



BA BILD 10-11-012-0022-24 LANZINGER

On September 8, 1939, one week into the Nazi invasion of Poland, German armoured troops reached the gates of Warsaw. The Polish government and High Command had left the city but a determined garrison awaited the enemy invader and the Poles were able to stave off two consecutive German attempts to take the capital by armoured attack. Thus began a siege that would last for three weeks and subject the Warsaw Army of over 100,000 and the civilian population of over one

million to a ruthless campaign of aerial bombardment and heavy artillery shelling, causing thousands of casualties and widespread destruction. It was a hopeless battle that could only end in defeat and on September 27 the Polish garrison capitulated. The photos of the first penetration by tanks and infantry of the 4. Panzer-Division taken on September 9 became standard repertoire of German propaganda publications on the Blitzkrieg in Poland.

THE SIEGE OF WARSAW 1939

By Karel Margry

At 4.45 a.m. on September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Inaugurated by the surprise attack on the Westerplatte fortress at Danzig (see *After the Battle* No. 65), five German armies streamed across the Polish frontier from three different directions — north, north-west and south-west.

In the north, Heeresgruppe Nord, commanded by Generaloberst Fedor von Bock, attacked with two armies, one on each side of the 'Polish Corridor' to Danzig. The 3. Armee under General der Artillerie Georg von Küchler struck from East Prussia (the territory separated from the main part of the Reich by the Danzig corridor) and the 4. Armee under General der Artillerie Günther von Kluge from Pomerania in the north-west. With a strength of 630,000 men and 21 divisions — 17 infantry, two panzer and two motorised infantry — the army group's task was to first crush the Polish forces defending the Corridor and then move rapidly south and south-east towards the Narew river and, once across there, continue along the east bank of the Vistula river in order to prevent a Polish stand along this river line.

Heeresgruppe Süd under Generaloberst Gerd von Rundstedt, poised in Silesia in the south-west and in German-occupied Czechoslovakia in the south, unleashed three armies — the 8. Armee under General der Infanterie Johannes Blaskowitz, the 10. Armee under General der Artillerie Walter von Reichenau and the 14. Armee under Generaloberst Wilhelm List. Mounting 836,000 men in 36 divisions — 23 infantry,

three mountain, four panzer, four light and two motorised infantry — its task was defeat the Polish armies in western Poland while at the same time sending strong mobile columns towards Warsaw (250 kilometres away) and the Vistula in order to capture the capital and secure crossings over the river on a wide front. The main thrust was to be carried out by von Reichenau's 10. Armee, which therefore had the bulk of the German armoured and mechanised divisions under its command.

Together the two army groups were thus to form a giant pincer movement designed to entrap and destroy all Polish forces, if possible still west of the Vistula. Each army group was supported by a Luftwaffe air fleet — Luftflotte 1 under General der Flieger Albert Kesselring assisting Heeresgruppe Nord and Luftflotte 4 under Generalleutnant Alexander Löhr backing up Heeresgruppe Süd. In total the Germans fielded 1,450,000 troops, 1,700 tanks and over 1,900 aircraft.

Opposing the German onslaught stood the Polish Army, under its commander-in-chief (and de facto leader of Poland) Marshal Edward Smigly-Rydz. It comprised 30 first-line divisions, ten reserve divisions and 11 cavalry brigades. It had only 500 tanks, many of them outdated. Against the 1,900 German aircraft, the Polish Air Force could muster only 842, half of them modern, the other half obsolescent.

Defending the long Polish border stood seven first-line armies. In the north, facing East Prussia, were (from east to west) the Narew Operational Group, the Modlin

Army and, defending the Polish Corridor to Danzig, the Pomorze Army. Further south along Poland's western frontier stood the Poznan Army, the Lodz Army and the Krakow Army, while the southern sector bordering on Slovakia was defended by the Karpаты Army. Backing up these first-line formations were four reserve corps: the Wyszkiw Operational Group north-west of Warsaw, the Kutno Group in the north-west, the Prusy Group in the south-west and the Tarnobrzeg Group in the south.

The Polish strategy of defence was based on the promise by its Western ally France that, in the event of a German invasion of Poland, the French Army would within a few days attack Germany from the west, forcing it to fight a two-front war. Hence, the Poles judged it worthwhile to try and hold up a German invasion force as close to the border as possible. Thus, rather than concentrate their forces behind the natural defensive barrier formed by the rivers Narew, Bug, Vistula and San, deep inside the Polish interior (as the French had advised), the Polish High Command chose to put all their available forces directly along its 1,200-kilometre-long western frontier, forming a cordon line of dispersed armies. To add to their difficulties, the Polish army had only started mobilising on August 30, one day before the Germans struck, and many of their units were still assembling or on their way to the front when the hatchet fell.



Warsaw's defences included 86 AA guns and numerous detachments of AA machine guns. Here a crew poses with their Ckm wz.30 machine gun set up on the corner of Aleja Jerozolimskie (Jerusalem Avenue) and Ulica Marszałkowska (Marshal Street) in the city centre.

It was an uneven battle from the start. The Wehrmacht's new tactics of mechanised warfare, soon to become universally known as Blitzkrieg, completely overwhelmed the Polish defenders. Large closed bodies of panzers and motorised troops, supported by wave after wave of screeching Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive-bombers, rapidly penetrated the Polish defensive crust and plunged deep into the countryside, enveloping large numbers of troops and throwing them in chaos and disarray. Pockets of resistance were bypassed, to be mopped up and destroyed by the foot-slogging infantry divisions following behind. The weather was perfect for tanks, the ground remaining dry and hard-surfaced. In the very first hours of the invasion the Luftwaffe struck at Polish airfields, railway junctions, bridges, munitions factories and mobilisation centres. The devastating air attacks destroyed many Polish aircraft on the ground and greatly hampered the Poles' further mobilisation and supply system.

France and Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, but failed to provide any meaningful support to Poland.

By September 5, German forces had everywhere broken through the Polish cordon formations and the jaws of the inner pincer were closing. In the north, Von Kluge's 4. Armee had overrun the Danzig Corridor and established contact with Küchler's 3. Armee, which was driving westward from

East Prussia and south-eastwards towards the Narew. In the south, while Blaskowitz's 8. Armee tied down the Polish forces and protected the army group's left flank, von Reichenau's 10. Armee managed to trap the Lodz and Krakow Armies and the Prusy Group in a huge cauldron at Radom, on the near side of the Vistula. In the far south, List's 14. Armee was rapidly isolating the Karpaty Army against the mountains and forcing it into surrender.

The speedy advance of the German troops made the Polish strategy of defending along the border obsolete and early on the 6th the Polish High Command ordered all its armies to withdraw behind the planned second line of defence, formed by the rivers Narew, Vistula and San.

By now, the armoured spearhead of the 10. Armee was ramming its way towards Warsaw. On September 6 the XVI. Armeekorps (mot.), commanded by General der Kavallerie Erich Hoepner and comprising the 1. and 4. Panzer-Division and the 14. and 31. Infanterie-Division, managed to break through positions of the Lodz Army north of Radomsko and started its drive towards the Vistula, now 200 kilometres away, the 4. Panzer-Division on the left aiming for Warsaw and the 1. Panzer-Division on the right for Gora Kalwarja 30 kilometres further south, with the two infantry divisions trailing behind.

Right: Warsaw is one of those cities whose appearance has completely altered since pre-war days. Three times during the war there was wholesale destruction in the capital: first as a result of the German bombing and shelling in September 1939; then in May 1943 when, in the aftermath of the failed uprising in the Jewish ghetto, the Germans blew up the entire Jewish quarters in the city centre, and then finally in August-October 1944 when the Polish underground army in Warsaw rose in rebellion against the Germans, which again led to brutal retaliation and further obliteration (see *After the Battle* No. 143). Post-war reconstruction of the devastated city by the Communist regime was accompanied by giant building projects and led to a further upheaval of the city's landscape. One of the victims was the distinctive tower along Marshal Street seen in the background of the wartime photo. The giant tower that has taken its place is the Palace of Culture and Science, built in 1952-55 and cynically known by the Poles as 'Stalin's gift to Warsaw'. The spot where the machine gun was set up is today an entrance to the Centrum Station of the Warsaw metro.



THE SITUATION IN WARSAW

Warsaw in 1939 was a city of 1.3 million inhabitants. From the very first hours of the campaign, this huge metropolitan area became the target of an unrestricted aerial bombardment campaign by Luftwaffe bombers and dive-bombers, mainly from Kesselring's Luftflotte 1 supporting Heeresgruppe Nord.

On September 1, a force of some 90 Heinkel He 111 bombers from Kampfgeschwader 27, protected by 36 Me 109 fighters from Jagdgeschwader 21, together with 35 He 111s from II./Lehrgeschwader 1 raided the capital. They hit military targets, such as infantry barracks, the aerodrome and the PZL aircraft factory at Okecie in the south-west and the Warsaw radio station in Fort Mokotow in the south. However, right from the start, they also freely bombed civilian facilities such as waterworks, hospitals, market places and schools, and strafed civilians with machine-gun fire. The attacks came as a complete surprise. The streets were crowded and dozens died in the first few minutes. Later that week, in order to disrupt communications, the bombers and dive-bombers attacked the city's railway stations and the Vistula bridges — the latter without success. On September 3 alone 1,500 civilians were killed. A girls' school was hit on the 4th.

Warsaw's air defence depended mostly on the fighters of the Polish Air Force's Pursuit Brigade (Brygada Poscigowa) under Colonel Stefan Pawlikowski. It comprised two squadrons and was equipped with 54 fighter aircraft, chiefly the PZL P.7 and PZL P.11 types. The city's anti-aircraft artillery under Colonel Kazimierz Baran had 86 AA guns and various detachments of anti-aircraft machine guns.

Initially the air defence of the capital was fairly successful. During the first six days, the Pursuit Brigade managed to shoot down 43 enemy aircraft, while the anti-aircraft artillery destroyed a similar number. In addition, there were nine unconfirmed victories and 20 damaged aircraft. However, the brigade had itself also lost 38 machines, or approximately 70 per cent of its strength. The city's air defence began to crumble on September 5 when the military authorities ordered 11 of the AA batteries withdrawn from Warsaw towards Lublin, Brest-Litovsk and Lwow. The following day, September 6, the remnants of the Pursuit Brigade were also transferred from the Warsaw sector to Lublin.

With rumours of the rout of the Polish armies reaching the capital, thousands of

Right: With German forces rapidly approaching the capital, the city authorities called upon the population to assist in constructing barricades and defensive positions. After the fall of the city, a German Propaganda-Kompanie photographer pictured what looks like an improvised pillbox or barricade on the corner of Targowa and Wilenska Streets in Praga, the part of Warsaw on the east bank of the Vistula.

inhabitants packed their belongings and fled to the east, only to meet up with other refugees heading westwards. At the same time, masses of people entered the city from the west, fleeing before the German invading forces. Stukas swooped down on the long columns of people, strafing and striking terror at leisure.

On September 4, Polish President Ignacy Moscicki and his government evacuated from Warsaw, transferring their seat to Lublin, 150 kilometres to the south-east. Commander-in-Chief Marshal Smigly-Rydz and the Polish General Staff also left the capital, on the night of September 6/7, moving to Brest-Litovsk, also 150 kilometres to the rear. Their departure led to further panic and chaos in the capital.

At one time, it had been the Government's intention to declare Warsaw an 'open city', but this idea was now abandoned. The capital would be defended at all cost. On September 3, before he left, Smigly-Rydz ordered the creation of an improvised Warsaw Defence Command (Dowództwo Obrony Warszawy). General Walerian Czuma, the head of the Border Guard (Straz Graniczna), was appointed its commander and Colonel Tadeusz Tomaszewski its Chief-of-Staff.

Initially the forces under command of General Czuma were very limited. Most of the city authorities had withdrawn together with a large part of the police forces, fire-fighters and military garrison. Warsaw was left with only four battalions of infantry and one battery of artillery. Also, the spokesman of the Warsaw garrison had issued a communiqué in which he ordered all young men to leave the city. To co-ordinate civilian efforts and counter the panic that threatened to engulf the capital, Czuma appointed the President (Lord Mayor) of Warsaw, Stefan Starzynski, as the Civilian Commissar of the capital. Starzynski immediately started to organise the Civil Guard to replace the evacuated police forces and the fire-fighters. He also ordered all members of the city's administration to return to their posts. In his daily radio broadcasts he asked all civilians to construct barricades and anti-tank barriers at the city outskirts.

Defensive field fortifications were constructed mostly to the west of the city limits. Streets were blocked with barricades and overturned tram cars. Cellars of houses were turned into pillboxes. Gradually, the forces of General Czuma were reinforced with volunteers, as well as rearguard troops and various army units, primarily from the Lodz and Prusy Armies, retreating before the onslaught of German armoured units. One was a stray battalion of the 41st Infantry Regiment 'Suwalski' from the destroyed 29th Division. On September 7, the 40th Infantry Regiment 'Children of Lwow', part of the 5th Division and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Jozef Kalandyk, was transiting through Warsaw towards previously assigned positions with the Pomorze Army. The unit was stopped and joined the defence of the capital.

By the 8th General Czuma had gathered some 17 infantry battalions under his command, supported by 64 pieces of artillery and 33 tanks. The latter — 27 light tanks of the Vickers E, 7-TP and R-35 types and six TK-3 and TKS tankettes — were formed into the 1st and 2nd Light Tank Companies.



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The same building still stands, its façade pockmarked by bullets marks from the 1944 uprising and dilapidated by years of neglect.

The last Polish formation defending before Warsaw was the 13th Infantry Division, positioned near Kuluszki in central Poland. After bitter fighting with Hoepner's XVI. Armeekorps on September 6-7, its lines were broken by the 4. Panzer-Division, which captured the town of Tomaszow

Mazowiecki, located 115 kilometres south-west of Warsaw. During the night (September 7/8), most of the soldiers of the 13th Division panicked and deserted, enabling the 4. Panzer-Division to carry on to Rawa Mazowiecka, another 35 kilometres closer to the Polish capital.



WITOLD PIETRUSIEWICZ

The German bombing and strafing of Warsaw began right on the first day of the invasion and caused hundreds of casualties. At Warszawa Wschodni (Warsaw East) Railway Station in Praga a memorial stone marks the spot where on September 5 a group of girl scouts and school pupils serving as first-aid nurses were killed by a German bomb.



BA BILD 101H-012-0022-21 LANZINGER

On September 8 — eight days after the start of the campaign and after an amazing dash of 80 kilometres in ten hours — lead elements of the 4. Panzer-Division suddenly appeared on the outskirts of Warsaw. Taking advantage of the surprise, the Germans immediately launched an attack into the city, hoping to capture it on the run. The first attack, in the late afternoon of the 8th and by Panzer-Regiment 35 only, was quickly stopped by the fierce Polish resistance in the outer borough of Ochota.

The second attempt, by the entire division and on a double axis, on the morning of the 9th penetrated deeper into the city but was again repulsed in heavy fighting in Ochota and Wola. A Propaganda-Kompanie photographer, Bildberichter Otto Lanzinger, accompanied one of the attacking columns into the city and his pictures have become classic images of the 1939 fighting for Warsaw. Here a number of PzKpfw I and IIs roll forward while supporting infantry keep close to the houses.

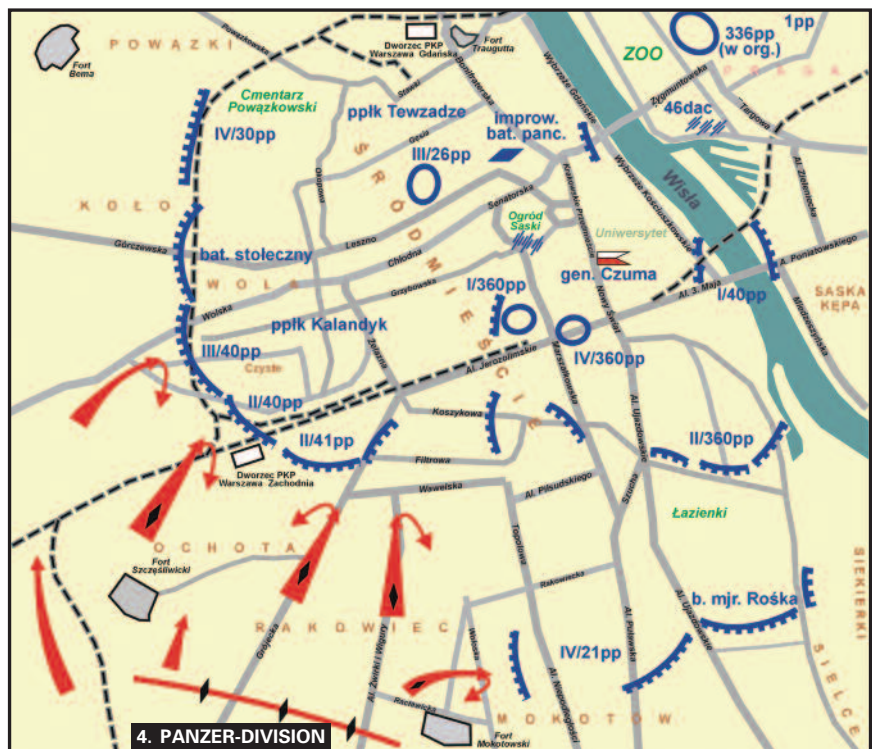
FIRST GERMAN ATTACKS ON THE CAPITAL

On the morning of September 8, the 4. Panzer-Division — now well ahead of the rest of the 10. Armee — made a lightning dash towards Warsaw, 80 kilometres away. Moving out at first light from Rawa Mozaiewicka, with Panzer-Regiment 35 in the lead, it brushed aside pockets of enemy resistance and reached Radziejowice, 35 kilometres on. With Polish soldiers surrendering by the thousands, the panzers rushed forward another 35 kilometres to Wolica, an outer suburb south-west of Warsaw, hoping to secure crossings over the Utrata river at Raszyn. Attacking at 1.15 p.m., the panzers destroyed two Polish light tanks and pushed back the Poles from blowing up two bridges right in front of them. Undaunted, the light panzers forded the brook, while attached engineers from Pionier-Bataillon 79, protected by infantry from Schützen-Regiment 12, quickly repaired the crossings. Soon the lead troops were approaching Okęcie, the airfield right on the south-western edge of the metropolitan area. Panzer-Regiment 35 had reached the city limits of Warsaw.

Back at the divisional command post at Nadarzyn, ten kilometres to the rear, Generalleutnant Georg-Hans Reinhardt was just receiving a visit from his army and corps commanders, Generals Reichenau and Hoepner. Having heard rumours that the Poles had declared their capital an open city, the three generals did not expect serious resistance and together they worked out exact plans for the seizure of the city. The division was to advance in two columns, with Panzer-Regiment 35 and Schützen-Regiment 12 on the right and Panzer-Regiment 36 and Infanterie-Regiment 33 on the left. However, the latter three units were still moving up and it would take some time for them to reach the start line.

Up front, the commander of Panzer-Regiment 35, Oberst Heinrich Eberbach, thought he could take the city on the run. Conferring with Hoepner and Reinhardt, he recommended that the surprise of the enemy be exploited and that he be allowed to continue the advance without waiting for the rest of the division. Permission was granted. A Storch light aircraft hurriedly flew in a few street maps of Warsaw and a plan of attack

was made. Entering from the south-west, the regiment's II. Abteilung was to advance across Pilsudski Square and then cross the Vistula to the east bank; the I. Abteilung was to remain in the centre of the city. Aerial support for the attack was quickly arranged through Kesselring's Luftflotte 1 (nominally in support of Heeresgruppe Nord) which sent in 35 Henschel HS 123 biplane dive-bombers from II./Lehrschwader 2.





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A PzKpfw II advances past another one. These photographs were taken on Grojecka Street, the main thoroughfare entering Warsaw from the south-east and leading into the borough of Ochota, at its intersection with Siewierska Street.

Grojecka was the axis of attack of Panzer-Regiment 35 both on the afternoon of the 8th and again during the morning of the 9th. The long shadows in Lanzinger's photos show the sun in the east, which proves that they were taken on the 9th.

At 5 p.m. Eberbach's regiment began the assault, advancing towards the borough of Ochota. A few rounds were fired. Just beyond the Rakowiec settlement the houses momentarily stopped, an open area partly filled with suburban vegetable gardens stretching out before the tankers' eyes. The tanks moved across a road bridge, the actual outskirts of the city being 400 metres beyond. As they entered the built-up area, the road ahead was blocked by a barricade of overturned streetcars and furniture trucks. Suddenly, a rain of fire fell on the force. From four-storied apartment buildings, ventilation openings in the rooftops, windows and basement openings, Polish soldiers of the 40th 'Children of Lwow' and 41st 'Suwalski' Regiments opened up on the tanks with everything they had. One of the few PzKpfw IV (the whole regiment had just eight of these in its 4. and 8. Kompanie) received a direct hit. It was recovered under fire but the attack was stalling.

By now the sun was setting. Realising that Warsaw was not an open city and that the Poles were strongly defending it, Eberbach called off the attack and withdrew his tanks behind the bridge. For now, all by itself and well ahead of the rest of the division, the regiment needed to secure itself on all sides.

At 7.15 p.m. that evening — a point in time when the panzers were still battling in Ochota — German radio already broadcast the OKW communiqué bringing the headline news that German troops had penetrated into Warsaw.

Right: Grojecka Street has changed out of all recognition since 1939 and none of the buildings visible in Lanzinger's photos remain standing. Today, the entire length of Grojecka is lined by high-rise apartment blocks built in the Communist era. Practically the only common feature between then and now are the tracks and overhead masts of the tram line to Okęcie. This is the view looking south-west and out of town, at the point where Siewierska used to connect with Grojecka.

During the night, the remaining elements of the division caught up with Panzer-Regiment 35: the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 36, the infantry of Schützen-Regiment 12 and Infanterie-Regiment 33 and the divisional artillery. Thinking he was now strong enough to take the city, Generalleutnant Reinhardt ordered the attack to be repeated the following morning with all available forces. Panzer-Regiment 35, supported by Schützen-Regiment 12, was to repeat its attack along the main road into Ochota. Panzer-Regiment 36, supported by Infanterie-Regiment 33 and two engineer companies, was to launch an attack from positions further to the north, along the main road leading into the borough of Wola.

At 7 a.m. on September 9, following a ten-minute preparatory artillery barrage on the city's edge, the 4. Panzer-Division again moved into the assault. Dive-bombing support was once more provided by Luftflotte 1, which had dispatched the HS 123s from II./LG2 and 140 Stukas from StG77 and III./StG51.

Leading the attack into Ochota, the I. Abteilung of Panzer-Regiment 35 (Hauptmann Meinrad von Lauchert), with infantry mounted on the tanks, once again rolled across the bridge, followed by more infantry and attached engineers. The first road barricade was eliminated. Despite strong Polish resistance a second bridge was taken and the tanks reached the streets of Warsaw. Once in the built-up area, the German infantry had to take each house and clear it. The Poles resisted fiercely with burst of machine-gun fire, hand-grenades dropped from above and tossed from cellar openings, even with blocks of stones dropped from the roofs. Anti-tank mines buried in the road verges and adjoining fields disabled several panzers. The fiercest fighting in Ochota was at the barricade erected near the junction of Grojecka and Siewierska Streets and defended by the 4th Company of the 40th Regiment.

The panzers attempted to continue by themselves. The lead tank, commanded by Leutnant Georg Claass of the 1. Kompanie, was hit by a well-camouflaged anti-tank gun.



NIKITA TIEPLUSZCZEW

Right: Infantrymen of the supporting Schützen-Regiment 12 dash across Siewierska Street, a side street of Grojecka. Note the smoke rising in the right background, evidence of Stuka dive-bombing attacks on Polish positions in Wola, the adjoining borough attacked by Panzer-Regiment 36 and Infanterie-Regiment 33.

The first round failed to knock it out but the second set the vehicle on fire. Claass and his radio operator managed to bail out but both later succumbed to their wounds. The same Polish gun immobilised the vehicle of the regimental adjutant, Oberleutnant Heinz-Günther Guderian (the son of the panzer general). Dismounting and escaping through a courtyard gate, Guderian came across the tank of Leutnant Diergardt and a platoon of infantry. Taking both under his command he continued the attack.

Advancing through courtyards and gardens, Leutnant Wilhelm Esser and two platoons of tanks from the 2. Kompanie were able to advance as far as the railway line, where Polish defences knocked out his radio. Oberfeldwebel Ziegler in his PzKpfw III assumed command of the remaining vehicles and managed to advance as far as the main railway station. All by himself in the middle of the capital, he eventually had to pull back. Leutnant Gerhard Lange worked his way forward to an enemy artillery position and opened fire on the guns with everything he had. The Poles attacked by throwing shaped charges against his tracks, which tore off one of the roadwheels and blocked his turret, and he too had to pull back.

Throughout the battle the Stukas of StG77 and III./StG51 gave support by attacking the Polish main artillery positions which were located in Praga, on the far side of the city and east of the Vistula. In addition to dive-bombing the gun sites, they swooped down on the city's main avenues and on the railways in an attempt to obstruct Polish troop movements.

Around 9 a.m. Oberst Eberbach committed the II. Abteilung (Major Wilhelm Hochbaum), which had been held in reserve and was supported by another battalion of Schützen-Regiment 12, to the area one kilometre north of the main road, where the Polish defences appeared less well organised. This force initially made good progress, overrunning Fort Szczesliwice, one of the old fortifications surrounding the capital. However, as they reached the park beyond, the mounted riflemen received rifle and machine-gun fire from the high-rises on the left. Just as they deployed to engage it, Polish artillery fell among them and a few vehicles caught fire. Meanwhile, Polish anti-tank guns stopped the advance of the tanks. Oberleutnant Heinz Morgenroth, the commander of the 8. Kompanie, was fatally wounded. Of the two panzer platoons that advanced into the park, only three tanks came back.

The story was much the same with Panzer-Regiment 36, attacking north of the railway line and into Wola. Here too, well-placed Polish 75mm anti-tank guns firing at point-blank range, and the barricades erected on main streets, managed to repel the German assault. The civilian population took an active part in the fighting and the Germans were halted with severe losses.

Right: From his covered position in a side street, Lanzinger took this close-up of a PzKpfw I, its number '133' showing that it was tank No. 3 of the 3. Zug of the 1. Kompanie of the I. Abteilung of Panzer-Regiment 35. The Panzer I was the mainstay of the 1939 armoured divisions. Weighing 5.4 tons and with an armour of between 7mm and 13mm, it had a crew of two and a main armament of two 7.92 mm MG13 machine guns.



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NIKITA TIEPLISZCZEW

Today, a new block of flats on Grojecka masks the view into Siewierska but the building seen in the latter street remains.

On several occasions the Poles made up for their lack of armament by ingenuity. Colonel Zdzislaw Pacak-Kuzmirski, commander of the 8th Company of the 40th Regiment, found 100 barrels of turpentine in the Dobrolin Factory and ordered his men to position these in front of the barricade at the intersection of Wolska, Elekcyjna and Redutowa Streets. When the German armour approached, the liquid was ignited and

several tanks were destroyed without a single shot being fired.

The TP-7 tanks of the Warsaw Defence Command were actively engaged in the battles. Those of the 1st Light Tank Company joined in the heavy fights around Okecie airport, but they were no match for the German panzers and suffered considerable losses. Those of the 2nd Company took part in the successful defence of Wola.



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BA BILD 1011-012-0022-32 LANZINGER

Some 150 metres back along Grojecka, near its junction with Przemyska Street, Lanzinger pictured a 7.5cm le. IG 18 light infantry gun set up to engage enemy troops defending behind a

barricade. The gun has just fired off a round and smoke is still curling from its barrel. Panzer I and IIs are waiting behind. Black smoke rises up from a disabled vehicle in the background.



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Back up front, and right in front of where Lanzinger is taking cover, another gun — this one a 3.7cm Pak 36 — has been set up. Across the street is its Krupp Kfz 69 towing vehicle. Two Panzer Is roll forward. The 4. Panzer-Division had begun the

campaign with 341 tanks: 183 Panzer I, 130 Panzer II, 12 Panzer IV and 16 Panzerbefehlswagen. However, by the time it reached Warsaw, both tank regiments had suffered losses and all four tank battalions were below strength.



BA BILD 1011-012-0011-25 LANZINGER

Further forward, Lanzinger pictured infantrymen squatting beside 'R05', one of the tanks of Regimental Headquarters of Panzer-Regiment 35. The solid white cross as a national identification mark was introduced by the Wehrmacht just before the Polish campaign. However, combat experience in Poland showed that it served just as often as an easy aiming mark for enemy gunners so in April 1940 the centre of the cross was blacked out by a superimposed black cross, creating the emblem that remained the German national identification mark for the rest of the war.

At 10 a.m., after three hours of fruitless attack, Generalleutnant Reinhardt saw that the fighting could not be prolonged if his division was to remain as an operational unit and ordered his men to retreat to their initial line of departure. Casualties in tanks and infantry had been very heavy. Of the 220 tanks that had taken part in the assault, some 80 had been lost. Panzer-Regiment 35 alone, which had started the assault with 120 tanks, had only 57 left operational, including a single Panzer IV. Even the command tank of Generalleutnant Max von Hartlieb-Walsporn, commander of the 5. Panzer-Brigade (which controlled the two panzer regiments), was immobilised by anti-tank fire as it made its way back. When the XVI. Armeekorps sent an order to renew the attack immediately, Reinhardt drove back to the corps command post and convinced Hoepner that this was absolutely impossible. All that could be done for now was to lay siege to the capital from the west.

During the night, a large number of the disabled panzers, including some that had run over mines, were recovered by their crews, in some cases from out of the Polish lines. Additional reinforcements arrived in the form of Infanterie-Regiment Leibstandarte-SS 'Adolf Hitler' (mot.), the Führer's bodyguard unit turned into a motorised infantry unit and commanded by SS-Obergruppenführer Sepp Dietrich.

TEMPORARY RELIEF

Having warded off two consecutive ground attacks on the city, the defenders of Warsaw were now suddenly given a very welcome respite due to unexpected developments that were unfolding 100 kilometres west of the capital. That evening, September 9, the Poznan Army under Lieutenant-General Tadeusz Kutrzeba and the Pomorze Army under Lieutenant-General Wladyslaw Bortnowski launched a very strong surprise counter-attack against the left flank of the Heeresgruppe Süd forces advancing towards Warsaw.

With the two German pincers moving north and south of him, Kutrzeba's army had until then been largely unaffected by the fighting and was still completely intact. As it moved back eastwards from Poznan, German army intelligence had somehow lost track of it and mistakenly assumed it had already pulled back behind the Vistula. Joining up with Bortnowski's Pomorze Army, Kutrzeba saw a chance to strike at the northern flank of the German southern pincer. The Polish High Command initially turned down his proposal, ordering him to continue withdrawing to the Vistula, but early on the 8th he was given the green light. It was a desperate manoeuvre to stall the German advance and buy time for the organisation of Warsaw's defence.

The attack, by eight infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades, fell on the 30. Infanterie-Division of Blaskowitz's 8. Armee, which was holding a thin screening line along the Bzura river. The Poles inflicted considerable losses on the Germans, killing 1,500 and capturing 3,000 in the initial push. To avoid a serious reverse, Blaskowitz was compelled to completely suspend his army's advance on Warsaw and divert all his troops to come to the rescue of the 30. Division. Nonetheless, the Germans were thrown back southwards some 20 kilometres.

Von Rundstedt and his Chief-of-Staff Generalleutnant Erich von Manstein initially underestimated the Polish advance and judged it a problem the 8. Army should solve by itself. However, on 11 September, realis-

ing they had a major crisis on their hands, they changed their mind and decided to redirect the main force of the 10. Armee plus army group reserves and most of the aircraft from Luftflotte 4 towards the Bzura. Thus reinforced, the Germans managed to hold the Poles in a vicious battle on a narrow front along the river. Raging for a full ten days, it developed into the largest, longest and single most-important battle of the campaign.

However, as a direct result of this Polish counter-offensive, the 4. Panzer-Division and the Leibstandarte-SS were withdrawn from Warsaw and sent westward to help stave off the threat. Their positions were taken over by the 31. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Rudolf Kämpfe), one of the follow-up divisions of the XVI. Armeekorps, the lead regiment of which — Infanterie-Regiment 82 — arrived in front of Warsaw on the 11th. Its troops were fatigued by long days of marching in hot weather and already weakened by earlier battles, so they were ordered for the time being to refrain from a direct attack on the city and just maintain siege positions. In this sense the attempt to buy time for Warsaw was a success. However, the aerial attacks on the city continued. On September 10, nicknamed 'Bloody Sunday', there were more than 70 German bombers above Warsaw and 17 consecutive bombing raids.

Meanwhile, there had been an organisational change on the Polish side. On September 8, the day of the first German assault, Marshal Smigly-Rydz had ordered the creation of an improvised Warsaw Army (Armia Warszawa) under Lieutenant-General Juliusz Rómmel. Until then the commander of the Lodz Army on the border, Rómmel had got separated from his operational forces and had just arrived in Warsaw with his staff (some critics say he more or less abandoned his army and defected to the capital). From his headquarters at Brest-Litovsk, Smigly-Rydz sent him a signed order to 'defend the city as long as ammunition and food lasts, to hold as many of the enemy forces as possible'.



BA BILD 1011-012-0022-28 LANZINGER

Above: As Lanzinger turns his camera to the right, the barricade that is holding up the German advance comes into view. It consists of a tramcar and two lorries which have been drawn up on either side of the tram blocking the street and it is the one fiercely defended by the men of the 4th Company of the 40th 'Children of Lwow' Regiment under Lieutenant Jan Grzybowski. Four panzers have approached the obstacle and infantry are bunching up around them. The tank standing to the left of the post supporting the tram cables is '103' denoting that it is the third of the four tanks of the I. Abteilung headquarters. Right: With Grojecka Street having seen so much change, there is virtually nothing to connect past and present but this is the exact same spot.



NIKI TA TIEPLISZCZEW



Left and right: The main Polish monument to the fighting of September 8-9 stands at the junction of Grojecka with Opaczewska Street, some 200 metres south of the actual location of the barricade defended by Lieutenant Grzybowski's men. Compris-

ing three concrete elements, the centre one forming a giant '1939' and the pair on either flank the dates '8 IX' and '27 IX' respectively, it is adorned with unit memorial plaques. A commemorative ceremony takes place here every September.



With the attempts by the 4. Panzer-Division to capture Warsaw by direct attack foiled, the Germans laid siege to the enemy capital. Infantry divisions closed in from east and west, and the Luftwaffe and heavy artillery guns began a round-the-clock bombard-

ment that would last for three weeks. This shot of smoke billowing up from fires caused by the bombing was taken by PK-photographer Mensing from near the Okęcie to Ochota road in the suburb of Włochy on the south-western outskirts on the 24th.

The newly-created army was composed of the forces defending Warsaw (under General Czuma); the garrison of Modlin Fortress — a 19th-century citadel located at the junction of the Vistula and the Narew rivers some 30 kilometres north of the capital and blocking a main approach to it (under Brigadier-General Wiktor Thommée) — as well as all Polish units defending the Narew and Vistula riverlines north-east and south of Warsaw. General Czuma continued as the commander of the Warsaw Defence Force, which he split into two sectors, one on each side of the Vistula: East (Praga) under Lieutenant-Colonel Julian Janowski and West under Colonel Marian Porwit.

Meanwhile, the defenders of the city were joined by various units of the routed Prusy Army, notably the 44th Infantry Division (Colonel Eugeniusz Zongolowicz), a half-complete reserve formation made up of regi-

ments of the Border Defence Corps (Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza — KOP), which had been dispersed by the 1. Panzer-Division at Belchatow and had been ordered to head to Warsaw.

Other stray units came from the defeated Lodz Army, notably the 4th Battalion of the 30th Infantry Regiment from the 10th Division under Major Bronislaw Kaminski, which arrived on the 10th and took up defensive positions in Plackowka and Mlociny in north-western Warsaw.

In addition, several new units were created in the capital itself out of reserve centres of two Warsaw-based formations. Reservists from the 8th Infantry Division formed the 360th Regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel Jakub Chmura. It comprised five battalions which would be deployed at various points in the city's defensive lines. The rear-echelon battalion of the 36th 'Academic Legion'

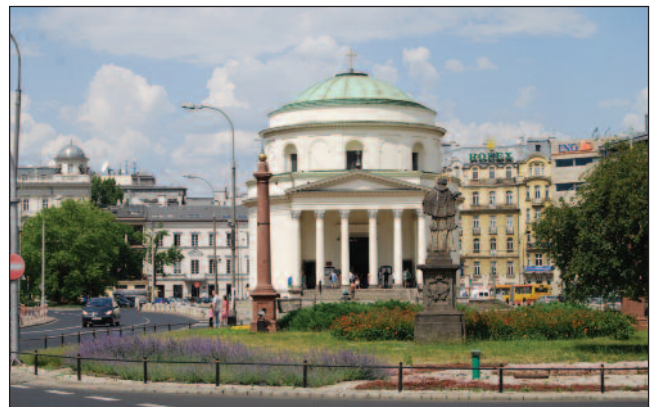
Infantry Regiment, a unit made up mostly of university students, served as a core of the 336th Regiment. Split onto two separate units, the 1st and 2nd 'Defenders of Praga' Regiments under Colonels Stanislaw Milian and Stefan Kotowski respectively, it helped defend the Praga sector on the east bank of the Vistula.

During all this time, Stefan Starzynski, the Civilian Commissar of Warsaw, was a tower of strength in the besieged city. His daily radio speeches were crucial in keeping the morale of both soldiers and civilians high. Starzynski commanded the distribution of food, water and supplies as well as the fire-fighting brigades. Assisted by his Deputy, Julian Kulski, he also managed to organise shelter for almost all civilian refugees from other parts of Poland and for people whose houses had been destroyed by German bombing.



WARSAW UPRISING MUSEUM

With hundreds of people being killed by the German bombing and shelling, impromptu cemeteries were opened in parks and lawns. This field of fresh graves was in the small park on Plac Trzech Krzyzy (Three Crosses Square), one of the main squares in central Warsaw, across the street from St Alexander's Church.



ATB

The square and most of the buildings around it were destroyed or deliberately demolished by the Germans during the 1944 uprising. St Alexander's was rebuilt in 1949-52, however not to its neo-classicist design of 1886-95 but in a form similar to its original appearance of 1818-25.



ALINA ZIENOWICZ

There are numerous memorials to the 1939 defence of Warsaw all across the city. On the wall of Nos. 104-106 Aleja Jerzego Waszyngtona (Washington Avenue), at the intersection with Grochow Street in Praga on the east bank of the Vistula, a plaque records that this was the location of the earthen 'crossroads redoubt' where the 2nd Battalion of Colonel Stanislaw Sosabowski's 21st 'Children of Warsaw' Regiment prevented the enemy from reaching the Vistula bridges. The 2nd Battalion was led by Major Wislaw Radziszewski. The plaque was unveiled in September 1986.

ENCIRCLEMENT AND SIEGE

Meanwhile a new threat to Warsaw was developing from the north-east, this time coming from Heeresgruppe Nord. On September 10, von Küchler's 3. Armee had broken through the Polish lines along the Narew river and started its march southwards, aiming to cut off Warsaw from the east. Its I. Armeekorps under Generalleutnant Walter Petzel crossed the Bug at Wyszkow on the 11th and was now rapidly approaching the capital.

As this new menace got near, the city's garrison again received welcome reinforcements in the form of units from the Modlin Army pushed back by the German advance. The remnants of the 5th Infantry Division under Major-General Juliusz Zulauf reached Warsaw on the 14th, re-uniting with the division's own 40th 'Children of Lwow' Regiment. With Zulauf's force came the 21st 'Children of Warsaw' Regiment, commanded by Colonel Stanislaw Sosabowski (of later Battle of Arnhem fame), which had got separated from its parent 8th Division on the third day of the invasion and had fought its way back from the north by itself. The battered remains of the 20th Infantry Division under Colonel Wilhelm Andrzej Lawisz-Liszka arrived from Mlawa on the 15th. All new arrivals were incorporated into the Warsaw Army and assigned to the defence of Praga on the east bank, General Zulauf taking over command of the East sector from Lieutenant-Colonel Janowski.

They had just made it in time for on that same day — September 15 — the 61. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Siegfried Hänicke), leading element of the I. Armeekorps, reached the eastern outskirts of Warsaw. The Germans must have been unaware of the exact Polish positions in this part of the city, for a large column of troops came marching into Grochow, the south-eastern working-class borough of Praga, along Aleja Jerzego Waszyngtona (Washington Avenue), straight at the positions of Sosabowski's 21st Regiment. His 1st Battalion opened up a hurricane of fire that took the enemy column completely by surprise. Stalled, the Germans tried to deploy into assault formations, bringing direct artillery fire and tanks to bear. Polish anti-tank guns positioned

down the avenue knocked out two of the panzers but the Germans nonetheless managed to gain a foothold in eastern Grochow, wiping out a platoon of Polish riflemen that was covering the withdrawal of their company. However, the German advance was held at the next street and by 7 p.m. the attack had been repulsed. Sosabowski's command tallied a loss of 320 men killed, wounded or missing.

The following day, September 16, another three of Küchler's infantry divisions arrived at



TADEUSZ RUDZKI

Also in Saska Kepa, at the corner of Francuska and Zwyciezcow Streets, is a memorial to the men of the 21st and 336th Infantry Regiments and the 21st 'Nadwislanski' Ulan Regiment who fought here under 2nd Lieutenant Tadeusz Barszczewski and Sergeant Stefan Goss. The memorial comprises a surviving fragment of the barricade that was here and which protected the grenade launcher, ammunition dump and one of the quarters of the Saska Kepa defensive sector.



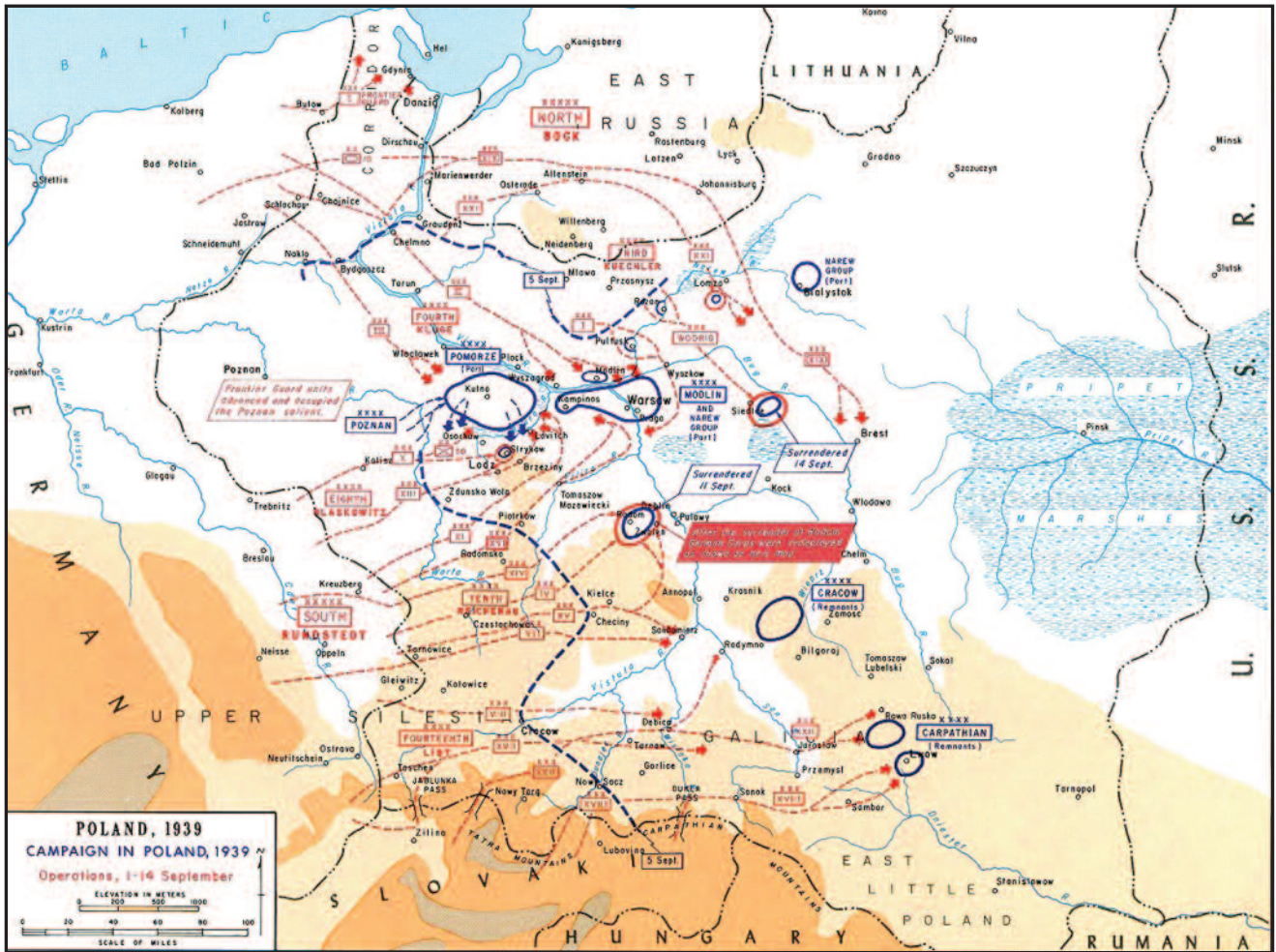
TADEUSZ RUDZKI

Further south in Praga, at No. 6 Bajonska Street in the borough of Saska Kepa, is a memorial plaque to the 336th Infantry, the regiment that was born out of the 36th Academic Legion' Regiment and which defended the streets and fields around here.

the eastern gates of Warsaw: the 11. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Max Bock), the 32. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Nikolaus von Falkenhorst) and the 217. Infanterie-Division (Generalmajor Richard Baltzer), the latter two both of the II. Armeekorps. Together with the 61. Division, they now formed an unbreakable cordon around Warsaw east of the Vistula. With the 31. Division of the 8. Armee enclosing much of the city on its western side, only a broad strip of land along the Vistula towards the Kampinos Forest in the north-west and the Modlin Fortress in the north now remained in Polish hands. Though not yet completely encircled, Warsaw was effectively under siege.

That morning, Sosabowski's men were surprised to see an open car flying a large white flag, followed by two tanks with the crews standing up in the open turret, slowly coming down Washington Avenue towards the barricade on Grochow Street. It was a party of truce. The German parlementaire, Major Kiewitz, commander of the I. Bataillon of Infanterie-Regiment 151 of the 61. Division, handed Sosabowski a letter addressed 'to the Officer Commanding Warsaw' and containing a demand for the surrender of the city. Sosabowski sent the note to General Rómmel's headquarters and within an hour the answer came back that the Army Commander would neither talk with, nor see, the enemy emissary.

Within two hours after Major Kiewitz returned to his lines, a furious artillery bombardment fell on the Polish positions. An hour later, at 5 p.m., the 11. Infanterie-Division launched an assault against Sosabowski's regiment. Again, the Poles waited until the attackers had approached within 100 metres of their positions before opening a withering fire with rifles, machine guns and mortars. After three hours of bitter fighting, the assault was repulsed with heavy losses to the Germans, the attacking unit — Infanterie-Regiment 23 commanded by Oberst Johann-Georg Richert — being practically annihilated. A similar thing happened when Infanterie-Regiment 96 of the 32. Division attempted to enter Brodno in northern Praga. It was met with intense artillery and mortar fire and thrown back with heavy casualties, losing 150 men.



By mid-September, most of the Polish armies had been caught in pockets surrounded by German troops. With the German 3. Armee closing in from the north-east, Warsaw was isolated in a perimeter enclosing the Kampinos Forest and the fortress of Modlin.

Meanwhile the battle for Poland was continuing. Well to the east of Warsaw, on Heeresgruppe Nord's far left wing, von Kluge's 4. Armee was speedily moving south. Its XIX. Armeekorps, under General der Panzertruppe Heinz Guderian, dashing forward far in advance of the infantry formations, had crossed the Narew at Wizna and, moving on east of the Bug, reached Brest-Litovsk on September 14, capturing the citadel on the 16th.

Then, on September 17, Poland received a further shock when the Soviet Red Army, following the secret protocol of the German-Russian non-aggression pact signed in Moscow just three weeks earlier (August 23), entered the country from the east. With the Poles having no forces other than border guard troops to oppose this move, and many of these initially even being uncertain over whether to welcome or fight the new invaders, the Soviets rapidly occupied eastern Poland. Now under attack from all sides by two different countries, Poland was fighting a losing battle. Realising that defence had become impossible, Marshal Smigly-Rydz issued orders for all Polish forces to retreat towards Romania and avoid fighting the Soviet aggressors. The Polish government and High Command crossed into Romania, where they were interned.

On September 18 Guderian's panzer corps made contact with armoured units of the 14. Armee of Heeresgruppe Süd at Wlodawa on the Bug river, 200 kilometres south-east of Warsaw, thus completing the planned giant pincer movement and the encirclement of virtually all Polish forces. The Germans soon met up with the Soviets, at Brest-Litovsk and elsewhere, beginning an uneasy alliance that

would last just 22 months. (To their chagrin, they had to abandon some of the territory already won to the Russians, retiring to the pre-arranged boundary line.)

Meanwhile, due west of Warsaw, the battle of attrition on the Bzura had reached its inevitable conclusion. Having halted the Polish attacks, the 8. Armee launched its own attack across the river. With the armoured and motorised troops from the 10. Armee rushing up from the south-east and east, and forces from the 4. Armee from Heeresgruppe Nord closing in from the north and north-west, the Germans soon managed to encircle the very considerable Polish forces in a large pocket around the town of Kutno. The battle of annihilation raged for a week but by September 19 it was all over and an estimated 170,000 Polish troops surrendered.

However, large fragments of the Poznan and Pomorze Armies managed to break through the German encirclement. Desperately fighting their way through the Kampinos Forest, they succeeded in reaching the Warsaw-Modlin perimeter, mostly around September 19 and 20, considerably reinforcing the latter's defensive strength. From the Poznan Army came the bulk of the 25th Infantry Division (General Franciszek Alter) and two cavalry brigades (the Wielkopolska under Brigadier-General Roman Abraham and the Podolska under Colonel Leon Strzelecki); 431 survivors of the 14th Cavalry Ulan Regiment under Colonel Edward Godlewski, plus smatterings from three more infantry divisions, the 14th, 17th and 26th. The Pomorze Army brought in 1,500 survivors from the 15th Infantry Division (General Zdzislaw Przyjalkowski), the Pomorze Cavalry Brigade

(Colonel Adam Bogoria-Zakrewski) and what little remained of the 4th and 16th Divisions. General Kutrzeba of the Poznan Army, who reached Warsaw on the 16th, was made deputy commander of Warsaw under General Rómmel. General Bortnowski of the Pomorze Army had been heavily wounded on the Bzura and was captured on the 21st.

Two-thousand men of the 13th Division's 43rd 'Bayonne Legion' Regiment (Lieutenant-Colonel Franciszek Zbigniew Kubicki), survivors of the rout against the XVI. Armeekorps on September 7, tried to fight their way towards besieged Warsaw, but were stopped by the 11. Infanterie-Division during a night battle in Falenica, a south-eastern suburb of Warsaw, on September 19. As a result, only a few hundred men of the division managed to reach the capital.

With these reinforcements — the last to come in — the Polish forces defending Warsaw had risen to approximately 100,000 soldiers. The general disposition of troops was now as follows:

Warsaw West (under Colonel Porwit) was divided into three subordinate zones:

In sub-sector North were the 60th Regiment (25th Division), the 4th Battalion of the 30th Regiment (10th Division), the 59th and 61st Regiments (15th Division) and the 1st Battalion of the 144th Infantry (44th Division) defending Bielany, Mlociny, Zoliborz, Powazki and Kolo, with the 3rd Battalion of the 26th Regiment (5th Division) holding an outer position near Wawrzyszew.

In sub-sector West were the 40th Regiment (5th Division) and the 2nd Battalion of the 41st Regiment (29th Division) holding Wola, Ochota and Rakowiec, with the 1st

Right: Hitler personally inspected the Warsaw front twice during the Polish campaign. His first visit occurred on September 22, when he and his headquarters entourage visited the I. Armeekorps of the 3. Armee which was encircling Praga with three infantry divisions. From the balcony of a tower overlooking that part of Warsaw, the Führer and his party observed the artillery bombardment of the enemy capital. The officer pointing out relevant sites to the Führer is probably a regimental or artillery commander from one of the infantry divisions. Visible to the right of Hitler are General Georg von Küchler, commander of the 3. Armee; Generalleutnant Walter Petzel, commanding the I. Armeekorps (with glasses) and Generaloberst Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW). Just visible behind Keitel is Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler and the man seen holding the camera at rear is Oberleutnant Walter Frentz, Leni Riefenstahl's favourite cinematographer, who covered the Polish campaign as a Luftwaffe cameraman. Note the row of SF 14 trench binoculars with telescopic lens mounted on the balustrade.



and 5th Battalions of the 360th Regiment and a Volunteer Workers Battalion defending outer positions at Blizne and Gorce Okulicki.

In sub-sector South, charged with the defence of Mokotow, Czernieskow and Sierkierki, were a Volunteer Workers Battalion, remnants of the 4th Battalion of the 21st Regiment, the 1st Hunters Battalion and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 360th Regiment.

Warsaw East (under General Zulauf) was divided into two zones:

In sub-sector North were the 78th, 79th and 80th Regiments of the 20th Division (Colonel Lawisz-Liszka), with the 1st Battalion of the 43rd Regiment (13th Division) attached, manning positions in Brodno, Pelcowizna and Elsnerow.

In sub-sector South (commanded by Colonel Zongollowicz of the 44th Division) were the 26th Regiment (5th Division) defending the easternmost borough of Utrata; Sosabowski's 21st Regiment (8th Division) guarding Grochow in the south-east, and the two 'Defenders of Praga' Regiments holding Saska Kepa and Goclaw in the south.

In general reserve were the 29th Regiment (25th Division), 56th and 62nd Regiments (15th Division), and the three cavalry brigades (the latter now amalgamated into a Combined Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier-General Graham), plus groups of light artillery and a heavy artillery group.

After the battle of the Bzura had ended, several of the German divisions from that battle rushed eastwards to tighten the ring around the Warsaw-Modlin perimeter. The XI. Armeekorps — with the 18. Infanterie-Division (Generalmajor Friedrich-Carl Cranz), 24. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Friedrich Olbricht) and 19. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Günther Schwantes) — progressively filled the line on the left of the 31. Division. The Leibstandarte-SS returned to take up positions between Warsaw and Modlin, Hitler having ordained that his elite SS force should be present to take its share of the glory of the upcoming final victory.

On the 22nd, the 3. (leichte) Division (Generalmajor Adolf Kuntzen) inserted itself to the right of the 31. Division, along the south side of the perimeter, only to be relieved two days later by two divisions from the XIII. Armeekorps, which had come marching up from the south-west and south: the 10. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Conrad von Cochenhausen) and the 46. Infanterie-Division (Generalleutnant Paul von Hase).

WARSAW UNDER BOMBARDMENT

By September 19 — the day Hitler made his triumphal entry into Danzig (see *After the Battle* No. 65) — the campaign in Poland was essentially over. The war of movement had come to an end and the bulk of the Polish armies had been destroyed. Except for a few isolated pockets of resistance remaining on the Soviet border and on the Baltic coast, only Warsaw and Modlin were still holding out. The perimeter that linked the two strongholds was completely surrounded and — as the German General Staff told Hitler — their fall was now merely a matter of time.

In mid-September, Hitler had personally intervened in the conduct of the campaign, not for military but for political reasons. Knowing the Soviets would soon invade Poland from the east, and that the agreed partition line between German and Soviet territory ran along the Vistula, he wished to make absolutely sure that Warsaw would fall before the Russians reached it, which was planned to happen on October 3. He therefore told his surprised generals that he wanted the city captured by September 30 at the latest. Rather than take it by a direct assault, he now chose to lay siege to the city and blast it into submission. He ordered von Rundstedt to assemble all his army group's heavy artillery and mortars around the city and instructed Hermann Göring, the C-in-C of the Luftwaffe, to embark on a ruthless and all-out area bombing of the metropolis (Operation 'Wasserkante').

The renewed aerial offensive began on the 13th when 183 Stukas and He 111s from Löhr's Luftflotte 4 dropped their loads on the north-western part of Warsaw. The Jewish quarters were especially hard hit. The attacks continued on a daily basis, reaching a new crescendo on the 17th. Although the orders instructed the pilots to concentrate on strategic and military targets, such as the city's water, gas and electricity works, military barracks, ammunition dumps, artillery positions and command centres (specifically the Citadel, the War Ministry and the General Inspectorate of the Army) and traffic hubs, in actuality the bombers and dive-bombers engaged in an indiscriminate area bombing, which by necessity led to massive collateral damage and thousands of civilian casualties.

At the same time, German heavy and medium artillery, drawn up all around Warsaw under overall command of Generalmajor Johannes Zuckertort, began a ceaseless bombardment of the city, which added considerably to the damage and casualties. Every move in the Polish front line brought

down a salvo of shells and mortar bombs and every crossroads was subjected to periods of concentrated fire. The heavy artillery included big railway guns, large-calibre siege guns and heavy mortars, one round of which could pulverise entire blocks of buildings. The civilian population lived permanently in a twilight of dust, acrid smoke and gloom of underground shelters.

The atmosphere in the beleaguered city had now turned decidedly bleak. All the shops were closed, with windows barred. No street was without damage. Broken water mains spouted fountains into the air and the smell of bust sewage pipes pervaded every corner. Many buildings had their windows shattered and walls scarred with shrapnel. Rescue workers were digging in smoking ruins, searching for survivors. Most of the inhabitants looked shabby and tired, many of them with blood-soaked bandages and the light of desperation in their eyes. Every cellar, subway, ditch and trench had its civilian occupants. Even in the front line there were women and children who could not be sent away. The troops shared out their food and water but it was a great problem to produce enough for all. Hospitals overflowed with wounded and thousands lay on blankets on stone floors waiting for attention from overworked doctors. Drugs and other medical supplies were getting scarce. With water mains hit so often that it was impossible to get water, fires blazed throughout the night, providing markers for the enemy pilots. Buildings collapsed without warning and burning gas mains lit up the debris-littered streets.

In the late afternoon of the 16th — shortly after General Rómmel had refused the German demand for surrender and Colonel Sosabowski had sent back the German parliamentaire to his own lines — 12 Heinkel He 111s from I/KG4 dropped a million leaflets over Warsaw calling upon the civilian population to evacuate the city towards the east within 12 hours 'in order to prevent useless bloodshed and the destruction of the city'. Loud-speaker vans, from positions close to the front line, blared out the same message.

The dropping of leaflets was repeated on the 18th, 19th, 22nd and 24th. The only result of the whole action was an agreement that enabled the entire diplomatic corps and all foreign nationals to leave the city. The 178 diplomats and 1,200 other foreigners crossed the lines at Marki, north-east of Warsaw, during a temporary truce on the morning of the 21st — an event that German propaganda exploited to the full to demonstrate Germany's goodwill.



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On September 22 — as it happened the very same day on which Hitler observed the bombarding of Warsaw from the Praga side of the city — an unusual incident happened when Generaloberst Werner von Fritsch (*left*), a man to whom Hitler owed much, was killed by a Polish bullet in the very same sector of the German front. An officer of the old Prussian school and a warm supporter of the Nazi regime, Fritsch had been appointed Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres (Commander-in-Chief of the Army) by Hitler in February 1934 and was one of the chief architects of the resurrection of the German Armed Forces after 1933. However, in February 1938, he had been forced to resign after allegations of homosexuality, concocted by Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler who wanted him out of the way. The charges soon proved false but, even though he was acquitted by a Court of Honour in March, his reputation was damaged and he was never reinstated as chief of the OKH. Hitler refused to give him com-

mand of an army, but instead named him Honorary Colonel of his old regiment, Artillerie-Regiment 12, part of the 12. Infanterie-Division. The affair left Fritsch's honour fatally hurt and, as he divulged to close intimates, he felt unable to live with the blemish. As the division passed east of besieged Warsaw, he chose to personally inspect the forward area of the German front line in Praga, a very unusual activity for someone of his rank. As he walked around the German barricade on Radzyminska Street, the main road entering Warsaw from the north-east, a Polish bullet (either a machine gun or a sniper) tore an artery in his leg and he fell to the ground. His adjutant, Lieutenant Rosenhagen, rushed to his aid but Fritsch retorted: 'Please leave it', lost consciousness and died within a few minutes. In all probability he had sought death deliberately by exposing himself to enemy fire. *Right*: The following day, a German PK photographer pictured the barricade where the incident had taken place.

Meanwhile, there were outbursts of fierce fighting, mostly at night and mainly in the sector on the east bank of the Vistula. During the day, German machine guns sprayed the forward areas; the Polish guns mostly kept silent, unless they were certain of hitting a target, and many of the men slept in order to be fresh for night-fighting. Nearly every night, the Poles launched company-sized sallies against the German lines, or even regiment-sized break-out attempts to the east. On the 20th, the 11. Infanterie-Division repulsed one such attack, taking 100 prisoners.

On September 22 forces of the 18. and 24. Infanterie-Division, attacking eastwards from the Kampinos Forest, reached the Vistula between Warsaw and Modlin, thereby cutting the last remaining lines of communication between the two strongholds and splitting the Polish perimeter into two separate cauldrons. Warsaw was now truly surrounded by a continuous ring of German troops.

September 22 was also notable for a curious combat incident that happened on the German front line at Praga in eastern Warsaw. It involved Generaloberst Werner von Fritsch, the former Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres (Commander-in-Chief of the Army), who was killed by a Polish sniper while openly moving about in the forward areas of the 61. Division. Fritsch had been relieved of his post by Hitler in February 1938, the victim of false accusations of homosexuality levelled against him in the so-called Blom-Fritsch Affair. Though later cleared of all blame, his reputation and honour were irretrievably stained and it is pretty certain that Fritsch chose to inspect the Warsaw front lines, where he had no real business, in order to seek death deliberately.



BEELDBANKWOZ — LIBERTY PARK 145254

The whole affair was glossed over by German propaganda and Fritsch was buried in Berlin with full military honours on the 26th. After the fall of Warsaw, the Germans placed a commemorative marker at the spot on Radzyminska Street (named Wilnaer Strasse during the German occupation) where he had died. The inscription read: 'Here on September 22, 1939 fell Generaloberst Freiherr von Fritsch'. The marker was destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and no trace of it remains today. (Fritsch was the second German general to be killed in combat during the Second World War, the first being SS-Brigadeführer and Generalmajor der Ordnungspolizei Wilhelm Fritz von Roettig, who fell on September 10 near Opoczno when his staff car was ambushed by Polish troops.)



'Black Monday' — September 25, the day the Germans launched their general air and ground offensive against Warsaw. This aerial shot taken from a German reconnaissance aircraft shows smoke rising from numerous fires caused by the massive bomb-

ing and shelling. In the foreground is Praga, the part of the city east of the Vistula, and the two bridges are the Most Gdanski railway bridge, right, and the Most Kierbedzia road bridge, left. The main city on the far side of the river is covered in smoke.

GENERAL ASSAULT ON THE CITY

Meanwhile, everything was being readied for the final German assault on the besieged city. By now the forces surrounding Warsaw numbered eight divisions and some 175,000 soldiers. The plan was for a concentric attack by all divisions, with the main attack to be delivered by those of the XI. and XIII. Armeekorps from the west. On September 24, all German units, including those of the I. and II. Armeekorps of the 3. Armee east of the Vistula, were put under command of Blaskowitz's 8. Armee, this to ensure good co-ordination in the forthcoming assault. Generalmajor Wolfram von Richthofen, the Fliegerführer z.b.V. in Luftflotte 4 (responsible for co-ordinating Stuka and other close-support operations), was put in overall command of the air formations deployed in the attack.

The final assault began on September 25 — 'Black Monday' as it came to be known by the people of Warsaw. As part of the offensive, the Luftwaffe launched its largest bombing raid to date. Starting at 8 a.m., some 370 aircraft from Luftflotte 1 — 240 Stukas from

five different Geschwader (StG 51, 76 and 77, and LG1 and 2), 100 Dornier Do 17 bombers from KG77 and 30 Junkers Ju-52 transport planes from IV./Kampfgeschwader z.b.V. 1 — unloaded an endless stream of bombs and incendiaries on the city. The Stukas and Dorniers could only drop bombs, not incendiaries, and Heinkels 111 were not available, so the Ju 52s were used to drop the phosphor bombs, both from their bomb racks and with dispatchers manually shoving the ordnance out of the open cargo doors. Rotating from their bases, with each crew flying three or four sorties, the 370 aircraft dropped a total of 500 tons of high-explosive bombs and 72 tons of incendiaries on the city. Warsaw became an inferno. The entire centre was badly damaged. In parts it was hardly possible to recognise streets as all the landmarks disappeared under the rubble. Columns of black smoke rose high above the city.

For the Germans the air operation was a mixed success. The few remaining Polish anti-aircraft guns, firing off their last rounds, managed to shoot down two of the slow-moving Junkers. As the day went on, smoke

from fires and large clouds of dust obscured targets and greatly reduced accuracy. As a result, a significant number of the bombs landed on German infantry positions in the north-west suburbs, leading to acrimonious discussions between Luftwaffe and Army commanders.

Among those observing the bombing that day was Hitler himself. Ever since September 4, the Führer and his Führerhauptquartier retinue had been touring the Polish battleground, visiting command posts, meeting troops, inspecting destroyed Polish materiel and viewing battered fortifications. On the 22nd he had already observed besieged Warsaw from the balcony of the tower of a race and sports stadium overlooking Praga in the 3. Armee sector, but today his schedule included a visit to the 8. Armee west of the city, timed to coincide with the start of the final assault and the culmination of the aerial and artillery bombardment of the beleaguered city. Using trench binoculars, Hitler and his entourage observed the bombing and shelling, watching the columns of smoke billowing up from the built-up area.

Right: Three days after his first inspection of the Warsaw front, Hitler returned to the sector, this time to observe the grand finale of the Luftwaffe bombing attacks and the start of the final ground offensive against the city. His venue on this occasion was the sector of the XI. and XIII. Armeekorps on the western side of the city. Earlier in the day he had visited the Leibstandarte-SS, his own bodyguard unit turned military formation, which occupied positions between Warsaw and Modlin. Among those visible in this shot by Bildberichterstatter Kliehm of Propaganda-Kompanie 637 are Martin Bormann, Hitler's private secretary and head of the Nazi Party chancellery (behind the left-hand binoculars), Generalmajor Erwin Rommel, the commander of the Führer-Begleit-Bataillon (on Hitler's left); General der Artillerie Walter von Reichenau, commander of the 10. Armee (at the right-hand binoculars), and Generalmajor Friedrich Paulus, the 10. Armee Chief-of-Staff (just visible behind Reichenau).



BA BILD 1011-013-0064-34 KLIEM



BA RH 82 BILD-00077 MENSING

The final offensive engaged five infantry divisions in a concentric attack on the western half of the city. Faced with fierce Polish resistance, none of them made much headway, least of all the 31. Infanterie-Division attacking the south-western borough of Ochota. This was the same area where the 4. Panzer-

Division had tried to penetrate the city a fortnight earlier, still defended by the 2nd Battalion of the 40th 'Children of Lwow' Regiment. On September 26, the second day of the offensive, PK-Bildberichter Mensing pictured the crew of a PAK 36 anti-tank gun firing at an enemy resistance nest on the city's edge.



ATB

Although the tram lines that used to run along Opaczewska Street have been lifted since the war and modern developments make it impossible to get an exact match, a close-up

shot taken from Drawska Street shows the block of flats that was the Polish resistance nest. It is the second block from the left and stands at the western end of Opaczewska Street.



FP 17255

Faced with a hopeless military situation and in view of the rapidly worsening plight of the civilian population, the Polish command of the Warsaw garrison had no other option than to begin capitulation talks with the Germans. Early on September 27, Lieutenant-General Tadeusz Kutrzeba and Colonel Aleksander

Pragłowski, Deputy Commander and Chief-of-Staff of the Warsaw Army respectively, met with General Blaskowitz, commander of the 8. Armee, at the Skoda engine factory in the Rakowiece district on the south-western edge of Warsaw. PK-photographer Koch recorded the arrival of the Polish party.

CAPITULATION

Despite having held off and slowed down the first blows of the offensive, the situation for the Polish commanders in Warsaw was now clearly and utterly hopeless. Although the garrison was still sufficiently strong in manpower to defend the city for several more weeks, it was only a question of time before their ammunition, rations and supplies would run out. Worse, the plight of the capital's civilian population had become completely intolerable. The constant bombardment had resulted in heavy and mounting casualties. The destruction of the waterworks had caused a lack of both drinking water and water with which to extinguish the many fires raging all over the city. There was a lack of food and medical supplies and the hospitals were overtaxed by thousands of wounded soldiers and civilians. Irrespective of all that, strategically, the lack of support from the Western Allies, and the Soviet Union's entry into the war, had made any further defence of the city completely pointless.

Right: Numerous photographers and cameramen were on hand to record the important moment. The factory where the surrender ceremony unfolded is generally identified as the Skoda Works but by 1939 this was not really its proper name. It had housed the Polish division of Skoda (Polskie Zakłady Skody), which mainly produced engines for the Polish state-owned aircraft manufacturing company PZL, but this had been nationalised in 1936 and been renamed PZL WS-1 (Wytwórnia Silnikow — Engine Works 1). However, most people still referred to it as the Skoda Works. The factory complex was blown up the Germans before their retreat in January 1945.

In the late afternoon of the 26th General Rómmel called a 'council of defence' to discuss the situation. Among those attending were Mayor Starzynski and Generals Kutrzeba, Czuma, Zulauf, Alter and Abraham. After listening to each participant's views, Rómmel announced his decision to open surrender negotiations with the Germans. All agreed and General Kutrzeba was appointed head of the parliamentary delegation.

Early on the morning of September 27 Kutrzeba and Colonel Aleksander Prag-

łowski, Rómmel's Chief-of-Staff, crossed the German lines to begin the capitulation talks. At 9.30 a.m. they met with General Blaskowitz. Many German units, as soon as news of the surrender talks reached them, immediately stopped their attack operations. At noon a cease-fire agreement was signed and all fighting halted.

The formal capitulation was signed by General Kutrzeba at 1.15 p.m. the following day (September 28) in the 8. Armee's command bus parked at the Skoda engine works



FP 17254

at Rakowiec in south-western Warsaw. The surrender terms stipulated the following:

On September 29 all Polish units were to lay down their arms in specified areas; disarmed units were to gather in indicated areas; barricades, road-blocks and trenches on the main roads were to be destroyed and mines removed; units were to march out of Warsaw along certain routes according to a programme, under their own officers; privates and NCOs were to be released from prisoner of war camps and returned home after a few days; officers were to go to POW camps but to retain their sabres; officers not surrendering would, on capture, be treated as criminals and not accorded rights under the Geneva Convention; and troops were to carry enough food for three days.

Several of the Polish units declined to put down their weapons and stop firing, and their commanding officers had to be visited by Generals Czuma and Rómmel personally. Many units chose to hide or destroy their heavy armament rather than surrender it. The few remaining 7-TP tanks were destroyed by their crews. (Some of the hidden war material would later be used during the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944 — see *After the Battle* No. 143). At 6 p.m. on September 29 the evacuation of Polish forces to German prisoner of war camps started. It continued all day on the 30th. The following day, October 1, German units entered the city. The battle for Warsaw was over.



NIOD 24631

The preparatory talks took place in an 8. Armee headquarters command bus. Kutrzeba (right) and Colonel Pragłowski (left) are in the foreground and General Blaskowitz is the centre one seated on the left.



NIOD 24626

The final signing of the surrender took place at the Skoda works shortly after 1 p.m. on September 28. Present on behalf of the Warsaw Army, in addition to Kutrzeba (here listening to General Blaskowitz with the help of an interpreter) and Colonel Pragłowski, were Lieutenant-Colonel Marian Kulakowski, the chief quartermaster, and Lieutenant-Colonel Dr. Leon Strehl, the chief medical officer. The civilian delegation consisted of Stefan Starzynski, the President (Mayor) of Warsaw (fourth from left); Dr. Konrad Orzechowski, director of the city's hospital department; Felicjan Jablonski, chief of food supply; and Dr. Stanislaw Lorentz, director of the National Museum. The Germans had demanded that Starzynski, who had been a pillar of strength to

the population and a shining light to the free world during the three-week siege, be present at the ceremony. In the final days of the battle, Starzynski had been offered to leave the city several times. On the 26th, the pilot of a PZL.46 Sum light bomber, who had flown into the beleaguered city with orders for the Warsaw Army from Marshal Rydz-Smigly, offered to evacuate him to Lithuania. He was invited to go underground and receive plastic surgery in order to escape the city. However, Starzynski refused all offers. After the Germans entered the city, he was allowed to continue as Mayor until finally arrested by the Gestapo on October 27. He died in German captivity, most probably on October 17, 1943, in Dachau concentration camp.



A total of 102,000 troops surrendered in Warsaw. Their evacuation from the capital began in the evening of September 29 and continued throughout the 30th. Units marched out in companies under their own officers, surrendering their arms and ammunition at pre-arranged places in the city, and continuing on to prisoner of war camps in western Poland.

It was however not yet the final end of all fighting. Modlin Fortress had held out one day longer than Warsaw, capitulating on the 28th. The Hel Peninsula on the Baltic coast surrendered on October 1. The last remaining Polish force, the 17,000-strong Independent Operational Group Polesie defending

the town of Kock south-east of Warsaw, only gave up on October 6.

The Polish Army had lost approximately 6,000 men killed and 16,000 wounded at Warsaw. Some 100,000 soldiers (5,000 officers and 97,000 men) were taken into captivity. The civilian population suffered 25,800

dead and approximately 50,000 wounded. The four weeks of German aerial bombardments and artillery shelling had reduced 12 per cent of the city to ruins. No official list of German casualties was published but they are estimated at 1,500 killed and 5,000 wounded.



Karel was lucky to find this location on Pulawska Street in Mokotow, the main road leading out of Warsaw to the south. The tower in the background stands next to the Sw. Michaila Archamiola (St Michael Archangel) Church. The old church from 1856 was destroyed by German bombardments during the August 1944 uprising. It was rebuilt to a different design in 1945-47.



The mass of rifles, machine guns, anti-tank guns, helmets and other equipment surrendered by the Polish troops on Krasinski Square in the Old Town.



The view is towards the corner of Miodowa and Długa Streets. Heavily damaged in the 1944 uprising, the corner has undergone a major transformation since the war.

ECPAD DAT 3105 L14

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Above: With the evacuation of all Polish troops completed, German forces officially entered Warsaw on October 1. To celebrate their victory, the 10. Infanterie-Division held a parade through the city — the first of a series of divisional parades that were clearly also designed to impress the people of Warsaw of German might. Here the formations line up for the march on Plac Polytechniki (Polytechnic Square) in Mokotow in southern Warsaw. *Right:* The main auditorium building of the Polytechnika Warszawska (Warsaw University of Technology) remains unaltered. The street passing it on the left is Nowowieska and the one on the right Stanisława Naokowskiego. (As historical irony would have it, this square was also the site where General Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski met with the Germans to discuss the Polish surrender at the end of the Warsaw Uprising on October 3, 1944 — see *After the Battle* No. 143).

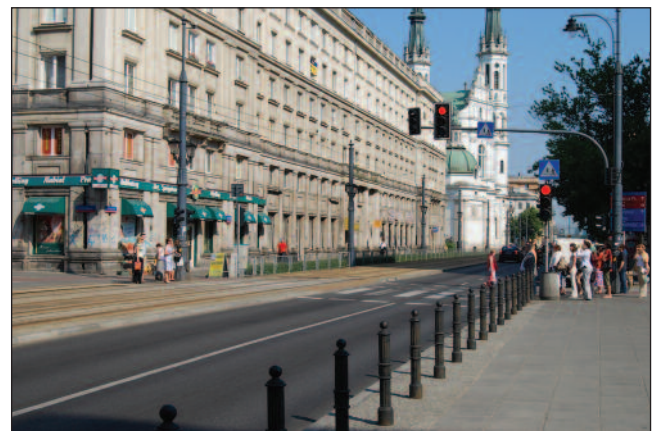


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Left: Shortly after the start of the parade, the troops march past a horse-mounted general. Although the official wartime caption identifies him as 'the divisional commander', it cannot be Generalleutnant Conrad von Cochenhausen, as he was taking the salute further down the route. In all probability he is one of the corps commanders, most likely General der Kavallerie



ATB

Maximilian von Weichs of the XIII. Armeekorps under whose command the 10. Division had operated during the siege. *Right:* This is Ulica Marszałkowska (Marshal Street), one of the main thoroughfares of the city centre, at its viaduct crossing with the Aleja Armii Ludowej. The church is the Kościół Zbawiciela (Church of the Holiest Saviour) on Plac Zbawiciela.



NOD 13947

Having paraded northwards along the length of Marshal Street, the men of the 10. Infanterie-Division made a right turn to begin their southward leg. Here they march across Plac Teatralny (Theatre Square) into Wierbowa Street, watched by silent crowds.



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The neo-classical building housing the Grand Theatre and National Opera was bombed and half-destroyed during the August 1944 fighting. Painstakingly restored to its old glory by the post-war Polish Communist regime, it was re-opened in 1965.



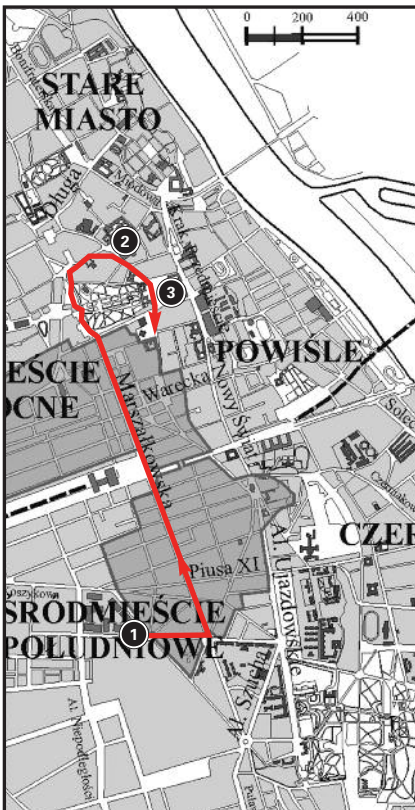
Left: Continuing on to Plac Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego (Piłsudski Square), the troops parade past their divisional commander, Generalleutnant Conrad von Cochenhausen. He and his staff, all mounted on horses, had taken up position in front of the Saxon Palace and the equestrian statue of Marshal of Poland Józef Piłsudski (1763-1813). The palace was the seat of the Polish General Staff and also the site of the Tomb of the Polish Unknown Soldier. Right: The palace and the statue were both blown up by the Germans after the collapse of the 1944 uprising,



the only part left standing being the central colonnade sheltering the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The palace was never rebuilt, leaving just a large open space between the square and the Saxon Garden. The statue, by Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen and dating from 1832, was recast from the original mould in 1965, but it was not restored to its old place. Instead, it was relocated to the courtyard of the Presidential Palace on Krakowskie Przedmieście. Excavations of the palace wing sites were in progress during our visit, hence the steel fencing.

In the days following the surrender, every German corps and division involved in the final offensive held its own victory parade in Warsaw. On October 1, the 10. Infanterie-Division marched in from the south. The divisional commander, Generalleutnant von Cochenhausen, reviewed his troops mounted on a white horse in front of the Saxon Palace on Piłsudski Square in the centre of the city. The division was earmarked as occupation force for Warsaw and would remain in the area until December when it was relieved and ordered to transfer to Marburg in Germany.

The route of the 10. Infanterie-Division's parade. [1] Polytechnic Square. [2] Theatre Square. [3] Piłsudski Square.



Piłsudski Square is Warsaw's largest square and the traditional venue for military parades. During the German occupation, it was named Adolf-Hitler-Platz. Then, after 1946, it became Plac Zwycięstwa (Victory Square) and today it is again Piłsudski Square.



Buildings of modern architecture today flank either ends of the square, the five-star Victoria Hotel on its southern side dating from 1976.



ECPAD DAT 3107 L30

The following day, October 2, at least four more of the divisions that had been engaged in the siege of Warsaw held their own victory parades. The route of the 18. Infanterie-Division

led across Plac Teatralny, where a saluting base had been set up for Generalmajor Friedrich-Carl Cranz (just outside of the picture to the left).



ATB

Time marches on. The view looking east across the empty square towards Senatorska Street over seven decades later.

Right: The Divisionskapelle (divisional band) leading the march-past. The neo-Renaissance building in the background is the Jablonowski Palace, also known as the Ratusz (Town Hall). The official seat of the President of Warsaw, this is where Stefan Starzynski had had his civilian defence headquarters during the siege. It was certainly no coincidence that the saluting bases for the German victory parades were located right in front of the main seats of military and civilian command of the just-vanquished enemy — the 10. Division parading past the headquarters of the Polish General Staff and the 18. Division past that of the Civilian Commissar of the capital — both venues clearly and deliberately chosen to impress the might of the new ruling regime on the Poles. Note the shrapnel marks to the walls of the Ratusz and the damage to the roof of the Blank Palace next door — results of the German bombing and shelling.



ECPAD DAT 3107 L29

The following day, October 2, elements of four different divisions — the 18., 19., 31. and 46. — made their triumphal entry. The 18. Division paraded through the city centre, with Generalmajor Craz taking the salute on Plac Teatralny (Theatre Square). The 19. Division held its parade on the west side of the Saxon Garden, one battalion per regiment passing in front of Generalleutnant Schwantes on Bankowy Square. The 31. Division, although it had been in the line in the south-west, marched in from the east, parading down Aleja Jerozolimski (Jerusalem Avenue) with the divisional commander, Generalleutnant Kämpfe, saluting his troops from a black stallion in front of the main railway station. In yet another parade, Generalleutnant von Petzel, the I. Armeekorps commander, took the salute from an improvised stage at the eastern end of the great Poniatowski Bridge, the troops then proceeding to Pilsudski Square to pass in front of their divisional commander.



ATB

Right: Five years later, during the 1944 uprising, this same building would become a main strongpoint of the Polish insurgents and be completely destroyed by the Germans. The ruins were cleared away in 1952-58 but the palace was rebuilt in the 1990s according to the original pre-1936 architectural plans.



ECPAD DAT 3105 L24



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Left: More troops crossing Plac Teatralny with the Grand Theatre-National Opera on the left. Note the bomb-gutted

building at the far end of the square. *Right:* The same view today, taken from the corner of Nowy Przejadzd Street.



BA RH 82 BILD-00075 WENSING

Simultaneously with the 18. Infanterie-Division, other divisions made their triumphal entry on October 2. The 31. Infanterie-Division held its parade on Aleja Jerozolimskie, the divisional commander, Generalleutnant Rudolf Kämpfe, taking the salute from in front of the Warsaw Main Railway Station (see the plan on page 30). Begun in 1932, and planned to become one of the

most modern stations in Europe, the still unfinished building had been partly destroyed in a fire on June 6, 1939 — a few weeks before the outbreak of war. Initially many people believed that it had been an act of sabotage by German or Soviet agents but the conflagration had in fact been accidentally started by a team of careless welding contractors.



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The half-finished building was repaired and completed by the Germans and taken into use in 1940 but then blown up by them in January 1945. After the war, a provisional main

station was opened nearby and used until 1975 when it was superseded by the new Warsaw Central Station that exists today.



BA RH 82 BILD-00067 MENSING

Included in the parade was a group of PzKpfw II belonging to the panzer detachment that had supported the division in its attacks on Ochota on September 25-26. In the background is the square tower on Marshal Street, which we earlier saw on page 4.



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All the buildings around this spot have been supplanted by modern high-rise development.



BA RH 82 BILD-00070 MENSING

Left: After the tanks came the long columns of infantry, marching three abreast. The view is eastwards, towards Poniatowski Bridge in the far distance. Right: On this side of Jerusalem



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Avenue, a few original buildings remain. The Hotel Polonia on the right has the dubious distinction of being the only hotel in Warsaw to have emerged from the war completely unscathed.



ECPAD DAT 3108 L07

The column for yet another divisional parade entered the city from Praga, crossing the Vistula via the Poniatowski Bridge.

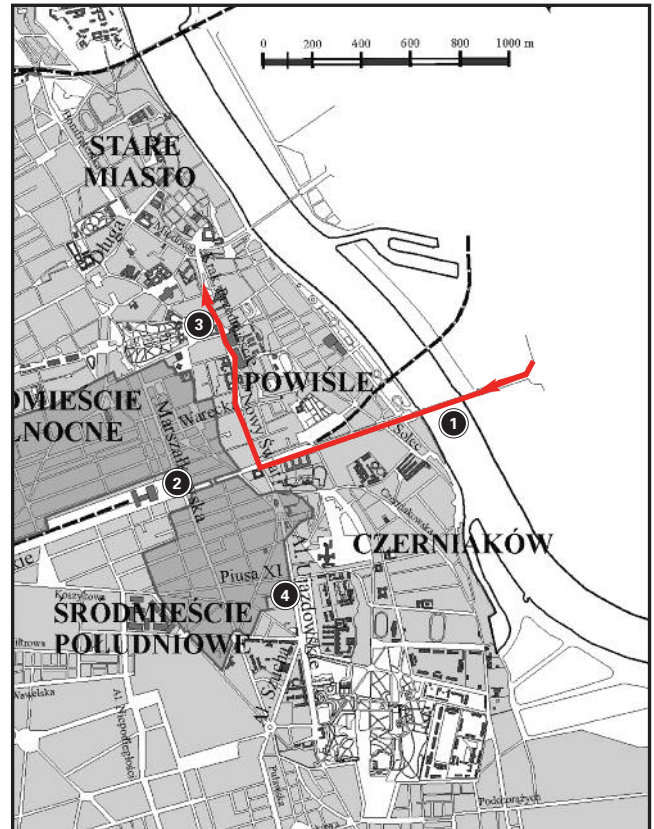


ECPAD DAT 3114 L23

Above: Taking the salute from an improvised podium at the eastern end of the bridge (the remains of the barricade that blocked access to it during the siege) was Generalleutnant Walter Petzel, commander of the I. Armeekorps. Below: The ornamental portico towers flanking the bridge make for an easy comparison.



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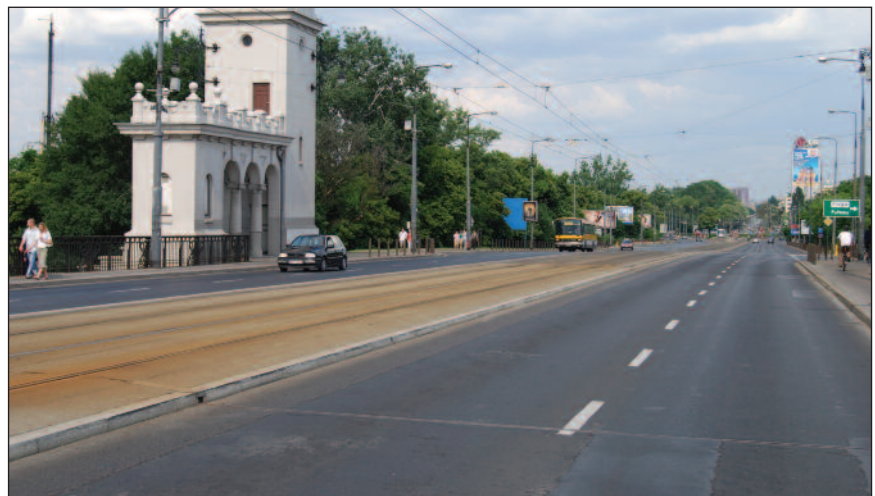


Although the thoroughfare across the bridge is Jerusalem Avenue and leads directly to Warsaw main railway station seen in the photos of the march-past of the 31. Division, this is undoubtedly not the same parade. As we will see further on, this one turned north before reaching the station and proceeded along Krakowskie Przedmieście to arrive at Pilsudski Square where their divisional commander was waiting to take the salute. [1] Poniatowski Bridge. [2] Main Railway Station. [3] Pilsudski Square. [4] Aleja Ujazdowskie.



ECPAD DAT 3114 L15

Above: The standard set up behind General Petzel is the tactical sign for a corps headquarters. One can assume that these troops belonged to one of the two divisions of Petzel's I. Armeekorps — either the 11. or the 61. Infanterie-Division — but it is not known which one, nor have we found the date on which this parade was held. The three divisions holding the eastern half of the ring around Warsaw (the 217. Infanterie-Division of the II. Armeekorps being the third) did not engage fully in the final offensive of September 25-26, limiting themselves to diversionary attacks and continuing the routine of bombarding the city with heavy artillery, so one can presume that their parades were held after those of the divisions that had done the main fighting. *Right:* Poniatowski Bridge is usually very busy with traffic but Karel caught a quiet moment to match up the shot looking east towards Praga.



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ECPAD DAT 3108 L17

Left: Petzel shaking hands with one of his subordinate commanders. *Right:* Poniatowski Bridge was blown up by the Germans on September 13, 1944. Rebuilt to a simpler design in



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1945-46 and widened in 1963-66, it was only in 2004 that enough funds were available for the reconstruction of the pair of small towers at either end.



ECPAD DAT 3115 L25

Left: Having turned north, the parade proceeds down Krakowskie Przedmieście, one of the best-known and most-prestigious streets of Warsaw. **Right:** The building in the background is the



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Staszic Palace, the seat of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the bronze statue of Nicolaus Copernicus in front of it (another work by Bertel Thorvadsen) is one of Warsaw's main landmarks.



ECPAD DAT 3115 L29

Left: Turning around, the PK-Bildberichter pictured the head of the parade passing the Kosciol Swietokrzyski (Church of the Holy Cross), one of Poland's most-notable places of worship. **Right:** The Baroque church was severely damaged during the Warsaw Uprising, among others by the detonation



ATB

of two Goliath tracked mines inside the building on September 6, 1944, and then completely blown up by the Germans in January 1945. Rebuilding started immediately in 1945 and was completed in 1953, albeit in a simplified architectural form.



ECPAD DAT 3115 L37

Left: Having turned the corner and proceeded down Krolewska Street, the troops enter Pilsudski Square. The building in the background is the Dom bez Kantów (House without Corners), a military building housing both the headquarters of the Warsaw garrison, the Central Military Library and apartment buildings



ATB

for officers and married NCOs. Left: During the German occupation the building served as the headquarters of the NSDAP-Gauleiter of the Warsaw district, which partly explains why it did not fall victim to German demolitions in 1944-45. Today, many of the apartments are privately owned.



BA BILD 1011-001-0251-07 SCHULZE

This is most likely Generalleutnant Siegfried Hänicke of the 61. Infanterie-Division taking the salute from his horse on Pilsudski Square.



ECPAD DAT 3167 L02

Above: Having passed their divisional commander, the troops turn right to leave Pilsudski Square via Ossolinskich Street. Contrary to Generalleutnant von Cochenhausen the day before, this general had taken up a position not in front of the Saxon Palace but facing it, the general rule for a military parade in the Wehrmacht probably being that troops pass in front of their commander from left to right. Note the burned-out building on the left, part of the Hotel Angielski, before the war one of the most important and elegant hotels in the capital. *Right:* The Angielski was pulled down during the German occupation, the site remaining a car park for many years after the war. Today, the Metropolitan office centre, a creation of architect Norman Foster completed in 2003, takes up the entire northern façade of the square.



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Left: The apotheosis of all the parades in Warsaw came on October 5 when a huge victory march-past was organised attended by the Führer himself. Hitler flew in to Okęcie airport where he was received by guards of honour from army and air force and greeted by the assembled generals and representa-



tives of party and state. Here he shakes hands with (L-R) Generaloberst Gerd von Rundstedt, the commander of Heeresgruppe Süd; General Blaskowitz and General von Reichenau. **Right:** The Führer's Mercedes passing the Saxon Palace on Pilsudski Square (note that Hitler is holding a street plan of the city).

The series of march-pasts culminated in the massive victory parade on Thursday, October 5, attended by Hitler, the commanders-in-chief of the three services and all the top commanders of the just-completed campaign. The spectacle had been organised by

Generalmajor Erwin Rommel, the newly appointed commander of the Führer-Begleit-Bataillon (Führer Escort Battalion), who had flown to Warsaw on the 2nd especially to make the arrangements. Hitler flew in to Okęcie airport from Berlin in the morn-

ing, where he was met by Generaloberst Walther von Brauchitsch, Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres (Commander-in-chief of the Army) and Generals Blaskowitz and von Reichenau. In his big open Mercedes he made a tour of the city, crossing Pilsudski



BA RH 82 BILD-00073 MENSING

Left: The parade was held on Aleja Ujazdowskie, the grand avenue lined with palaces and embassies in the south of the main city. The saluting base had been set up opposite the Leszczyński Palace at No. 23 (see [4] on the plan on page 30). Bildberichter Mensing pictured the military band and mass of



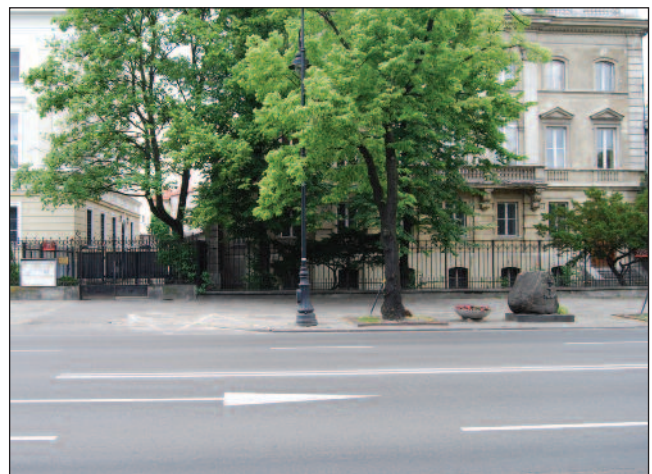
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soldiers awaiting the arrival of the Führer. Note the newsreel cameraman on the roof of the car. **Right:** The Leszczyński Palace and the adjoining Sleszyński Palace at No. 25 were both destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising later in the war, but painstakingly rebuilt in 1947-48.



BA RH 82 BILD-00080 MENSING

Left: As the Führer's Mercedes arrives at the saluting base, he is greeted by a sea of Nazi salutes. **Right:** During the German occupation of Poland, the Leszczyński Palace became the seat of the SS- und Polizeiführer (SS and Police Chief) in Warsaw.



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After hostilities had ended it was taken over for use as the Yugoslavian and Serbian Embassies until 2008 when, after a long legal dispute, it was handed back to the son of the pre-war private owner.



All the divisions that had taken part in the final offensive of September 25-26 provided units and detachments to take part in the victory parade. Here the Führer salutes a column of

infantry troops as they march by. Standing behind him are (L-R) Generals von Küchler, Keitel and (facing the camera) Blaskowitz.



Today a bus stop marks the former location of the Führer's saluting base. The view is looking north up Aleja Ujazdowskie.

The dome in the background is that of the St Alexander's Church on Three Crosses Square (see page 12).

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BA RH 82 BILD-00081 MENSING

The 4. Panzer-Division, which had been the first to reach and attack Warsaw, had somehow been overlooked and not been invited to send a detachment to represent them at the parade,

so these Panzer I and IIs must have originated from the independent panzer units that had been attached to the infantry divisions for the final assaults of late September.



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Looking south down Aleja Ujazdowskie today. The building on the right, just south of Frederic Chopin Street, now houses government bureaus. During the Nazi occupation, Aleja Ujazdowskie was first Germanised into Linden-Allee. Then, in October 1940,

on the first anniversary of the parade, the Germans renamed it Siegesstrasse (Victory Street). In 1953, following the death of Josef Stalin, it was renamed Aleja Stalina (Stalin Avenue). Three years later the traditional name was restored again.



Among those standing with Hitler on the rostrum were (L-R) Generaloberst Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Army; Generaloberst Keitel, chief of the OKW; Generaloberst von Rundstedt, commander of Heeresgruppe Süd; the three army commanders Generals von Kùchler, Reichenau, and Blaskowitz; and the two air force commanders Generals Alexander Lùhr and Albert Kesselring of Luftflotten 4 and 1 respectively. Standing on the pavement was Generalmajor Erwin Rommel, the commander of the Führer-Begleit-Bataillon, who had been in charge of organising the parade.



The various corps commanders present in the second row on the rostrum stood ready to introduce their subordinate units to the Führer as they approached. Here it is the turn of General der Kavallerie Maximilian von Weichs, commander of the XIII. Armeekorps.

Square, before alighting at the podium that had been erected on Aleja Ujazdowskie, the grand avenue in the diplomatic and aristocratic quarter of Warsaw. The streets along which the big parade proceeded were lined with German troops but the virtual complete absence of civilians was a clear sign by the capital's population that to them Warsaw was a city of the dead. The massive parade lasted a full two hours as an endless procession of armoured, horse-mounted, infantry, engineer and artillery troops of all infantry divisions involved in the siege drove, marched and goose-stepped past Hitler and his generals. (The 4. Panzer-Division, which had made the initial incursion into the city, had been overlooked and did not participate.) Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's favourite film-maker, was present with her cameramen to film the whole event. Following the parade, Hitler visited the Belvedere Castle, the former seat of the late Marshal Jozef Pilsudski.

Back at the airfield, there was an embarrassing incident between Hitler and his generals. Hitler had ordered a field-kitchen meal to be served on the airfield and General Blaskowitz, thinking that the occasion warranted a gala display, had extra tables and benches arranged in the hangars, complete with paper tablecloths and flower decorations. For some reason Hitler reacted furiously. Seeing the festive dinner tables, he turned around brusquely, took a few spoonfuls of soup from a field-kitchen truck outside, talked to a few soldiers standing around and, snubbing Brauchitsch's attempts to change his mind, boarded his aircraft with his aides and flew back to Berlin, leaving the generals on the airfield decidedly discomfited and offended.

The Warsaw victory parade was one of the largest military parades ever staged by the Wehrmacht, and was certainly the largest ever held in the capital of a country conquered by the Nazi Germany. It was only superseded in magnitude by the giant parade held in Berlin on April 20, 1939, to celebrate Hitler's 50th birthday (see *After the Battle* No. 64). Whereas the Warsaw march-past mustered some 20,000 troops and took two hours, the Berlin one, held on the Charlottenburger Chaussee, included 50,000 troops and lasted for four hours.



The view looking south down Aleja Ujazdowskie from Three Crosses Square (with St Alexander's Church on the right). The troops are marching towards the camera. Note the scarcity of spectators. We have arrowed the position of Hitler's saluting base.