. The antitank

company had twelve 37mm towed guns and was the only completely motorized unit of the regiment. The reserve divisions were organized in similar fashion but their regiments lacked heavy infantry howitzers and the third and fourth wave divisions had obsolete machine guns from World War I.

The artillery element of the active infantry division was a mixed regiment of 3 light and 1 medium battalions, equipped with 105mm and 150mm howitzers, and an observation battalion. None of the reserve divisions had an observation battalion, and most of their firing battalions had obsolete artillery pieces from World War I.

Other divisional units for both active and reserve infantry divisions were a reconnaissance battalion; an antitank battalion with 37mm guns; an engineer battalion; a signal battalion; and rear trains and services. The total strength authorized the active infantry division was 17,875 officers and men. Wave II and IV divisions were smaller by 1,000 to 2,000 men or more, and Wave III divisions larger by approximately 600 men.

The 4 motorized infantry divisions were smaller than the active standard infantry divisions by approximately 1,400 men. Each of the motorized infantry divisions comprised 3 infantry regiments and was organized much as a standard division except that all elements of the division were transported by motor vehicle.

The 3 mountain divisions resembled the standard infantry divisions but were not organized uniformly. The 1st Mountain Division had 3 infantry regiments and 4 gun battalions in its artillery regiment; the 2d and 3d Mountain Divisions had only 2 regiments of infantry and 3 battalions of artillery apiece. The light mountain artillery battalions were equipped with 75mm pack guns, which could be dismantled and carried by mules, and the medium artillery battalions were equipped with 150mm howitzers of the type used by the infantry divisions. The authorized strength of the mountain division was approximately 17,000 officers and men, though the 1st Mountain Division for a time had a total strength of over 24,000 men.

Command Organization

General von Brauchitsch was still the Army's commander in chief in March 1939, with General der Artillerie Franz Halder as his chief of staff. The headquarters of the Army was known as the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH), or the High Command of the Army. [See *chart 2.*]

For administration and other station complement functions OKH controlled 15 *Wehrkreise*, numbered I through XIII, XVII, and XVIII. [See *map 3.*] Control over the Army's tactical forces was exercised through the six group commands.

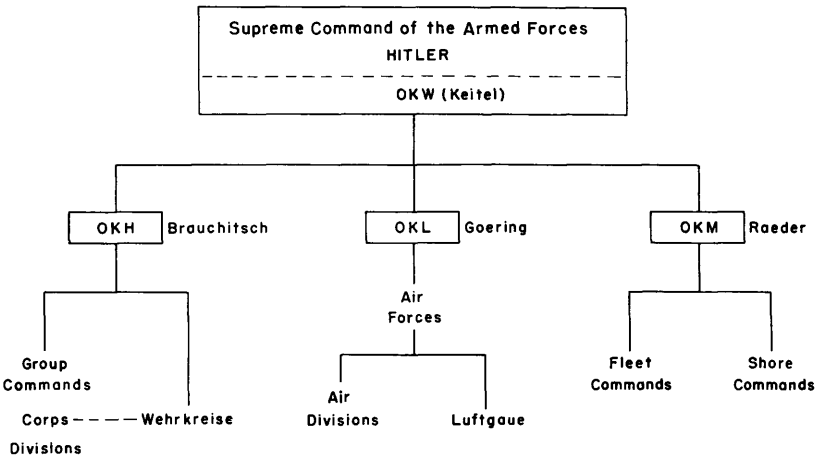
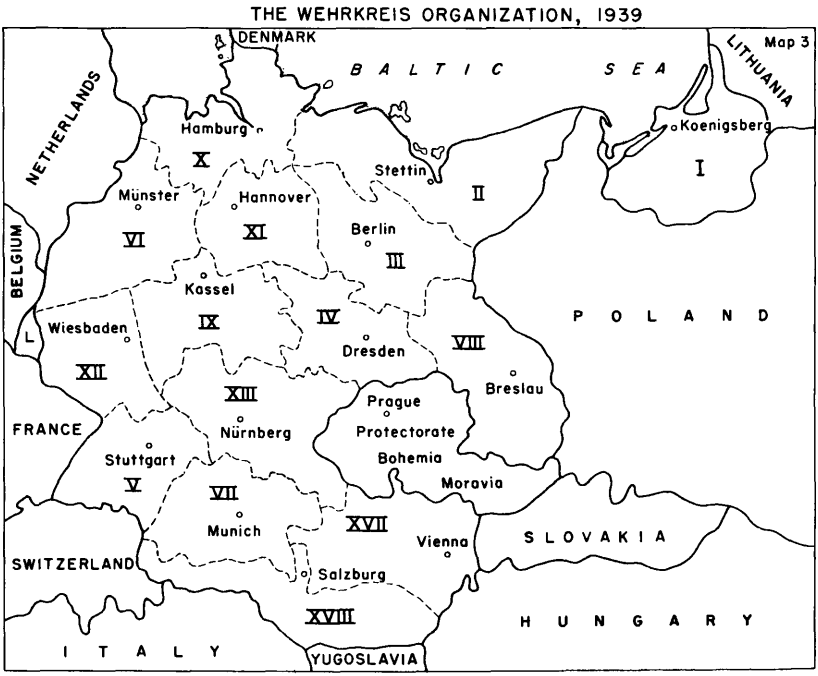


Chart 2. The Wehrmacht and the Armed Services High Commands, 1939.

Group Command 1, controlling the I, II, III, and VIII Corps, was in Berlin. Group Command 2 (Plan WEST) was at Frankfurt-am-Main and to it were attached the V, VI, and XII Corps, and the 3 frontier commands. Dresden was headquarters for Group Command 3, to which the IV, VII, and XIII Corps were responsible. Group Command 4 controlled the XIV Corps (motorized infantry divisions),



XV Corps (light divisions), and XVI Corps (Panzer divisions), and was the forerunner of the Panzer armies of a later date; the headquarters of this group command was in Leipzig. Group Command 5 had its headquarters in Vienna, and controlled the XVII and XVIII Corps. Hannover was headquarters for Group Command 6, to which were attached the IX, X, and XI Corps. This peacetime subordination of corps would not necessarily pertain on mobilization, when the group commands became armies. As in the United States Army, corps in the German Army could be shifted from control of one army to the other.

The New Navy

Germany was permitted by terms of an agreement with the British on 18 June 1935 to build up to 35 percent of the latter's total naval tonnage and 45 percent of Britain's submarine tonnage. Following as it did on Hitler's denunciation of the military limitations imposed on the Reich by the Versailles Treaty, the naval agreement constituted tacit British consent to German rearmament. The British were temporarily reassured by the German agreement to limit the size of the Reich's new navy. However, the French were distressed by the increase in German naval power, and a wedge was driven in the Allied front.

By March 1939 the *Hannover* had been decommissioned and the obsolete battleships *Schlesien* and *Schleswig-Holstein* were being used as cadet training ships. Still armed, the old battleships could be used for secondary naval missions. The battle fleet proper was composed of the battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau;* the 3 armored cruisers (pocket battleships) ; 2 new heavy cruisers, the *Bluecher* and *Admiral Hipper*, displacing 10,000 tons and mounting 8-inch guns; the 6 light cruisers built during the replacement construction program; 22 destroyers of the *Maass* and *Roeder* classes (1,625 and 1,811 tons), with 5-inch guns; and 43 submarines. The *U–1* through *U–24* and the *U–56* displaced from 250 to 300 tons and were restricted to the coastal waters of the Baltic and North Seas. The *U–25* and *U–26* were 712-ton boats, and the *U–37* through *U–39* displaced 740 tons each; these larger submarines were capable of operating as far as mid-Atlantic without refueling. The *U–27* through *U–36* displaced 500 tons; the *U–45*, *U–46*, and *U–51*, 517 tons each. These last boats were capable of operations in the North Sea and the waters about the British Isles. Some additional submarines in various stages of construction would also be ready for operations by the outbreak of hostilities.[18]

[18] Bredt, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–12.



Figure 6. Artist's conception of German Pocket Battleship.



Figure 7. The U–25.

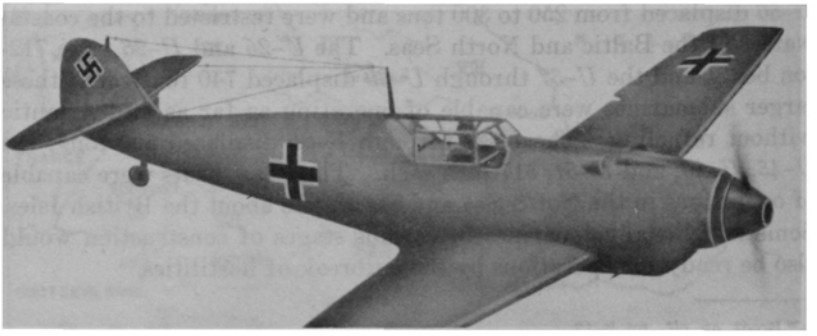


Figure 8. The Messerschmitt 109, standard German fighter

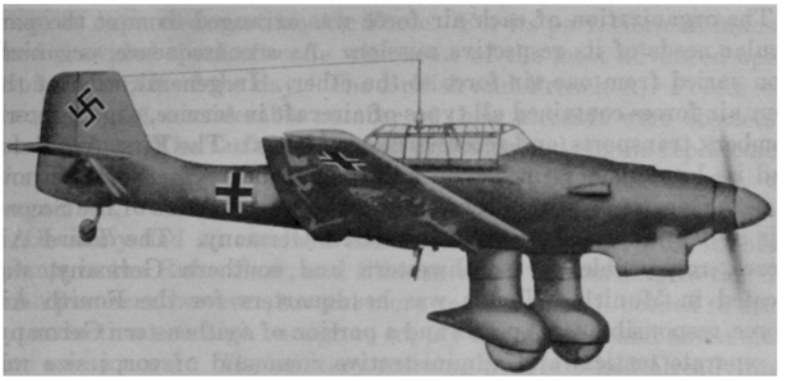


Figure 9. The Junkers 87 (Stuka) Dive Bomber.

Admiral Raeder's *Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine* (OKM), or High Command of the Navy, controlled the fleet, Luftwaffe units attached to the Navy, and shore commands for the Baltic and North Sea coastal regions. The fleet comprised the heavy surface units, submarine arm, and naval reconnaissance forces. The shore commands were responsible for the training units and schools ashore, coast artillery units, arsenals, and other land installations of the Navy. [See *chart 2.*]

The New Air Force

The Luftwaffe by March 1939 was a potent attack force, which would have 4,303 operational aircraft available by the outbreak of hostilities. These would include 1,180 bombers, 336 dive bombers, 1,179 fighters, 552 transports, 721 observation planes, 240 naval aircraft, and 95 miscellaneous airplanes.[19]

Goering's headquarters was known as the *Oberkommando der Luftwaffe* (OKL), or High Command of the Air Force. The four major subordinate air commands were designated as *Luftflotten* (air forces), and controlled both tactical and administrative units. This arrangement contrasted sharply with that of the Army, which had separate channels of command for its tactical and administrative components. [See *chart 2.*]

Tactical air units were dispersed about Germany in eight air divisions. The administrative commands, 10 in number, were known as *Luftgaue*, similar to the Army's *Wehrkreise*, and provided the tactical air units with logistical support.

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[19] *Meldung des Generalquartiermeisters der Luftwaffe vom September 1939,* in Werner Baumbach, *Zu Spaet* (Munich, 1949), p. 48.

The organization of each air force was arranged to meet the particular needs of its respective mission. As a consequence, organization varied from one air force to the other. In general, each of the four air forces contained all types of aircraft in service, e. g. fighters, bombers, transports, and reconnaissance planes. The First Air Force had its headquarters in Berlin and responsibility for northern and eastern Germany. Braunschweig was the headquarters of the Second Air Force, dispersed over northwestern Germany. The Third Air Force, responsible for southwestern and southern Germany, was located in Munich. Vienna was headquarters for the Fourth Air Force, responsible for Austria and a portion of southeastern Germany. A separate tactical and administrative command of corps size was assigned to East Prussia and retained under OKL control.

The German Military Situation in March 1939

The power of the Wehrmacht, while formidable by early 1939, had been exaggerated by German and foreign news media out of proper proportion, and the Westwall was of limited value to the defense of the Reich. Five years was hardly sufficient time for the three services to build up and thoroughly integrate a large cadre of professional officers and noncommissioned officers. The crop of 250,000–300,000 Army conscripts that finished training each year was beginning to fill the reserve ranks, but training of the older men of the 1901–1913 age classes had lagged.

The active Army could be considered as one of the best trained in Europe, but lacked a sufficient number of qualified signal personnel and its Panzer forces were an untried experiment. The bulk of the tanks (Mark I and II) were known to be too light but could not be replaced at once with the heavier Mark III and Mark IV models. Rolling stock and truck transportation were in short supply and it would take time to organize additional reserve divisions and train the large number of men who had not yet seen service.

The Navy was far inferior in strength to the British Navy alone, and would be no match for the combined fleets of Britain and France. The German Navy had few capital ships, nor did it possess a sufficient number of destroyers to provide escort for the Reich's merchant vessels carrying critical materials from abroad. In the event of war, this meant that the large German merchant fleet would be restricted mainly to the North and Baltic Seas. The German submarine force, though it would soon equal the British in numbers, was much lighter in tonnage, and the range of many of the U-boats was restricted.

The German Air Force would experience no immediate problem insofar as personnel was concerned. The Luftwaffe's training program had turned out a sufficient number of pilots and air crews to

man an expanded wartime Air Force. For its part, German industry had provided the Luftwaffe with some of the most advanced operational aircraft of the day. The British and French Air Forces were larger, but a considerable number of their aircraft were obsolete or obsolescent. The Luftwaffe lacked airframe and engine replacements for sustained operations, however. Repair facilities, though well organized, were not nearly extensive enough for a major war effort.

Germany had an excellent industrial base for war, with its heavy plants in the Ruhr, Saar, and Silesian areas. According to the German planners, however, several more years were still needed to attain a production rate high enough to supply the materiel and ammunition for a major war. The military training program had already made inroads on the strength of the labor force, and mobilization would deprive it of additional thousands of technicians and workers who had completed their period of compulsory service and were assigned to reserve units.

In short, Germany was prepared only for a limited war of short duration. Gasoline and ammunition reserves would not suffice for simultaneous large-scale operations in the east and west, and the disaster of 1918 still acted to dampen the enthusiasm of the general public for military adventures. His series of successes in Austria and Czechoslovakia and the continued reluctance of Britain and France to take action, however, inclined Hitler to become more reckless. German military planning thus had to include numerous improvisations to meet sudden demands, a practice that was to become typical of the Reich's World War II operations.

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Chapter 3

Events Leading up to the Outbreak of Hostilities

General

The diplomatic and military events that preceded hostilities were closely interrelated. Hitler attempted by threat of military action against the Poles to obtain concessions in Danzig and the Corridor, and the situation became increasingly grave.

It was obvious from the outset that the Poles could not be intimidated. The Warsaw government remained firm in its refusal to cede Polish rights in Danzig or sovereignty in the Corridor area. Hitler then resolved to dissuade the British and French from their stand in support of the Poles and to settle the problem by force if necessary. A statement of Hitler's intentions was made to the chief of OKW and the commander in chief of the Army on 25 March 1939 when the Fuehrer instructed these officers to initiate preparations for a solution of the problem of Poland by military means.[1] This involved a gamble on the part of Hitler, since he had no understanding with the British and French as he had had the preceding year at Munich during the Czech crisis. Moreover, the western nations were now aroused and might intervene to stop further German expansion. Hitler's racial theories and in particular his anti-Semitic policy had done Germany irreparable harm in the public opinion of the western world.

German and Polish propaganda agencies were already engaged in a noisy campaign against one another. Stories of atrocities against the German minority in the Corridor were given wide dissemination. Germans arriving from Poland as volunteers for the armed forces or Reich Labor Service related further incidents of anti-German activities beyond the border.

Much also hinged on the circle of Hitler's chief lieutenants during this period. Joachim von Ribbentrop as Foreign Minister had incurred considerable ill will abroad; Ribbentrop's threatening manner and lack of tact appeared typical of Germany's foreign policy. Moreover, Ribbentrop completely underestimated the British and their determination to honor their obligation to Poland. Goering con-

[1] *I. M. T., op. cit.*, XXXVIII, Doc. 100R, p. 274; and X, p. 513.

tinued to build up an offensive air force. Josef Goebbels had organized a highly effective propaganda machine for the furtherance of National Socialist policies. A pliable man had been found in Walter Funk, who succeeded Hjalmar Schacht as Minister of Economics when the latter warned Hitler against reckless military expenditures. The chiefs of the armed services were in no position to oppose any premature military adventures the Fuehrer might entertain.

The Annual Military Directive, 1939–40 [2]

Part II of OKW's "Directive for the Armed Forces, 1939–40" was issued on 3 April and formed Hitler's reply to Chamberlain's pledge of support to Poland made in the House of Commons three days earlier. Part II was entitled "Plan WEISS", and its issue before the rest of the directive proper attested to its urgency. Plan WEISS opened with a brief discussion (drafted by Hitler himself) of relations with Poland. The attitude of Poland might require a solution by force, so preparations were to be made by 1 September to settle the problem for all time. Should war occur, the Wehrmacht would have the mission of destroying Poland's armed forces by surprise attack. To preserve secrecy, mobilization would not be ordered until immediately before the attack. The Army would establish contact between East Prussia and the Reich at the beginning of operations, and could utilize Slovak territory.

Only active units would be used in the opening attack, and these would be moved into concentration areas in the frontier region on Hitler's order. The Navy would destroy or neutralize the Polish fleet and merchant marine, blockade Polish ports, and secure sea communication with East Prussia. The Luftwaffe would destroy the Polish Air Force, disrupt Polish mobilization, and render the Army close support.

Plan WEISS also took the Western Allies into consideration, since these were believed to be the greater threat to Germany. Measures were to be taken to secure the Westwall, the North and Baltic Sea areas, and the air defense of Germany. Poland would be isolated, and a quick conquest would preclude external assistance.

The covering letter, signed by Keitel, stated that a timetable of preparations was to be made by OKW. The three services were directed to submit their compaign plans and recommendations for this timetable by 1 May. These would be coordinated by OKW, and differences among the Army, Navy, and Air Force would be worked out in joint conferences.

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[2] *Weisung fuer die einheitliche Kriegsvorbereitung der Wehrmacht fuer 1939/40, OKW. WFA Nr. 37/39g. Kdos Chefs LIe,* in *I. M. T., op. cit.,* XXXIV, Doc. 120–C, pp. 380–442.

Parts I and III of the directive, issued separately on 11 April, were recapitulations of instructions included in the directive for the preceding year. Part I gave detailed instructions for defensive arrangements on Germany's frontiers. Part III restated a previous plan to seize Danzig without war. The extent of defensive preparations would depend upon the situation with Germany's neighbors. As for Danzig, it might be possible to seize the city from East Prussia should a diplomatic situation favorable to Germany develop.

Part IV consisted of special instructions to the commander of I Corps in East Prussia. In effect, in the event of war, I Corps would provide personnel for the headquarters of Third Army, and the army commander would be responsible for the defense of the exposed German province.

Part V of the annual directive determined the boundaries for the theaters of operations in the east and west. Part VI was of particular concern to the German war economy. While protecting its own war industries and sources of supply, Germany was to utilize those production centers it could capture intact and would limit damage in operations to the minimum. In connection with Plan WEISS, the industrial areas of Poland centering on Cracow and Teschen were of particular importance.

A special annex to the directive, issued on 21 April, specified that there would be no declaration of war in implementing Plan WEISS. A partial mobilization of reserves might be required but this would not necessarily involve the mobilization of industry. However, in the event of a general war, both reserves and industry would be mobilized immediately.

The issuance of the "Directive for the Armed Forces, 1939–40" initiated preparations to resolve the matter of German claims against Poland. Germany might be able to exert sufficient pressure on the Poles to obtain Danzig and special privileges in the Corridor, or might seize Danzig by surprise. If neither of these was successful, Hitler might direct the implementation of Plan WEISS, a solution by force. Defensive measures to be taken in the west would secure Germany against attack by Britain and France while differences with Poland were being settled. The preparations in the first two months following the issuance of the directive were concerned mostly with planning the movement of units and logistical installations into position to launch an overwhelming attack against Poland should the Fuehrer decide upon the alternative of war. [For detailed planning and preliminary German military movements see Ch. 5, this study.]

Diplomatic Developments, April–July

On 28 April 1939 Hitler abrogated the Polish-German Nonaggression Pact of 1934 and the London Naval Agreement of 1935 in a Reichstag speech. Hitler stated further that the issue of Danzig must be settled.

Agitators were sent into Danzig to embarrass and annoy the Polish government. Polish flags were torn down and Polish property was damaged on 12 May, the anniversary of Pilsudski's death. Shortly afterward a Polish customs house was attacked. Polish measures against the German population in Danzig and the Corridor were given wide publicity in the German press and broadcasts, and Danzig's National Socialist faction, dominating the city government, clamored for reunion with the Reich.

A pact with the Italians on 22 May 1939 brought Mussolini into Hitler's camp. This involved no military support, and the Italian dictator was even assured that there would be no war for the next several years. The advantage to Germany lay in obtaining a secure flank to the south and preventing an agreement between Italy and the Allies. Italy on France's eastern frontier would neutralize part of the large French Army, and Britain's naval position and the Suez Canal would be threatened by the Italian fleet.

The major diplomatic scene shifted to Moscow by early summer, where Britain and France were attempting to enlist the aid of the Soviet Union in presenting a solid front to Germany. Negotiations were slow, and the Russians refused to commit themselves to any coalition agreement. Meanwhile, in Berlin, Hitler received visits of state from the Hungarian Prime Minister, Regent Paul of Yugoslavia, and the Prime Minister of Bulgaria. All visits featured military shows and a display of Germany's armed power.

Germany's strong diplomatic position at this point required one more support to discourage British and French intervention and assure Hitler a free hand in Poland—the collaboration or at least the friendly neutrality of the Soviet Union. Hitler would forsake his own anti-Communist policy by such a step, but a rapprochement with the Russians would be welcomed in wide diplomatic and military circles in Germany. Ribbentrop favored an arrangement of this nature, as did the German Ambassador in Moscow, Count von der Schulenberg.

The Russians had already indicated a desire to normalize and improve relations with Germany the preceding April, when their Chargé d'Affaires had approached a representative of the German Foreign Office in the course of discussions on commercial matters.

Hitler seized upon the opportunity to settle outstanding differences and offered the Russians uncontested domination of Latvia and Esthonia, Poland east of Warsaw and the Vistula from Warsaw to the south, thence east of the San River, in exchange for a free hand west of that line. The Russians, willing to bargain with Hitler in Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Esthonian soil and lives, accepted the offer.[3]

Events, 1–22 August

Disorders in Danzig and the Polish Corridor became increasingly serious during the first three weeks of August, and German pressure against the Poles was intensified. Britain and France repeated their assurances to the Polish Government, and the attitude of the Western Allies served to strengthen Polish determination to resist German demands. Concluding that time was working to his disadvantage, the Fuehrer hastened in his course. German military concentrations in the east, though camouflaged as maneuvers, grew more threatening as the diplomatic situation deteriorated.

Danzig was infiltrated by German agents and military personnel in civilian clothing throughout August. The police were openly anti-Polish and assisted the Germans in organizing military forces inside the city. Forster, head of the National Socialist Party in Danzig, made no secret of his visits to Hitler and his aim of incorporating the Free City into the Reich. The increasing seriousness of the situation and the denial of its commercial rights by the city administration caused the Polish Government to take measures of reprisal in the nature of embargoes, giving the Germans more propaganda material for consumption in the Reich. Other incidents were touched off in the Corridor border areas.

An attempt to dissuade Hitler was made by Count Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's Foreign Minister, in a conference with Hitler and Ribbentrop on 12 and 13 August. Mussolini was not ready for war and desired a period of several years in which Italy might recover from its military ventures in Ethiopia, Spain, and Albania. The Italian services required reorganization and modern equipment and would not be ready for the field until 1942 or later. Hitler was adamant, however, and Ciano left the meeting thoroughly embittered at the German Breach of faith.

Preparations for the incident necessary to give Germany a pretext for invading Poland were made on 17 August, when the Wehrmacht was ordered to supply Reinhard Heydrich, deputy to Heinrich Himmler, with Polish uniforms.[4] The purpose of this was to create

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[3] Helmuth Greiner, *Der Feldzug gegen Polen*, pp. 4–7. MS #C–065. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

[4] *I. M. T., op. cit.*, XXVI, Doc 795–PS, p. 337.

incidents wherein German soil would be violated by persons identified as members of the Polish Armed Forces. Hitler would then be in position to claim that he was justified in ordering the Wehrmacht to defend German territory, lives, and property, and in moving forces into Poland to restore order in a situation which the Polish government could not control.

Hitler held a conference with his service chiefs, the commanders of the major forces being deployed against Poland, and the chief of OKW on 22 August. The Fuehrer's speech was a rambling monologue lasting for hours. In substance, he felt that the time was ripe to resolve German differences with Poland by war and to test the Reich's new military machine. It was unlikely that Britain and France would intervene; if they did, Germany would be able to carry on a long war if necessary. Britain and France had promised Poland support, but were in no position to render material aid of any consequence. Moreover, Hitler felt, the British and French leaders would hesitate to draw their respective nations into a general war.[5]

There was also another vitally important factor to be considered. The Russians were about to sign a nonaggression pact with the Germans. Ribbentrop had left for Moscow earlier that day, to obtain the signature of Foreign Commissar Molotov to the agreement already worked out by German and Russian representatives. Stalin was no friend of the Poles and the agreement with him would strengthen the German economic front considerably.

According to Hitler, an appropriate "incident" would be used to justify the German attack on Poland. The morality of such a device was inconsequential. Victory was all that mattered. Hitler closed his address with an assurance to the assembled commanders that he was certain the armed services could accomplish any task set for them.

Sixteen years earlier Hitler had outlined in his book *Mein Kampf* the program on which he was about to embark. In this rambling account of his early struggles and his philosophy, Hitler had stated that future efforts at German expansion would be directed toward the east, to the Soviet Union and the states dominated (according to Hitler) by Moscow.[6] He had also discussed the matter of an alliance with the Soviet Union and had stated that it would mean war, since Britain and France would not wait a decade until the new coalition became too strong for them to defeat. Instead, Britain and France would move against the Reich immediately. The Fuehrer had also charged the Soviet leaders as criminals, with no intention of honoring the obligations they would incur by an alliance.[7] Hitler's actions from

[5] Greiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–13.
[6] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1939), pp. 650–51.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 657.

this point were to reveal his utter cynicism. The German dictator was fully aware of the risk of bringing on a general war, despite the assurances to his military leaders that there would be no war with the west over Poland.

The Pact With the Russians

The announcement of the 23 August 1939 agreement with the Soviet Union exploded all hopes of a peaceful settlement between Germany and Poland. In that part of the document made public, the Soviet Union and Germany made a simple statement of nonaggression, which meant that the Russians would not intervene on the side of Poland were that country to be attacked by Germany. A secret provision added to the pact established the line of the Narew, Vistula, and San Rivers as the boundary between the German and Soviet spheres of interest in Poland.[8] Finland, Esthonia, and Latvia would fall within the Russian, and Lithuania within the German sphere of interest. The pact served to alienate the Japanese, and Mussolini decided to remain aloof from the fighting. However, the Italian dictator saw the beginning of a realization of further Italian designs on the Balkan Peninsula should the war spread. Mussolini already held Albania and coveted portions of Yugoslavia and Greece.

On 24 August the British gave written guarantees to Poland, obligating both Britain and France to come to the aid of Poland in the event Germany launched an attack. This unexpected development, when it came to the attention of the Reich government the following day, caused Hitler to rescind the order he had given to commence operations against Poland on 26 August. The Fuehrer immediately set about to deter the British and French by an offer of German guarantees to support the British Empire and respect existing frontiers with France. Neither Britain nor France were moved by Hitler's offer. Poland was shunted aside, and Hitler dealt with the British representatives as spokesmen for the Polish Government as well as the French from this point.

The reply to Hitler's offer to support the British Empire was delivered by the Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson, on 28 August. Henderson reemphasized Britain's position in the event of German hostilities against Poland. Hitler gave no answer at the time, but promised Ambassador Henderson a reply the following day. At 1915 on 29 August the British Ambassador was informed that a Polish plenipotentiary would have to be in Berlin the following day, with full powers to negotiate a settlement. The Polish Ambassador was not present at these meetings, nor were Polish representatives invited to attend.

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[8] Department of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations* (Washington, 1948), p. 78.

The German proposal was all but impossible. The British Ambassador had first to inform his government of the Reich's most recent demand, and the British Government would have to send the message to the Polish Government, which in turn would have to give one individual full authority to sign any agreement put forth by the Germans. The plenipotentiary would also have to be in the Reich capital by midnight of 30 August.

The German demands had been expanded to include a plebiscite in the entire Corridor region on a return to the Reich, in addition to the outright return of Danzig. When no Polish plenipotentiary appeared by midnight on 30 August, and no authority was forthcoming for the Polish Ambassador to act in such a role, Ribbentrop stated that the time limit allowed the Poles had expired. The German Foreign Minister read off the demands of his government to Ambassador Henderson, without benefit of translation, and furnished no copy of his text to either British or Polish representatives, as diplomatic practice required. Ribbentrop then announced that negotiations were at an end.

On the following day, 31 August, Hitler signed "Directive No. 1 for the Conduct of the War".[9] The time for the attack on Poland was set for 0445 the following day, 1 September 1939. Neutrals were to be scrupulously respected and hostilities in the west would be initiated only by Britain and France. Any crossing of the German frontier in the course of military counteraction would require Hitler's personal approval, though combat aircraft might cross the border in defending the Reich against British and French air attacks in force. In the event retaliation against Britain became necessary, Hitler reserved to himself the right to order air attacks against London.

Early in the evening of 31 August Ribbentrop received the Polish Ambassador, but the latter was not empowered to act as plenipotentiary for his government and the meeting accomplished nothing. The same evening the German Government broadcast its demands against Poland and blamed the breakdown in negotiation on the intransigence of Warsaw.

To complete the justification of the action he was about to undertake, Hitler had his agents set off a number of carefully prepared "incidents" in the Polish border area. At 2000, a band of men "captured" the radio station at Gleiwitz in German Silesia. A short broadcast in Polish followed, announcing an attack on Germany, and then the "attackers" were driven off, leaving one dead man behind.[10]

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[9] *Weisung Nr. 1 fuer die Kriegfuehrung, OKW/WFA Nr. 170/39, g. K. Chefs LI, 31.8.39,* in *I. M. T., op. cit.,* XXXIV, Doc 126-C, pp. 456–59.

[10] *I. M. T., op. cit.,* IV, pp. 242–44.

The "casualties" for these incidents, provided from among condemned prisoners and clad in Polish uniforms, were killed or rendered unconscious by fatal injections, then shot and left to be found by German police. The carrying out of the Gleiwitz operation had been assigned by Heydrich to an SS official, Alfred Naujocks. Despite its crudity, the Gleiwitz incident was to be used by Hitler in his charge that regular Polish forces had violated Reich territory and that German troops had been forced to return their fire.

PART TWO

POLAND'S POSITION AND GERMANY'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK

Chapter 4

The Polish State and the Armed Forces

Government

Poland had made considerable progress in the short period of its existence as a modern state.[1] The Polish State in 1939 was a republic, organized under the constitution of 23 April 1935. The President was chosen indirectly by an assembly of electors, who were themselves elected by popular vote. The legislature consisted of a senate and *Sejm*, or lower house. Elections to the legislature were held every five years except for one-third of the senate seats, filled by Presidential appointment.

The President served for a term of seven years, and nominated his own ministers. As Chief of State, the President controlled the usual executive organs of government. In practice, the Polish President was a strong figure, mainly due to the influence of Marshal Pilsudski, who had been the power behind the government almost continuously from the time of its founding until the new constitution was written and put into force a month before his death on 12 May 1935.

Ignace Moscicki, a close personal friend of Pilsudski, was President in 1939. Jozef Beck was Foreign Minister and Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly was the Inspector General of the Armed Forces. These three and a few others controlled what was essentially an authoritarian form of government, wherein the executive branch of the government dominated the legislature. Despite their own National Socialist form of dictatorship, the Germans took full advantage of the opportunity to criticise the Polish form of authoritarianism in their propaganda campaign.

[1] Ltr, Gen Blumentritt to OCMH, 28 Dec 54.

Population and Economy

As of the beginning of 1939 the Polish State had a total population of 34¾ million, of whom 22 million were ethnic Poles. The larger minorities were the Ukrainians (3¼ million), Jews (2¾ million), Ruthenians (2¼ million), and Germans (¾ million). Smaller numbers of Russians, Lithuanians, Slovaks, and other Slavic groups comprised the remainder of the minorities resident within Poland's borders.

Sixty-five percent of this population was engaged in agriculture, producing large quantities of grain, potatoes, sugar beets, and dairy products for export. With 23 percent of its area covered by forests, chiefly in the east and Carpathian Mountains regions, lumber was likewise an important item for export. Some coal was also shipped abroad, from the mining region southwest of Cracow.

Poland's mineral deposits included substantial reserves of coal, lignite (brown coal), oil, potassium salts (important in the manufacture of gunpowder and fertilizers), and zinc. Poland produced approximately 1½ million tons of steel yearly, forty million tons of coal, and one-half million tons of petroleum products.

Poland's chief export customer as well as the source of most of Poland's imports was Germany. In exchange for foodstuffs and lumber, Germany shipped to Poland large numbers of motor vehicles and machines, as well as textiles, finished metal goods, and chemicals. A favorable rate of exchange for the German mark prompted many Germans in the border areas to buy leather goods and other consumer products in Poland. The low wage level of its workers gave Poland some advantage in competing in the world's markets.

The Polish merchant marine in 1939, according to Lloyd's Register, comprised 63 vessels and 121,630 gross tons. Poland's sole port, Gdynia, had been built into a center of commerce from the small fishing village of 1919, and Poland had free access to the excellent facilities of the harbor at Danzig.

Within Poland itself, there were over 3,800 miles of navigable rivers and canals, including 1,534 miles of the Vistula. These supplemented the 12,000 miles of government-operated railway lines for moving heavy freight. Poland also possessed 37,000 miles of improved highways. Commercial air transportation was not significant by western European standards.

Topography

Poland forms a vast land bridge from the North German Plain in the west to the marshy lowlands of Byelorussia (White Russia) and the rich steppe of the Ukraine in the east. The country possesses no

good natural defense lines, except to a limited degree in the Carpathian Mountains in the south, and along the course of the Narew, Vistula, and San Rivers, which bisect Poland in a general north-south line. Operations by any but small infantry forces would be almost impossible in the vast Pripyat Marshes in the east. As of August 1939 the area of Poland comprised 150,470 square miles, slightly smaller in extent than the state of California.

Along the southern frontier, the Carpathians reach their greatest altitude in the High Tatra, with peaks up to 8,700 feet. The passes through the mountains are limited in number, but the most difficult areas to traverse lie on the Czech side and several roads and rail lines give direct access to the industrial region in southwestern Poland. However, infantry, preferably mountain infantry, would still be necessary to force many of the passes into Poland if they were defended.

North of the mountains, the Carpathian Plain merges into the southern upland area of Poland, which extends from Cracow in a northeasterly direction to Lublin and includes the rich plateau of Galicia. The uplands reach altitudes of 2,000 feet in some places, though their average elevation is much less. The area is generally well suited to the conduct of military operations by motorized and armored units as well as by infantry.

North of this upland region is the extensive Central Polish Plain, extending from Poznan to Warsaw and the east, and merging into the Pripyat Marshes, which continue into White Russia. The Central Plain is the largest area of the country and has come to be regarded as typical of Poland's geography; it has long been the center of Polish national life. The terrain and the road and rail network of this area offer excellent opportunities for military operations, in particular the use of armor.

To the north of the Central Polish Plain is another belt of uplands extending from German Pomerania to East Prussia, Lithuania, and White Russia. These uplands on Poland's northern border reach elevations of 600–700 feet, but form no natural boundary with East Prussia. In the Polish Corridor, the low hills west of the Polish port of Gdynia form little obstacle to north-south or east-west movement.

The climate of Poland becomes increasingly continental from west to east, with correspondingly wider ranges in daily and annual temperatures. In the more easterly regions of the country, summers are quite warm and the winter season cold, with heavy snowfall. Poland generally has abundant rain, causing frequent flooding of the rivers in the more level portions of the country. These floods could form a serious obstacle to the conduct of extensive military operations.

The chief river is the Vistula, which rises just inside the Polish frontier southwest of Cracow, wends its way through the west central part of Poland, bisects the capital, Warsaw, and empties into the sea at Danzig. Other major rivers of Central Poland are the Bug, San, and Narew, all of which flow into the Vistula. In the west, the Warta (Wartha) flows into Germany and becomes a tributary of the Oder. In the southeast the Dniester flows into Romania and the Soviet Union. In the east central portion of Poland a number of smaller rivers flow into the Pripyat Marshes. In the northeast the Niemen flows from east to west across that extension of Poland bordered by White Russia and Lithuania, to flow into the latter country, and the Dzisna flows across the frontier to the east to become the Soviet Union's Dvina. With their bridges destroyed, all of these rivers could form obstacles to the movement of troops, particularly armored and motorized units. With the rivers in flood, the obstacles in some places would be all but insurmountable.

The weather remained warm and dry in late August 1939, with no immediate prospect of the heavy rains that would cause the rivers to flood and turn the countryside into a muddy morass. Instead, the Polish plains offered excellent opportunities to German military operations, and the movement of armored and motorized units.

The Armed Forces

General

The Polish concept of national forces considered only two services, the Army and Navy. There was no separate air force; air units formed part of both Army and Navy. The President of the Polish Republic was the nominal commander in chief, but delegated the actual exercise of command to the Inspector General of the Armed Forces and the Minister of War. In peacetime the Inspector General prepared mobilization plans, supervised training, made recommendations on matters pertaining to national defense, and controlled the administrative areas and tactical commands of the Army; in time of war he would become the commander in chief. The Minister of War represented the services in the President's cabinet, more as a representative of the Inspector General than as civilian head of the armed forces, and was responsible for a number of diverse functions, including some personnel matters and industrial mobilization. The Navy was supervised by the Minister of War; its size relegated the naval service to a very subordinate role in the Polish Armed Forces Establishment.[2]

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[2] *Grqsses Orientierungsheft Polen, Stand Fruehjahr 1939, Kapitel 3a, Oberste Kommandobehoerden und Gliederung der hoeheren Einheiten im Frieden, OKH, Az. 3 a/n 50–12. Abt. (III) GenStdH, Nr. 550/39, den 1 April 1939.* OKW 1957. CRS, TAG.

Chart 3 - The Polish Ground and Air Force (Peacetime Establishment)*

I Corps Area (Warsaw)

XX 8	XX 18	XX 28	X Mazowiecka
Modlin	Lomza	Warsaw	Warsaw

II Corps Area (Lublin)

XX 3(L)	XX 13	XX 27	X Wolynska	X Hrubieszow	X Rzeszow
Zamosc	Rowne	Kowel	Rowne	Hrubieszow	Rzeszow

III Corps Area (Grodno)

XX 1(L)	XX 19	XX 29	X Wilenska	X Podlaska	X Suwalki
Wilno	Wilno	Grodno	Wilno	Bialystok	Suwalki

IV Corps Area (Lodz)

XX 7	XX 10	XX 26
Czestochowa	Lodz	Skierniewice

V Corps Area (Cracow)

XX 6	XX 21 Mt	XX 23	X Krakowska
Cracow	Bielsko-Biala	Katowice	Cracow

VI Corps Area (Lwow)

XX 5	XX 11	XX 12	X Kresowa	X Podolska
Lwow	Stanislawow	Tarnopol	Brody	Stanislawow

VII Corps Area (Poznan)

XX 14	XX 17	XX 25	X Wielkopolska
Poznan	Gniezno	Kalisz	Poznan

VIII Corps Area (Torun)

XX 4	XX 15	XX 16	X Pomorska
Torun	Bydgoszcz	Grudziadz	Bydgoszcz

IX Corps Area (Brest - Litovsk)

XX 9	XX 20	XX 30	X Nowogrodzka
Siedlce	Baronowicze	Kobryn	Nowogrodek

X Corps Area (Przemysl)

XX 2(L)	XX 22 Mt	XX 24
Kielce	Przemysl	Jaroslaw

XX 1	XX 3
Warsaw	Warsaw

III 1	III 5	III 6	III 2	III 3	III 4
Warsaw	Lida	Lwow	Cracow	Poznan	Torun

* From OKH Intelligence Study of April 1939

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The industrial base to support the Polish Armed Forces was still in the process of expansion and modernization in 1939, with the major mining and industrial complex centering about Cracow in southwestern Poland. In addition to this, another industrial region had grown up in the Lublin-Radom area of south central Poland. The total production of both areas in munitions and other military supplies was still limited, and stockpiles had to be built up throughout the country in peacetime. This worked to the disadvantage of the Poles in that the relatively immobile stocks of ammunition, fuel, and other critical supplies would be vulnerable to capture in war and could not be replaced from current production.

However, there was little doubt of the Polish willingness to fight. The fate of Czechoslovakia had not been forgotten, and considerable reliance was placed on the assistance of Britain and France. More trust was placed in the effectiveness of Polish infantry and horse cavalry than was justified by later events, and the traditional Slav resentment of German expansion eastward played its part in strengthening Polish determination to resist.

The Army [See *chart 3.*]

Poland was divided into 10 corps areas for purposes of military administration and tactical units were attached to the corps area commands for logistical support. Army and army group headquarters did not exist in peacetime. Instead, the Army maintained three higher headquarters known as inspectorates and commanded by senior general officers, at Torun (Thorn), Wilna, and Lwow (Lemberg). From time to time, e. g. for annual maneuvers, these inspectorates would be assigned tactical divisions and functions as army headquarters. In time of war, the inspectorates would become army or task force commands. Available records make no mention of tactical corps headquarters in wartime; these presumably would be drawn from the corps area commands.

The peacetime Army was authorized 30 infantry divisions and several small mountain infantry brigades, 14 horse cavalry brigades, 1 mechanized cavalry brigade, and 2 air divisions. A number of separate engineer, artillery, and other supporting units also existed, but many were assigned a training rather than tactical mission. The personnel ceiling of this peacetime force was set at 280,000, making it necessary to maintain the divisions and brigades at a much reduced strength.

The 30 active divisions were distributed 3 to each of the 10 corps areas as of early 1939. The divisions were numbered 1 through 30, and were identical save for the 21st and 22d Divisions, which were classified as mountain divisions and assigned to that part of Poland

bordered by the Carpathian Mountains. Only 11 active horse cavalry brigades appear to have been in existence, disposed at the rate of 1 or more to 8 of the 10 corps areas. Elements of the mechanized cavalry brigade were assigned to several corps areas. Unlike the numbered infantry divisions, the cavalry brigades were designated by the name of the area in which they had their home stations.[3]

Supporting (army) troops were distributed throughout all 10 areas, each of which had 1 medium artillery regiment and 1 or more separate tank battalions (of a total of 13). Most of the corps areas also had antiaircraft units (from the Polish Army's 5 regiments and several separate battalions), and engineers (a total of 14 separate battalions). A signal regiment maintained radio contact between Polish Army Headquarters and major commands in the field, and telephone communication outside the divisions and cavalry brigades was maintained by 4 separate signal battalions.[4]

Poland's universal conscription program, modeled on that of France, had 204,600 conscripts and volunteers in Army service in 1939. The period of active service varied from 1½ years for infantry trainees to 22½ months for those of the cavalry, artillery, signal troops, and engineers. The average soldier was hardy and willing to learn, but a lack of modern equipment restricted technical training.

The active noncommissioned officers corps of 30,000 was regarded as well qualified despite its lack of training with modern weapons and techniques. The majority of this group were long-term volunteers and thoroughly schooled. The situation with the 16,300 active officers was somewhat more complex. Junior officers were carefully selected and given uniform training, but field and general officers in most cases had acquired their background in the diverse German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and other services, and varied widely in their methods and abilities.

As of 1939, 1,500,000 reservists of the classes 1898–1915 (men 24 to 42 years of age) could be called up on mobilization. An additional 560,000 reservists of the 1888–97 period would also be available if necessary, but their age (43 to 52) would restrict the use of these troops to security duties and work in the rear areas.[5] The peacetime divisions and army troops would be brought to full strength on mobilization, some 15 reserve divisions and supporting units called into service, and the Air Force and Navy expanded.

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[3] *Grosses Orientierungsheft Polen, Kapitel 3a, Anlage 4, Friedensgliederung des polnischen Heeres, Stand vom April 1939.* OKW 1957. CRS, TAG.

[4] *Grosses Orientierungsheft Polen, Kapitel 3b, I, Gliederung, Bewaffnung und Staerken der einzelnen Waffen in Frieden (einschl. Marine), pp. 1–30, and II, Obrona Narodowa (Nationale Verteidigung),* pp. 31–36. OKW 1957. CRS, TAG.

[5] The Sikorski Institute, *Polskie Sily Zbrojne W Drugiej Wojnie, Tom I, Kampania Wrzesniowa 1939, Czesc Pierwsza* (London, 1951), p. 178.

A National Guard (*Obrona Narodowa*) also existed, to supplement the active Army and reserve units. The National Guard consisted of men who had completed their training but were without mobilization assignments, men who had not received the prescribed conscript training for one reason or another (including a large number who had been surplus to the draft quotas), and volunteers not yet subject to conscription (21 years of age). The weapons and uniforms issued the National Guard were retained in their homes, and ammunition at the local depots of the active units. Training on a part-time basis was carried on, and units up to brigade level were organized.

The Polish National Guard brigade consisted of two regiments of four battalions each, and a total strength of from 2,500 to 4,000 men. Brigades and regiments were commanded by active officers; most of the other officers were from the reserve. In all, 11 brigades were formed, one in each corps area and a naval brigade in Gdynia. In the event of war the National Guard brigades would come under the control of local military commanders.

The active Polish infantry division had three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, a reconnaissance battalion, an antiaircraft company, a signal company, and rear trains and services. It was planned that each division would have its own engineer battalion and antitank company. As of 1939, this had progressed only to the point where some divisions had small engineer detachments. Transportation in the infantry division was horse drawn.[6]

The infantry regiments each comprised three battalions, of three rifle companies and one heavy weapons company each, an antitank company, a cannon platoon, signal platoon, engineer platoon, and small replacement and service detachments. The rifle companies each had 9 light machine guns (similar to the United States Army's Browning automatic rifle, but classified as a machine gun) and three 46mm mortars of Polish manufacture. The weapons companies had 12 heavy machine guns and two 81mm mortars of French origin. The antitank company had nine 37mm guns, and the cannon platoon had two 75mm field pieces of Russian manufacture. The total strength of the regiment, unless it was assigned to border security duties, was 1,450 officers and men. Regiments assigned a border security mission were increased in strength to 2,350 men.

The artillery regiment had two battalions of 75mm guns of French or Polish manufacture, and one battalion of 100mm howitzers of Czech or Polish origin; most of the fire control equipment was obsolete. The replacement of foreign artillery pieces with Polish-made 105mm and 155mm howitzers was making progress as of 1939 but was still far from complete. The authorized strength of the artillery regiment was

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 209–12.

780 officers and men. In many cases, the artillery regiment lacked one or more of its battalions or the battalion one battery. Few except artillery units in border areas had their authorized allocation of transportation.

The cavalry brigade consisted of three or four cavalry regiments, and one squadron each of pack artillery, signal troops, and engineers. Each regiment had four line squadrons armed with rifles, light machine guns, sabers, and lances; a machine gun squadron with 12 heavy machine guns; an antitank platoon with four 37mm guns; and a small remount and replacement detachment.[7] The authorized strength of the brigade varied from 720 officers and men to a total of 875, depending upon the brigade's mission.

The two air divisions and their air regiments (six in all) had administrative functions only. The tactical unit was the group (three to six per regiment), with two to four squadrons, each with 10–12 aircraft of similar type. In peacetime the air divisions received technical direction from the Air Department in the Ministry of War. Upon mobilization, the Air Force would be reorganized to provide air support for the ground forces and would operate under the tactical control of the army.

Ten reconnaissance, seven fighter, five fighter-bomber, and six groups of liaison aircraft were in existence in mid-1939. There were also two additional air regiments in the process of activation in eastern Poland. The total number of aircraft was 935, including 350 reconnaissance type, 300 fighters, 150 fighter-bombers, and 135 liaison planes. However, a large number of these were obsolete or obsolescent, and suitable only for training purposes.[8] Total personnel strength of the Army Air Force was 6,300 officers and men.[9]

The Navy

The surface fleet of the Polish Navy in 1939 was built around the four destroyers *Blyskawica* (*Lightning*), *Grom* (*Thunderbolt*), *Wicher* (*Hurricane*), and *Burza* (*Squall*). The first two vessels each displaced 2,144 tons; the latter two, 1,540 tons. The heaviest armament comprised 5.1-inch guns and all four destroyers were based at Gdynia. The submarine force consisted of the *Orzel* (*Eagle*), *Sep* (*Vulture*), *Rys* (*Lynx*), *Wilk* (*Wolf*), and *Zbik* (*Wildcat*), based at Hela; all five were the long-range type, displacing from 980 tons to 1,473 tons. The shore defenses of Gdynia and Hela were manned by Navy personnel. Two naval infantry battalions also existed, one

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 212–14.

[8] *Grosses Orientierungsheft Polen, Kapitel 3b, I Gliederung, Bewaffnung und Staerken der einzelnen Waffen in Frieden (einschl. Marine), pp. 1–30, and II, Obrona Narodowa (Nationale Verteidigung)*, pp. 31–36. OKW 1957. CRS, TAG.

[9] The Sikorski Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

at Gdynia and the other a few miles inland, and two additional battalions were in the process of organization. Air support for the Navy consisted of three reconnaissance squadrons, three fighter squadrons, and two torpedobomber squadrons, with a total of 85 aircraft.

The Polish Navy was also responsible for the Vistula River, and for this purpose maintained 16 river gunboats and two reconnaissance squadrons of 10 aircraft each. The total peacetime strength of the Polish Naval Force was approximately 3,100 officers and men.[10]

Defense Plan and Dispositions

The Polish defense plan was based on a study originally prepared in 1938 and revised as the Reich gained additional territories surrounding Poland. According to Plan "Z", as it was called, the Poles estimated in March 1939 that the Germans would make their main attack from Silesia in the direction of Warsaw. An attack from southern Silesia and Slovakia would secure the right flank of the main German attack force. Meanwhile, other German attacks would be launched from Pomerania and East Prussia, to cut the Corridor and support the main drive on the Polish capital. It was estimated the Germans would be able to mobilize 110–120 divisions in all, of which 70–80, including all 5 panzer, 4 light, and 4 motorized infantry divisions would be available for operations against Poland.[11]

Permanent defensive works already existed along the Narew River, at Torun, about Bydgoszcz (Bromberg) and south to the Warta, west of Lodz (Lodsch), about Czestochowa, and west of Katowice (Kattowitz) and Cracow; some of these fortifications had been built prior to World War I. Additional fortifications were built or in the process of construction at Mlawa and along the approaches from East Prussia, west of Bydgoszcz at the base of the Corridor, west of Poznan (Posen), and along the frontier south to Slovakia. These fortifications, some of them only field type, would be used to form the first Polish line of defense.

The field fortifications constructed were far less formidable than might be expected. In the main, they consisted only of earthen entrenchments, barbed wire obstacles, and tank traps. Their construction was entrusted to local military commanders, with the result that there was little uniformity and the extent of the work depended largely upon the initiative of the individual officers. Moreover, many of the works were delayed until the harvest and were not ready when needed. The blocking of smaller rivers to make possible later flood-

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 257–62.

ing was unsuccessful due to the dry weather which held all through the summer.

Orders deploying the Polish Army according to Plan "Z" were issued on 23 March 1939. The deployment was an obvious attempt to hold the entire country, and probably based on the belief that the intervention of Britain and France in the west would force a number of German divisions to withdraw. The deployment was faulty from a military standpoint, since the Corridor was indefensible and troop units in that area would be in constant danger of encirclement from East Prussia and Pomerania. Polish forces deployed in the Poznan area would be situated in a salient flanked on the north and south by German territory, and units in the Cracow area would be threatened by encirclement from Slovakia and southern Silesia. However, the Corridor and Poznan areas contained a large part of Poland's agricultural resources, and Cracow the country's mines and heavy industry. In addition to these economic aspects, the psychological effect of the surrender of these vital areas without a struggle had to be considered.

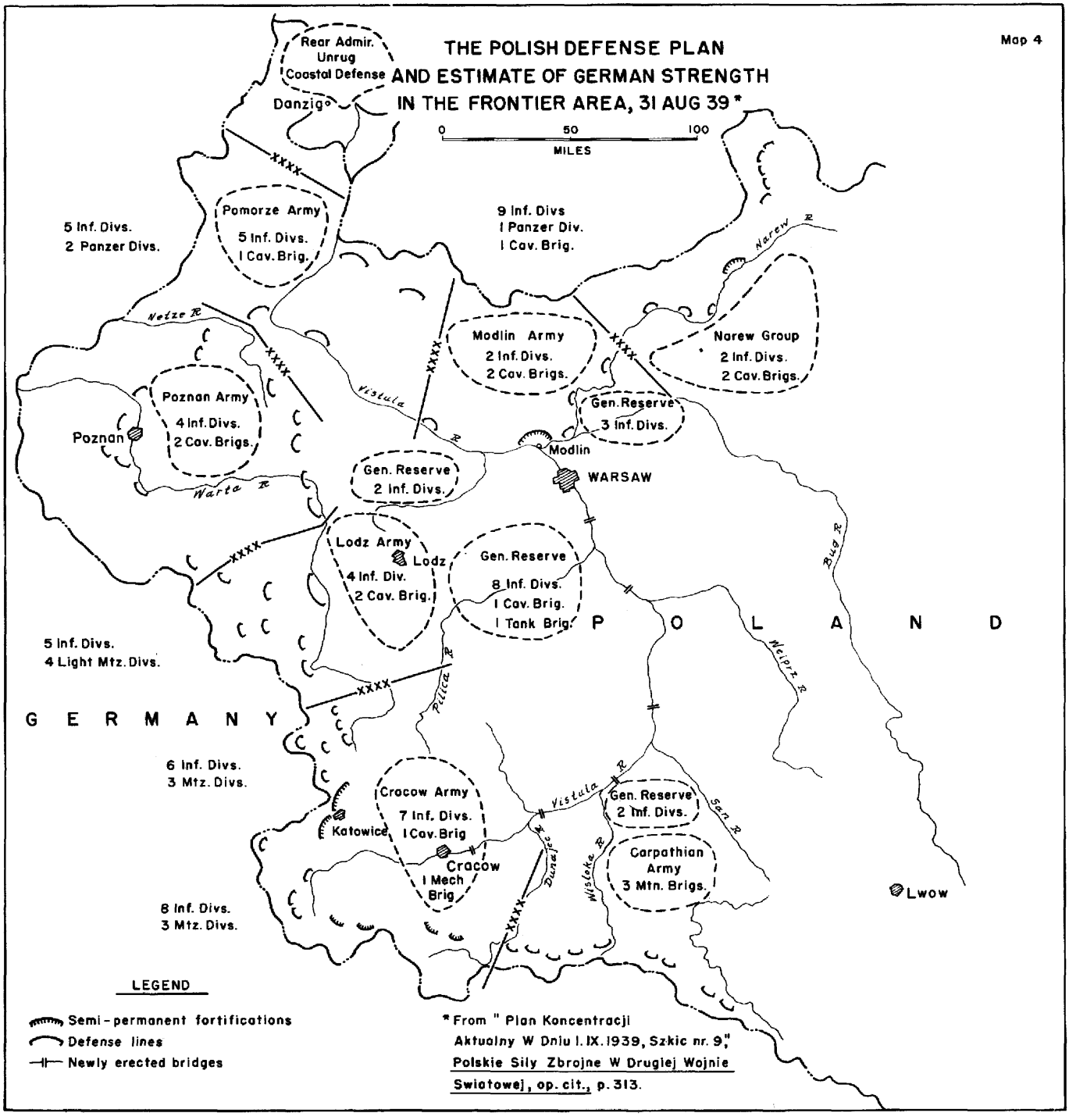
Temporary bridges were built along the Vistula and the Warta, to facilitate the movement of reserves to threatened points. Several infantry divisions and smaller units were transferred from their garrison areas in eastern Poland to the central and western parts of the country. A number of individual reservists were called up for service and several reserve divisions mobilized and assigned to defensive missions with the active divisions. National Guard units in the Corridor and Poznan areas were mobilized for frontier defense service.

In the north, a special force of two infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades, under Maj. Gen. C. Mlot-Fijalkowski, was disposed along the Biebrza and Narew Rivers and assigned the mission of holding that part of the Polish frontier north of the Grodno-Warsaw rail line and the frontier with Lithuania (*Narew Group*). On the left of the *Narew Group*, a similar force of two infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades, under Brig. Gen. E. Przedzymirski-Krukowicz, was assigned the defense of the Mlawa area and the direct route to Warsaw (*Modlin Army*). Another force of five infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade (*Pomorze Army*), under the command of Maj. Gen. W. Bortnowski, held the Corridor to a junction with the command of Maj. Gen. T. Kutrzeba, assigned four infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades for the defense of the Poznan salient (*Poznan Army*).

Five infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades, under command of Maj. Gen. J. Rommel, held the Lodz area (*Lodz Army*) and southward to a junction with the force of Brig. Gen. A. Szylling, assigned seven infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade for the defense of the

Map 4

THE POLISH DEFENSE PLAN AND ESTIMATE OF GERMAN STRENGTH IN THE FRONTIER AREA, 31 AUG 39*



*From "Plan Koncentracji Aktualny W Dniu 1. IX. 1939, Szkic nr. 9," Polskie Sily Zbrojne W Drugiej Wojnie Swiatowej, op. cit., p. 313.

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vital Cracow region (*Cracow Army*). Temporarily, light forces would hold the crossings from Slovakia. The general reserve force, centered about Warsaw and in two concentrations to the northeast and northwest of the capital, consisted of twelve infantry divisions, the mechanized cavalry brigade, and one horse cavalry brigade. These concentrations of the general reserve would counterattack major German penetrations in the direction of Warsaw and provide the force necessary if the Poles were eventually to go over to the offensive. The port area of Gdynia also organized a defense force the strength of a small division by combining the naval infantry force, reservists, and seamen assigned to shore installations.

The ground defensive organization involved most of the active and several reserve (infantry) divisions, all the active cavalry brigades, and the bulk of the naval personnel assigned to shore duties. In addition, the *Pomorze*, *Lodz*, and *Cracow Armies* and the general reserve force were assigned reserve divisions which would be called up on mobilization. Where possible, troops were retained in garrison areas and the units assigned defensive missions. In some cases units had to move to areas better situated for defense. In the Corridor area these moves aroused the resentment of the German part of the population and formed the basis for German charges of war preparations on the part of the Poles.

The Polish commands formed had no standard corps organization and few other units except infantry divisions and cavalry brigades. However, reference is generally made to them as armies, except for the *Narew Group*, with the name of the geographic area they were assigned to defend.

Some changes were made in the dispositions of these Polish forces during the several months preceding the German attack. The *Carpathian Army* was formed under Maj. Gen. K. Fabrycy to defend the southern frontier of Poland. The *Carpathian Army* was allocated only three mountain infantry brigades, but an additional force formed for the general reserve and consisting of one active division and a partially mobilized reserve division was stationed in the area in the immediate rear of Fabrycy's force. The mechanized cavalry brigade was transferred to the *Cracow Army*, an infantry division of the *Lodz Army* was transferred to the general reserve, and a provisional tank brigade was organized and attached to the general reserve. This was the force, not fully mobilized, with which Poland was to confront the bulk of Germany's 102 divisions, supported by a total of 3,000 tanks and more than 4,000 aircraft. [See *map 4*.]

Chapter 5

The German Plan and Preliminary Movements

April–May 1939

Headquarters OKW began to draft the timetable of preparations for the concentration against Poland immediately following the issue on 3 April of the second part of the annual armed forces directive. The timetable would form the master schedule for the movements, security measures, and other steps necessary to enable the German forces to launch an attack at the time and in the manner directed by Hitler should the Fuehrer decide to settle his differences with Poland by war. Its completion, however, would have to await the recommendations of the three services, which began their planning and prepared recommendations for the deployment of forces on the basis of the instructions contained in Plan WEISS.

Each service selected one or more major commands to direct operations in the field. Some deviation from the mobilization plan of the Army was found to be necessary in the case of the higher ground commands, as OKH directed the organization of two army group headquarters. The peacetime *Heeresgruppenkommando 1*, under Generaloberst Fedor von Bock, that would normally have become Second Army on mobilization, was designated to form the headquarters of Army Group North. Headquarters OKH also directed the organization of a provisional headquarters under Generaloberst Gerd von Rundstedt, then in retirement at Kassel; this headquarters would become Army Group South, with a staff composed largely of VII Corps personnel who would have been assigned to form Twelfth Army on mobilization. The Luftwaffe selected its First and Fourth Air Forces. The Navy designated Naval Command East (*Marinegruppenkommando Ost*), the naval equipment of the *Heeresgruppenkommando*, as the headquarters for fleet units to be committed to the campaign.

Bock's chief of staff was Generalleutnant Hans von Salmuth and his operations officer was Colonel Wilhelm Haase at the time. The provisional headquarters was to be known as *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* (Working Staff Rundstedt) temporarily. As his chief of staff,

THE GERMAN CONCEPT OF GROUND OPERATIONS *

0 10 20 30 40 50
MILES

LITHUANIA

1 Infantry Division

Danzig

2 Regiments

EAST PRUSSIA

1-2 Infantry Divisions
1 Cavalry Brigade

1 Cavalry Brigade

8 Infantry Divisions
1 Cavalry Brigade
1 Panzer Brigade

FOURTH ARMY

3 Infantry Divisions
3 Motorized Divisions

Stettin

ARMY GROUP NORTH RESERVE

3 Infantry Divisions

Narew R.

Bydgoszcz
(Bromberg)

3-4 Infantry Divisions

5-6 Infantry Divisions
1 Cavalry Brigade

Vistula R.

Bug R.

BERLIN

POLAND

Poznan
(Posen)

WARSAW

Frankfurt am Oder

NORTH
XXXXX
SOUTH

GENERAL RESERVE

GERMANY

Lodz

Oder R.

6-7 Infantry Divisions

EIGHTH ARMY

5 Infantry Divisions

Radom

Weilun

Breslau

Kielce

ARMY GROUP SOUTH RESERVE

9 Infantry Divisions

Oppeln

TENTH ARMY

6 Infantry Divisions
7 Motorized Divisions

Vistula R.

San R.

Gleiwitz

1 Division

Cracow

Dunajec R.

5 Infantry Divisions
1 Cavalry Brigade
1 Motorized Brigade

FOURTEENTH ARMY

5 Infantry Divisions
3 Motorized Divisions

* From Undated OKH Planning Map

(Note the number of Motorized Divisions. The planners undoubtedly combined Panzer, Light and Motorized Divisions at the time they drew up this plan.)

Rundstedt was assigned Generalleutnant Fritz Erich von Manstein, commander of an infantry division. Col. Guenther Blumentritt, chief of training at OKH, was to become Rundstedt's operations officer. The provisional headquarters had no peacetime counterpart, and almost all of the *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* planning had to be carried on by the three officers originally assigned and by two General Staff officers detailed to the project in the course of the summer. Rundstedt remained much of the time at his home, while Manstein and Blumentritt continued as division commander and OKH staff officer, respectively, working on the plans as an additional duty. Blumentritt's dual position in operational planning and normal training made it possible to camouflage many of the preoperational movements of troops as part of the annual training and maneuver program.

The Army, Navy, and Air Force drew up three separate but coordinated campaign plans. As a point of interest, the Army plan included the commitment of two regiments and several smaller separate units of the *SS Verfuegungstruppen*, the armed affiliate of the National Socialist Party. The SS military force was still in the process of development, and only four regiments and a few separate small units were in existence in 1939.

Hitler was briefed on the Army's plan on 26–27 April. The Fuehrer approved the OKH concept of an attack by two army groups, from north and south, destroying the Polish armies in the western part of the country and capturing Warsaw. On the northern front, Fourth Army would cut the Corridor at its base and take Grudziadz (Graudenz). The establishment of contact between the Reich proper and East Prussia by Fourth Army would be followed by a Third Army attack from East Prussia in the direction of Warsaw. On the southern front Rundstedt's army group would advance on Warsaw on a broad front, diverting sufficient forces to hold any Polish attack on its right flank from Galicia and the southeast. [See *map 5.*]

A directive embodying the Army's campaign plan was sent by OKH to Rundstedt and Bock on 1 May for comment and elaboration, and initiated detailed planning by *Heeresgruppenkommando 1* and Rundstedt's staff. Both sent appropriate orders to the peacetime commands that would form their army headquarters to initiate planning at the next lower level. As the recommendations of these headquarters were received, they were incorporated into the plans of Rundstedt and *Heeresgruppenkommando 1.* Bock and Rundstedt submitted their comments and recommendations to OKH late in May.[1]

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[1] *Entwurf Aufmarschanweisung Weiss, Arbeitsstab Rundstedt, Ia Nr. 1/39 g. Kdos, 20. Mai 1939.* P 274g. CRS, TAG; *Gen Feldm, v. Bock, Tagebuch-Notizen z. Polen-Feldzug, Mai/Juni 1939–43. Oktober 1939,* I, p. 2–4 (hereafter referred to as the "Bock Diary"). P–210. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

One attempt was made about this time to discourage Hitler from precipitating a major war by a rash move. As his OKW planners viewed the situation, a war involving the British and French and other western powers could end only in disaster. Therefore, members of the planning staff proposed a war game to consider all features of Germany's strategic situation. Keitel transmitted the request to the Fuehrer, and was refused on the grounds that security and diplomatic negotiations might be endangered. Hitler was firmly convinced that there would be no war with the west over Poland.[2] Meanwhile, OKH revised its campaign plan and OKL and OKM continued with their own planning work.

The OKH Operation Order of 15 June 1939[3]

The first OKH operation order directed Bock's and Rundstedt's headquarters to pursue their planning under their original designations as *Heeresgruppenkommando 1* and *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt.* The target date by which the two headquarters were to have worked out all details on coordination with the Air Force (and with the Navy, in the case of Army Group North) was set for 20 July. Both army groups had attached to them the commands of the active Army that would form army headquarters on mobilization, and the corps, divisions, and supporting troops considered necessary to accomplish their missions. Direct communication with subordinate headquarters was authorized for planning purposes. Orders directing specific preparations could also be issued by the two headquarters scheduled to become army groups, cutting across normal administrative channels. The movement of troops to the frontier areas would be directed by OKH.

The plan of campaign was expressed in detail, adhering to the general concept of operations, with two army groups attacking from north and south in the direction of the Polish capital. The operation order added one change in directing Third Army to attack simultaneously with Fourth Army and send a strong force to assist Fourth Army in seizing crossings on the Vistula. The major force of Third Army, meanwhile, would attack in the direction of Warsaw without waiting for Fourth Army to establish land contact between the Reich proper and East Prussia. The Polish Army would be destroyed in the western part of Poland, and reserves would be prevented from mobilizing or concentrating to resist the German advance.

This plan of attack, with the German striking power on the north and south, would leave the German center open to Polish counter-

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[2] Bernhard von Lossberg, *Im Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab* (Hamburg, 1950), p. 27.

[3] *Aufmarschanweisung Fall Weiss, OKH, 1. Abt (I) Gen St d H, Nr. 4200/39 g. Kdos., 15. Juni 1939.* A copy of this order will be found in the *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* planning papers. P 274 k. CRS, TAG.

blows. Consequently, frontier guard units and some reservists would take up defensive positions east of the Oder River at Frankfurt-am-Oder, securing the vital river crossings into the interior of Germany. Local attacks would be launched by these frontier guards and reservists to deceive the Poles and tie down Polish units that might otherwise be moved to oppose the drives of the northern and southern army groups.

Army Group North was to control the Third and Fourth Armies, under command of General der Artillerie Georg von Kuechler and General der Artillerie Guenther von Kluge. The headquarters for Third Army would be formed from Kuechler's I Corps in East Prussia; the Fourth Army, from Kluge's Group Command 6. While Third Army commenced operations from East Prussia, Fourth Army would make its attack from North Germany's Pomerania.

Third Army would be composed of 8 infantry divisions, a Panzer brigade, and a cavalry brigade. Fourth Army would comprise 4 standard infantry divisions, 2 motorized infantry divisions, and a Panzer division. Two infantry divisions would be the army group reserve. Army Group North would thus include 14 standard infantry divisions, 2 motorized infantry divisions, a Panzer division, a Panzer brigade, and a cavalry brigade, together with army group, army, and corps troops.

The attack in the direction of Warsaw would form Third Army's major effort. The force of Third Army that would attack to the southwest and assist Fourth Army in securing crossings along the Vistula would be smaller. Fourth Army would attack to the east and south, cutting off the Polish forces in the northern part of the Corridor and securing the communication and transportation lines between Germany proper and East Prussia. The force of Third Army that attacked to the southwest and the Fourth Army would join in the attack toward Warsaw when their mission in the Corridor area was completed. The capture of Danzig would be accomplished by German reservists already in the city.

Army Group South, the stronger of the two major German ground forces, would include the Eighth, Tenth, and Fourteenth Armies, under General der Infanterie Johannes Blaskowitz, General der Artillerie Walther von Reichenau, and Generaloberst Wilhelm List, in that order. Eighth Army would be formed from Blaskowitz's Group Command 3; Tenth Army, from Reichenau's Group Command 4; Fourteenth Army, from List's Group Command 5. The Eighth and Tenth Armies would attack from northern Silesia; Fourteenth Army, from southern Silesia and the satellite state of Slovakia.

Eighth Army would comprise four infantry divisions. Tenth Army would be composed of 6 infantry, 2 motorized infantry, 2 Panzer, and

3 light divisions. Fourteenth Army would include 5 infantry, 1 light, and 2 Panzer divisions. Three mountain and 6 infantry divisions would be the army group reserve. Army Group South thus would have 21 infantry, 4 Panzer, 2 motorized infantry, 4 light, and 3 mountain divisions.

The main effort would be made by Tenth Army, strongest of the three, striking toward Warsaw. Eighth Army would move on Lodz and secure the left (north) flank of Tenth Army against strong Polish forces known to be in the Poznan-Kutno area and capable of interfering with Tenth Army's mission. The situation as it developed in the area of Army Group South would determine the further employment of Eighth Army. On the right (southeast) flank of Army Group South, Fourteenth Army would take Cracow and push to the east to protect the right flank of Tenth Army from attack by Polish forces moving into western Galicia from Lwow and the east. The junction of Army Group North and Tenth Army at Warsaw would seal off Polish units in western Poland and prevent their escape to the area east of the Narew-Vistula-San River line.

The future army group commanders held several dissenting opinions concerning the OKH plan. Rundstedt believed that Tenth Army should move first to destroy the Polish forces on its front, diverting some units if necessary from the drive on Warsaw. This was resolved when Rundstedt was ordered to move directly on the Polish capital with the Tenth Army. Rundstedt also desired more cavalry to screen his left flank. Accordingly, OKH allocated the motorized SS Regiment Adolf Hitler to the Eighth Army.[4] For his part, Bock questioned the advisability of a heavy attack on Warsaw from the west. Instead he favored strengthening Third Army at the expense of Fourth Army, once the Corridor had been cut, and executing a deep drive east of the Polish capital to prevent the escape of Polish forces into the vast Pripyat Marches. Smaller German forces could be used to tie down the Poles west of Warsaw, but the major effort would be in the east. Bock was granted some additional latitude in directing his campaign, but his major objection to the OKH concept was not resolved until operations were under way.[5]

Troop movements to begin the implementation of the OKH plan would be carried out in three series. The first of these would involve the movement of a number of infantry divisions and supporting units to Germany's eastern frontier area and to East Prussia. Maneuvers had been scheduled, including armored exercises in central Germany, and the Reich had announced the intention of strengthening its east-

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[4] Ltr, Halder to Manstein. *OKH, 1. Abt. (I) Gen St d H, Nr. 4160/30 g. Kdos., 2. Juni 1939,* in the *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* papers. P 274 a. CRS, TAG.

[5] "Bock Diary," pp. 4–5.

ern frontiers, so the first troop movements would not necessarily appear as a hostile gesture toward Poland. Troops from the Reich were also scheduled to participate in the Tannenberg Memorial ceremonies in East Prussia in August, to commemorate the victory of Hindenburg's Eighth Army over the Russian Narew Army in the Allenstein area in August 1914. The second and third series of movements would involve the headquarters staffs and their supporting troops; the armored, light, and motorized infantry divisions; and the remaining elements of the infantry divisions. The day all preparations would be completed for the attack was designated as Y-day. Final preparations were to be scheduled as Y–3, Y–2, etc., as soon as Hitler specified the exact date for Y-day.

The OKW Timetable [6]

The timetable of preparations was issued to the Army, Navy, and Air Force on 14 July and scheduled the movement of forces as recommended by the services to enable them to execute their attack plans. The movement of some Army units for the purpose of working on the Ostwall, or eastern counterpart of the Westwall, had already begun, so the timetable contained the schedule for the remainder of the movements in the first series of troop shifts. Notations in the timetable called for decisions by Hitler prior to the undertaking of successive major steps planned, thereby enabling the Fuehrer to exercise close control over the entire undertaking. The timetable itself did not constitute an order. Rather, it provided only a schedule, and orders for movements or measures to be taken had to be given by OKW or the service directly concerned. Where political or diplomatic considerations were involved, OKW reserved decision or gave specific authorization to one of the services to order appropriate action. Orders to various departments of the Reich government, as the transportation and postal services, were also to be given by OKW.

In addition to the movement of active units to the east, the timetable provided for the mobilization of a number of reservists for the Army and Air Force prior to the attack. A total of 386,000 Army and 55,000 Luftwaffe reservists would be ordered to report for active duty, ostensibly for maneuvers.

The timetable provided for securing the Fuehrer's decision regarding Y-Day by 23 August. With this decision, the "Y" or final movement would be ordered, and units in concentration areas would begin their moves to assembly areas for the attack. On Y–1, Hitler's order for the attack was to be given by 1200, after which the "X" mobiliza-

[6] *Zeittafel fuer den Fall Weiss, WFA/L I 92/39, Chefs, v. 14.7.39.* OKW 129. CRS, TAG.

tion would be directed (calling up the reserve divisions without public proclamation), and the code word setting the precise time for the attack was to be communicated to the headquarters of the three services.

Hitler's order of Y–1 setting the exact time for the attack was to be followed by the implementation of Plan WEST. The first westward movement would involve seven active divisions, several of which were already training in the western frontier area. The frontier commands were to be absorbed into the First, Fifth, and Seventh Armies, and Army Group C would be assigned responsibility for the defense of the Westwall.

Logistical Support

The *Reichsbahn* (German Federal Railways) would transport the bulk of the troops and their equipment to the frontier area. Movements to mid-August, carefully scheduled, required no mobilization of the German railroad system. As of 16 August, however, there was to be a curtailment of traffic and as many special trains as possible (excursions, etc.) would be cancelled. On 18 August precautions were to be taken to safeguard rail lines and installations.

On Y–2 the *Reichsbahn* would make the necessary arrangements preliminary to its mobilization. On Y–1 the security of rail lines and installations was to be strengthened by additional railway police and the *Reichsbahn*, with the rest of the German transportation system, would go on a wartime basis. Foreign rail traffic in Germany was to be kept under observation and preparations made to halt it if necessary.

The Autobahn highway system was to be inspected effective 17 August. Stops for motor columns would be kept available, and obstructions to traffic repaired immediately. On Y–1 the special telephone system of the Autobahn was to be tied in with the rest of the German telephone communications system. The trucks and other motor vehicles necessary for military use would be requisitioned from government agencies, industry, and private owners.

The *Reichspost* (German Postal Service), which controlled the telephone and telegraph systems as well as the mails, held available special lines for long-distance military traffic even in peacetime. On Y–2 all telephone and telegraph installations would be secured. On Y–1 the special nets for military traffic were to be opened. Regular telephone and telegraph traffic would be kept to the minimum, and communications traffic to foreign countries was to be monitored or held up. All telephone and telegraph communications to Poland and Lithuania were to be cut off at midnight of the day preceding Y-day.

Enormous stocks of rations, ammunition, gasoline, spare parts for a wide range of vehicle types, bridging equipment, and hay and

forage for the animals of the infantry and mountain divisions were to be made available. Provisions would also have to be made for moving depots forward as the units advanced. It was estimated the fuel problem would be particularly acute with the armored columns, moving through a primarily agricultural country.

The food supplies required by the troops prior to the attack would be provided by the local *Wehrkreise.* Eighth and Tenth Armies were to be supplied with rations by *Wehrkreis* VIII, with headquarters in Breslau. Fourteenth Army would draw upon *Wehrkreis* XVII, in Vienna. Third Army was to be supplied by *Wehrkreis* I, in Koenigsberg (East Prussia), and Fourth Army by *Wehrkreis* II, at Stettin (Pomerania).

Rations for the troops were to be secured in advance of operations from the *Wehrkreise* and stored in depots by each army. According to German practice, the divisions, corps, and army troop units would draw directly on these depots. Initial stocks were to consist of a 10-day supply of field rations and one emergency ration. A 10-day supply of oats and sufficient hay for the animals for 2 days would be stored in the same depot and issued with the rations. A notation in the OKH field order that biscuits would be provided in place of bread for the last 3 days of the 10-day period, since the issue bread would remain fresh for approximately one week only, may perhaps serve as an example for the completeness of preparations. Should further rations, hay, and forage not be available for issue after the start of operations, e. g. if the units overextended their supply lines or army ration installations were unable to maintain the rate of advance of the combat units, the divisions might permit local requisitioning down to battalion.

A total of four times the basic load of ammunition (a specified amount to be carried by the troops or in unit transportation) was to be made available. One load would be carried by individuals (pistol, rifle, and submachine gun ammunition) and in the trucks, wagons, and trains of the unit (machine gun, mortar, and artillery ammunition). A second load would be available for issue from the army ammunition depot, and two more loads would be stored on rail sidings and moved forward as the situation necessitated. Every rifleman required 90 rounds, every light machine gun 3,750 rounds, and every division artillery piece 300 rounds, for each of the four loads. Third Army, drawing on depots in East Prussia and separated from the Reich, was to have a total of six loads available, and would store four extra loads for those Fourth Army units Bock planned to move to East Prussia once a junction was effected across the Polish Corridor.

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Gasoline and oil sufficient to drive each vehicle a total of 750 kilometers (approximately 450 miles) under normal operating conditions was to be provided units in assembly areas. All gasoline tanks were to be filled and the surplus carried in cans on each vehicle, on unit supply trucks, or in the regimental and division trains. Stocks equal to this initial issue of fuel were to be kept in tank cars along the rail lines, ready to move ahead for issue as the units advanced. Army Group South, with its heavy concentration of armored vehicles, was to have an additional allocation of 1,500 tons of fuel, to be held on trucks in the vicinity of Breslau and ready to move on short notice to units where it was needed.

The various armies were to draw replacement vehicles, tires, and spare parts from specified motor pools and tire depots in the Zone of the Interior. Major repairs would also be effected by the repair shops of these motor pools. In the Army Group North area, Third Army would use the motor pool in Koenigsberg and Fourth Army that in Stettin. In the Army Group South area, Eighth Army would use the motor pool in Breslau, Tenth Army the motor pools in Breslau and Oppeln, and Fourteenth Army the motor pool in Vienna. The tire depots, for the most part, were in the general vicinity of the motor pools or in nearby cities. All motor pools and their supply warehouses were to receive special issues of spare parts by 20 August.

It was presumed that the Poles would destroy a large number of bridges, particularly those across the Vistula and the broader rivers. Rail lines and terminal installations might also be damaged by bombing, artillery fire, or demolitions. Many of the Polish roads would not stand up well under sustained pounding by trucks, the artillery's prime movers, and tanks. In anticipation of these contingencies, bridging equipment was to be stored in each army group area, and a number of engineer bridging units attached to each army group and army. In addition to the bridging units, each army group and army was to receive road building, general service, and construction engineer battalions. Special engineer staffs would be attached to the army groups and armies to provide technical direction for all engineer work within the army group and army areas. Railway engineer personnel would be available for putting captured rail lines back into operation.

Sick and wounded personnel requiring hospitalization would be sent to available garrison or civilian hospitals, pending the organization of general hospitals in the army rear areas. Veterinarians were to use civilian facilities whenever military installations for the care of sick and injured animals were not available, until such time as veterinary service in the army rear areas could be established.

Temporary executive power (*vollziehende Gewalt*, a form of martial law) in designated areas of Silesia would be granted to the

commander of Army Group South, and in portions of Moravia and Slovakia to the commander of Fourteenth Army. Since the two armies of Army Group North would be operating from either side of the Polish Corridor, the Commanders of each were to be granted temporary executive power over designated areas of Reich territory. The time such authority should take effect would in each case be directed by OKH. With this authority, the respective army group and army commanders, in the event of emergency, could utilize civilian manpower and installations, and control the police and local public officials. This authority was to devolve upon the army commanders once the German forces crossed the border into Poland.

Arrangements were also to be made for evacuation of prisoners taken. In the Army Group North area, Fourth Army's captives would be evacuated to a central collecting point at Stargard; Third Army's would go to collecting points to be set up by *Wehrkreis* I. In the area of Army Group South, prisoners of war taken by Eighth and Tenth Armies would be evacuated to collecting points in Silesia. Fourteenth Army would erect such detention centers in Slovakia as it deemed necessary. With the exception of those sent to Slovakia, all prisoners of war would come under the control of the Replacement and Training Army (*Ersatzheer*) upon arrival at the collecting point. The collecting points themselves were not considered as camps for final disposition, but rather as temporary holding points pending further evacuation or exchange.

Radio silence was to be observed by all units in their concentration and assembly areas, but normal traffic of garrison troops maintained to avoid arousing the suspicions of the Poles. Land cables and telephone lines for use by the incoming headquarters staffs were to be installed by garrison troops and special signal personnel. These advance preparations could be made only within the Reich, however. Those units of Fourteenth Army that would concentrate in Slovakia would be moving into an area not occupied by German garrison troops and any overt activity would be certain to draw the attention of the residents of the region and quite possibly their Polish neighbors. Thus Fourteenth Army was to plan lines to be installed hastily when the units to concentrate in Slovakia moved into their assembly areas. Special signal troops would be assigned the army groups to put captured Polish signal installations and facilities back into operation as the attack progressed.

The APO number system would go into effect with the arrival of troops in concentration areas. No mail was to be delivered or collected for a period of five days following the start of operations.

The Navy and Air Force

The role of the Navy in the Polish Campaign was outlined in Admiral Raeder's annual directive on 16 May.[7] Naval units would participate in operations to the extent of destroying or capturing the small Polish naval and merchant fleets, keeping clear the sea lanes to East Prussia, blockading Danzig and Gdynia, bombarding Polish shore installations, and rendering Army Group North such assistance as it might require in the course of its operations. *Marinegruppe Ost*, under command of Generaladmiral Conrad Albrecht, would control 3 cruisers, 2 flotillas of destroyers (8 or more ships), 14 submarines, and a number of torpedo boats and other light craft. These naval units were to be so deployed in the Baltic area so as to be able to reach their assigned battle stations before hostilities were begun. The naval units assigned to missions against Poland were assured of a 48-hour advance warning period to reach these assigned stations. The bulk of the fleet, including most of the operational U-boats, would take up battle stations in the North Sea and the Atlantic, ready to engage the British and French in the event of Allied intervention.

An operation order was issued on 21 August by Naval Command East, giving the latest estimates of Polish naval strength and assigning specific missions to units designated to participate in the attack on Poland.[8] The training ship (formerly battleship) *Schleswig-Holstein* was to be sent on a visit to Danzig shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, and was to anchor in the harbor there; its mission was the bombardment of Polish shore installations. Other surface units would proceed out of sight of land to Gdynia and Hela (a Polish fort on the Hela Peninsula in the Bay of Danzig) and destroy their coastal batteries.

Fire was to be opened on Hela at H-hour and on Gdynia one hour later, to prevent losses to German aircraft scheduled to make a feint attack at first light to cover the approach of the surface craft. Neutral ships would be given 10 hours to clear the ports, after which both Danzig and Gdynia were to be blockaded by mines, surface craft, and submarines. The property of neutrals was to be scrupulously respected to prevent incidents, and German warships would not enter neutral waters. Special care was to be taken to avoid damage to the city of Danzig. The Navy would be instructed to commence hostilities by a system of code words and numbers disguised as radio traffic of the merchant marine.

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[7] *Weisung Fall "Weiss," OKM, B. Nr. 1 Skl. Ia Op 48/39, Gdkos Chefs, 16. Mai 1939,* in *I. M. T., op. cit.,* XXXIV, Doc. 126–C, pp. 428–42.

[8] *Operationsbefehl Nr. 1 fuer Linienschiff "Schleswig-Holstein," Marinegruppenkommando Ost, B. Nr. Gkds 250/39 Chefs. AI, 21. August 1939,* in *ibid.,* pp. 448–55.

The Luftwaffe issued its first directive for operations against Poland in mid-May. The First and Fourth Air Forces, designated to direct the air effort, were commanded at that time by General der Flieger Albert Kesselring and General der Flieger Alexander Loehr, respectively. The First Air Force would operate in the area of Army Group North and give close support to the Third and Fourth Armies. The Fourth Air Force was to operate in the area of Army Group South and support the Eighth, Tenth, and Fourteenth Armies. Air force planinng proceeded in much the same manner as planning by the Army.[9]

As major subordinate headquarters, the First Air Force would control the 1st Air Division, commanded by Generallieutenant Ulrich Grauert, operating from bases in Pomerania, and the Luftwaffe Training Division (consisting of picked squadrons formerly assigned to experimental work), commanded by Generalleutnant Helmuth Foerster, operating from bases in East Prussia. For its major subordinate headquarters, the Fourth Air Force was to control the 2d Air Division, under Generalleutnant Bruno Loerzer, with headquarters 25 miles southeast of Breslau in German Silesia, and a provisional command known as the Richthofen Air Division. (The German term for Generalmajor Wolfgang Freiherr von Richthofen's position was *Fliegerfuehrer z. b. V.*, or Air Commander for Special Employment, and his force consisted of approximately one air division.) The Richthofen Air Division was to establish its headquarters approximately 70 miles southeast of Breslau, enabling the division to support Fourteenth Army.

The OKL reserve was to consist of the 7th Air Division at Liegnitz in Silesia. The 7th Air Division included the 1st Parachute Infantry Regiment and several air transport groups. (Parachute troops were part of the Luftwaffe under the German concept of organization. Goering had forced this arrangement for paratroop units and antiaircraft units already formed by the Army at the time the armed forces had been expanded.)

The two air forces assigned to direct the air effort against Poland would control 36 groups and approximately 1,400 offensively armed aircraft. All of the Luftwaffe's dive bomber force, 70 percent of its bombers, and 50 percent of the fighter force would be committed to operations, and the two air forces deployed to meet an attack in the west would be weakened by the diversion of combat units to the air effort in the east.

The Air Force plan of operations gave first priority to the destruction of the Polish Air Force in the air and on the ground. The

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[9] *Die Planung und Vorkereitung des Lulkrieges gegen Polen, 1939, Teil C, Planung und Vorbereitung.* Von Rohden Collection. CRS, TAG.

12 major Polish air bases and 75 smaller air fields and landing strips were known to the Luftwaffe, and the first few days should suffice to eliminate any Polish threat from the skies. The German Air Force would then be able to turn its attention to bombing and strafing Polish columns moving to the front, and bombing marshalling yards and rear areas where Polish reserves would be gathering.

To maintain close contact with Army units it was to support, the Air Force detailed liaison officers to the major ground commands. A Luftwaffe commander for all air reconnaissance and flak units supporting the Army was also detailed to each of the two army group headquarters.

The Concentration of Forces

The first troop movements to the east, from late June to mid-August, involved a number of infantry divisions, some of the corps headquarters, and many of the service units required to establish communications and supply installations that would be needed by the troops to follow. The first movement occurred between 26 June and 15 July, when four infantry divisions were dispatched to Pomerania and Silesia. Five more infantry divisions followed between 15 July and 4 August. In some cases troop units dispatched to the frontier areas were rotated back to their home stations once again before their final move to concentration areas shortly before the attack. This measure helped allay Polish fears about an imminent invasion.

An infantry division and panzer brigade arrived in East Prussia during the first week of August. A possible Polish attack against East Prussia in the event of hostilities made it essential that this easternmost German area be secured while troops were concentrating in Pomerania and Silesia. Part IV of the annual military directive provided for the organization of Third Army by I Corps in East Prussia in the event of mobilization. Unlike the other army headquarters that would be formed from existing group commands and corps, Third Army in peacetime had a small permanent staff and could organize rapidly for defense. The exposed province of East Prussia, surrounded on its land sides by Poland and Lithuania, made necessary such preparation for a quick transition from a peace to a war footing.

The concluding movements in the first phase of deployment eastward were completed in early August. A signal regiment arrived in Pomerania to set up the communications net for Army Group North headquarters, and a corps headquarters and two infantry divisions arrived in the Fourth Army area. A corps headquarters, engineers and military police, and an infantry division moved into Eighth

THE CONCENTRATION OF GERMAN FORCES *

0 10 20 30 40 50
MILES

EAST PRUSSIA

POLAND

GERMANY

SLOVAKIA

Danzig

THIRD
Mohrungen

NORTH
Bad Polzin

1/3 20(Mtz)

3

2(Mtz)

FOURTH
Jastrow

32

3

50

21

228

206

217

1

61

1

12

11

XXXX

Narew R.

Bug R.

Vistula R.

2/3 20(Mtz)
Frankfurt am Oder

Poznan

Kutno

WARSAW

Oder R.

Warthe R.

Lodz

13(Mtz)

EIGHTH
Breslau

10

29(Mtz)

4

1(L)

TENTH

14

1

SOUTH
Neisse

Oppeln

3(L)

2(L)

4

8

28

Cracow

Dunajec R.

5

FOURTEENTH
Neutitschein

2

7

4(L)

* From Aufmarsch des Heeres, Fall WEISS, undated map.

576-178 O - 75 (Face p. 71)

Army's area. A corps headquarters, a signal regiment, construction engineers, and two infantry divisions moved into the Tenth Army's area. Two corps headquarters, a signal regiment, and three infantry divisions moved into the area of the Fourteenth Army. A signal regiment and military police units also arrived as the forward echelon of Army Group South's army group troops.

The second series of transfers was designated as the "A" movement, and set in motion in mid-August with Hitler's decision to continue with the build-up of forces. In the north, the personnel assigned to form the army group staff moved to Bad Polzin and established headquarters. Personnel to form Fourth Army established headquarters at Jastrow. Units scheduled to become army group and army troops and moved in at the same time included engineers, signal units, artillery, and air units directly attached to the ground forces for observation and courier purposes. On 16 August four reserve divisions composed of personnel resident in East Prussia were called up for training. A corps headquarters, a panzer division, and elements of two motorized divisions were shifted into the Fourth Army area. [See *map 6.*]

In the south, the headquarters of Rundstedt's army group was established at Neisse. Eighth Army headquarters assembled at Breslau, Tenth Army at Oppeln, and Fourteenth Army headquarters at Neutitschein. All of these headquarters, as well as those of the army group and armies in the north, would become operational on OKH order. The corps headquarters and divisions deployed in the "A" movement to the Army Group South area included elements of three Tenth Army corps, with two Panzer, two motorized infantry, and three light divisions. One corps headquarters moved into Fourteenth Army's area.

The "Y" movement followed immediately upon the "A" movement and was set in motion with Hitler's decision of 23 August setting 26 August as Y-day, when all preparations were to be complete. The remaining elements of the divisions and corps which redeployed only part of their forces in the "A" movement were brought up, together with army group, army, and corps troops, and additional corps, divisions, and separate units were moved in. The remaining elements of two divisions closed into the Fourth Army area in the north. In the south, the remainder of three corps and their divisions moved into Tenth Army assembly areas; one light and two panzer divisions arrived in the area of the Fourteenth Army. For security purposes, a number of the armored and motorized units moved in organic transportation by night from maneuver areas in central Germany.

Concurrent naval movements from mid-August brought fleet units and attached air elements within striking range of Poland or into position to counter British and French attempts at intervention. On 19 August 14 long-range submarines left their home bases at Wil-

helmshaven and Kiel for Atlantic war stations and the British Isles area. The *Graf Spee* departed on 21 August to rendezvous with the supply ship *Altmark*, and take up position as a commerce raider in the South Atlantic. Two more submarines left for the Atlantic area on 22 and 23 August.

Naval Command West (*Marinegruppe West*) was organized on 23 August to control fleet units sent on interception missions against the British and French. The *Deutschland* left Wilhelmshaven for a rendezvous with the supply ship *Westerwald*, and the mission of raiding Allied commerce in the North Atlantic. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* took up positions in the North Sea. The *Admiral Scheer*, the cruisers *Hipper* and *Leipzig*, 3 divisions of destroyers (6 or more ships), 24 of the smaller submarines, approximately 100 naval aircraft, and a number of light vessels for patrol purposes, minesweeping, and local defense missions completed the naval units assigned to meet any Allied attack from the west.

Naval Command East was assigned the *Nuernberg* as flagship for the direction of operations against the Polish Navy, merchant marine, and port defenses. The cruisers, 2 flotillas of destroyers, 14 submarines, and other naval vessels and aircraft to be committed against Poland were in the Baltic area and prepared for active operations on short notice.

The First Air Force headquarters moved to East Prussia and the Fourth to Breslau. The First Air Force comprised 800 aircraft, including 500 bombers, 180 dive bombers, and 120 fighters. The Fourth Air Force controlled 590 aircraft, including 310 bombers, 160 dive bombers, and 120 fighters. The bomber aircraft were mostly Messerschmitt 111's and Dornier 17's. The dive bombers were Junkers 87's, more popularly known as Stukas. The fighters were mostly Messerschmitt 109's and 110's. The OKL reserve had a few additional bombers and two air groups with approximately 250 Junkers 52 transports for paratroop operations. Air units unable to mount their first strikes against Poland from home bases because of range moved to permanent air bases in eastern Germany first, then to landing strips in the vicinity of the frontier on Y–1.

The codeword *Befehlsuebernahme* ("assume command") was sent out by OKH upon Hitler's decision setting Y-day, and Army Groups North and South and Army Group C and their armies became operational on the 23d. Naval and air force headquarters designated to participate also become operational at the same time as the army commands.

With the build-up of forces complete Hitler set dawn on Y-day, 26 August, as the time for the attack, knowing the Russians would not intervene. As General Halder noted in his diary, there would be no

further orders—everything would proceed according to plan.[10] The divisions and other units moved to their final concentration areas as scheduled.

Within the Reich Zone of the Interior, the remaining second, third, and fourth-wave divisions were mobilized. A number of Luftwaffe reserve units were also called up for service. No reinforcement was considered necessary for the Navy, which would mobilize only if Britain and France entered the war.

The Period of Indecision

Hitler rescinded his order to attack late on 25 August when the British and French refused his overtures and Chamberlain guaranteed support to the Poles. Some German units were already moving toward their final assembly areas, and officer messengers, and in some cases commanders themselves, had to intercept the attack forces personally and relay the order to halt the opening of hostilities. In a few cases small German units crossed the frontier and engaged in clashes with Polish border guards before they could be recalled. Apparently, these skirmishes were considered only an additional provocation by the Poles and part of the German war of nerves.

While the Polish and German forces waited under arms, both reported numerous violations of the frontier and occasional shootings, although none was sufficiently sharp to precipitate hostilities. The Germans still hoped to achieve another bloodless conquest; the Poles thought the firm attitude of the Allies would discourage Hitler from starting what must surely develop into a general war.

The delay in the attack allowed sufficient time for the 10th Panzer Division, just formed in the Protectorate, to move into the area of Fourth Army. (There were no Panzer divisions 6 through 9 at this time. These numbers were to be assigned to the Panzer divisions to be formed from the four light divisions.)

The Navy dispatched two more submarines to Atlantic stations. On 30 August OKM received a report from a radio intercept unit that the Polish destroyers *Grom*, *Blyzkawica*, and *Burza* had left Gdynia. The Polish vessels were kept under observation until it was apparent that they were enroute to the British Isles area. Orders were then issued transferring the cruisers, three of the destroyers, and a number of torpedo boats of the Naval Command East force to Naval Command West. Orders already issued for the mining of the Gdynia Bay area were cancelled. The striking units of Naval Command East would be reduced to the *Schleswig-Holstein*, a few destroyers, 14 submarines, a number of smaller surface craft, and attached Luftwaffe units.

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[10] *Kriegstagebuch des Generaloberstén Franz Halder, Band I* (hereafter referred to as the "Halder Diary"), p. 26. Copy in Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

Meanwhile, Hitler had regained his determination. Warning orders to the Army, Navy, and Air Force on 30 August instructed the participating headquarters of all three services to prepare for operations on 1 September. In the course of the afternoon of 31 August, they were directed to proceed with the attack: the time for the commencement of hostilities was set for 0445.

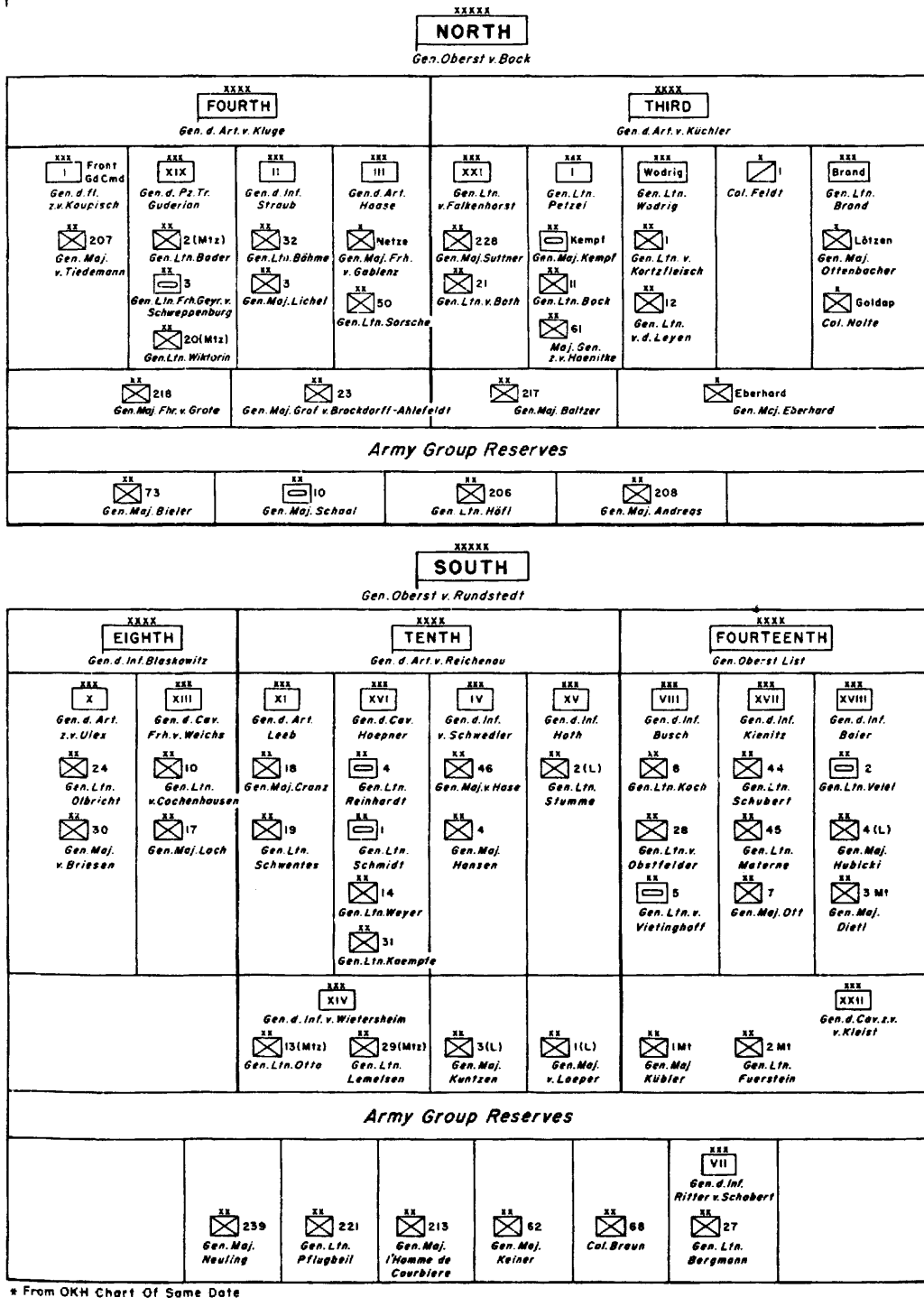
As of 31 August the German ground force arrayed against Poland comprised a total of 55 divisions; its composition and dispositions varied in a number of details from the original plan of operations. Plan WEISS had provided for the commitment only of active units to the initial attack; a number of reserve corps and divisions had been added by the mobilization that had proceeded after Hitler postponed the time of attack on 25 August. Several new organizations formed over the preceding few months were also ready for operations, and a number of provisional commands had been formed. [See *chart 4*].

A provisional corps, called Wodrig after its commander, had been created in Third Army control to control two divisions moving south on Warsaw from East Prussia. The XXI Corps, a Wave II command, had also been added to Third Army. The XIX Corps, an active command formed in the course of the summer, was under General der Panzertruppen Heinz Guderian, former chief of Mobile Troops, and would control the Panzer and motorized infantry divisions of Fourth Army. (As the XIV, XV, and XVI Corps, it had no corresponding *Wehrkreis* organization.) The Panzer brigade sent to East Prussia had been raised to the status of a provisional division and would be committed to operations as Panzer Division Kempf. The 10th Panzer Division had been added to Army Group North. The Kuestrin Frontier Command had been redesignated the 50th Infantry Division. No major changes were made in the order of battle or dispositions of Army Group South but a Wave II corps and several divisions on the right flank of Fourteenth Army would be able to complete their concentration and enter the campaign sooner than would have been the case had operations commenced on 26 August as scheduled.

The frontier commands were also to play a more important part in operations than had first been planned. The three frontier commands along the Westwall were a part of the active Army, but those in the east were police forces under the Reich Ministry of the Interior in peacetime and came under Army control for security duties in the event of war. For the campaign against Poland, the frontier commands in several cases would fill a combat role.

*From OKH Chart of same date.

CHART 4 - GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE 1 SEPTEMBER 1939*



* From OKH Chart Of Same Date

On its extreme left Third Army in East Prussia assigned a small provisional corps of limited combat potential to secure the frontier with Lithuania and the exposed salient of German territory extending into Poland in the direction of Grodno. This force, named Brand, had only two brigades of border and local defense troops. On the Third Army right XXI Corps would cross the frontier with two infantry divisions in a southwesterly direction, with the immediate task of establishing contact with the Fourth Army near Grudziadz. In the center of the Third Army line the I Corps and Corps Wodrig were to attack with one Panzer and four infantry divisions in a drive south toward Warsaw. The 1st Cavalry Brigade was to secure the left flank of the force moving on the Polish capital. One infantry division would form the army reserve. Troops of the XI Frontier Command would be available to hold the rear areas and gaps between Army units as the front moved forward. Third Army would also control the force at Danzig, designated as the Eberhard Brigade and assigned the capture of the city from within. [See *map 7.*]

Fourth Army in Pomerania had the preponderance of armored and motorized troops in Army Group North. Opposite Gdynia and Danzig, the 1st Frontier Command would sever the upper part of the Corridor. South of the 1st Frontier Command, the XIX Corps, with its one Panzer and two motorized divisions, was to form the major striking force of Fourth Army and cut the Corridor at its base. To the right of the XIX Corps, II Corps would commit two infantry divisions. The III Corps would control one infantry division and a provisional brigade to the south of II Corps. The II and XII Frontier Commands, the latter holding the heavily fortified region east of the junction of the Wartha and Oder Rivers, would complete the Fourth Army front to a junction with Rundstedt's Army Group South. Two infantry divisions would form the army reserve, disposed behind the center of the Fourth Army line.

Army Group North reserves would comprise one infantry division in East Prussia, and one Panzer and two infantry divisions in Pomerania. The division in East Prussia was concentrated in the area immediately adjacent to the junction of the Lithuanian, Polish, and German frontiers. The divisions in Pomerania were concentrated behind the center and right of the Fourth Army line.

On the left, Eighth Army, the smallest of the three armies of Army Group South, would have on its right XIII Corps with two infantry divisions. The X Corps with two infantry divisions would be committed in the center of the army front. The XIII Frontier Command would be disposed to the left of X Corps and extend the army group front northward to a junction with the XII Frontier Command of Brock's Army Group North. Eighth Army would have no di-

visions of its own in reserve, but an infantry division of the army group reserve would be disposed in its area.

Tenth Army would attack in the center of Army Group South. On the right XV Corps would commit one light division. In the right center IV Corps would have two infantry divisions. The XVI Corps, consisting of two Panzer and two infantry divisions would be committed north of the IV Corps. The XI Corps would be on the left of the Tenth Army front with two infantry divisions. The XIV Corps, with two motorized infantry divisions, and two light divisions would form the army reserve. The XIV Corps was disposed on the army north flank, one light division was located behind the XI Corps, and one light division to the rear of the junction of the IV and XV Corps.

On the right of Army Group South, Fourteenth Army would commit the XVIII Corps, made up of one mountain, one light, and one Panzer division. Several Slovak battalions would supplement German reconnaissance units on the extreme right flank and capture a number of villages in Poland that the Slovaks claimed as their own. The XVII Corps would form the center of the Fourteenth Army line with its three infantry divisions. The left of the Fourteenth Army would be held by the VIII Corps, with one Panzer and two infantry divisions. The XXII Corps and two mountain divisions were still arriving and would join the attack later.

Army Group South reserves would comprise one infantry division of the VII Corps, and five other infantry divisions. The reserve corps would follow Tenth Army in the attack, behind the XV Corps. Two of the other five infantry divisions would be disposed at the junction of Eighth and Tenth Armies, one would be disposed in the area of Tenth Army, and two at the junction of Tenth and Fourteenth armies.

In the west, Army Group C had been mobilized and become operational at the same time as the army groups on the Polish frontier, with Generaloberst Ritter von Leeb, recalled from retirement, in command. Twelve active, 6 second-wave, 12 third-wave and three fourth-wave divisions comprised Leeb's defense force, supported by the Second Air Force in the north and the Third Air Force in the south. This would hardly suffice to hold a general attack by the French Army, supported by the British Army and Royal Air Force. However, even though the OKH planners did not share Hitler's optimism and were convinced France and Britain would declare war in the event of an attack on Poland, they felt that the Allies would be hesitant to attack and that the Wehrmacht would be able to achieve a quick victory in Poland. The Westwall defenses, meanwhile, would

discourage any British and French offensive until German troops could be shifted from Poland to the west.

On the eve of operations, Germany had all of its divisions under arms. The bulk of the Army, including all of Germany's panzer, motorized, and light divisions, was concentrated in the east. In the west, a minimum force, all infantry divisions, held the Westwall against a possible French and British attack. The remainder of the German ground force, a few reserve infantry divisions, was scattered about in the interior of the Reich.

The strength figures for the German ground forces in the east included 630,000 men in Army Group North and 886,000 in Army Group South. Of the Army Group North total, 320,000 were in the Third Army and 230,000 in Fourth Army; the remaining 80,000 comprised army group troops or units retained under the direct control of OKH. Of the Army Group South total, 180,000 were with Eighth Army, 300,000 with Tenth Army, and 210,000 with Fourteenth Army; the remaining 196,000 were army group or OKH troops.[11]

No unforseen incidents arose to disrupt preparations. The weather remained clear as the troops closed in their final assembly areas for the attack.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

PART THREE

OPERATIONS IN POLAND

Chapter 6

Attack and Breakthrough

The Opening of the Attack

The German attack was a tactical surprise to the Polish Army, despite both the troop concentrations the Polish High Command knew were taking place beyond the frontier and the worsening diplomatic situation. The Polish Government had ordered a general mobilization on 30 August, but many reservists were still en route to join their organizations and some units were in the process of movement to concentration areas or defensive positions when the Wehrmacht commenced operations. Hitler's headquarters, OKW, was in Berlin at the time of the attack, while OKH directed the Army effort from a field headquarters at Zossen, outside the Reich capital.

The German Air Force commenced hostilities at 0440 by bombing Polish air bases at widely separated points throughout the country. A few minutes later the *Schleswig-Holstein* commenced shelling the Polish fortress of Westerplatte in Danzig Harbor at a range of only several hundred yards. The brief but heavy bombardment was followed by the landing of a small German force, which was immediately driven off by the Poles.

The Polish destroyer *Wicher* was sunk defending the port of Gdynia against air attack and bombardment by light German naval units. All five Polish submarines were at sea; three escaped to internment in Sweden, while the *Orzel* and *Wilk* managed to reach safety in Britain.[1] In the waters offshore, German surface, submarine, and air forces quickly established a tight blockade of the Polish port areas.

German ground troops at some points exchanged fire with Polish Army patrols and border police as the Army crossed the frontier. This scattered resistance was quickly overcome and the Poles were forced to withdraw before superior German force and firepower. The German ground forces experienced the usual confusion of troops coming under fire for the first time. Incidents were reported of artillery

[1] "Essay by Grossadmiral Doenitz on the War at Sea," p. 12. X–495. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.



Figure 10. The battleship Schleswig-Holstein.

and tanks firing on friendly forces. Despite a number of minor reverses, fire discipline and control by unit commanders were quickly established and German ground operations proceeded on schedule.

At 1000 on 1 September Hitler reported the opening of hostilities to the assembled Reichstag in the Kroll Opera House in Berlin. According to Hitler, the Wehrmacht was defending German territory and taking necessary counteraction to an organized Polish attack. The Fuehrer stated further that he had no quarrel with Great Britain or France, and was desirous of reaching agreement with both western powers. Hitler also announced that in the event he were to become a casualty, his successor would be Hermann Goering, a clear indication of the degree of authority Hitler had attained over Germany.[2]

Army Group North, 1–3 September [3]

The Opening Battles

Visibility was limited by a heavy mist the morning of 1 September as Bock's Army Group North moved into Poland. Third Army debouched from East Prussia in a drive south on Warsaw with its I Corps and Corps Wodrig in line, and southwestward on Grudziadz with its XXI Corps. Fourth Army attacked eastward across the Corridor from Pomerania, and Danzig was taken without a struggle by Brigade Eberhard. [See *map 7.*]

Rapid progress was made during the morning of 1 September on the Third Army front. During the afternoon the Third Army force

[2] Alan Bullock, *Hitler, a Study in Tyranny* (New York, 1952) pp. 502–03.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section was taken from *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* 1–3 Sep. P. 600a. CRS, TAG.



Figure 11. Polish fortification near Mlawa.

moving on Warsaw encountered strong resistance from the Polish *8th* and *20th Infantry Divisions* and the *Novogrodska Cavalry Brigade* in the Mlawa area. German tank attacks were stopped with heavy loss by antitank fire from Mlawa's concrete fortifications.

Fourth Army engaged elements of the *Pomorska Cavalry Brigade* at the outset of operations in the Corridor, but the Polish cavalrymen withdrew before the German advance. By noon it was apparent to Fourth Army that the *Pomorze Army* was attempting to withdraw to the south and east. Later in the afternoon elements of the Polish *9th Infantry Division* were also identified on the Fourth Army front. Army group intelligence estimated that the Poles were much weaker in the Corridor than anticipated, though they were still believed capable of making a stand behind the Brda (Brahe) River, dividing the lower Corridor.

Third Army Operations, 2 September

Tczew (Dirschau) was taken by an engineer task force of Third Army at dawn on 2 September, but the city's vital bridge across the Vistula was destroyed by the Poles. The task force, known as Group Medem, was unable to seize a crossing and Army Group North had to direct other units to effect crossings at Gniew (Mewe) and near Marienwerder.

Third Army's XXI Corps fought off heavy Polish counterattacks in its advance toward Grudziadz on 2 September. The bridge across the Vistula at Grudziadz was kept under artillery fire to prevent cross-

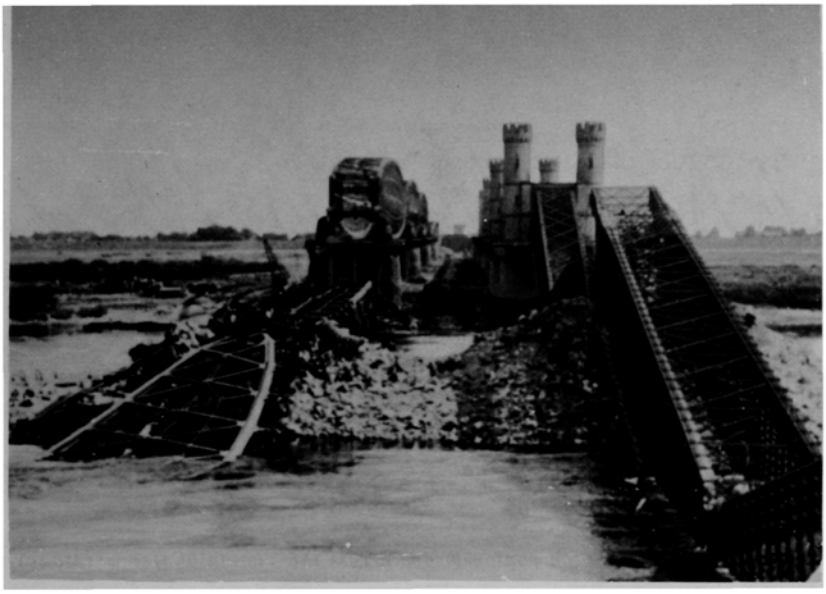


Figure 12. The Tczew (Dirschau) Bridge destroyed by the Poles.

ings by the Poles and the corps prepared to make concerted attacks against the city from north and east the following day.

On the Mlawa front I Corps failed to make any further progress, but Corps Wodrig units broke through Polish field fortifications east of the fortress city and pushed south. Panzer Division Kempf was promptly detached from the I Corps and shifted eastward to support Corps Wodrig in its advance. The Third Army plan for the force moving on Warsaw was quickly revised. Corps Wodrig was to execute an enveloping movement to take the Polish units defending Mlawa in the rear, while the 1st Cavalry Brigade secured the exposed left of the corps as it turned in its swing to the west. The two corps and the cavalry brigade would resume their southward movement in line after destroying the Polish force at Mlawa or compelling it to withdraw.

Fourth Army Operations, 2 September

Fourth Army crossed the Brda during the second day of hostilities, advancing within a few miles of the Vistula. The apprehensions about a strong Polish defense line along the Brda did not materialize. The success of the German advance was threatened for a few hours, however, when Panzer elements of XIX Corps outran their gasoline and ammunition supply. The Poles failed to gain any but a temporary advantage from this situation, and German supply columns fought their way through withdrawing Polish units to the stalled tanks.

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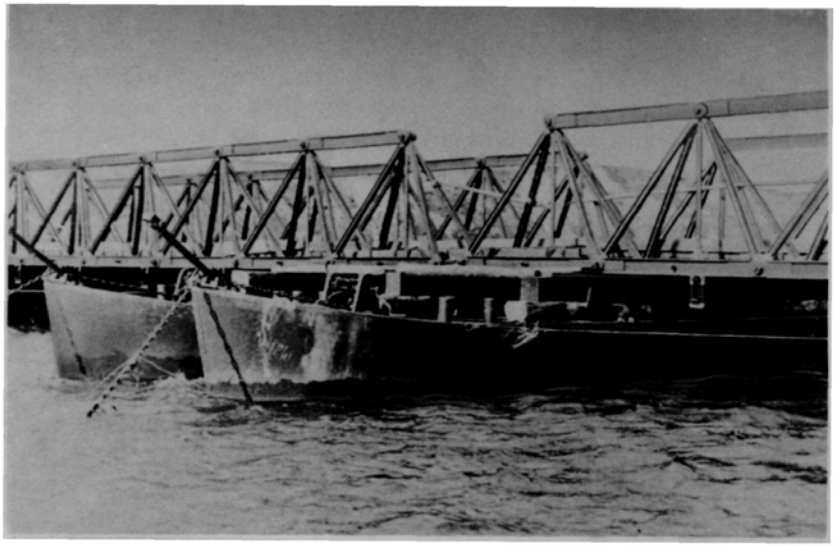


Figure 13. German 20-ton ponton bridge across the Vistula at Gniew (Mewe).

The Fourth Army gains of 2 September sealed off the *Pomorze Army's 9th Infantry Division* and *Pomorska Cavalry Brigade*, and the *27th Infantry Division*, which had been identified farther east in the Corridor. The two Polish infantry divisions were destroyed in a number of attempts to escape through the line formed by the German forces that had crossed the base of the Corridor. The cavalry brigade was shattered in a series of charges against XIX Corps' armor, pitting mounted lancers against tanks.

The 10th Panzer Division of the army group reserve was shifted to the northeast across Fourth Army's rear on 2 September. Bock planned to effect a crossing in the northern area of the Corridor with a strong Panzer force as soon as possible.

The Junction of Third and Fourth Armies

Third Army's XXI Corps identified the *Pomorze Army's 16th Infantry Division* in the Grudziadz area on 3 September, and its *4th Infantry Division* to the east of the city. Heavy air attacks on the *4th Infantry Division* broke up the Polish threat to the left flank of XXI Corps, and the corps continued to advance southwestward to drive out the Polish *16th Infantry Division* and enter Grudziadz. Despite heavy losses, the two Polish divisions succeeded in withdrawing in good order to the south and east, while rear guards fought a strong delaying action within the city itself.

On the Mlawa front the *Mazowiecka Cavalry Brigade* was identified before Third Army's Corps Wodrig. The I Corps, supported

by the attack of Corps Wodrig from the east, broke into the Mlawa defenses and forced the stubborn defenders to withdraw.

Fourth Army sent the 10th Panzer Division across the Corridor just below Danzig and into East Prussia immediately upon the division's attachment from army group reserve on 3 September. The 207th Infantry Division turned to the north after the Panzer units had passed, and forced the Polish forces still in the upper area of the Corridor to withdraw toward Gdynia. Other Fourth Army units cleared the area of the lower Corridor, established contact with Third Army units at Nowe Swiecie (Neuenburg), and launched a series of heavy attacks against the *Pomorze Army's 15th Infantry Division* in position north of Bydgoszcz.

The first phase of the campaign in the north was completed on 3 September with the linking of the Third and Fourth Armies. The *Pomorze Army* force assigned to the defense of the Corridor proper had been destroyed, with a loss of 15,000 men in prisoners alone, 90 field pieces, and large stocks of materiel. The *Modlin Army*, from which the Germans claimed to have captured 10,000 prisoners, had been forced to withdraw southward from the Mlawa area. The Corridor was cut at base and center. The northern end of the Corridor and the fortress of Westerplatte in Danzig Harbor remained in Polish hands, but under constant attack by German ground, air, and sea forces. The *Podlaska Cavalry Brigade* of the *Narew Group* made several local penetrations into East Prussia in the area held by Corps Brand during this period of operations. These actions received much publicity in the foreign press but affected the campaign very little. [See *map 8.*]

Army Group South, 1–6 September [4]

The Advance to the Warta (Warthe)

The morning of 1 September was clear on the front of Rundstedt's Army Group South, which had the advantage of air reconnaissance as it moved into Poland. Eighth Army, on the left, advanced toward Lodz and protected Tenth Army's north flank. Tenth Army, in the center of the army group line, struck out in the direction of Warsaw with the strongest concentration of armor in either army group. Fourteenth Army, on the right, moved toward the industrial area about Cracow and into Galicia, protecting the south flank of the main attack force. [See *map 7.*]

Forward elements of Army Group South penetrated three to four miles into Poland by 0600. Steady progress was reported until 1400, when the army group commander was informed that the retreating

[4] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section was taken from *Kreigstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Sued in Polen 1939.* 1–6 Sep, E 129/1. CRS, TAG.

Poles had demolished numerous bridges and even blown up stretches of roadway to slow the German armored and motorized columns. Tenth Army also reported resistance by rear guards, an engagement with elements of the *Wolynska Cavalry Brigade*, and several incidents of civilians firing on German troops.

No protracted resistance was encountered, and by late afternoon some Army Group South units had advanced as much as 15 miles. The tactics of the new war of movement were first demonstrated during this period of operations. When their armored columns were fired upon or held up by obstacles, the Germans deployed their tank units off the roads and continued their forward move. When necessary, the Luftwaffe was called upon to support the advance by dive bombing centers of Polish resistance. Polish units bypassed by the German armor were engaged by infantry units following the tanks.

Eighth Army reported the *10th Infantry Division* of the *Lodz Army* withdrawing toward Kalisz (Kalisch) and the *14th* and *25th Infantry Divisions* and *Wielkopolska Cavalry Brigade* of the *Poznan Army* retreating to the north and east. Tenth Army reported the Polish *7th Infantry Division* and *Krakowska Cavalry Brigade* of the *Cracow Army* and the *28th* and *30th Infantry Divisions* and *Wolynska Cavalry Brigade* of the *Lodz Army* to be withdrawing to the east. Most of the first day's fighting on the Eighth and Tenth Army fronts was carried on between Polish rear guards and German reconnaissance elements or the advance guard of German armored and motorized units.

Fourteenth Army reconnaissance troops and Slovak units on the right of the army front captured a number of villages in the area immediately to the north of the Slovak frontier by the close of the first day. Other Fourteenth Army units drove elements of the *Rzeszow Armored Cavalry Brigade* from the Novy Targ (Neumarkt) region, and cleared the Jablunka Pass and the area for several miles to the north of the pass of the *Cracow Army's 21st Mountain Division* after hard fighting. The Polish *5th Infantry Division* from the general reserve and the *6th Infantry Division* of the *Cracow Army* were forced to withdraw in the direction of Cracow, and the *Cracow Army's 23d Infantry Division* fell back to the northeast of the city. Units on the left flank of Fourteenth Army then found themselves confronted by strong permanent fortifications guarding the approaches to the industrial complex in the southwest of Poland.

The attack of Army Group South was resumed at 0600 on 2 September. The Poles resisted stubbornly at Mikolow (Nibolai), in the fortifications before Katowice (Kattowitz), and about Czestochowa (Tschenstochau). Eighth Army crossed the upper Prosna, Tenth Army reached the Warta above Czestochowa in its zone of advance,

and Fourteenth Army divisions fought their way forward to converge north of Novy Targ.

Their movements made it apparent to Rundstedt that the Poles intended to establish a defensive line along the Warta River, and hold out in such fortified areas as Katowice and Czestochowa as long as possible. The Germans also found an increasing number of demolitions and other obstacles to the movement of armored and motorized units. A number of reservists sufficient to form two provisional divisions were sent to reinforce the Polish units facing Eighth Army. Elements of several infantry divisions from the Polish general reserve also moved into the area beyond the Warta in the Tenth Army's zone of advance.

Czestochowa was taken on the morning of 3 September, and Tenth Army seized several bridgeheads across the Warta despite determined Polish resistance. Fourteenth Army fought its way through the fortifications about Katowice and Mikolow in its zone of advance, and moved east along the Vistula. The southern Polish armies, bypassed in numerous places by the fast-moving German columns, began a hurried withdrawal. The troops on the front noted a marked decrease in Polish resistance and made extensive gains.

The Advance across the Polish Plain and into Galicia

By the morning of 4 September Army Group South estimated the withdrawing *Poznan Army* incapable of launching a heavy attack on the exposed left flank of the Eighth Army as it advanced northeastward. Tenth Army had virtually destroyed the *Cracow Army's 7th Infantry Division* and taken 1,000 prisoners, including the division commander. Heavy losses had also been inflicted on the *Krakowska Cavalry Brigade.* Tenth Army's Panzer divisions continued the drive eastward, moving beyond Radomsko, while two light divisions protected the right flank of the Panzer units and advanced to the Pilica River. Fourteenth Army reported the destruction of the *Cracow Army's 6th Infantry Division* and a general Polish withdrawal toward Cracow and the east.

The XXII Corps was operational under Fourteenth Army control on 4 September and advancing northward in the Novy Targ sector, with a Panzer, a mountain, and a light division attached. The XVIII Corps, which had controlled these three divisions the morning of the attack, had been withdrawn to assume control of two mountain divisions on the right front of the army and make a crossing into Poland farther to the east.

Additional gains were reported by all three armies on 5 September. Eighth Army was advancing rapidly to the northeast, while its X Corps presented a front to the north. Several battalions of the IV

Frontier Command, a regiment of the 62d Infantry Division, and elements of the 252d Infantry Division crossed the Reich frontier to fill the gap formed as Eighth Army moved farther eastward. The frontier command and the infantry units were immediately organized into a task force known as Group Gienanth and given responsibility for the defense of Army Group South's exposed left flank. As Eighth Army continued to move eastward the front presented by the X Corps became more extended despite the relief afforded by the commitment of Group Gienanth. The *Poznan Army* to the north had not been engaged as heavily as the other Polish armies in the frontier area and still possessed a considerable combat potential.

Tenth Army units were across the Pilica by 5 September, and the way was open for an advance across the Polish Plain to the capital. The Polish reserves had been committed and there were a few units to be drawn upon to reinforce the sagging defense line before Warsaw.

Fourteenth Army drove eastward on Cracow against stiffening resistance on 5 September. The XXII Corps below the Vistula moved in the direction of the San River, and the XVIII Corps fought a way into Poland through the eastern Carpathian passes.

Rundstedt's headquarters revised its earlier estimate of the *Poznan Army's* capabilities on the Eighth Army flank on 6 September and prepared to meet a Polish attack from the north. The army group commander requested additional cavalry for reconnaissance purposes but OKH could make no cavalry available. To restrict the *Poznan Army's* movement and channel its withdrawal, two infantry divisions of the army group reserve were sent into line between X Corps and Group Gienanth, strengthening that part of the Eighth Army front facing north.

Tenth Army continued to move northeastward on a wide front on 6 September, making deep penetrations with its Panzer divisions. The Poles contested the advance of the Panzer divisions bitterly, since they were closest to Warsaw and threatened the eastward retreat of the *Lodz* and *Poznan Armies.* The Panzer divisions were followed by infantry divisions, which quickly cleared the captured areas of bypassed Polish units and stragglers. The Panzer division on the northern flank beat off heavy counterattacks, inflicted severe losses on the Poles, and captured the commander of the Polish general reserve's *29th Infantry Division.* Fourteenth Army captured the key city of Cracow the same day.

Intelligence reports indicated that the Poles were attempting to rally remnants of their *Cracow Army* in the area of Radom. The destruction of the forces concentrating at Radom and known to still be at Lodz would prevent the escape of more organized Polish units beyond the Vistula River. Eighth Army was directed to make a frontal



Figure 14. German Regimental Command Post in Poland.

attack against the force assembling near Lodz. Tenth Army was ordered to envelope the force at Radom from north and south while continuing the drive toward the Vistula.

Meanwhile an order from OKH assigned Fourteenth Army the mission of destroying the Polish forces escaping to the east of the Vistula. Strong armored and motorized forces were to move to the northeast in the direction of Lublin. Polish units that managed to escape destruction west of the Vistula would be caught within this second envelopment in eastern Poland.[5]

The first phase of Army Group South's operations was completed by 6 September. The Poznan Army had been forced to withdraw eastward. The *Lodz Army* was under heavy attack. Cracow had been taken and remanants of the *Cracow Army* at Radom were about to be enveloped by Tenth Army. The *Carpathian Army* had been forced to withdraw toward Lublin and Lwow.

No great number of prisoners had been taken in a single engagement, as had happened in the Corridor to the north a few days earlier. However, Army Group South reported several thousand captives in the Cracow area, and Tenth Army had bypassed thousands of Polish troops in its advance across the Warta; these were still being captured by the infantry units that had followed the armor. The Poles had

[5] *OKH, Gen. St. d. H. Op. Abt. (1) Nr. 1043/39, Geheime Kommandosache, and telecon Rundstedt and Brauchitsch,* in *ibid.*



Figure 15. German Infantry on the march in Poland.

also committed a larger proportion of their general reserve to stem the rapid advance of the stronger southern army group and to meet the threat Rundstedt posed to the capital and control center of the Polish defense effort. Tenth Army had had innumerable obstacles with which to contend, as the Poles destroyed bridges and other construction before its tank columns, and part of Fourteenth Army had had to fight its way through mountain passes defended by picked Polish mountain troops.

To retain control of its widening and moving front Army Group South displaced its headquarters to Lubliniec (Lublinitz), just inside the Polish frontier. Eighth Army moved to Gross Wartenberg, Tenth Army to Radomsko, and Fourteenth Army to Bielsko (Bielitz). [See *map 9.*]

The Air Force and Navy

The mass air attacks in the opening hours of the war destroyed a large part of the Polish Air Force on the ground. Major bases at Warsaw, Grudziadz, Torun, Lodz, Czestochowa, Radom, Katowice, and Cracow were bombed heavily. Some German aircraft were brought down by the few Polish fighters that managed to get into the air, but the Polish planes were soon destroyed or driven off, and had to land at remote bases to refuel. Antiaircraft and small arms fire against low-flying German aircraft was reported as fairly ac-

curate, while antiaircraft fire against bombers flying at medium and higher altitudes was reported as ineffective. The German aircraft proved themselves technically superior to the Polish types in the few reported instances of air-to-air combat.[6]

In addition to these longer range missions, the Luftwaffe bombed all known landing strips and a number of military installations in the border area, and rendered the Army some close support. Polish fortifications on the Tenth Army front were bombed the first day, expediting Tenth Army's advance toward the Warta.

Air attacks on the Polish naval vessels and antiaircraft emplacements in the harbor of Gdynia and on the antiaircart defenses of Hela completed the neutralization of these installations. Dive bombing attacks against the heavy fortifications of the Westerplatte in Danzig Harbor were unsuccessful and soon suspended.

German aircraft returned to base only long enough to refuel and secure more bombs and ammunition. Some German aircraft returned to the attack on the ground facilities of the Polish Air Force while other air units, their original mission accomplished, flew off to disrupt the movement of Polish reinforcements to the front and prevent the withdrawal of those units already committed against the Germans. Poland's east-west rail lines and the rail lines from the south to Gdynia were bombed heavily.

Air observation in support of the German ground forces operated under difficulties peculiar to the terrain and Polish population. German airmen had difficulty distinguishing German and Polish columns because of the heavy dust clouds thrown up from the unimproved roadways over which many units had to move. Thousands of Polish civilians also took to the roads before the German advance, wagons filled high with household goods and belongings. Moving alone in a cloud of dust, these refugee wagon trains resembled the horse-drawn columns of either Army.

A number of light attacks were made by the Polish Air Force. Several involved the participation of Polish aircraft in the air defense of Warsaw and in support of Polish ground units engaged with the German Tenth Army. One bombing attack was made on East Prussia. Several observation missions and fighter sorties were made over Silesia and Bohemia-Moravia, but the Polish Air Force had ceased to exist as an effective fighting force by 3 September. The German First and Fourth Air Forces from that date were free to direct their major effort to the support of the ground forces.

In three days the Luftwaffe had driven the Polish Air Force from the skies, destroyed most of its bases on the ground, and crippled

[6] "*Der Einsatz der Luftwaffe im polnischen Feldzug,*" pp. 18–46. X–244. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

aircraft repair and production facilities. The mobilization of the Polish Army was disrupted by attacks on troop concentration areas and transportation lines. The damage of the first day to the Polish railroads was quickly repaired, but the release of more German aircraft from the task of destroying the Polish Air Force during the next few days made it possible to mount a series of attacks of increasing intensity against the Polish rail system; this interdiction was soon applied to the highways as well. German air units, after exhausting their bomb loads and ammunition, would keep moving columns on the roadways under observation until additional combat aircraft arrived to complete their destruction.

The German Navy played only a small part in operations with the light surface forces, the few submarines, and the old battelship *Schleswig-Holstein* that it committed to the Polish Campaign. When Great Britain and France declared war on 3 September, the Fuehrer countered with a directive ordering general mobilization of all the Reich's resources and permitting the Navy to engage in limited offensive operations.[7] The Germans had already prepared for this eventuality by sending the bulk of their fleet to Atlantic and North Sea battle stations. Thus almost the entire German naval effort was concentrated against Great Britain from 3 September, with little left for the few light Polish fleet units at large in the Baltic.

The *Schleswig-Holstein* remained in the Danzig Bay area, while submarines and destroyers blockaded Gdynia and Hela. Some support was rendered German ground forces in coastal areas, but for the most part the Navy in the Baltic had little to do except protect convoys moving from Stettin and other north German ports to East Prussia and prevent the escape of the few remaining Polish naval and merchant vessels.

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[7] *Weisung Nr. 2 fuer die Kriegsfuehrung, 3 Sep 39, OKW/WFA Nr. 175/39 g. K. Chefs. L I.* PS–438. Records of the *I. M. T.*, National Archives.

Chapter 7

The Destruction of the Polish Army

General

The speed of the German advance made effective direction and coordination of the Polish defense effort increasingly difficult as operations continued. The declaration of war by Great Britain and France on 3 September did not bring with it the relief the Polish High Command had expected. The Hitler directive immediately following the declaration had left the opening of offensive operations in the air and on the ground to the British and French, and it was only a question of time until the German Army would overrun Poland.

An attempt was made to reorganize the battered Polish forces into three armies, one north of the Vistula, a second holding the front from Warsaw to the junction of the Vistula and San Rivers, and the third in the south. The rapid advance of the Germans prevented implementation of this plan.[1]

The two German army groups exerted pressure on the *Poznan Army* from north and south and forced it to continue its withdrawal eastward. Remnants of the *Pomorze Army* also fell back before the Third and Fourth Armies on the withdrawal route followed by the *Poznan Army*. Some units of the *Lodz Army*, under heavy attack by the Eighth Army, were also forced to withdraw in the general direction of Warsaw. The road and rail network of the Polish Plain west of Warsaw was to cause a convergence of these various forces in the area about Kutno. Tenth Army pushed remnants of the *Cracow Army* back into the Radom area, while other units of the *Cracow Army* and the *Carpathian Army* were forced to retreat toward the Lublin area and Lwow before Fourteenth Army. In the extreme north some units of the *Narew Group* withdrew in the direction of Brzesc to avoid being outflanked.

The second phase of German operations consisted of destroying these remaining major Polish forces. German armored units disregarded their exposed flanks and raced ahead of the infantry divisions to cut the retreating Polish armies into smaller groups. The Luft-

[1] Lt Gen M. Norwid Neugebauer, *The Defence of Poland (September 1939)* (London, 1942), p. 150.

waffe had complete control of the air and was able to keep withdrawing Polish columns under constant observation and attack. Forests areas occupied by Polish units were set afire with incendiaries and the troops attacked from the air when they fled into the open. The national government at Warsaw prepared for movement to the south and east, where it might continue the war or escape to Romania.

The German successes against the Polish Army were dampened by the situation in the west. Britain and France might go over to the offensive at any time, and they held the advantage as long as the bulk of the German Army and the Luftwaffe were committed in Poland. As OKH viewed the situation, it was imperative that operations in Poland be brought to a conclusion as speedily as possible, and that the bulk of the German forces be shifted to the west. The Luftwaffe would have little difficulty in moving its air units from the east to the large number of bases in the west. The army, however, with its far larger force and with its tanks and artillery, required more transportation and time to shift from one theater of war to another. As a consequence, OKH was opposed to any proposal to move deeper into Poland than was necessary to effect the destruction of the Polish Army. This strategic plan of OKH was opposed by Bock and Guderian, who were eager to make a deep armored penetration into eastern Poland to prevent the escape of major Polish forces into the Pripyat Marshes area.

A number of the usual reports on atrocities by both sides made their appearance during this period. One that received a great amount of publicity occurred on Sunday, 3 September, when Polish troops at Bydgoszc claimed to have been fired upon by minority Germans. A number of German civilians resident in the Bydgoszcz area were shot in an operation directed by the local Polish commander, and the Reich government charged the Polish Government with terrorism. The Polish Government, in turn, used the incident to support its claim of fifth column activities on the part of the German minority resident within Poland's borders. The "Bloody Sunday" incident was promptly used in the psychological warfare effort of both Germans and Poles.

Army Group North, 4–17 September [2]

Operations in Western Poland

Third Army reported its XXI Corps in firm control of Grudziadz on 4 September. Engineers immediately set to work repairing the bridges across the Vistula, to establish a further linkup with Fourth Army. [See *map 8.*]

[2] *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* 4–17 Sep. P. 600a. CRS, TAG.

On the left of the Third Army front I Corps and Corps Wodrig regrouped to resume their southward advance from Mlawa. The army group was critical of the operations just concluded at Mlawa, taking the position that Third Army should have bypassed the Polish defenses. Little resistance was encountered immediately south of Mlawa, but a stiff defense was expected along the Narew River.

Fourth Army opened the second phase of operations with its XIX Corps clearing the area west of the Vistula near Grudziadz of Polish units still trying to escape from the Corridor. Reaching the river, the XIX Corps moved northward. Other Fourth Army units south of Grudziadz crossed the Vistula the same day, while fighting a series of actions with the remnants of Polish units that had infiltrated through the XIX Corps. At the base of the Corridor Fourth Army forced the *Pomorze Army's 15th Infantry Division* to withdraw from its positions north of Bydgoszcz.

With the Corridor operation completed Army Group North began to plan the movement of the bulk of Fourth Army to the east flank of the army group front. This movement would enable Army Group North to clear its left front of Polish forces and execute a wide encirclement east of Warsaw. Bock understood that he had the authority to order such a major move as a result of a telephone conversation with Brauchitsch on 2 September.[3] According to the army group plan, Fourth Army would move on Lomza, from concentration areas in East Prussia east of Third Army, and drive south to destroy the Polish forces on the left flank of the army group front. This accomplished, Fourth Army would move west to envelop other Polish forecs still facing Third Army. Some risk would be involved in stripping the Corridor area and the region immediately to the south of combat units. Polish remnants would be left far behind the German battle line, opposed only by security troops and service units.

Army Group North was obliged to revise its plan with the receipt of orders from OKH on 4 September and during the night of 4–5 September. In the first of the two orders, OKH authorized the organization of only a small provisional force of fortress troops and reservists from units already available in East Prussia to move on Lomza. The second order directed the Fourth Army to continue its drive on Warsaw from the northwest. Panzer and motorized units (XIX Corps) could be shifted to the left front of Third Army, but would have to remain west of the line Ostrow Mazowiecka-Warsaw in the drive on the Polish capital.

Army Group North still held that its left should be strengthened further. A call by Bock to Brauchitsch the morning of 5 September confirmed the OKH order. The commander in chief of the Army

[3] "Bock Diary," pp. 20–25.

gave as reason for his decision the belief that the Poles no longer had an effective army. Despite Bock's remonstrations, OKH would permit no moves further eastward than were necessary, in view of Germany's weak situation along the Westwall.

An additional link was established between the Third and Fourth Armies southeast of Grudziadz on 6 September, and the German line across the Southeastern area of the Corridor was shortened. The XIX Corps headquarters and one division were immediately withdrawn and moved to the left flank of Third Army, where the corps would organize the provisional force OKH had authorized for the move on Lomza. Army Group North moved its headquarters to Allenstein in East Prussia the same day, and remained there to the end of the campaign. Third Army moved to the frontier area south of Allenstein and Fourth Army shifted to a point within the Corridor northwest of Bydgoszcz.

Operations in Eastern Poland

The XXI Corps concentrated in the Pisia (Pisseck) River area on its return to East Prussia, and was redesignated Group Falkenhorst, after its commander. The 10th Panzer Division was added to Falkenhorst's command, which was to consist of an armored division, an infantry division, and a brigade of fortress troops and reservists from East Prussia. Army Group North was apprehensive, and felt that Group Falkenhorst would not be strong enough to accomplish its mission. Moreover, the commitment of Group Falkenhorst would draw the attention of the Poles to the area in which the army group planned to concentrate the Panzer and motorized divisions of XIX Corps for a fast drive deep into eastern Poland. Despite army group's misgivings, Group Falkenhorst was committed on 7 September, when it moved south on Lomza with the 10th Panzer Division, followed by the brigade of East Prussian troops.

Army Group North received a welcome but premature message from Rundstedt's headquarters the evening of 8 September. According to Army Group South, the XVI Corps had taken Warsaw and established several crossings on the Vistula. The entry in the headquarters journal of Army Group North noted that "The drama is approaching its finale." The hope of a quick victory was dashed when it was learned that only one division had reached Warsaw and had been forced to withdraw, and that no crossing had been made along the Vistula.

The 20th Motorized Infantry Division arrived as the first of the XIX Corps units in East Prussia and concentrated in the rear of Group Falkenhorst. Corps headquarters itself arrived the day Group Falkenhorst was committed. The XIX Corps was retained under army group control and prepared to enter the battle against the

Polish *Narew Group* without waiting for the rest of its divisions. The 10th Panzer Division and East Prussian brigade were relieved from attachment to Group Falkenhorst and attached to the XIX Corps. Guderian quickly formed a line on the left of Group Falkenhorst and moved south on 9 September, followed by the 20th Motorized Infantry Division. Group Falkenhorst, having lost its armored striking force to the XIX Corps, resumed the use of its original designation as the XXI Corps. The XIX Corps was able to report immediate progress southward, but the corps' left flank was completely uncovered and exposed to attack by the *Podlaska Cavalry Brigade* and other *Narew Group* units still in the Grodno area and about Bialystok.[4]

The commitment of the XIX Corps on the Third Army front immediately posed another problem. The original boundary of Ostrow Mazowiecka, set for Third Army and Group Falkenhorst, would seriously restrict the freedom of action of the fast-moving armored units and prevent full exploitation of their capabilities. Army Group North requested OKH to assign another objective, suitable for the execution of a wide envelopment. The line Minsk Mazowiecki-Siedlce was settled upon. The army group planners felt that the area west of Siedlce was still too narrow for a sweeping envelopment east of Warsaw. However, it would suffice to form a link up with Army Group South east of the Vistula. Headquarters OKH remained firm in its decision to keep its forces as far to the west as possible.

The XIX Corps' 10th Panzer Division crossed the Narew at Wizna the day it attacked. The following morning the 20th Motorized Infantry Division crossed the river at a point some miles to the west. The corps commander was immediately ordered to move south across the Bug to intercept Polish forces withdrawing eastward from the Vistula.

The XXI Corps, on the right of the XIX Corps, was held up by Polish fortifications at Nowogrod at the outset of the drive into eastern Poland. Though it managed to force the Polish *18th Infantry Division* to withdraw, the XXI Corps could not maintain the pace of the advance set by the XIX Corps and fell behind.

The 20th Motorized Infantry Division became heavily engaged with elements of the Polish *18th Infantry Division* in the vicinity of Zambrow on 10 September. Units of the 10th Panzer Division were diverted to assist the motorized division, and inflicted heavy losses on the Poles. The remainder of the 10th Panzer Division, followed by the 3d Panzer Division, which had meanwhile rejoined the corps,

[4] *Kriegstagebuch des Generalkommandos XIX A. K. ueber den Feldzug in Polen, 1.9.39—25.9.39.* P-250a. CRS, TAG.

penetrated to the Nurzyck (Nurzec) River, a tributary of the Bug, west of Bielsk. [See *map 10.*]

Command control over the movements of these Panzer divisions and the motorized division was necessarily restricted to radio. The corps staff also experienced some difficulty in performing its proper function by reason of the frequent moves over long distances to keep the headquarters immediately behind the advancing divisions.

The southward movement of the XIX Corps also exposed its left flank to a Polish attack from the Bialystok area to the east. On 11 September Army Group North directed that Corps Brand secure this flank by a move against Bialystok. On the same day the 2d Motorized Infantry Division began moving southward to rejoin XIX Corps, while the corps' 23d Infantry Division remained in the border area.

Meanwhile I Corps and Corps Wodrig of Third Army moved rapidly toward the Bug after crossing the Narew. Advance elements of Corps Wodrig were across the Bug River by 10 September and drove south to intercept Polish units reported by air reconnaissance to be withdrawing eastward from Warsaw. Third Army headquarters moved to a new location southeast of Mlawa the same day.

Intelligence reports indicated that the Polish Government had fled to the Lwow area and that the Polish High Command had established headquarters in the fortress city. A large number of Polish units had managed to escape to the east of the Vistula, and it could therefore be expected that the Poles would attempt to establish a new defense line in southeastern Poland. A natural line already existed, from Brzesc down the Bug River to Lwow, thence to the west, and south along the San River to the Polish frontier. A deep drive into southeastern Poland would be necessary if this new defense line was to be destroyed before it could be completely organized.

Army Group South had already been ordered to move deeper into eastern Poland, in the direction of Lublin. Headquarters OKH on 11 September changed the objective of Army Group North to the line Kowela—Slonim. This would effect a second encirclement of Polish forces in the eastern part of the country, beyond the Bug River.

On 12 September OKH directed another change in the mission of Army Group North. The remnants of the Polish armies in the west were all but encircled about Kutno and in the area between that city and Warsaw. The army group's Third Army would be able to exert additional pressure on these Polish armies by investing Warsaw from the east and blocking escape from the city. Accordingly, OKH ordered Army Group North to execute a right turn with a part of its force and present a new front to the west. Third Army's I Corps was

ordered to seize the river crossings into the city but to avoid becoming involved in a major engagement in the city itself, where house-to-house fighting would be costly in casualties and would prevent the disengagement of the corps when the expected order to resume the march to the southeast was received. Other Third Army forces would advance to the line Garwolin-Siedlce and establish a front to the southeast. The XIX Corps would drive east of the Bug and take Brzesc, to protect the left flank of the army group and make it possible to resume the army group advance into southeastern Poland with a minimum of delay.

The OKH order of 12 September also made Eighth Army responsible for operations at Kutno and released Fourth Army for movement to the east of the Army Group North front. Bock assigned Fourth Army responsibility for the security of the area in the direction of Bialystok, with Corps Brand and the XXI Corps attached.

The XIX Corps on 12 September controlled the 3d and 10th Panzer Divisions and the 20th Motorized Infantry Division, and the 2d Motorized Division had also rejoined the corps. The 10th Panzer Division led the advance on the left, followed by the 3d Panzer Division, echeloned out to the left rear. On the right the 20th Motorized Division led the advance, followed at some distance by the 2d Motorized Division, which was shifted to the rear of the 3d Panzer Division the following day. The lack of infantry on the left of the armored units was a cause of some concern at army group headquarters, since strong Polish forces were believed to be in the Pripyat Marshes and the heavily forested area to the east.

The difficulty in shifting units across the rear of XIX Corps in order to establish a front to the east was resolved by giving priority to XIX Corps. This involved some risk until the roads to the east were sufficiently clear of XIX Corps columns moving southward from East Prussia, but units of the *Narew Group* still west of Grodno and Bialystok were in no position to take advantage of the opportunity to attack the flank of the German columns en route to the south.

The Polish forces immediately east of Warsaw fought desparately but without coordination or direction of effort as Third Army's I Corps cleared the area to the Vistula. The army's Corps Wodrig reported the capture of 8,000 prisoners on 15 September alone as it moved southward. It was Bock's intention to direct the XIX Corps to send half of its force in the direction of Slonim to the northeast and the other half toward Kowela to the southeast after the capture of Brzesc. The commander of Army Group North estimated that infantry would require eight days to accomplish these missions, and the armored and motorized units could reach the two objectives in a

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fraction of that time. Bock did not consider it necessary to commit any further forces to secure the vast Pripyat Marshes area.

The I Corps laid siege to the Warsaw suburb of Praga on 16 September. Farther south Corps Wodrig completed the destruction of Polish remnants that had fled across the Vistula from the Radom area before the Army Group South advance. The 1st Calvary Brigade patrolled the east bank of the Vistula to prevent further crossings by the Poles.

Fourth Army headquarters was operational southeast of Lomza on 16 September. This permitted Third Army to move its headquarters to Wegrow, where it could direct operations against Warsaw more closely. Bialystok was in German hands, and the Fourth Army front was secure as far south as Bielsk. Polish units identified on the front to the northeast indicated no threat to the army group's left flank.

Operations at Brzesc

On 14 September the 10th Panzer Division reported that its forward elements had reached Brzesc. The 3d Panzer Division, which had shifted to the left rear of the 10th Panzer Division, covered the corps' left flank by pushing reconnaissance elements out in the direction of Kobryn. The corps commander hurried to join the force that had reached the objective, and the 20th Motorized Infantry Division, its operations against the Polish *18th Infantry Division* completed, was shifted eastward to give the Panzer units at Brzesc additional infantry support.

The initial German attack against Brzesc penetrated the city's outer fortifications, and the garrison withdrew into the fortress, known as the Citadel, that formed the core of the city's defensive system. An attempt to take the Citadel by a surprise attack was a failure, and Guderian decided that a determined assault by a larger force would be necessary.

On 16 September the 10th Panzer and 20th Motorized Infantry Divisions launched a concerted attack on the fortress, and took the outer line of defenses. However, the infantry regiment of the 10th Panzer Division failed to advance immediately behind the artillery barrage laid down for its support, and the inner fortress remained in Polish hands.

The Citadel was finally taken on 17 September, when an infantry regiment of the 20th Motorized Infantry Division launched an assault as the Polish garrison was attempting to break out of the fortress and escape to the west. A total of 600 prisoners were taken by the Germans in this final phase of the Brzesc operation.

While the 10th Panzer and 20th Motorized Infantry Divisions were engaged in taking Brzesc, the 3d Panzer Division moved around the city to the east and drove southward in the direction of Wlodowa.

The 2d Motorized Infantry Division, following the 3d Panzer Division, was assigned the mission of securing the left flank of the corps and moved eastward in the direction of Kobryn. The headquarters of the XIX Corps moved to Brzesc and prepared to meet the Russians, since the corps could not evacuate Brzesc before their arrival.

Active operations ended for part of the XIX Corps with the capture of Brzesc and its Citadel. The 10th Panzer and 20th Motorized Infantry Divisions remained in the Brzesc area. The 3d Panzer Division, which had moved southward on Wlodowa, and the 2d Motorized Division, moving on Kobryn to the east, were to continue their small actions, cutting off Polish units attempting to escape eastward and taking numerous prisoners. [See *map 10.*]

The 2d Panzer Division of Army Group South was reported moving in the direction of Wlodowa. The XIX Corps was ordered to remain in place and be prepared to effect a junction with Rundstedt's army group. This order was never carried out and no link up of German forces was actually effected east of the Bug River. The 2d Motorized Infantry Division shortly withdrew from Kobryn to rejoin the corps at Brzesc. The 3d Panzer Division was also withdrawn on 20 September, as the corps made preparations to move to East Prussia. The XIX Corps was attached to Fourth Army the same day.

The Intervention of the Russians

Army Group North was informed of the Red Army's movement into eastern Poland by OKH early on 17 September, and was directed to remain west of the line along the Bug River-Brzesc-Bialystok. Units of the XXI Corps in the Bialystok area and a motorized division of XIX Corps in the Brzesc region had already advanced east of this line. These units were to be permitted to remain east of the line long enough to complete their missions, after which they were to withdraw. The plan to send armored and motorized infantry colums to Slonim and Kowela was abandoned. Despite the OKH order to confine its operations to the area west of the Bug-Brzesc-Bialystok line, Army Group North instructed its air reconnaissance units to continue flying missions to Grodno and other points deep enough to provide security for the army group. [See *map 10.*]

The second phase of operations by Army Group North was completed with the intervention of the Red Army. All organized resistance in the area between Warsaw and Brzesc had ended, and Army Group North had established contact with Army Group South across the Vistula at Gora Kalwarja. Farther east advance Panzer units of XIX Corps had established radio contact with Panzer elements of Rundstedt's force and only a few miles separated the armored spearheads of the two German army groups. Prisoners taken on 16 and 17 September represented half the identified Polish divisions and almost

one-third of the cavalry brigades, and their statements indicated complete despair on the part of the remnants of the Polish Army.

Relations with the Russians suffered several setbacks at the outset in the Army Group North area. Russian aircraft bombed a bridge nine miles west of Bialystok on 17 September, killing three German soldiers and several Labor Service men. Other Russian air attacks inflicted casualties on advance units of XIX Corps east of the Bug.

Warsaw presented a special problem with the intervention of the Russians. The capital was held by a large garrison, reinforced by the units that had escaped encirclement in the battles farther west, and a large part of the heavy artillery required for an assault on Warsaw's defenses was committed at Modlin, the fortress city a short distance down the Vistula. The bulk of the army group's armor was far to the east at Brzesc, and Hitler was unwilling to accept the heavy casualties an infantry assault on Warsaw would cost. However, the Fuehrer was anxious to gain possession of the city before the arrival of the Russians, to impress the Red Army and prevent the formation of a Communist puppet government in the Polish capital.

To weaken the determination of the population of Warsaw to resist, a leaflet drop over the city had been made on 15 September, urging noncombatants to leave and promising fair treatment and the release of the garrison as soon as the formalities of surrender were completed. The Germans had to take into account the matter of foreign public opinion about the lives of noncombatants and the large diplomatic colony still inside Warsaw. The United States Congress was soon to convene in special session, and the Congress of American States had called on its members to meet. The killing of large numbers of civilians and disregard of accepted custom in repatriating diplomatic representatives would win the German Government no friends in either congress. The United States arms embargo was still in force, prohibiting the sale of weapons and munitions to the Allies, and the attitude of the American states toward the German attack was still undeclared.

Army Group South, 7–17 September [5]

All three of its armies reported progress as Army Group South entered the second phase of operations, and OKH cancelled its planned airborne attack on the Vistula crossing at Pulawy. The three army headquarters had to displace forward again to maintain proper control over their advancing units. On 7 September Eighth Army moved to the vicinity of Lodz, as it pressed the attack against that city and the *Lodz Army*. Tenth Army moved to Konskie on 9 September as it prepared to destroy forces of the *Cracow Army* con-

[5] *Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Sued in Polen 1939.* 7–17 Sep, E 129/1. CRS, TAG.

centrated at Radom. Fourteenth Army moved to a point southeast of Cracow the same day and continued its drive to the east and northeast. Army Group South moved its headquarters on 13 September to Kielce where it remained until the end of operations. [See *map 9.*]

A series of separate battles developed on each of the army fronts. These were simultaneous actions, with each German army attempting to envelop and destroy the Polish units on its front and prevent their escape to the east.

Eighth Army

The combat potential of Eighth Army was increased considerably at the outset of the second phase of Army Group South's operations with the attachment of the XI and XVI Corps from Tenth Army. The XI Corps held the right of the army line, while XVI Corps reached the suburbs of Warsaw with its 4th Panzer Division on 8 September and its 1st Panzer Division penetrated to the Vistula.

The Eighth Army's successes against the *Lodz Army* and its deep penetration northeastward across the Polish Plain were to work to Eighth Army's temporary disadvantage in the area of the X Corps at the outset of the second phase of operations, however. The Gienanth Group and the 213th Infantry Division from the army group reserve on the army's north flank were left far to the west. The 221st Infantry Division from the army group reserve was disposed on a very wide front and was also too far to the west to come to the support of X Corps units in case of an attack from the north. The continued advance of Eighth Army to the northeast made necessary an increasing prolongation of the line held by X Corps against the *Poznan Army*, particularly on the front of the German 30th Infantry Division.

The 30th Infantry Division made some redispositions to meet a possible attack, but was still in an unfavorable position for defense. Division units were strung out along an open flank for a distance of more than 20 miles and advancing northeastward in column, with only small detachments thrown out for security. The division artillery was scattered throughout the column and a coordinated defensive fire would have been impossible. [See *map 9.*]

At noon on 10 September the German 30th Infantry Division reported itself under heavy attack from the north by a Polish force estimated at two or three infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades. The army commander first considered counterattacking with the XIII Corps, but discarded this plan in favor of directing the X Corps to turn its front to the north. The 30th Infantry Division lost some ground to the Poles, but the support of the other two infantry divisions of the corps made it possible to establish a new line the following day.

A number of antitank and other army group units were made available to Eighth Army and hurried into line to bolster the front, and the XI Corps was directed to attack the Polish penetration on its eastern shoulder.

Despite the heavy losses incurred by the 30th Infantry Division, the Polish attack served the Germans in that it hastened the encirclement of the *Poznan Army* at Kutno. The diversion of units to make the attack weakened the eastern front of the Polish force and the XI Corps succeeded in driving the Poles to the west of the Bzura and farther away from Warsaw and Modlin and any possible escape to the two fortress cities.

On 11 September OKH placed Eighth Army in control of operations against the Polish forces about Kutno, and the army moved its headquarters to Lodz. The German plan for the operation provided for attacking the Poles from the west, south, and east, while Bock's army group blocked escape north across the Vistula. A day later OKH directed the attachment of the III Corps of Fourth Army south of the Vistula to the Eighth Army as Army Group North prepared to regroup and shift Fourth Army to the drive east of Warsaw. A provisional force was organized to hold the north bank of the Vistula against Polish crossings from the Kutno area.

Included in the Kutno encirclement at this time were 12 Polish divisions, including the *Poznan Army's 14th*, *17th*, *25th*, and *26th Infantry Divisions*, and the *Wielkopolska* and *Kresova Cavalry Brigades;* remnants of the *Lodz Army's 2d*, *10th*, *13th*, *28th* and *30th Infantry Divisions* and *Wolynska Cavalry Brigade;* and battered units of the *Pomorze Army's 4th*, *15th* and *16th Infantry Divisions* that managed to escape destruction following the junction of the German Third and Fourth armies across the base of the Corridor. This represented more than one third of the entire Polish land force. Some concern was expressed at OKH and the headquarters of both army groups about the capability of this Polish force to break out to the east to join the garrison of Warsaw. For the next few days this encirclement, a development of the original OKH plan to destroy the bulk of the Polish armies west of the Vistula, was to become a focal point of attention in the campaign.

Eighth Army controlled a total of six corps for the operation against the Polish force at Kutno, including the XI and XVI Corps attached from Tenth Army. These corps were deployed in a rough circle about the Polish force centered between the Vistula and Bzura. One more attempt by the Poles to break out of the encirclement and escape to the southeast on 12 September was thwarted despite the loss of some ground by the Germans. The desperate attacks of the Poles only served to exhaust further their few units still intact.

The XI and XVI Corps reverted from Eighth to Tenth Army control on 15 September, as Tenth Army was made responsible for operations against Kutno from the east. The commander of the Polish force was finally identified as General Bortnowski, of the *Poznan Army.* Despite his hopeless position, Bortnowski made one more effort to break through the German line on 16 September, this time to the north and east in an attempt to cross the Vistula and reach Modlin. This final attempt was fruitless, and the Eighth Army took advantage of the weakening Polish situation to compress the Kutno force into a compact mass and a target small enough for a concentrated air assault.

The following day, 17 September, German air units attacking Warsaw were diverted long enough from their target to deliver a series of heavy air attacks on the encircled Poles and expedite the movement of ground units toward Kutno. The Polish defensive organization collapsed, and 40,000 prisoners were taken. A strong Polish force managed to fight its way through the German line and moved toward the forested area southwest of Modlin, below the Vistula. This force was immediately engaged by Tenth Army and destroyed.

At the conclusion of the second phase of Army Group South operations Eighth Army was still occupied in clearing the Kutno area of the last remnants of its Polish force. While Tenth Army completed the destruction of those Polish units that had escaped east of the Bzura, Eighth Army destroyed all those remaining west of the river. Since it was not in the area of the demarcation line between the Russian and German halves of the country and had no orders to move in that direction Eighth Army was not immediately affected by the sudden Russian advance into eastern Poland. [See *map 10.*]

Tenth Army

The deep penetration of Tenth Army prevented the Polish forces near Radom from completing their defensive deployment as the second phase of Army Group South's operations began. The *Lodz Army,* already under attack by the Eighth Army on the German left, could not prevent Tenth Army tank units from moving up the north bank of the Pilica toward the Vistula and Warsaw. Bypassed on the south, the *Lodz Army* was forced to fall back on the Polish divisions at Kutno, and Tenth Army could make its major effort against the Polish force at Radom. [See *map 9.*]

The Radom force on 8 September consisted of survivors of the Polish *3d*, *19th*, and *29th Infantry Divisions* from the general reserve, the *Krakowska Cavalry Brigade* and *7th Infantry Division* of the *Cracow Army*, and the *12th Infantry Division* from the general reserve. All but the *12th Infantry Division* had been heavily engaged and had but a fraction of their original strength. Depleted as this

force was, it succeeded in slowing the German advance toward the Vistula.

Tenth Army was directed by Rundstedt to destroy the Polish force at Radom by an envelopment from north and south. This would enable Tenth Army to seize crossings on the Vistula and press forward to a junction with Army Group North at Warsaw. The Tenth Army order of the same date assigned XIV and XV Corps the mission of enveloping the Polish force from the north and south, while IV Corps tied it down with attacks from the west and southwest.

Hard fighting developed as Panzer units reached the Vistula north and south of the Polish force at Radom late on 8 September. The stubborn resistance of the Poles required the full attention of Tenth Army, and the XI and XVI Corps on the left flank of Tenth Army were temporarily attached to Eighth Army.

Tenth Army destroyed the Polish force at Radom by 11 September and took 60,000 prisoners. A few Polish units of regimental strength withdrew into the more wooded areas and continued a sporadic resistance that tied down a number of German divisions for several more days. Bridges across the Vistula, including the important crossing at Pulawy, were secured. Tenth Army was directed to move the IV Corps across the river and in the direction of Lublin, to support the advance of Fourteenth Army on that city and its junction with Army Group North. The XIV Corps would remain west of the Vistula temporarily, and clear the area of Polish remnants still trying to escape across the river.

On 13 September Tenth Army was given control over the VII and VIII Corps on the left flank of Fourteenth Army. The two corps were directed to continue their advance eastward, enveloping the Polish force at Bilgoraj and supporting the movement of Fourteenth Army on Lublin. This shift gave Tenth Army control over all German forces moving on Lublin from the west.

The IV Corps in the center of the Tenth Army front was across the Vistula on 14 September and moving east on a small Polish force at Krasnik. The city of Krasnik was taken on 15 September, and the corps moved rapidly past Lublin toward the Wieprz River. The XIV Corps concentrated on the west bank of the Vistula but did not cross in force, since some of its units were still occupied in clearing the area east of Radom of Polish remnants. On the Tenth Army right, the VII and VIII Corps attached from Fourteenth Army fought hard to destroy the Polish forces at Bilgoraj.

On 15 September Tenth Army reassumed control over the XI and XVI Corps that had been attached temporarily to Eighth Army, and Tenth Army became responsible for two fronts, one facing north toward Warsaw and the other east toward Lublin. The two corps

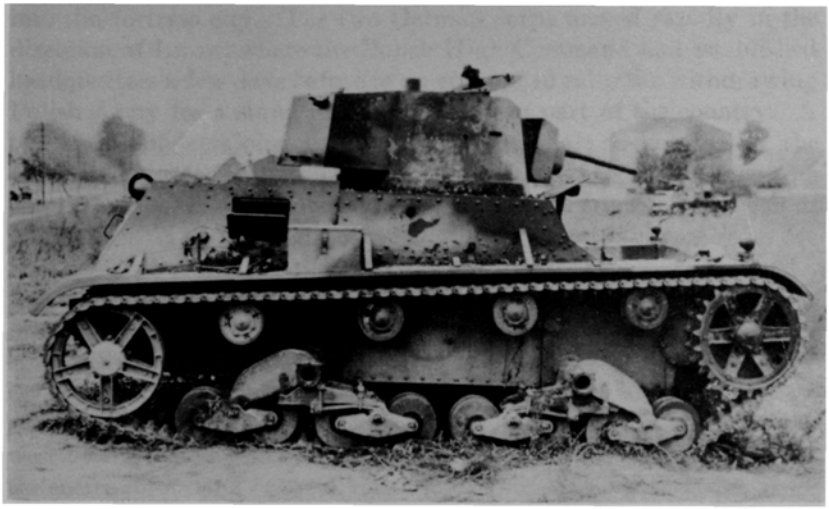


Figure 16. Polish light tank disabled by antitank fire near Warsaw.

on the Warsaw front would lay siege to the Polish capital from the south and move Panzer units between Warsaw and the Polish forces at Kutno, in support of the Eighth Army effort against the encircled western Polish armies. This would also provide flank protection for Tenth Army on the left, originally the mission of Eighth Army, and would free Eighth Army to concentrate on reducing the Polish force within the encirclement.

Tenth Army units on the Warsaw front held an east-west line. One infantry division was assigned to hold the southern approaches to the city, while the army concentrated stronger forces to move between Warsaw and the mass of Polish units at Kutno. The army commander directed the XI corps to establish a bridgehead west of the Bzura River, to enable the XVI Corps to cross with its armor and attack the Poles from the east. This operation was worked out in close coordination with Eighth Army, pressing in on the Poles from the northwest, west, and southwest.

The bridgehead across the Bzura was established by 16 September, and the two Panzer divisions of XVI Corps prepared to attack immediately, with strong infantry support. A sharp spoiling attack by the encircled Polish force, in an attempt to break out to the east, prevented the implementation of this plan. Two infantry divisions were diverted to stem the attack, and a Panzer division was shifted northward to interpose itself between the Polish force and the capital. The disruption of the German plan mattered little, however, as the Polish force at Kutno expended its strength in attempts to break through the German encirclement.



Figure 17. German antiaircraft gun supporting advancing Infantry along the Bzura River.

The Tenth Army was still committed against the eastern side of the Kutno encirclement as the Eighth Army and Luftwaffe launched a concerted attack the following day. The Polish units that escaped in the course of this action, most of them from the *Poznan Army*, were caught between the Vistula and Tenth Army units west of Warsaw. Twelve thousand prisoners were taken and Tenth Army moved on the Vistula to close the gap between Kutno and Warsaw.

On Tenth Army's eastern front, meanwhile, Bilgoraj was taken though stiff fighting continued southeast of the city, and Lublin was entered on 17 September. Advance units, passing between Polish concentrations to the north and south, reached the Wieprz River the same day. Tenth Army units were moving on Chelm and street fighting raged in Lublin as the second phase of Army Group South's operations came to a close. Tenth Army moved its headquarters to a point a short distance southwest of Warsaw and continued its drive in the direction of the Bug River, which would form the limiting line for its advance. [See *map 10.*]

Fourteenth Army

On 10 September the XVII and XVIII Corps on the Fourteenth Army right crossed the San north and south of Przemysl, forced the *24th Infantry Division* of the Polish general reserve to withdraw eastward and drove elements of the *Cracow Army's 11th Infantry Division*

into the fortress city. The two German corps moved rapidly in the direction of Lwow, where the Polish High Command had established headquarters a few days before in an attempt to rally the withdrawing Polish Army for a stand in the southeastern part of the country. A task force under Colonel (later Field Marshal) Schoerner of the XVIII Corps' 1st Mountain Division reached the fortifications of the city on 12 September, and met spirited resistance from the garrison of 12,000 men. The mountain division quickly invested Lwow from the north and west, and cut all contact with the Polish force at Przemysl. [See *map 10.*]

The city of Lwow is dominated by the Zboiska Heights to the north and northeast. It was important that these heights be seized without delay and that the exits from the city to the south and southeast be closed. Security would have to be provided against attacks from the west by the Polish force in Przemysl, and from the southwest, where the entire right flank of the division was exposed to Polish forces being moved up from the southeastern region of the country.

The attack to secure the ridges north and northeast of the city was launched by Group Schoerner at 1000 on 13 September. The task force made rapid progress from the start, reaching the commanding height known as Hill 374 in the afternoon, and Zboiska and the surrounding ridges by dark. The major road to the north was cut by the capture of Zboiska, and the mountain troops dug in to hold their gains against a series of heavy Polish attacks. Other task forces moved out to secure the approches from the southwest and Przemysl, and to close off exits from the city to the south and southeast.

On the left flank of Fourteenth Army, meanwhile, progress was slow, and VIII Corps, had to be shifted to clear the north bank of the Vistula as far as the junction with the San. The units opposing the forces on the left of the Fourteenth Army front comprised remnants of the Polish *21st* and *22d Mountain Divisions* and the *Rzeszow Armored Calvary Brigade.* The Polish units fought a strong rear guard action and withdrew across the San in a northeasterly direction to the dense forest and swamp area about Bilgoraj. [See *maps 9* and *10.*]

On 13 September Army Group South directed Fourteenth Army to send the remainder of its XVIII Corps to take Lwow, after which the corps was to move northward. The XVII and XXII Corps in the center of the Fourteenth Army line were to move to the northeast in the direction of Wlodzimierz and Hrubieszow, to effect a junction with Army Group North east of the Bug River. The VII and VIII Corps on the left were attached to Tenth Army, freeing Fourteenth Army for its extensive operations deeper into southeastern Poland. Army Headquarters moved to Rzeszow. [See *map 10.*]

Lwow was completely encircled by XVIII Corps units by 14 September. Further west the Poles in Przemysl continued a stubborn resistance. Elements of several divisions had to be relieved from other missions for the assault on Przemysl's defenses.

Przemysl fell on 15 September, marking the end of organized Polish resistance on the Fourteenth Army front except at Lwow, in the area northwest of Lwow, and near Bilgoraj. The protracted resistance at Lwow led the Fourteenth Army to direct the XXII Corps, after the capture of Wlodzimierz and Hrubieszow, to execute a move to the south with Panzer and motorized units with the mission of destroying the Polish forces still attempting to reach the fortress city. Detachments were also sent to the east to secure the oil fields below Lwow and prevent the escape of more Polish units and small parties to Romania. Meanwhile, a desperate attempt by Polish remnants to reach the garrison at Lwow was thwarted, at the expense of heavy casualties to the 1st Mountain Division, which held the XVIII Corps line north of the city and bore the brunt of the Polish attacks.

Fourteenth Army reported some local engagements on 16 September as isolated Polish units were encountered on the army front and in the rear areas. Heavy fighting continued at Lwow and in the area of Bilgoraj.

The intervention of the Red Army on 17 September made necessary some changes in the plan of operations. Fourteenth Army was ordered to advance no further than the line Stryj-Lwow-Bug River. The siege of Lwow would continue, temporarily ,and the oil-producing area south of Lwow was to be secured.

Chapter 8

The End of the Campaign

General

The third and final phase of German operations in Poland consisted of (1) capturing the capital and other key fortress areas left behind the advancing Wehrmacht, and (2) evacuating eastern Poland ahead of the Red Army on the schedule ordered by Hitler. The capture of Warsaw, Modlin, and the port areas in the Corridor were only a matter of time as additional German infantry, artillery, and air forces became available with the approaching end of hostilities. Hitler's order for the evacuation of the area that was to be occupied by the Russians posed a more difficult problem, since German forces east of the Vistula and San Rivers were still engaged with remnants of the Polish Army at a number of points.

The Polish President and Marshal Rydz-Smigly had fled to Romania. A few organized Polish units still remained in the more inaccessible areas of eastern Poland, while other Polish troops had banded together under strong individual leaders regardless of rank. Units of both categories presented the Wehrmacht with a problem in discontinuing operations and withdrawing westward.

While these events were taking place, OKH was faced with the problem of shifting ground troops to the Westwall to meet a possible French and British attack. Divisions and higher commands were transferred from the Polish theater to the west as soon as they could be spared. As a result, the commands left behind had to assume the task of controlling vast areas and suppressing such scattered resistance as remained.

The Battles for Warsaw and Modlin

Early Surrender Overtures

Warsaw had come under siege with the approach of Third Army to the suburb of Praga, and OKH ordered a leaflet drop proposing negotiations with the Polish garrison for the evacuation of the city's civilian population and the diplomatic colony. A temporary ceasefire was arranged in the Praga sector while a German emissary from

Third Army spoke with the Poles under a flag of truce on the morning of 16 September. The Polish commander refused to receive the German representative, nor would he accept a letter calling upon him to surrender. Another leaflet drop was made over the Polish capital in the afternoon of the same day, giving the population a cease-fire guarantee and 12 hours to evacuate the city. Third Army, however, suddenly resumed its shelling of Warsaw, returning the fire of the Polish batteries that either had not received or not heeded the German offer of a 12-hour truce. The barrage was finally stopped late that night, but little could be done to repair the damage to the German propaganda effort.[1]

On 17 September the Poles broadcast a request that they be allowed to send representatives to arrange the removal of noncombatants. The request was acknowledged by the Germans, who indicated their willingness to receive the Polish emissaries, although Hitler had indicated that the time allotted for evacuation had elapsed. The Polish emissaries never appeared, however.

Initial German Attacks

On 18 September OKH directed the resumption of operations against Warsaw, and Third and Tenth Armies commenced a heavy and sustained artillery bombardment of the Polish capital. The First Air Force joined the attack with a dive bomber attack on water works and other utilities on 20 September. On the ground small task forces made a series of probing attacks against the city's defenses.

Officer prisoners revealed that the garrison of Warsaw was composed in large part of regular troops, under General Rommel, former commander of the *Lodz Army*. Morale was good, under the circumstances, and ammunition in ample supply. The city's communications system and sources of electric power were still intact. The food situation was unknown, but at best it could only be fair in view of the large civilian population to be fed and the impossibility of any resupply from outside Warsaw. Third Army met spirited resistance to the north and east of the city, as did Tenth Army to the south and west.

Progress was slow in reducing the city of Warsaw by artillery fire and air bombardment. The garrison had made good use of the brief cease-fires to build additional barricades and weapons emplacements, and Warsaw's artillery still answered the fire of the Germans. A large militia force, hastily organized, supplemented the efforts of the Army and police. The situation with the diplomatic colony was resolved on 21 September when it was arranged for personnel of the

[1] *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* 15–28 Sep. p. 600a. CRS, TAG.



Figure 18. German 150mm howitzer firing on Warsaw.

neutral embassies, consulates, and missions to leave the city through the Third Army lines.

Hitler visited Third Army units on 22 September and observed the shelling of Praga from a church tower outside the city. The Fuehrer was opposed to an assault on that part of the city east of the Vistula. However, he approved an attack on that part of Warsaw west of the Vistula that would be occupied by the Germans according to the German-Soviet pact. An attack from the west would also drive the mass of the Warsaw population out of the city to the east and relieve the Germans of responsibility for them. Hitler was informed the same day of the death of General von Fritsch, whom he had removed as commander in chief of the Army over a year earlier. General von Fritsch, despite his retired status, had insisted on his prerogative as honorary regimental commander of accompanying the 12th Artillery Regiment of the 12th Infantry Division into the field, and was killed while observing a division action before Praga.[2]

The Eighth Army Attack

Various plans to take that part of Warsaw west of the Vistula were discussed and discarded. It was finally decided by OKH that Army

[2] An account of the incident by a Lt Rosenhagen, who was with General von Fritsch at the time of his death, is included in *Anlagenheft V zum Ktb, Meldungen der unterstellten Armeen,* in *ibid.*



Figure 19. German 75 mm infantry gun firing on target near Warsaw.

Group South's Eighth Army, which had finished clearing Kutno, would direct the effort to capture Warsaw. Eighth Army headquarters moved to a point southwest of the capital on 24 September, relieving Tenth Army Headquarters, which moved southward to the vicinity of Kielce again. Eighth Army quickly completed its plans and final dispositions for the attack.

The Eighth Army Commander, General Blaskowitz, was instructed that he was not to permit the civilian population to leave the city prior to the assault.[3] The worsening food situation within Warsaw and the large numbers to be fed would aid materially in hastening the surrender of the capital.

The Eighth Army attack began on 26 September, with a heavy air and artillery bombardment followed by an assault from the south. The first and second line of bunkers were taken, and prisoners reported that communications within the city had been cut and electric power was no longer available. Third Army supported the attack by a heavy artillery barrage on Warsaw's defenses from the north. By order of Hitler, the capture of the city was to be accomplished by 3

[3] *Angriffsanweisung Warschau fuer 8. Armee, H. Gr. Sued, Ia, 21.9.39 in Kreigstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Sued in Polen 1939.* 21 Sep. E 129/1. CRS, TAG.

October, before the arrival of the Russians at Praga to the east of the Vistula.

Two Polish envoys crossed the German lines north of Warsaw the evening of 26 September with a letter from General Rommel requesting a 24-hour cessation of fire and a surrender parley. The cease-fire request was refused and the German artillery fire intensified, though the Poles were informed that a local truce could be arranged in order to allow Polish emissaries to cross the lines in the event General Rommel decided to surrender the city. The incident was reported through army and army group headquarters to OKH, which directed that the surrender would be taken by Eighth Army and that only an unconditional surrender would be accepted.

General Kutrzeba appeared the following morning to accept the German terms in the name of General Rommel. The Polish envoy was immediately conducted to Eighth Army to conclude the negotiations for the surrender. Hostilities ceased at 1400 on 27 September, and 140,000 Polish troops lay down their arms, including the garrison in the eastern suburb of Praga. All Polish military personnel were ordered to be ready for evacuation by 29 September. Warsaw was in a serious situation, with over 16,000 of the garrison wounded and heavy casualties among the civilian population. The supply of drinking water had been cut off for five days, making it necessary for the garrison and population to use the water of the Vistula; an epidemic of typhoid appeared imminent. All public utilities had been heavily damaged and would require extensive repairs. The city was also on the verge of starvation.

The Capture of Modlin

Modlin continued to resist despite the surrender of the capital and a series of heavy attacks by the Third Army, supported by Eighth Army south of the city. The cessation of hostilities at Warsaw made large masses of artillery and increased air support available to Third Army. The bombardment of the fortress city was intensified and German infantry managed to infiltrate the first line of fortifications. An armistice was arranged at 0730 on 28 September and the formal surrender to Third Army's II Corps took place the following day. Twenty-four thousand Polish troops at Modlin laid down their arms in unconditional surrender, and German troops entered the fortress at noon. General Thommee, commander of the Modlin force, attributed his surrender to the cutting off of the water supply; the loss of food stores in the bombardment; the complete exhaustion of the defending troops, who had suffered 4,000 casualties in wounded alone; and the infantry attack.

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Gdynia and Hela [4]

Operations in the northern area of the Corridor became a separate campaign following the junction of the German Third and Fourth Armies. The German effort to capture the Polish port areas continued throughout all three phases of operations by Army Groups North and South, and ended only a few days before the destruction of the last organized Polish force in the field.

The 207th Infantry Division of the I Frontier Guard Corps linked with units of Brigade Eberhard from Danzig to present a front to the Poles in the Gdynia-Wejherowo (Neustadt) area as it turned north in the upper Corridor. Brigade Eberhard was placed under operational control of I Frontier Guard Corps, and the entire command was redesignated Corps Kaupisch. Steady progress against scattered resistance was reported until 6 September, when the advancing German units began to encounter Polish naval forces committed in a ground combat role. [See *maps 7* and *8*.]

The major Polish unit in line was identified as a naval infantry brigade, organized by expansion of the naval infantry battalions in Wejherowo and Gdynia to the status of regiments. The naval brigade and a number of miscellaneous units were under the command of a Colonel Dabek.

Wejherowo fell on 9 September, and a tight German ring was drawn about Gdynia and the coastal area immediately to the north, known as the Oksywie (Oxhoefter) Flats. Corps Kaupisch made another important gain on 9 September when a frontier guard regiment captured the port of Puck (Putzig) to the north of Gdynia and cut the main rail line to the naval base at Hela.

Corps Kaupisch encountered heavy resistance on 10 and 11 September as it moved in on Gdynia from its three land sides. From the Danzig area Brigade Eberhard pushed north along the coast, linked on its left with the 207th Infantry Division, which made its attack from the west. The northern side of the German encirclement was held by a frontier guard regiment, which rested its left flank on the sea and had contact with the regiment that had taken Puck.

The Polish force at Hela was completely cut off from land contact with the mainland on 12 September, when the frontier guard regiment at Puck sent a strong force to the north and reached the coast. That night the Poles at Gdynia launched an attack at the boundary line between the 207th Infantry Division and Brigade Eberhard,

[4] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section was taken from : *XXXI A. K., Grenzschutz-Abschn. Kdo. 1 (Korps Kaupisch)-Ia, Samelakte Korridor-Gdingen-Hela, Kriegstagebuch u. Anlagen, August–Oktober 1939.* E 292, 1. CRS, TAG.

regained some ground, and temporarily disrupted the schedule of the German advance.

The German line was restored the following day, and on 14 September Gdynia was taken. The Polish force of Colonel Dabek was forced to retreat to the Oksywie Flats, under a steady artillery and air bombardment. The *Schleswig-Holstein*, lying offshore, joined the artillery bombardment the following day, and an attack by Stuka dive bombers destroyed a major ammunition depot established on the Flats by the Poles. That same day Corps Kaupisch passed to the control of the newly established Military Government Command Danzig-West Prussia. [See *map 10.*]

The German shelling of the Flats and a series of heavy air attacks continued through 16 and 17 September. A total of 2,000 prisoners was taken on 18 September, and the German attack of 19 September became a clearing operation. Oksywie was taken in the late afternoon and the Germans had established firm control of the Flats by evening. Colonel Dabek committed suicide rather than surrender his command.

The destruction of the Gdynia force completed German operations in the upper Corridor, except for Hela. A regimental combat team of the 207th Infantry Division, reinforced by all but one battalion of the division artillery and by the artillery of Brigade Eberhard, was assigned the task of taking Hela. The extremely narrow peninsula extending out to the Polish naval base precluded the commitment of a force of any greater size, and a seaborne landing against heavily fortified Hela promised little success without heavy losses.

The regiment assigned to take Hela made a limited advance out onto the peninsula on 21 September, to find it heavily mined and stubbornly defended. Hela was taken under fire by the *Schleswig-Holstein*, which was joined by the *Schlesien* on 24 September. The rail line used by the Poles to move their heavy artillery out to positions on the peninsula was cut by Stuka bombing on 25 September and the offshore bombardment intensified. On 27 September air support was withdrawn as the Luftwaffe was deployed to the west. With the support of the two old battleships, another ground attack was launched down the narrow peninsula on 29 September. A further attack on 30 September gained the tiny village of Ceynowa for the Germans, and a final assault was planned for 2 October.

A final German attack was not necessary. On 1 October Rear Admiral J. Unrug, commander at Hela, requested a surrender parley. The Polish emissary accepted the German terms of unconditional surrender at 1700 the same day and all resistance ceased. A total of 5,000 prisoners was taken at Hela to bring the number captured by

Corps Kaupisch during the course of operations to 18,000. Hela also yielded 41 artillery pieces of various calibers and two small naval vessels.

The Evacuation of Eastern Poland

Hitler's order to withdraw to the demarcation line of the Narew-Vistula-San Rivers was communicated to the army groups on 20 September and necessitated a move far to the west of the line of 17 September. The Fuehrer's directive required immediate disengagement from the Polish forces still carrying on hostilities and withdrawal without delay to the west of the line formed by the three rivers.[5]

The order for evacuation took little cognizance of the military situation. The German combat units in eastern Poland had several thousand wounded they had been unable to evacuate, thousands of prisoners of war, a large number of disabled tanks and other vehicles, and in addition they were in possession of large stocks of Polish Army materiel, ammunition, foodstuffs, and other supplies. Personnel, vehicles, and animals had just completed a campaign over vast distances; the men and horses required rest and the motor vehicles were in need of repairs. Rail transportation to move any but a small portion of the German forces to the west was completely inadequate.

To effect the withdrawal in orderly fashion, the German ground forces on 21 September were ordered by OKH to draw back along a series of phase lines, each located progressively farther to the west. Where possible, an interval of 15 miles was to be maintained between the Wehrmacht and the Red Army, but unit commanders were authorized to deal with the Russians should they overtake German troops on the move. The wounded were to be left behind with medical personnel for later evacuation. Captured materiel was to be evacuated by the Germans where practicable, otherwise it would be left behind for the Russians. German materiel that could not be evacuated was to be left under guard and removed later. Particular care was to be taken to destroy disabled Mark IV tanks that could not be salvaged.[6]

Negotiations with the Red Army during the evacuation were often to prove exasperating to German commanders. Despite the offers of the Soviet Government and Red Army commanders to give armed support to German units still engaged with the remnants of the Polish Army, the Russians procrastinated about active assistance in most cases until the Germans no longer needed it. The problem of identification was also to plague German commanders. The Red

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[5] *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* 1–3 Sep. P. 600a; and *Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Sued in Polen 1939.* 20 Sep, E 129/1. CRS, TAG.

[6] *O. K. H. Genstb. d. H. Op. Abt., I/II Nr. 1121/39 g,* in *Anlagenheft I zum Ktb, Befehle des OKH, 4.7.39—1.10.39, Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* P. 600a. CRS, TAG.

Army and Polish Army uniforms were somewhat similar, and German units not infrequently mistook one for the other.

The civilian population that had fled eastward at the approach of the Germans was also to become a problem during the evacuation of eastern Poland. Fearful of the Russians, the mass of refugees that had fled into eastern Poland before the Germans turned about and moved westward again, clogging the already inadequate road system and blocking military traffic.

The Army Group North Area

The XIX Corps turned Brzesc over to the Red Army on 22 September in a formal ceremony in which both German and Russian units paraded. The corps then began its return to East Prussia, where tanks and other motor vehicles could receive urgently needed repairs and maintenance. [See *map 10.*]

On 23 September units of the 10th Panzer Division engaged in a sharp skirmish with advancing Russian cavalry. Russian losses were reported as 2 dead and 23 wounded. The incident was attributed to a mistake in identification and was settled by the local German and Russian commanders.[7] A number of other localities were turned over to the control of the Red Army without incident.

General von Bock commented at some length on the impression made by the Russians. The Army Group North commander noted that the Red Army was poorly disciplined and the troops were unsoldierly in appearance.[8] The political commisars were truculent and unfriendly. Bock directed that contact would be maintained only through officers and that there would be no general fraternization.

The evacuation in the Army Group North area was almost completed by the time Warsaw surrendered. Only a few German units remained east of the demarcation line, hunting down Polish units or safeguarding installations of military importance until the arrival of the Russians. The XXI Corps, with one division and a number of security units, maintained contact with the Russians in the north of the army group area. In the southern part of the army group area contact was maintained by units of I Corps near Warsaw.

The headquarters of Army Group North and Fourth Army returned to East Prussia preparatory to movement to the west, and on 2 October the area of responsibility of Army Group North was transferred to Third Army in a formal ceremony. Third Army promptly set about securing the northern Polish areas under German control.[9]

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[7] *Kriegstagebuch des Generalkommandos XIX A. K. ueber den Feldzug in Polen, 1.9.39—25.9.39.* P–250a. CRS, TAG.

[8] "Bock Diary," p. 53.

[9] *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* 2 Oct. P. 600a. CRS, TAG.

The Army Group South Area

Rundstedt reported the destruction of the Polish concentrations south of Bilgoraj during the several days preceding the receipt of orders to evacuate eastern Poland. Fourteenth Army on 20 September also reported the capture of 11,000 prisoners northwest of Lwow, ending operations in that area. The siege of Lwow was still in progress when Army Group South received orders to withdraw west of the Vistula-San River line.[10] [See *map 10.*]

The evacuation order instructed Rundstedt to leave the reduction of Lwow to the Russians. The attack planned by XVIII Corps for 21 September was cancelled, and the corps prepared to move to the west. Contact had already been established with the Russians when Red Army tanks had suddenly appeared at Winniki, southeast of Lwow.

The Polish garrison of Lwow abruptly and unexpectedly surrendered to the 1st Mountain Division as it made ready to withdraw from its siege lines on 21 September. The occupation of the city was left to the Russians and the 1st Mountain Division moved westward toward the San with the rest of the XVIII Corps.[11]

Tenth Army ceased operations at Chelm and began its withdrawal to the west of the demarcation line. Chelm had already been taken under artillery fire and preparations were under way for an infantry assault when the withdrawal order arrived.

A heavy engagement was reported in the Tenth Army area on 23 September, when a strong Polish force attacked the withdrawing Germans in the Zamosc region. Tenth Army reacted quickly, surrounding part of the Polish force southwest of Zamosc and driving the remainder to the south and into the area to be occupied by the Red Army.

By 30 September Eighth Army was engaged in evacuating the Polish garrison of Warsaw and with the numerous tasks involved in establishing control over the Polish capital. Tenth Army was still in contact with Polish remnants east of the Vistula, and Fourteenth Army had completed its evacuation to the San River.

Several incidents occurred during this period in the Fourteenth Army area when German and Russian troops exchanged fire. The incidents were settled by the local commanders concerned and no further action was taken by either side.

On 1 October Tenth Army was alerted for movement back to Germany. At the same time, OKH informed Army Group South that the demarcation line had been changed again and would follow the

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[10] *Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Sued in Polen 1939.* 20 Sep. E. 129/1. CRS, TAG.
[11] Gen Hubert Lanz, *Gebirgsjaeger* (Bad Nauheim, 1954), pp. 55–56.



Figure 20. Polish garrison of Warsaw marching out of city after the surrender.

Pisia and Narew Rivers to Ostroleka, thence past Ostrow Mazowiecka to the Bug, south along the latter to a point east of Tomaszow, west to the San, and south to the Slovak frontier. This would extend the German zone to the east, in places over 100 miles. The change had been made at the request of the Soviet Government, which desired to add Lithuania to its own sphere of influence. In exchange for Lithuania the Russians were willing to give the Germans that area of Poland between Warsaw and the Bug River.[12] [See *map 10.*]

Army Group South's commander was redesignated OB EAST (*Oberbefehlshaber Ost*) as of 3 October, with responsibility for all of occupied Poland. Under this reorganization, Rundstedt became the Commander in Chief East.[13]

The last organized stand by the Polish Army was made at Kock, where heavy fighting raged from 4 to 6 October. Panzer and motorized infantry units of Tenth Army ended this last Polish resistance, and the Kock force surrendered on 6 October, adding 17,000 more to the total of prisoners taken by the Germans. The Polish Campaign was over, though sporadic fighting was to continue in some of the more remote areas for a considerable period.

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[12] *Nazi-Soviet Relations, op. cit.*, pp. 102–08.

[13] *Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Sued in Polen 1939.* 27 Sep, E 129/1. CRS, TAG.

Results of the Campaign

The German Army suffered a total of 8,082 officers and men killed 27,278 wounded, and 5,029 missing in its 36 days of operations in Poland. Luftwaffe and Navy losses were much lighter.[14] The figure on missing Army personnel can be considered as high, in view of the fact that the German Army destroyed the Polish Army and recovered most prisoners taken by organized military units.

Two hundred and seventeen tanks were destroyed during the period 1–30 September, including 89 Mark I vehicles, 83 Mark II's, 26 Mark III's, and 19 Mark IV's.[15] Neutral sources also reported over 400 German aircraft of all types destroyed. Sustained operations over poor roads and rough terrain far ahead of maintenance facilities was extremely wearing on armored vehicles as well as trucks, requiring extensive repair work at the end of the campaign. German aircraft that participated in the campaign were in little better condition by the end of operations, having had to fly repeated sorties as the weather permitted, often from bases with only the most primitive landing and few if any maintenance facilities. The situation in the XIX Corps perhaps best exemplified the materiel situation by the end of operations when the entire corps was temporarily immobilized in East Prussia while its tanks, armored cars, and trucks were overhauled and repaired.

The Polish losses were staggering. The Germans claimed 694,000 prisoners of war, out of some 800,000 who had served in Poland's defense; the remainder were killed, captured by the Russians, had fled into Romania or Hungary, or had hidden in isolated areas of their own country. The Germans, by their own count, captured a total of 3,214 field pieces, 16,500 machine guns, 1,700 mortars, and enormous quantities of small arms and ammunition.[16] The captured ordnance and other materiel was not considered suitable for issue by Wehrmacht standards, but could be put to use by Germany's various satellites.

The civilian population which came under German control as a result of the campaign comprised approximately 22½ million persons. Some three-quarters of a million were ethnic Germans and available for military service. Some of the other minorities, as the Ukrainians, were not opposed to cooperation and service with the Germans. However, the bulk of the Polish population under German control were considered as the people of an occupied country. As a result, size-

[14] *Der Heeresarzt im Oberkommando des Heeres, Gen St d H/Gen Qu, Az: 1335 d IIb.* H1/176a. CRS, TAG.

[15] Report of *Heereswaffenamt*, pt. IV. H 15/40. CRS, TAG.

[16] *Kriegswissenschaftliche Abteilung, Generalstab des Heeres,* "Der Feldzug in Polen im September 1939" (Gotha, 1941), p. 21.

able military forces had to be maintained in Poland until the time that the Wehrmacht began to concentrate its forces in the east for the campaign against the Soviet Union more than a year later. The units assigned to this occupation duty were usually of far lower combat potential than those assigned to front-line service, but the necessity of keeping a military force in Poland at all tied down personnel and equipment that might have been put to use elsewhere in the major war effort in which the Reich now found itself engaged.

Chapter 9

The Intervention of the Soviet Union

Diplomatic Negotiations

The rapid progress of the German armies by 3 September prompted Foreign Minister Ribbentrop to dispatch a cable to Moscow, suggesting the movement of Red Army troops into eastern Poland. Molotov's reply was equivocal, stating that the Soviet Government felt the time not yet proper. However, the Soviet Foreign Minister committed his government to intervention at a time when it would be advantageous to the Soviet Union and to Germany.[1]

Ribbentrop dispatched a second cable on the matter of intervention on 9 September, calling attention to the fact that the Soviet military attache had been recalled to Moscow. Molotov's reply promised military action within the next few days. The Soviet Foreign Minister also admitted that the summoning of the military attache to Moscow had been prompted by the impending movement of the Red Army into Poland.

The German Ambassador in Moscow dispatched two additional cables to Berlin on 9 and 10 September. According to the German Ambassador, Molotov had promised more than the Red Army could accomplish within the span of a few days. The Soviet Government had been surprised by the speed of the German advance, and Red Army preparations for a movement on the scale required were still far from complete. Three million men had been mobilized, but some logistical arrangements still had to be made. Schools were being transformed into temporary hospitals, the supply of gasoline for nonmilitary uses had been curtailed, and certain foodstuffs had already disappeared from the open market.

The cables further indicated that Molotov was desirous of minimizing the odium attached to an aggressive move into eastern Poland. Thus the Russians would announce that the Red Army was coming to the aid of the Ukrainians and Byelorussians (White Russians) resident in eastern Poland who were threatened by the advancing Germans. The Soviet Union was also concerned about a recent announcement by General von Brauchitsch that had been interpreted as an indication that a Polish-German armistice was imminent.

Ribbentrop assured the Soviet Foreign Minister on 13 September that the Brauchitsch statement referred only to the disputed Corridor

[1] *Nazi-Soviet Relations, op. cit.*, pp. 86–96.

and other areas adjoining the Reich where organized Polish resistance had ceased. Meanwhile, German forces had advanced to and beyond the Narew-Vistula-San River line and forced the mass of the Polish armies into the encirclements at Kutno and Radom.

On 14 September Ribbentrop was informed that Soviet preparations were complete and a movement into eastern Poland could be expected shortly. However, the Soviet Government refused to order the Red Army to move until the Polish capital had been taken, and requested that the German Government estimate the date by which the capture of Warsaw might be accomplished.

Ribbentrop's reply of the following day, 15 September, contained a note of urgency. The German Foreign Minister stated that the fall of the Polish capital was a matter of only a few days. He urged an immediate move by the Russians, to prevent eastern Poland becoming a political vacuum or the population forming one or more small states. Ribbentrop further proposed the issuance of a joint communique to the effect that Germany and the Soviet Union were moving into Poland to restore peace and order in an area of interest to the Reich and the Soviet state. This would make unnecessary the announcement that the Russians were intervening in Poland in behalf of Russian minorities threatened by the Germans. Ribbentrop ended his cable with a request that the Soviet Government set a date and hour for the movement of troops across the Polish-Russian frontier.

Molotov's answer of 16 September promised military action the next day or the day following; Stalin was in conference with military leaders and would give the date and time that night. At 0200 on 17 September, in the presence of Molotov, the German Ambassador was informed by Stalin that Soviet troops would move into Poland at 0600 that same day. Stalin requested that German aircraft remain west of the line Bialystok-Brzesc-Lwow, since Russian aircraft would begin bombing operations in the area of Lwow immediately following the crossing of the frontier. Stalin closed the interview with the request that all military matters henceforth be conducted between Marshal Voroshilov for the Red Army and Generalleutnant Ernst Koestring, Germany Military Attache in Moscow.

From available records it appears that the German Foreign Minister and other government leaders had not taken the military officers directing operations into their confidence on the negotiations being carried on between Berlin and Moscow. Jodl mentioned later that he was informed of the impending move by the Red Army only two or three days before it took place. Warlimont, chief operations officer of Jodl's Armed Forces Operations Office, states that he knew nothing of the move until called by General Koestring from Moscow

the morning the Red Army crossed the frontier.[2] Koestring himself had not been fully advised of the Red Army's preparations and plans to cross into Poland.[3] As a result of this lack of direction from the Reich's highest official quarters, which were themselves completely uninformed of the actual Russian intentions until less than four hours before the actual intervention of the Soviet Union, German troops continued to move eastward and beyond the demarcation line which had been agreed upon. Some German units could not disengage from contact with the Poles immediately upon receipt of orders to do so; others were forced to fight a series of rear guard actions as they moved back to the demarcation line.

The joint communique issued on 18 September stated only that the Russian movement into Poland did not conflict with the nonaggression pact and that both German and Soviet Governments desired only to restore order and assist the Poles to reestablish their political existence. Two days later the Soviet Government proposed that no residual Polish Government be formed and that the country be partitioned along the line formed by the Soviet and German spheres of influence agreed upon in the nonaggression pact. The Reich Government immediately assented and Ribbentrop prepared to go to Moscow to conclude negotiations and settle the fate of the Polish state.[4]

The Red Army's Intervention Forces

The stipulation that a wide interval would be maintained between the withdrawing Germans and the advancing Russians made it difficult to obtain precise information about the size or composition of the Red Army force that entered eastern Poland. German military reports of the first few days make reference only to "Russian units." Repeated contacts where one force met the other, as at Brzesc and Lwow, soon gave the Germans a somewhat clearer picture of the Russian military situation.

The Red Army crossed the border into eastern Poland with two army groups, called "fronts" in Soviet usage.[5] It was of particular interest to the Germans to note that the units of these two fronts were drawn from the interior of the Soviet Union. Garrison troops in the frontier areas remained at their home stations, and the defensive capability of the Red Army in the western Soviet Union was not greatly weakened by the venture into Poland.

The White Russian Front, in the north, was commanded by Army Commander Kovalev, with headquarters in Minsk. (The regular

[2] Ltr, Gen Warlimont to OCMH, 9 Feb 55, p. 10. Author's file.
[3] Statement, Gen Ernst Koestring, 24 Oct 1951 in MS #P–108. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.
[4] *Nazi-Soviet Relations, op. cit.*, pp. 101–02.
[5] *OKH, OQu IV, Abt. Fremde Heere Ost, Nr. L 55/39 geh. and OKH, OQu IV, Abt. Fremde Heere Ost, Nr. L 63/39 geh.* OKW/918. CRS, TAG.

ranks for general officers, except for marshals, had not yet been reintroduced in the Red Army.) The front consisted of the Third and Eleventh Armies, the former assigned the mission of advancing on Brzesc and Bialystok while the latter moved into the area of Poland adjacent to the Lithuanian and East Prussian frontiers. The Third Army comprised one tank, one cavalry, and one infantry corps, with a total of two infantry and three cavalry divisions and an unknown number of tank brigades. The Eleventh Army controlled three similar corps, with one additional infantry division.

The Ukrainian Front, on the south, was commanded by Army Commander Timoshenko, with headquarters at Proskurov, east of Lwow. The front consisted of the First and Tenth Armies, the former assigned the mission of moving on Lwow while the latter advanced on the Lublin area. The First Army was the far stronger of the two, with a tank corps, two cavalry corps, and four infantry corps. First Army had a total of at least six infantry and six cavalry divisions, and an undetermined number of tank brigades. The Tenth Army comprised only two corps, with two cavalry divisions and an undetermined number of infantry divisions.

According to the estimates made at OKW, the Russians committed a total of at least 20 to 24 infantry divisions, 15 cavalry divisions, and 9 tank brigades to the advance into Poland. No figures were given on the number of troops that this may have involved. Since they expected to meet little or no resistance and possibly in order to impress the Poles and Germans, the Russians sent their tank and motorized units on ahead, where the terrain permitted, followed by the infantry at some interval. Horse cavalry units were used in broken country or areas in which the road net did not permit the use of motor vehicles. This accounts for the frequent mention in German headquarters journals of the sudden appearance of Russian armored and horse cavalry units.

The actions of the Russians on moving into Poland put the lie to their claims of assistance to the Russian minorities. The Red Army offered the Germans armed assistance wherever it should be necessary, even though this assistance usually came too late, and destroyed or captured organized Polish forces with which it came into contact even prior to the surrender of Warsaw and the destruction of the last major Polish force at Kock. Little information as to Russian activities in eastern Poland was allowed to leak out once the Red Army established control of the area; no mention at all of these activities appears in German reports of the period, possibly due in some part to lack of interest in areas beyond the control of the Wehrmacht and in which the Reich had no immediate concern, but more likely because of the stringent security measures taken by the Russians in their newly acquired territories.

Chapter 10

The Fourth Partition and German Occupation of Poland

Three military government commands, responsible directly to OKH, followed the German armies into Poland. These commands had army status, and were placed in control of the three military government areas (*Militaerbezirke*) into which western Poland was arbitrarily divided; headquarters were at Danzig, Poznan, and Cracow. The officers in charge of these commands were known as military government commanders (*Militaerbefehlshaber*), and their mission during the period of operations consisted chiefly of securing the German counterpart to the United States Army's communications zone, from the border of the Reich to the rear areas of the field armies. To carry out their mission, the military government commands were assigned one or two third—or fourth—wave divisions, some frontier guard units that had crossed the border with the Army, and a number of security battalions consisting of troops of the older age groups.

The command at Poznan was the first to take control of its assigned area, moving in 11 September, under General der Artillerie Alfred von Vollard-Bockelberg.[1] The second, at Danzig and responsible for the former German province of West Prussia, moved in the following day, under General der Artillerie Walter Heitz. The third, at Cracow, was commanded by General List of the Fourteenth Army, functioning in a dual role, and assisted by a small additional staff. This last command became operational on 13 September.[2]

By 25 September the end of the campaign was fast approaching and Hitler ordered the establishment of a military government organization for the occupied Polish territories. This organization would include four area military government commands, with headquarters at Poznan, Danzig, Cracow, and Lodz.[3] The Fuehrer selected Rundstedt as commander in chief for the conquered eastern territories, placing him in control of tactical units and military government. Army Group North and Fourth Army headquarters soon left for the

[1] *OKH, GenStdH, Op Abt (II), Nr. 2059/30 geh, in Anlagenheft I* to *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39.* P. 600a. CRS, TAG.

[2] *Neuaufstellung von Kommandobehoerden in September 1939,* in *Die personelle Entwicklung des Generalstabes des Heeres waehrend des Krieges 1939–40.* H. 23/109. *CRS,* TAG.

[3] *Hoeheres Kommando XXXIII, KTB, 7 Oct 39.* E 271/1. CRS, TAG.

west, to be followed shortly by Tenth Army. On its transition to OB EAST, Rundstedt's headquarters found itself in control of the four military government commands and the three armies remaining in Poland.

On 3 October a change was also made in the tactical organization when three frontier army commands were established to secure the new frontier with the Soviet Union. Third Army, which had moved to Ortelsburg in East Prussia, was redesignated Frontier Army Command North; Eighth Army was redesignated Frontier Army Command Center, with its commander functioning concurrently as Military Government Commander Lodz; and Fourteenth Army was renamed Frontier Army Command South, with its commander becoming concurrently Military Government Commander Cracow. The three headquarters retained their army status but reference to them was made by their territorial designations.[4]

West Prussia and the Poznan areas were annexed to Germany as *Reichsgœue* (administrative districts under the German Ministry of the Interior) on 8 October, the annexation to be effective as of 1 November. A small strip of Silesia taken by Poland after World War I was also annexed directly to Silesia. At the same time *Wehrkreise* XX and XXI were formed in the areas of the new *Reichsgœue*. The Military Government Command Danzig-West Prussia became the headquarters of *Wehrkreis* XX and the Military Government Command Poznan became *Wehrkreis* XXI.[5] As *Wehrkreise*, these commands were transferred to the control of the Replacement and Training Army.

On 12 October Hitler directed the establishment of a government general under civilian control for the area of German-occupied Poland not annexed to the Reich. This was done to ensure the carrying out of Hitler's policy of ruthless destruction of the Polish nation, a task he was convinced the Army would not complete. As governor general he appointed Dr. Hans Frank, a lawyer and National Socialist Party figure, who had functioned as chief civilian administrator for Rundstedt. Frank would be responsible to Hitler, with Dr. Seyss-Inquart as his deputy. Hitler felt that he could depend on Frank to put his racial theories as expressed in Mein Kampf into practice. The government general, however, was not to become operational until such time as Hitler decreed the military government of Poland at an end.[6]

Brauchitsch, through Keitel, brought the Army's protest against this reorganization to Hitler on 17 October. Hitler replied that

[4] *Mil Befh v Posen, Anlagen zum KTB, 7.9.39—13.10.39.* P 33b. CRS, TAG.
[5] *OKH/Gen Std H/Org Abt (II), Nr 829/39 geh.* H. 37/96. CRS, TAG.
[6] *I. M. T.*, XXIX. Doc 2233-PS, p. 368.

the Army would be relieved of the administration of the occupied territories and remained firm in his decision to establish a civilian administration; his decision was made public by decree on 19 October 1939, when it was directed that as of 26 October the occupation of Poland would be directed by the government general of Dr. Frank. Headquarters OB EAST would be responsible only for security and the defense of Germany against any attack from that quarter.[7]

Effective 26 October East Prussia (*Wehrkreis* I) was added to the command of OB EAST for defensive purposes and the commanding general of Frontier Army Command North became concurrently commanding general of *Wehrkreis* I. This realinement of forces gave OB EAST a solid front from the Baltic southward to Romania. In addition to the three frontier army commands, OKH assigned OB EAST the XXXI, XXXII, XXXIV, XXXV, and XXXVI Corps Commands, formed on 5 October 1939 from the frontier commands that had participated in the attack on Poland, with 12 third- and fourth-wave divisions, a cavalry brigade, and various security units.

The redeployment from Poland did not fill the requirement for combat-experienced commands and staffs for the direction of the campaign against France, which Hitler still hoped to launch before the end of the year. As a consequence, an exchange of headquarters became necessary. On 13 October the Fourteenth Army staff less the small group originally assigned to General List for the purpose of establishing a military government organization in southern Poland was replaced as headquarters of Frontier Army Command South by the staff of Army "A" (a provisional army formed to control units along the Netherlands frontier in September 1939) under General der Artillerie Alexander Ulex from the western front. The Eighth Army staff on the same day was replaced by the Fifth Army staff of General der Infanterie Liebmann as headquarters of Frontier Army Command Center at Lodz. The next move was that of Rundsted's headquarters itself. The planning for the compaign in the west revealed the need for another army group headquarters. On 18 October Rundstedt and his former Army Group South headquarters (that had been temporarily designated OB EAST) began their move to the west.

General Blaskowitz was appointed to succeed Rundstedt on 19 October and Frontier Army Command Center headquarters was redesignated OB EAST. The organization of a new headquarters for the Frontier Army Command Center area was begun immediately, but by 30 October the needs of the western front were so pressing that it was decided to use the personnel and equipment collected

[7] *Allgemeines Heeresamt.* H 37/96. CRS, TAG.

for the formation of the Eighteenth Army headquarters in western Germany. As no further personnel were available to form a substitute staff, OB EAST had to assume a concurrent function as Frontier Army Command Center, effective 2 November. By late October only one of the original army headquarters remained in the east—Third Army which was functioning as Frontier Army Command North. On 22 October Third Army relinquished its responsibilities as Frontier Army Command North to *Wehrkreis* I and moved to the west to become the Sixteenth Army. The area of responsibility of *Wehrkreis* I was enlarged to include that area of Poland which had been the responsibility of Frontier Army Command North.

During the winter and early spring of 1940 the needs of the other fronts made further demands on OB EAST and a number of the corps commands and most of the third-wave divisions were withdrawn from Poland. The OB EAST (and Frontier Army Command Center) staff of Blaskowitz was moved to the west to become the nucleus of the new Ninth Army headquarters. Frontier Army Command South headquarters became OB EAST, with the XXXIV and XXXV Corps Commands and seven newly organized security divisions, while *Wehrkreis* I retained control of three new security divisions. This remained the OB EAST organization until the end of the French campaign, when Eighteenth Army and a number of corps and combat divisions could be transferred from France to the east.

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Chapter 11

Conclusions

General

The German campaign in Poland in 1939 has been regarded by many as little more than a maneuver for the youthful Wehrmacht. However, the casualty figures and losses in materiel for the period of combat show that the campaign was more than an exercise with live ammunition. Rundstedt supported this view on operations in Poland in one of his rare commentaries following World War II.[1] The bulk of the German armed forces had to be committed to overcome the Poles, and the expenditure in ammunition, gasoline, and materiel was such as to preclude concurrent German operations on a similar scale in the west or elsewhere.

The unrealistic impression of the campaign was heightened by the German propaganda effort that proceeded apace with operations in the field. The German armies were depicted as highly motorized, with tank support out of proportion to the actual number of armored vehicles they had available, and with fleets of aircraft supporting ground units on short notice with maximum efficiency. Little mention was made of the horse drawn supply columns, of the infantry divisions which often marched on foot at the rate of 30 miles per day, or of the repeated Luftwaffe bombings of advance German units.[2]

The exaggeration of the picture of the new German war machine should not be construed to mean that the Wehrmacht was not a most effective fighting organization and had not accomplished much in putting the theory of mobile warfare to the test of battle. "Panzer" division and "Luftwaffe" soon became familiar terms in English and other foreign languages. It was obvious even to those not versed in military affairs that the era of trench warfare on the World War I pattern had ended. The element of movement had been restored to

[1] Comments of Field Marshal Rundstedt, Jun 48. MS #B-847. Foreign Studies Br, OCMH.

[2] *Vorlaeufige Erfahren des Generalkommandos XXII A. K. ueber Fuehren beweglicher Verbaende, in OKH, Beiheft la zu Nr. 12/92 g. Kdos., Erfahrungsberichte.* H 37/77, (Army Group South). Reports of 3d and 10th Panzer Divs and 20th Mot Inf Div to XIX Corps, in *Anlagenheft II* to *Kriegstagebuch Feldzug in Polen, Heeresgruppe Nord, 1.9.39—2.10.39* 1–3 Sep. P. 600a. CRS, TAG.

war, even though fewer than one in six of the German divisions mobilized during the period of the Polish Campaign were Panzer or motorized divisions. Except for the XVI and XIX Corps, the German Panzer force had also been committed piecemeal, and full advantage was not taken of the shock power of the Panzer division in the campaign in Poland.

The opportunity for a successful Allied attack against the Westwall had passed by the time the Polish Campaign ended. Hitler and his generals were well aware of the risk they had taken in throwing almost all their resources into the gamble for a quick victory in the east, as exemplified in their redeployment of divisions and higher commands from the Polish theater to the Westwall before operations in Poland had been completed.

The situation faced by the British and French in October 1939 was that of a *fait accompli*. Germany had defeated Poland completely and redeployed to the Westwall forces sufficient to withstand a belated Allied offensive. Adolf Hitler's success in Poland also enhanced the Fuehrer's opinion of his own abilities as a strategist and further encouraged him to deprecate the advice of his military staff and senior commanders. Germany's increasing strength and the continued inactivity of the Western Allies soon inclined Hitler to order planning to commence for a fast-moving campaign to subjugate France and destroy the British Expeditionary Force. Only the onset of winter and the strongest objections from his military advisers prompted Hitler to delay his campaign until the following spring.

Lessons Learned by the Wehrmacht

The German forces took advantage of the opportunity to observe the effectiveness and utility of their new weapons and other materiel, organization, and tactics in combat operations in Poland and a number of improvements were found necessary. Some changes could be made before the campaign in France the following spring, while others would have to wait.

Materiel

Among the infantry weapons, the Model 1934 machine gun was found to be subject to frequent stoppages in rugged field use, particularly in muddy or dusty areas.[3] Research on a new machine gun was accelerated, and the Model 1942 that evolved would continue to operate despite exposure to many of the conditions that hampered the use of the Model 1934 weapon. The higher rate of fire of the 1942 machine gun was to be of considerable significance in later operations.

[3] "Halder Diary," II, p. 5.

The effort expended by Germany in the development of artillery of all types was found to be justified. According to Colonel Blumentritt, operations officer for Rundstedt, the Poles themselves testified to the effectiveness of the German artillery fire in the attack on Warsaw. The defenders had received warning of air attacks with the appearance of German aircraft and the bombing had been of limited duration. The sustained artillery fire, however, wore down the resistance of the garrison of the Polish capital.[4]

The 88mm antiaircraft gun was found to be especially effective in engaging bunkers and prepared fortifications. The VIII Corps made reference to this of the new gun in attacking the Polish fortifications at Nikolai. According to the VIII Corps account, the gun could penetrate the walls of bunkers and buildings reinforced as strongpoints.

The German Mark I tanks were found to be unsatisfactory in operations, and the Mark II tanks were useful only for reconnaissance. This served to confirm the belief that these tanks were too light for operations and should be replaced by heavier types. Panzer units were henceforth equipped with a larger proportion of Mark III and Mark IV tanks. The heavier of the two, the Mark IV tank, was singled out by Guderian as a highly effective weapon to be produced in quantity.[5] The Mark II tank was utilized for a time as a reconnaissance vehicle, and eventually the Mark I and II tank chassis were utilized as gun platforms for the self-propelled gun units organized for assault operations. In general, the supply of spare parts and system of maintenance for tanks was found to be inadequate for the needs of Panzer units in combat.[6]

The rapid and overwhelming successes and light personnel losses of the new German tank force in the Polish Campaign, as illustrated by the movements of the XIX Corps across the Polish Corridor and from East Prussia to Brzesc, convinced Hitler of the effectiveness of this new weapon. In 10 days of operations the XIX Corps covered 200 miles in its drive on Brzesc. Polish reserve units still assembling in the rear areas were completely surprised and destroyed before they could organize a defense. In an action at Zabinka, east of Brzesc, elements of the XIX Corps interrupted the unloading of tanks at a rail siding and destroyed the Polish armored unit before is could deploy and give battle. The corps' losses totalled 2,236, including 650 dead, 1,345 wounded, and 241 missing, less than 4 percent of

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[4] Ltr, Gen Blumentritt to OCMH, 31 Jan 55, p. 21. Author's file.

[5] *Erfahrungsbericht des Generalkommandos XIX A. K., in OKH Beiheft 1a zu Nr. 12/92 g. Kdos., Erfahrungsberichte.* H 37/77. CRS, TAG.

[6] *Kriegstagebuch des Generalkommandos XIX A. K. ueber den Feldzug in Polen, 1.9.39—25.9.39.* P–250a. CRS, TAG.

Guderian's entire force. Henceforth, as in the coming French Campaign, Panzer units were to play an increasingly important part in German planning.

Organization

Guderian recommended that battalion and regimental headquarters of Panzer units be located farther forward to direct the battle. Headquarters should be more mobile, restricted to a few armored vehicles, and well equipped with radio communication. The XIX Corps commander also recommended better communication with the supply columns and trains of the armored and motorized units.

The light divisions were found to have little staying power in sustained operations in Poland. These divisions already had at least one tank battalion each. The addition of a sufficient number of tanks to form a tank regiment for each division made it possible to complete the planned conversion of all four light divisions to Panzer divisions, bearing the numbers 6 through 9.

The motorized infantry divisions were found to be unwieldly in operations in Poland. To permit better control, one motorized infantry regiment was detached from each of the motorized divisions.

Equipment

Some infantry commanders complained of the awkward and heavy packs carried by the troops, recommending changes to permit the individual soldier greater freedom of action and more comfort. One commander recommended the carrying of machine gun ammunition by the ammunition carriers of gun crews in containers similar to those used by mortar crews, i. e. in a special pack carried by the individual soldier rather than in boxes carried by hand. This would permit the ammunition bearer to operate a rifle, giving the gun crew more protection and fire power. In addition a special grenade sack was recommended for the individual soldier. It was also requested that one rifleman in the infantry squad be provided with a telescopic sight to permit accurate fire on small or more distant targets.

The 57th Infantry Division prepared a report on its experiences illustrating a number of the small oversights that added to the problems of the commanders of lower units. The division was a Wave II organization composed largely of reservists who had recently completed their periods of active service. During their two years of active duty, the men had been trained on the Model 1934 machine gun. When they were mobilized for the campaign in Poland, many did not know how to operate the older World War I type weapon with which some Wave II units were still equipped. Another oversight was the supply of horseshoes, made to a size common to military horses but far

too small for the splayed hooves of many farm horses requisitioned at the time of mobilization.[7]

Some fault was found with the equipment carried by assault engineers. Their heavy gear made it difficult for the engineers to carry out their assault role with the infantry. It was recommended that their equipment be so distributed that the engineers would be able to operate effectively as part of the infantry-engineer team in assault operations.[8]

Training and Tactics

The infantry tactics of the Germans were criticized by Bock, who felt that too much was sacrificed to caution. This may seem somewhat contradictory, in view of the brief period of time in which the Germans destroyed a Polish force almost as strong as their own numerically and captured a number of heavily fortified areas that the Poles defended stubbornly. Bock actually had reference to the frequent delays incurred when artillery had to be brought forward to the support of infantry units. The general felt that some artillery batteries should always be attached directly to infantry units, to give close support in an attack or movement forward. The remainder of the artillery should be sufficiently mobile to move forward to support attacking infantry with little delay. Bock expressed the opinion that the old adage "The infantry must wait for the artillery" should be changed to "The artillery may not delay the infantry." [9]

Bock further felt that the German infantry training directives were obsolete and verbose. The commander of the northern army group was of the opinion that these regulations should be shortened and should stress the mission and aggressive action to accomplish it. Brief and pertinent regulations would be easier to remember and would impress on the officer, noncommissioned officer, and soldier the all-important task he was to perform in combat, with minimum distraction.

Another characteristic of warfare in eastern Europe as learned by the Germans was the considerable guerrilla activity in rear areas. As a consequence, it was recommended by a number of commanders that supply trains, workshops, and other rear installations be better equipped with weapons, particularly automatic weapons, and support personnel trained in their use.

The successful night attacks of the Poles made a considerable impression on the Germans. Although already aware of the advantage

[7] *57. Inf. Div., Ia Nr. 61,* in *OKH, Beiheft Ia zu Nr. 12/92, g. Kdos., Erfahrungsberichte.* H 37/77. CRS, TAG.

[8] *Gen. Kdo. VIII A. K., Abt. Ia Nr. 66/39 g. K.,* in *OKH, Beiheft Ia zur Nr., 12/92, g. Kdos., Erfahrungsberichte.* H 37/77. CRS, TAG.

[9] "Bock Diary," p. 44.

of moving by night, a device they used repeatedly, the Germans did not fully appreciate the potentialities of attacking under cover of darkness until shown by the Poles. With adequate security, these operations could cause considerable confusion when launched at the boundaries between units, as demonstrated by the Polish night attack of 12 September at the junction of the 207th Infantry Division and Brigade Eberhard lines before Gdynia.

Air Support

The Luftwaffe in Poland succeeded in proving its offensive power as an attack weapon, despite the protests of some senior army commanders whose troops had been bombed in close support operations. The Luftwaffe demonstrated its capabilities in isolating the Polish front by bombing bridges and rail lines, and preventing the movement of Polish supplies and troops by bombing and strafing truck columns on the roads. The Luftwaffe also rendered material assistance to advancing German armored columns and dive bombed Polish fortifications prior to attack by the ground forces. From this point the Luftwaffe was to have an important role as part of the German attack team.[10]

The complete cover given ground forces by the Luftwaffe in Poland worked a disservice to the Army as far as camouflage was concerned. Despite instructions, there was little actual need for advancing units to utilize available cover and concealment at halts; for artillery to put up camouflage nets to hide guns, ammunition, and prime movers; or for command posts to limit vehicular traffic in their immediate vicinity. The Polish Air Force was unable to take advantage of this laxity on the part of many units, and the pace of the campaign made it impossible for higher commanders to take corrective action while operations were still in progress. As a consequence, a poor start in camouflage discipline was made by many units, and the lack of offensive action by the Polish Air Force made it impossible to point out examples of what might occur were the Wehrmacht to be committed against an enemy possessing an air force comparable to the Luftwaffe.

[10] *"Der Einsatz der Luftwaffe im polnischen Feldzug," op. cit.*, pp. 50–51.

Bibliographical Note

The original sources used in the preparation of this study were drawn almost exclusively from the large store of German military records presently in the custody of The Adjutant General. These sources included the daily reports of OKW and the situation maps of OKH for the period of the campaign, the headquarters journals of the two army groups and five armies committed to operations, and such afteraction reports and observations of the corps and divisions as were available. Other primary sources included the Army mobilization plans for the years 1937–40, the consolidated intelligence study on Poland prepared by OKW, the diaries of Generals von Bock and Halder, and the naval operations journal for August and September, 1939.

Secondary sources used in the writing of the study consisted of two brief histories prepared by OKH immediately following the campaign in Poland, a number of monographs prepared by former German officers at the end of the World War II, and a wide selection of published German material. Other secondary sources consisted of the comments of the former German officers, whose assistance is acknowledged in the foreword of this study, and the three-volume work in Polish published by the semiofficial Sikorski Institute in London.

General background information on the German Armed Forces of the prewar period was obtained from H. Franke's *Neuzeitliche Wehrwissenschaften* (*Modern Military Science*); General Mueller-Hillebrand's *Das Heer, 1939–45* (*The Army, 1939–45*); Werner Baumbach's history of the Luftwaffe, *Zu Spaet* (*Too Late*); the German Navy's classified official history of naval rearmament during the period 1919–35, as reproduced in the International Military Tribunal's series of Nuernberg trial documents; Bredt's semiofficial *Taschenbuch der Kriegsflotten* (*Handbook of the Navies*); and available field and technical manuals, training publications, and other printed matter used by the Wehrmacht.

The material on German planning was obtained from such records as were kept of Hitler's conferences; the diary of General Halder (for OKH); the diary of General Bock (for Army Group North); the records of *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* (for Army Group South); the

naval orders of 16 May 1939 and 21 August 1939, as reproduced in the Nuernberg trial documents; and an account of the Luftwaffe's part as written by a group of captured German Air Force officers in 1946, under the title *Die Planung und Vorbereitung des Luftkrieges Gegen Polen, 1939* (*Planning and Preparations for the Air War Against Poland, 1939*).

The operations narrative is based on the headquarters journals of the army groups and armies, and such corps and division journals as were available. These records were supplemented by the Bock and Halder diaries; the Eighth Army report of operations against Warsaw; General Lanz's *Gebirgsjaeger* (*Mountain Trooper*), the history of the 1st Mountain Division; and several monographs prepared for the Office of Military History by former German Army and Air Force officers. The lessons learned by the Wehrmacht as a result of the campaign were drawn from the same sources.

Chronology of Events

1933

30 Jan—— Hitler appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg.
23 Mar—— Enabling Act passed by Reichstag to establish the National Socialist dictatorship.
14 Oct—— Germany withdraws from the League of Nations.

1934

26 Jan—— Nonaggression pact concluded with Poland.
30 Jun—— Roehm and other opponents of Hitler murdered in blood purge.
2 Aug—— Death of President Hindenburg. Chancellorship and Presidency combined by Hitler.
19 Aug—— National plebiscite approves Hitler's assumption of executive power.

1935

16 Mar—— Hitler announces the expansion of the Army to 36 divisions and 300,000 men. Conscription reintroduced.
21 May—— New armed forces law establishes a separate air force.
18 Jun—— Anglo-German naval agreement permits the construction of a modern German fleet.
1 Jul—— *Truppenamt* redesignated as the Army General Staff.

1936

7 Mar—— German troops occupy demilitarized Rhineland.
27 Oct—— Formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis.
17 Nov—— Conclusion of the Japanese-German anti-Comintern agreement.

1937

30 Jan—— Hitler reaffirms the Polish-German Nonaggression Pact.
12 Mar—— German troops cross the frontier to annex Austria to the Reich.

1938

4 Feb—— Resignation of Blomberg and Fritsch. Hitler creates OKW under Keitel and assumes closer control over the German Armed Forces, redesignated the Wehrmacht.
29 Sep—— Munich Conference. Hitler's claim to the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia recognized by Britain, France, and Italy. Czechoslovakia accedes to German demands.
24 Oct—— Ribbentrop demands the return of Danzig and special concessions in the Polish Corridor.

1939

20 Jan	Schacht dismissed as president of Reichsbank after warning Hitler of economic consequences of his armaments program.
15 Mar	Bohemia and Moravia occupied by German troops and organized as a protectorate of the Reich.
23 Mar	Memelland annexed to Germany.
25 Mar	Hitler directs service chiefs to make preparations for the solution of the Polish problem by military means.
31 Mar	Chamberlain ends policy of appeasement with guarantees to Poland pledging Anglo-French support should Polish independence be threatened.
3 Apr	"Directive for the Armed Forces, ,1939–40" issued by OKW Part II entitled Plan WEISS and provides for a military build-up against Poland by 1 September.
21 Apr	Annex to Plan WEISS specifies that there will be no declaration of war if the problem of Poland is to be resolved by force.
28 Apr	Hitler abrogates Polish-German Nonaggression Pact of 1934 and the London Naval Agreement of 1935.
12 May	Disorders in Danzig instigated by National Socialists.
15 Jun	Operation order issued by OKH specifies the composition and mission of the ground forces to participate in Plan WEISS.
14 Jul	Timetable for military preparations against Poland issued by OKW to the three services. Preparations to be completed by Y-day, which is to be set by Hitler.
23 Aug	Germany signs pact of nonaggression with the Soviet Union. Hitler sets Y-day for 26 August.
24 Aug	Britain and France give written guarantees to Poland.
25 Aug	Hitler directs attack to commence at 0400, 26 August, but revokes order when he is informed of British and French guarantees. Mobilization proceeds according to "X" Plan, while Hitler tries to dissuade British and French.
28 Aug	British and French remain firm in their stand on Polish question.
29 Aug	German ultimatum to Poles.
30 Aug	Ribbentrop declares negotiations with Poland at an end.
31 Aug	Hitler signs "Directive No. 1 for the Conduct of the War," ordering attack on Poland at 0445, 1 September. "Gleiwitz Incident" staged as Polish provocation for armed German intervention.
1 Sep	Wehrmacht crosses Polish frontier and attacks Polish air bases and naval installations.
3 Sept	Army Group North cuts the Corridor and Army Group South crosses the Wartha. Britain and France declare war on Germany.
11 Sep	Major Polish force destroyed at Radom.
12 Sep	Headquarters, OKH shifts ground forces to permit envelopment of Poles escaping east of Vistula.
17 Sep	Red Army moves into eastern Poland. The German XIX Corps captures Brzesc. Major Polish force destroyed at Kutno.

19 Sep	Army Group South reports Polish President and Commander in Chief have fled to Romania.
21 Sept	Surrender of Lwow.
27 Sep	Surrender of Warsaw.
29 Sep	Surrender of Modlin.
2 Oct	Army Group North relinquishes control of its area to Third Army. Army Group North and Fourth Army leave Poland for the western front.
3 Oct	Army Group South becomes OB EAST and responsible for occupation of Poland. Three frontier army commands organized. Tenth Army enroute to western front.
4–6 Oct	Destruction of last major Polish force at Kock.
12 Oct	Hitler directs establishment of a government general in Poland.
13 Oct	Eighth and Fourteenth Armies move to western front.
18 Oct	Army Group South relieved from assignment as OB EAST and ordered to the western front. Frontier Army Command Center becomes OB EAST.
22 Oct	Headquarters, Frontier Army Command North (Third Army) moves to western front. *Wehrkreis* I assumes control of the area of responsibility of Frontier Army Command North.
26 Oct	Occupation of Poland turned over to civilian control. Dr. Frank becomes governor general and military occupation forces are restricted to security duties.

Rank Designations of German General and Flag Officers

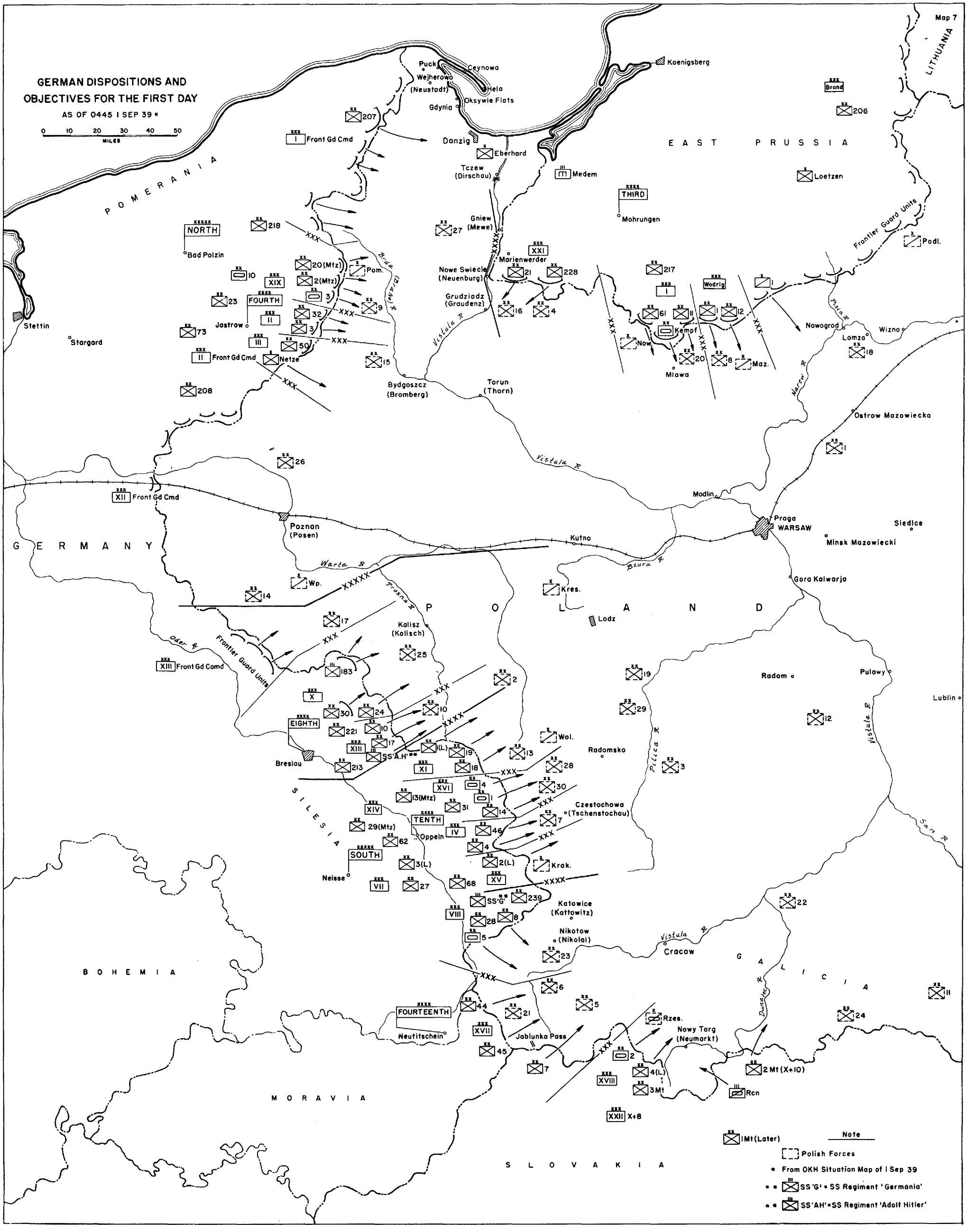
Army and Air Force

German designation	*United States Army and Air Force equivalent*
Generalfeldmarschall	General of the Army and General of the Air Force.
Generaloberst	General.
General der Infanterie, der Artillerie, der Flieger, etc.	Lieutenant General.
Generalleutnant	Major General.
Generalmajor	Brigadier General.

Navy

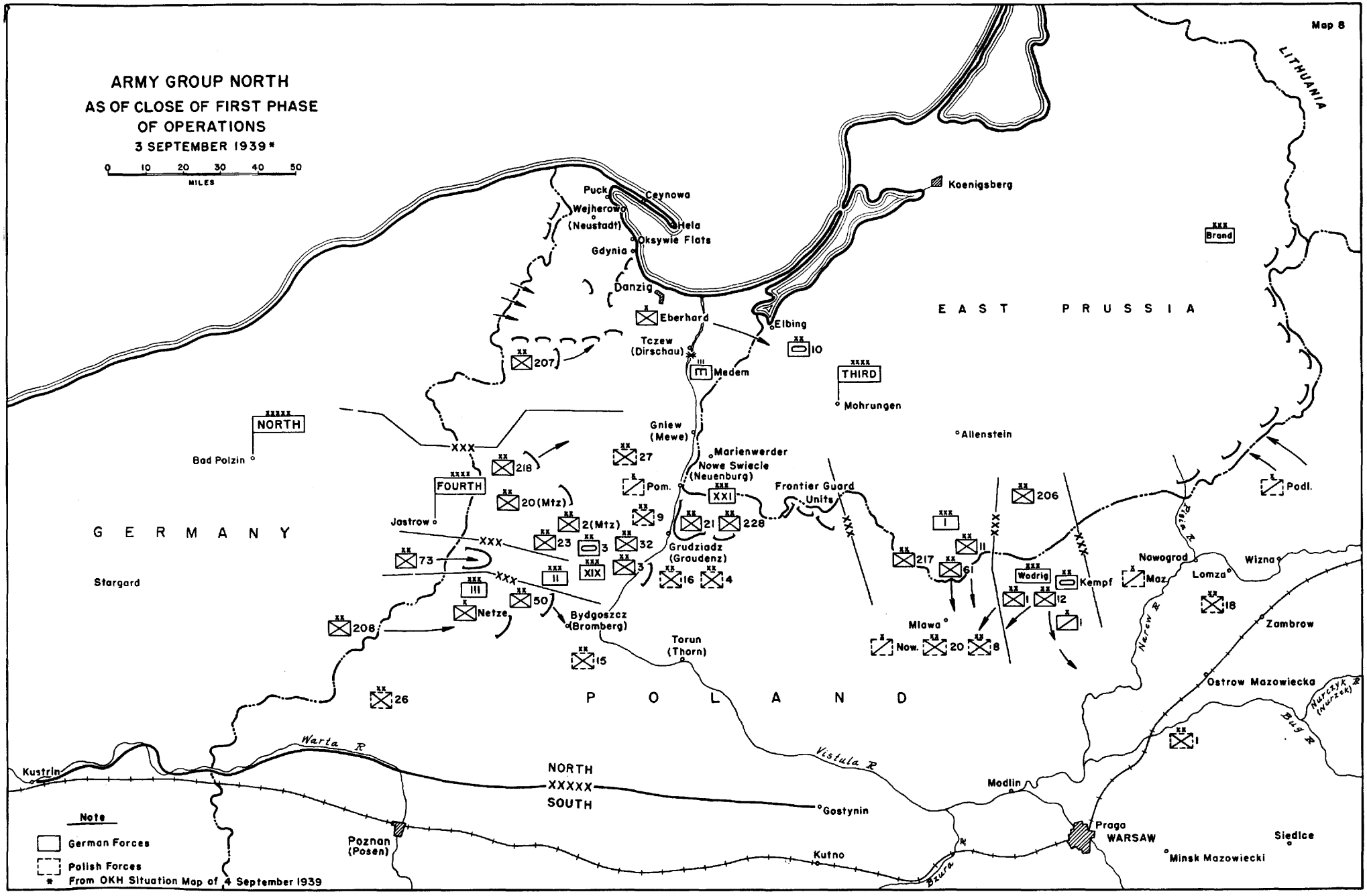
Grossadmiral or Generaladmiral	Admiral of the Fleet.
Admiral	Admiral.
Vizeadmiral	Vice Admiral.
Konteradmiral	Rear Admiral.
Kommodore	Commodore.

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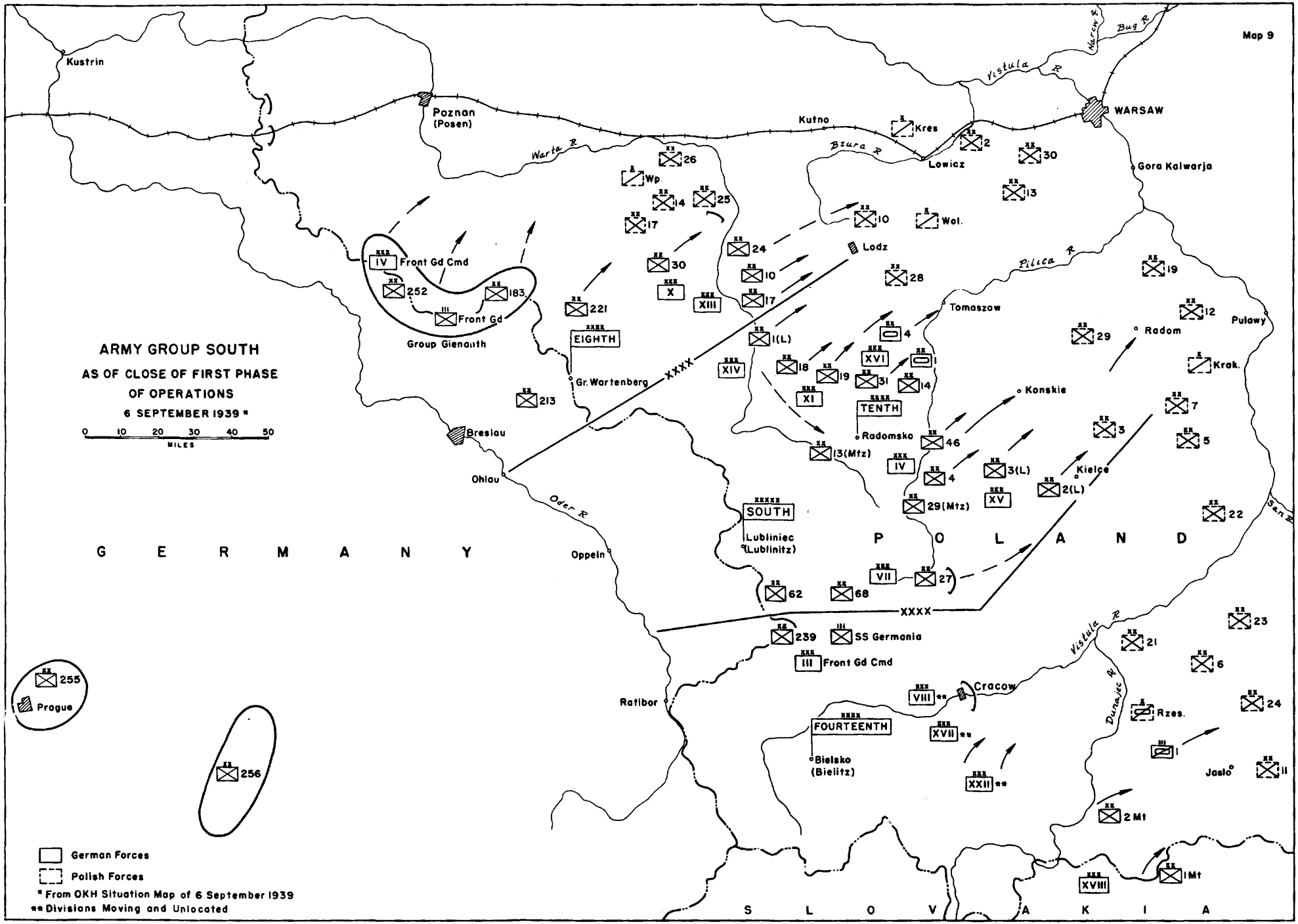
Map 7. German dispositions and objectives for the first day, as of 0445, 1 September 1939.

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Map 8. Army Group North, 3 September 1939.

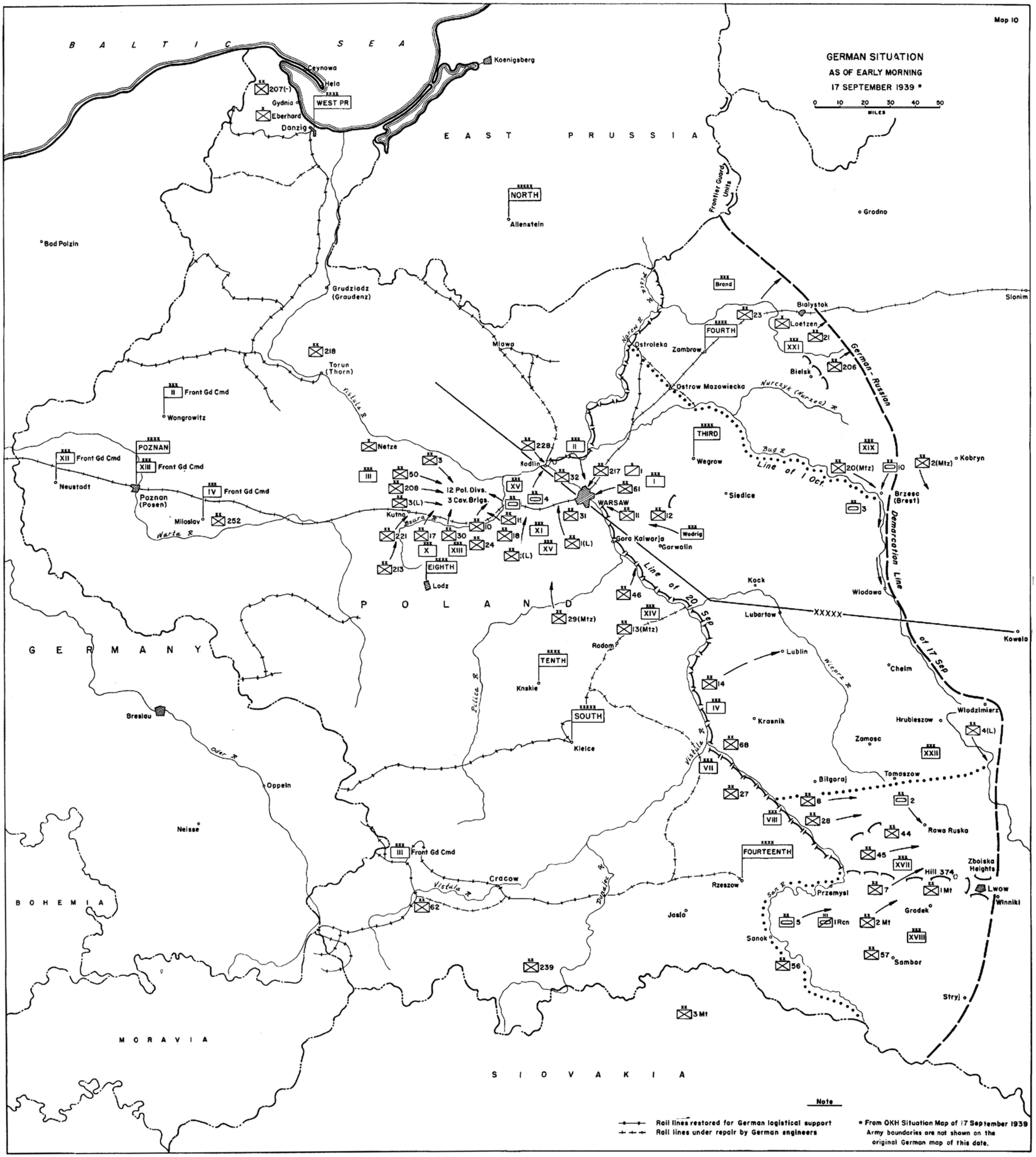
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Map 9. Army Group South, 6 September 1939.

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Map 10



Map 10. German situation, 17 September 1939.

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