

# Military Review

## LEGACY ARTICLE

The article that follows, "The European War" by Lt. Col. E. M. Benitez, was first published in *Military Review* in December 1939. It provides

a historical retrospective of what one U.S. Army writer was observing at the time with regard to developments in Western Europe at the outset of what would become World War II. It is republished here (with original pagination) to emphasize that the future may in some sense repeat itself, and the U.S. Army must be prepared.

Benitez writes, "It may sound like a paradox that in an age of machine guns, tanks, and airplanes, we should evoke the ghost of the Roman and Carthaginian Armies." Similarly, it might seem incongruous in an age of multi-domain operations to consider the actions of the European armies in 1939. However, just as the author foresaw the need for the U.S. Armed Forces to prepare for large-scale combat operations then, our leaders now anticipate the requirement for our forces to be prepared to face peer and near-peer adversaries during large-scale combat operations, possibly in the near future.

Many parallels to the dawn of World War II are apparent in 2018. Just as in the years prior to the outbreak of that war, many places in the world are in a state of political and social upheaval as many ideologies and nationalist agendas vie for hegemony in their respective spheres of interest. Russia no longer even

attempts to mask its territorial ambitions as it is rearming on a massive scale for potential conventional war in Europe and Central Asia. Meanwhile, China is emerg-

ing as an aspiring super power, both economically and militarily. It continues to wage virtual war against the United States diplomatically, economically, and informationally in an effort to undermine U.S. influence while simultaneously expanding the scope and reach of its armed forces, especially its Navy and Air Force, and especially in the South China Sea. Posing additional threats, both Iran and North Korea place as their highest priority developing conventional force capabilities, even at the cost of great tribulation and suffering borne by their respective peoples to pay for such military capability. And, finally, similar to fascist dreams of global

conquest, the jihadist vision of establishing an Islamic caliphate with the conventional military power capable of eradicating Western culture and influence continues to smolder in groups at the seams of a global Islamic community numbering in the billions.

Though the threats to the U.S. and its allies are not exactly analogous to those faced in 1939, the key similarity is the continuing need to clearly perceive and acknowledge what the real threats are and to prepare effectively to deal with them. ■

COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL  
**MILITARY REVIEW**



December, 1939, Quarterly Review of Military Literature  
VOL. XIX, No. 75





CAPITULATION OF WARSAW, 27 SEPTEMBER 1939

Acme.

## The European War

By Lt. Col. E. M. Benitez, CAC

### THE COLLAPSE OF POLAND

War tactics, despite spectacular new weapons, have changed little in 2,000 years. What Hannibal's Carthaginians did to the Romans at Cannae, southeastern Italy, in 216 B.C., the Germans did to the Poles last September.

It may sound like a paradox that in an age of machine guns, tanks, and airplanes, we should evoke the ghost of the Roman and Carthaginian Armies. At Cannae, we find a strong Roman center, well forward, presenting a convex front (Posen and Corridor Armies) disposed in great depth, the flanks protected by cavalry; if that protection were removed (the Silesian Army and right of the Corridor Army), the dispositions were such that an attack by the enemy could not be opposed in time or space. Hannibal, on the contrary, stretched his center to the limit (German frontier troops

only opposing the Posen Army), in order to be *strong on the wings* (North and South Army Groups), where he sought a decision by a double envelopment in a prearranged maneuver.

There is a striking similarity between the scheme of maneuver of the Germans in Poland, with the Polish Army in the role of the Roman Legions caught in the deadly vice of Hannibal's maneuver. There was little head-on fighting in Poland, the German columns moving swiftly and cutting off the retreat of the defending forces. The left arm of the pincers, operated from Pomerania and East Prussia; the right arm pushed towards Lodz, southwest of Warsaw, with a southern advance from Slovakia threatening Kracow. The double envelopment worked with appalling efficiency, particularly at Kutno, Radom and Warsaw, where the pair of





GENERAL MAP OF POLAND SHOWING LOCATION OF PLACES MENTIONED IN THE POLISH CAMPAIGN.

huge jaws successively closed, trapping thousands of Polish troops and capturing many guns and matériel.

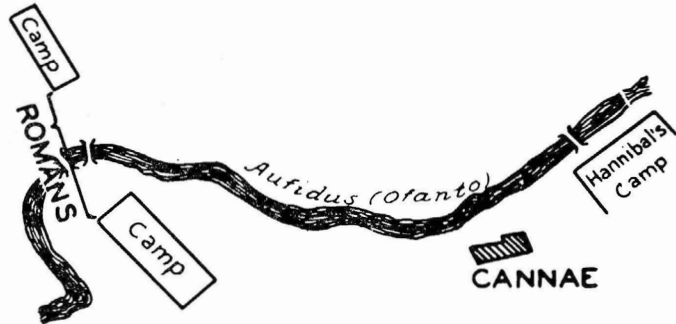
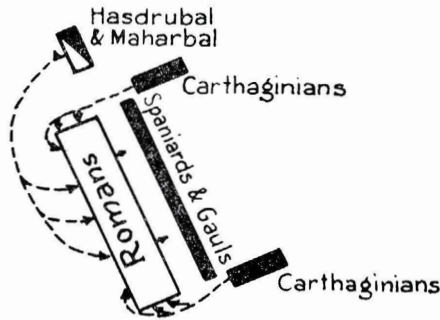
The envelopment has always been the German classic. At Sedan in 1870 where out of 100,000 Frenchmen, 15,000 were killed and 80,000 made prisoners. At Tannenberg in 1914, against Russia, 30,000 fell in battle and 92,000 were made prisoners out of a force of 150,000 Russians. It almost succeeded in 1914. It won a *blitzkrieg* in 1939 when it took the German military machine a little over three weeks

to overrun Poland in one of the most rapid and overwhelming campaigns in history.

After the spring of 1939, when it was beginning to grow more evident that Poland would resist Germany, the Intelligence Bureau of the German Army set out to clarify the probable operations and intentions of Poland. From impressions obtained from Polish literature\* and the daily

\*See C&GSS Military Review, September 1939, page 42.





THE BATTLE OF CANNAE, 216 B.C.

press in connection with military measures taken by Polish Army leaders, the German General Staff drew the following conclusions:

- (1) That Poland would fight.
- (2) That Polish Army leadership underrated the German Army and held the belief that Poland could successfully conduct a war in the East, at least to a certain degree, as strong German forces would be needed to face France and Britain on the Western Front.
- (3) That the Polish plan contemplated:
  - (a) Immediate occupation of the Free City of Danzig.
  - (b) An attack on East Prussia from three sides as follows:
    - (i) An attack from Augustow and Suwalki.
    - (ii) Another attack from Thorn and Graudenz. The two attacks mentioned above were to converge on Koenigsberg, completely avoiding the difficult lake terrain both in the west and in the east.
    - (iii) A holding attack from the south against East Prussia in the general direction: Warsaw—Koenigsberg.

The Poles believed that even if the German Army were able to break through Pomorze, it would still have to cross the Vistula, which is almost 3,000 feet wide with no bridges between Graudenz and Tczew, a distance of about 45 miles.

The Polish High Command also was convinced that the right flank of the German Army coming to the aid of East Prussia would be exposed to a Polish attack from the region of Bromberg, and also visualized the Posen center as a direct threat to Breslau and Berlin, separated by 30 and 95 miles, respectively, from the Polish frontier.

The Poles felt that they could defend successfully the Carpathian Mountains which reach an altitude of 7,500 feet in the Tatras, 5,200 feet in the western part and 3,900 feet

in the east. They recognized the importance and vulnerability of the Jablunka Pass (1,650 feet) in the extreme west and of the Dukla Pass (1,500 feet) in the extreme east, where the Carpathians are comparatively easy to cross.

The railway net favored the defense along the Slovakian frontier, there being only one railroad and one motor road in Slovakia, while on the Polish side there were five railroad lines between Jablunka and Dukla, supplemented by several motor roads converging on the main railroad lines of Southern Poland. Furthermore, the Poles thought that they could launch an offensive on the Slovakian front, where the population was bitterly opposed to German rule.

THE OPPOSING FORCES



MILITARY REGIONS OF POLAND

Poland.

Poland was divided into ten military army corps areas, each corps consisting of three divisions and one regiment of corps artillery; one cavalry division in Warsaw and 11 independent cavalry brigades; 1 to 2 incomplete mechanized brigades; 2 army artillery regiments; 2 aviation groups with 6 reinforced regiments (about 300 reconnaissance planes, 300 bombers and 400 pursuit; few reserves).

The infantry division consisted of 3 infantry regiments and one regiment of light artillery. The cavalry division included 3 brigades of 2 cavalry regiments each, and 2 battalions of horse artillery. The separate cavalry brigade consisted of from 2 to 4 cavalry regiments and 1 battalion of horse artillery. In keeping with terrain conditions and Polish doctrines of war, there was a heavy preponderance of cavalry (272 squadrons) in the Polish Army. On the other hand, the army was weak in antiaircraft weapons, having only about 40 batteries.



On the Russian border there was a frontier corps and from 2 to 3 cavalry brigades, about 30,000 men in all.

Whether or not at the outbreak of hostilities each corps area contained a reserve division prepared for action is not certain, but it is estimated that Poland had between 40 and 60 divisions in the field.

In addition to the combat troops, the field armies had supply branches and other service troops. Trained reserves brought the total fighting strength of Poland to about 1,500,000 men. The Polish forces were under the supreme command of General Edward Smigly-Rydz, who had been a favorite of the late Marshal Pilsudski, and had distinguished himself in the battle of Warsaw in 1920, where the Soviets were decisively defeated.

*Germany.*

The strength of the German Army of invasion has been estimated at from 70 to 80 divisions, six of which were Panzer (mechanized), and four motorized. The equipment of the German divisions was excellent and modern in every respect.



*Wide World Photo.*

GENERAL WALTER VON BRAUTCHITSCH  
Commander-in-Chief of the German Armies

The strength of the German infantry division was approximately 14,000 men, each division consisting of 3 infantry regiments, 4 battalions of field artillery (105-mm gun and 155-mm howitzer) and necessary service troops. The antitank and anti-aircraft matériel of the German Army was of the highest quality and stood superior to that of their Polish adversaries in a ratio of at least three to one.

The Panzer division, approximate strength 11,000 men, had a reconnaissance echelon, a tank brigade (shock echelon), a motorized brigade (ground holding echelon) and the necessary auxiliary troops.

The German forces were under the command of Colonel General\* Walter von Brautchitsch, who was fifty-eight years of age and the son of a cavalry general. Given the best education Berlin afforded, he became a lieutenant in the Royal Elizabeth Guard Grenadiers, at the age of 19, later transferring to an artillery regiment and rising to the rank of captain by 1914. After the war, despite the lull in German arms, he became successively a major, a lieutenant colonel and in 1930 director of military training for the Defense Ministry; 1931 saw him appointed a major general, and in 1932 he was made chief of artillery. He rose rapidly with the Nazi regime and in February 1938 was made Commander-in-Chief of the German Army succeeding Blomberg and Fritsch.

General Halder was his Chief of Staff.

PLANS OF CAMPAIGN

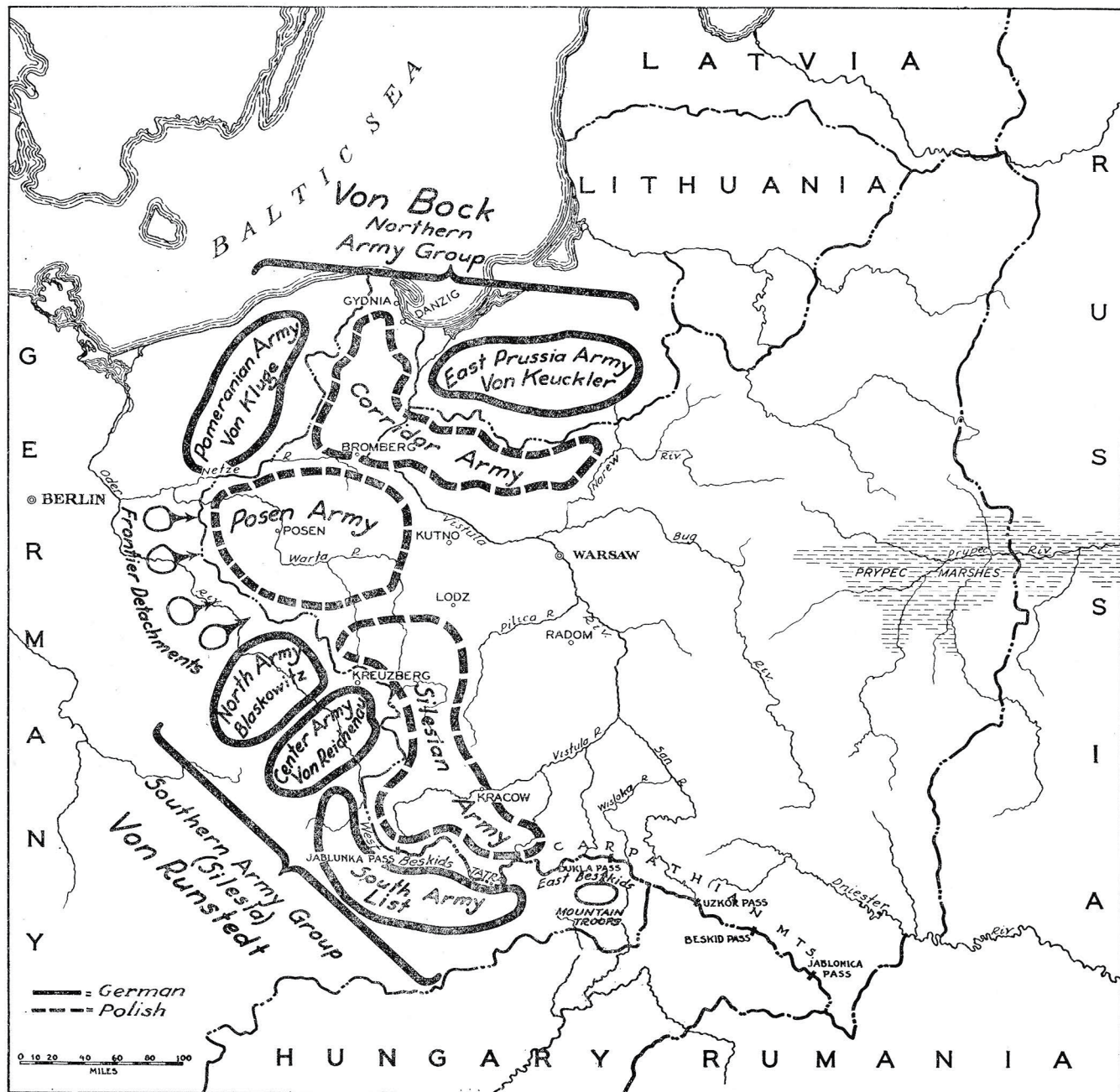
*Poland*

The Polish war plans, before the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Germany, were generally believed to envisage, on the part of Poland, defensive operations in Upper Silesia and in the Corridor, but offensive movements directed primarily against Central Silesia (Breslau), and secondarily against Berlin. The Polish provincial capital of Posen is only two hours by rail from the German capital; however, on the German side of the frontier the countryside, intersected by many river and canal beds, is easily defensible, and in addition, this region had been strongly fortified. These war plans, however, were based upon the assumption of the existence of a strong and well-defended Czechoslovakia which, in alliance with Poland and France, would, on her part, take the offensive against German Silesia to join the Polish forces there.

These plans became useless after the partition of Czechoslovakia and had to be hastily revised. It has been said by some military commentators that the new Polish plans envisaged a generally defensive attitude on the part of the Poles with the chief object of keeping the Polish fighting forces intact and temporarily evacuating large portions of Polish territory. The main defensive positions were supposed to be, first, along the line of fortified cities: Kutno—Lodz—Random—Kracow; the second and strongest on the line of the rivers Narew, Bug, Vistula and San, to which the armies were to fall back delaying the German advance and delivering sharp counterattacks as the opportunity offered. Meanwhile, Polish reserve divisions were to assemble behind the last named line, especially those drawn from East Poland

\*The rank of Colonel General is equivalent to second rank Field Marshal in the British Army.





CONCENTRATION AREAS OF GERMAN AND POLISH ARMIES.

whose mobilization, because of poor communication facilities, took considerably longer than those from the more thickly populated districts in the west.

In the light of events, it must be admitted, unless disproved by evidence, that the Polish plan must have contemplated offensive action, as the Germans claim. This is supported by the fact that Poland concentrated her armies far forward, that the Corridor Army and the Posen Army, in particular, were stronger than the Silesian Army and that

the newly created Fourth Army was partly concentrated in the north near Grodno on the East Prussian border. A large number of troops were massed in the Corridor and in the early encounters Polish cavalry penetrated German territory near Breslau and also in East Prussia. It is only by assuming offensive rather than defensive action that the Polish initial strategic concentration can be explained.

In order to carry out their plans, the Polish concentrated their forces as follows: (See Concentration Map.)



(1) One Polish army was stationed in the area north of Warsaw, capable of checking or threatening a German advance from East Prussia against Warsaw. This army was protected on the right by the forces that were intended to attack East Prussia from an eastern direction and on the left by a strong army in the Corridor. The mission of this Corridor Army was to occupy the Free City of Danzig and to launch an offensive against East Prussia from the west.

(2) The Polish Army in the region of Posen had the mission of covering the rear of the Corridor Army in the operation outlined above. In case of a German attack against the Corridor Army, the Posen Army was to threaten the German flank and it could also be used to reinforce the southern Polish Army, if necessary. Due to its central location, the Posen Army could threaten the flanks of any German attack from Central Upper Silesia or from Pomerania.

(3) Poland's Southern Army, the weakest of the three, concentrated in the region of Kracow and Lemberg, and was in the opinion of Polish Army leaders, strong enough to protect the important industrial area: Kracow—Lublin—Lemberg.

*Germany*

The German plan of campaign was, as it has been already stated, the classic double envelopment, with a powerful drive from Silesia on Warsaw and another from East Prussia across the Narew and Bug, both pincers to close east of Warsaw. The initial concentration and disposition of Polish troops was well known to the German High Command, thus materially assisting the successful accomplishment of this plan.

General von Brautchitsch created two army groups as follows: (See Concentration Map)

(1) *Southern Group* (the strongest): Colonel General Karl von Rundstedt, commanding; Lieutenant General Mausein, Chief of Staff.

a. South Army (right wing):

General List, commanding.

b. Center Army (main effort):

Artillery General Hans von Reichenau, commanding.

c. North Army (left wing):

Infantry General Johannes Blaskowitz, a Sudeten German, who rose through the ranks, commanding.

(2) *Northern Group*: General Oberst von Bock, commanding; Lieutenant General Salmuth, Chief of Staff.

a. Pomeranian Army:

Artillery General Guenther von Kluge, commanding.

b. East Prussian Army (10-12 divisions):

General von Keuchler, commanding.

The German center connecting the two army groups was weakly held by frontier detachments, their mission was to pin down as many Polish divisions as possible, the retreat of which was to be cut off by the strong, swift moving wings.

The goal of the German Army was the *swift defeat of the Polish Army*. To accomplish this the German High Command decided to strike several rapid blows at vital parts on the front which measured 1300 miles all told and so to

anticipate any large scale offensive by the Polish Army. The execution of this plan was aided materially by the annexation of Czechoslovakia, which enabled the German High Command to shift the right wing of von Rundstedt's Group into the Tatra and from there to launch an offensive in a northerly direction across the mountains.

The mission entrusted to the Southern Army Group was to push in a northeasterly direction toward the Vistula from near Kreuzberg with the center army (von Reichenau) which was to make the main effort. General List's Army from Silesia was to protect the right flank of the center army, cross the West Beskids Mountains by forcing the Jablunka Pass and advance in an easterly direction. Its orders were to hold the Polish forces there and, with the units advancing from Slovakia northward, encircle the Poles and prevent, if possible, a Polish retreat eastward.

General Blaskowitz' Army which, advancing from east of Breslau was to drive in the general direction of Warsaw protecting the left of the center army from expected flank attacks by the Polish Posen Army.

The mission of the Northern Army Group was to drive with General von Kluge's Army (Pomeranian Army) across the Corridor and establish contact with East Prussia as quickly as possible; then cross the Vistula between Bromberg and Graudenz and together with the forces advancing toward Graudenz from East Prussia, contact the north wing of the Southern Army Group (Blaskowitz) and advance in a general easterly direction.

The Second Army of General von Bock's Group (East Prussia), under the command of General von Keuchler, was given the mission of advancing from East Prussia over the Narew and the Bug, east of the Vistula, thus establishing connection with General von Reichenau's Army (Center Army, Southern Group) and cutting off Warsaw from the east. This army would extend its operations farther to the south in an effort to capture, with an encircling movement behind the Save and the Bug, those Polish forces that might succeed in crossing the Vistula.

**BLITZKREIG**

Germany commenced the war in the east early on the morning of 1 September. From East Prussia she launched an assault southward. She did not dispose of more than ten to twelve divisions in this isolated territory, and their attack by itself would have been fruitless. But, simultaneously, she thrust across the Corridor from Pomerania, overran it, opened up land communication with East Prussia, and continued the drive in the direction of Warsaw. The Posen salient was neglected; indeed, the Poles won a local success in this quarter, and reached for a moment the soil of the Reich. From the direction of Silesia came the main blow, in which most of her motorized and mechanized divisions were employed with terrific effect. Farther south still, from Slovakia, she thrust into Polish Silesia, that area of coal and iron, of intense industry, which contained the life-blood of Poland. This thrust was accompanied by another across the Beskid and Tatra ranges of the Carpathians.

The concentric attack might have been met with only a measure of success by a mobile and determined defense, but for one factor—the power of her air forces. They not only



enabled the German ground forces to move with complete freedom, but also blinded and crippled the Polish. Communications were shattered by constant bombing; counter-attacks were detected in assembly areas and broken up before they could develop; all Polish troop movements had to be confined to the hours of darkness. Polish artillery was instantly engaged by German, ranged by aircraft, whereas German battery positions could not be identified. Low-flying airplanes, using machine guns as well as bombs, preceded and covered the advance of fighting vehicles and of infantry. Back-area bombing spread disorganization in the rear. The Germans made tremendous use of aircraft operating in conjunction with mechanized and motorized units. Their swift and effective action disorganized the Poles, who were harassed from morning till night by this immensely superior and highly efficient force; consequently, they were unable to recover and reestablish successive defensive positions.

The concentric advance on Warsaw was followed by an advance of great strength, in the general direction of Lemberg. Various reasons have been put forward to explain this: that the objective was economic, namely, oil; that it was military, to cut off Poland from Rumania; that it was economic, military and political, to establish contact with Russia.

The course of the German offensive beginning 1 September reveals five separate main operations.

(1) In the south, the advance of the extreme right (List) across the Carpathian Mountains, advancing in the direction of the New Sandez—Tarnow railroad.

(2) North of that region, the envelopment of the industrial district of Upper Silesia, with the advance aimed at Kracow (von Reichenau).

(3) From Silesia, the drive past Lodz on Cestochowa and Warsaw (Blaskowitz).

(4) In the north and east, the occupation of the Corridor by invasions from Pomerania and East Prussia.

(5) From East Prussia, the push in a southerly direction toward the Narew, by way of Mlawa and Przasnysz.

The defense of the Free City of Danzig was left entirely to locally organized guards, who occupied the Polish post office where the Poles put up some resistance.

The German Navy closed the Bay of Danzig and in the early days of September destroyed what was left of the small Polish fleet: four submarines, a destroyer and a mine planter. Three Polish destroyers had fled to England in the closing days of August. The Navy and Air Force bombed the Polish naval bases of Gdynia and Hel and erected mine barriers in vital locations. The Polish garrison at Westerplatte surrendered on 7 September after an attack by the landing forces of the training ship Schleswig-Holstein, reinforced by a battalion of engineers.

In this fast war of movement there never was a continuous battle front. The Germans launched their attacks in mass, smashing forward as far as possible, troubling themselves not at all with the pocket which they left in the intervals between their columns. Mechanized and motorized divisions smashed relentlessly forward, crushing resistance or simply passing it by. Thus the Polish centers of resistance became mere isolated islands. So it was at Posen, for example, where in the so-called "Posen sack," 10 Polish divisions were trapped. The Germans did not overcome the

salient immediately, but depended upon their enveloping tactics, assuming that it would be disastrous for the Polish Army to be caught around Posen with its retreat cut off. The character of this rapid, crushing German advance can be better understood by a study of the operations as they developed, day by day.



PROBABLE DISPOSITIONS OF THE POLISH ARMY,  
1 SEPTEMBER, 1939.

### THE SILESIA GROUP

#### 1 September

By the evening of 1 September the extreme right wing of this group (List) had reached the line: Neumark—Sucha and crossed the Olsa at Tesin. Farther north, other units skirted the industrial region of Upper Silesia and advanced on Czestochowa.

#### 2 September.

Units of this group pushed on through Jablunka Pass, in the Beskids and seized Pless. North of the industrial region the German forces gained the banks of the Warta after taking Wielun. Simultaneously, in the country north of Czestochowa, mechanized units drove toward Radomsk, while other elements, advancing by way of Kepno, moved on Sieradz.

#### 3 September.

This day marks the forced crossing of the Vistula east of Pless, the overrunning of Polish fortifications south of Nikolei, the capture of Czestochowa, the crossing of the Warta at points east of Wielun and the occupation of Radomsk.

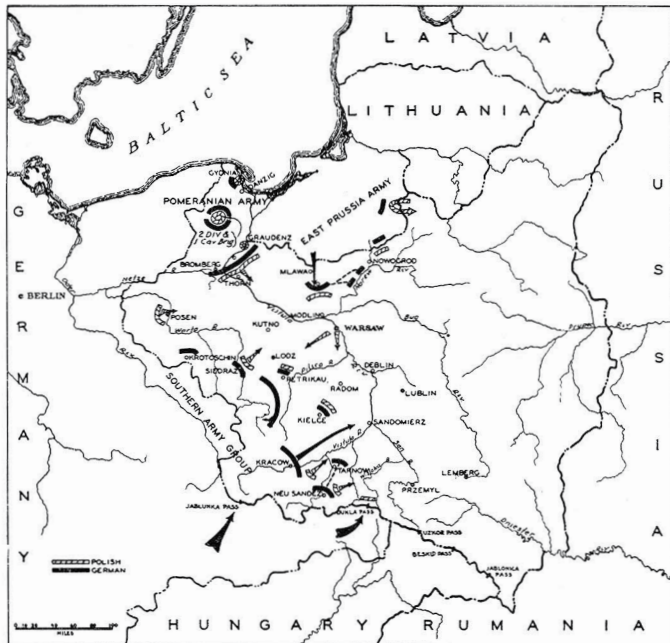


4 September.

According to German reports, the Polish 7th Division was destroyed southeast of Czestochowa and its commander, General Gosiovowski and staff taken prisoners. The German forces fought their way across the Warta and captured Ostrowo, Krotoszin and Lisa. The right wing of the Silesian Group continued the pursuit of the Polish forces in the direction of Kracow.

5 September.

The German troops drove the Poles from the northern exit of the Beskids. With the capture of Katowice, Konigshutto and Tarnow, the industrial region of Polish Upper Silesia was in German hands. While to the north, the advance reached the line: Checiny—Petrikau, the attack east of the Warta continued in the direction of Lodz. The Polish Government fled from Warsaw to Lublin.



ENVELOPMENT PHASE—SITUATION AS OF 6 SEPTEMBER

6 September.

Units of the Silesian Group entered Kracow without encountering resistance. In the north, the Germans took Kielce, and in the south they occupied Neu Sandez.

7 September.

The German advance kept close upon the heels of the defeated Poles in the region southeast of Gorlice and east of Tarnow, penetrating as far as the Wisloka; they also gained ground in the Lisa Cora range north of Kielce. North of Tomaszow, mechanized forces drove the Poles out of Rawa Mazowiecka, and advanced to within less than 40 miles from Warsaw.

THE POMERANIAN ARMY

Supported by the East Prussian Army, the mission of the Pomeranian Army was to establish direct contact with East Prussia. Instead of driving directly on Danzig, which was the shortest route, General von Kluge directed his main effort in the general direction on the line: Bromberg—Kulm—Graudenz.

1 September.

German troops reached the Netze River at Nakel and closed in on the Brahe. Meanwhile, the East Prussian forces launched an attack from Marienburg on the Polish fortified area of Graudenz.

2 September.

On this day, the Pomeranian Army crossed the Brahe. A powerful mechanized attack carried the advance elements to the Vistula at points south of Graudenz, northwards toward Tuchel.

4 September.

The Pomeranian Army reached the Vistula at Kulm, forcing its way across the Brahe. This advance prevented the Polish troops in the northern part of the Corridor from retiring to the south. All Polish efforts to shatter the iron ring by desperate individual action proved futile.

The Pomeranian Army forced the crossing of the Vistula at Kulm and continued to advance along the east bank of the river. Simultaneously, units of the East Prussian Army captured Graudenz. Teczew also fell into German hands that day.

5 September.

The Polish forces, under the pressure of the German units that had crossed the Vistula at Kulm and Graudenz, evacuated Bromberg.

6 September.

The Pomeranian Army concluded the mopping up of the region around Tuchel and according to German reports, wiped out the Polish 9th and 27th Divisions, a mechanized battalion, two battalions of light infantry and the "Pomorzka" Cavalry Brigade.

Continuing their drive to the east of the Vistula, the German forces crossed the Thorn-Strassburg highway.

7 September.

The Polish Posen Army commenced the evacuation of the Province of Posen. German troops occupied Wagrowice and Oborniki, north of Posen, and Kozmin at the south. The invasion of the Province of Posen from the west likewise gained ground forcing the Poles to withdraw farther and farther to the east.

THE EAST PRUSSIAN ARMY

1-4 September.

The left wing of this army advanced to the south driving deep into Polish territory. By 4 September this army had



pushed on past Mława and Przasniz and after heavy fighting broke through to the Narew.

#### 5-7 September.

The German forces occupied Ciechanow, whence they drove toward the Vistula in the direction of Plonsk. They gained the Narew first at Rozan, next at Pultusk and later at Ostroleka and Lomza. By 7 September the German forces had crossed this important obstacle. Polish cavalry conducted raids against the left flank of the German forces and even penetrated East Prussian territory at one point, but this threat was too weak to halt the German advance.

#### 8 September.

At the beginning of the second week of operations, the German armies in the East were making rapid advances all along the front.

While the right wing of the Silesian Group (List) was nearing the San, the left wing (Blaskowitz) advancing south of Lodz had reached to within 10 miles of Warsaw. In the afternoon of 8 September a German mechanized division entered the suburbs of Warsaw.

In the Province of Posen, the Polish forces were retreating eastward closely pursued by German troops.

In the northern part of the Corridor, units of the Pomeranian Army shifted to the attack on Gdynia, after mopping up the region of Tuchel.

A Polish cavalry attack against the extreme left of the East Prussian Army was broken up by the German air forces and in no wise interfered with the continuation of the German advance to the south.

By this time, the industrial region of Poland, where her munition bases and industrial centers were located, were in German hands and this had a decisive effect upon the subsequent operations.

#### 9 September.

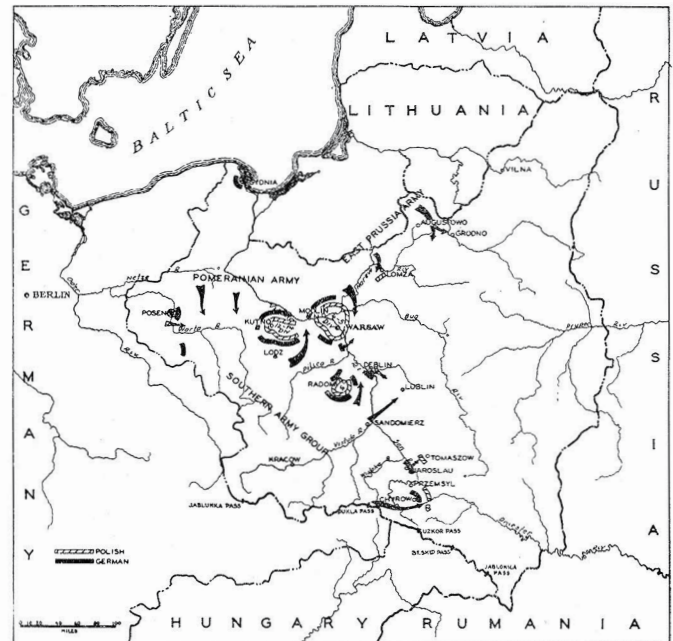
The motorized units of the Silesian Group reached Rzeszow on the Wisloka and proceeded to Jaroslau. German troops reached the Vistula and Sandomierz, captured Zwolen and Radomsk, while farther north the German advance had reached Gora Kalwarja on the Vistula. While units in rear of the Silesian Group occupied Lodz, the main body of the left wing (Blaskowitz) pushed on astride the city in pursuit of the Polish forces that were slowly retreating to the east.

#### 10 September.

The Polish troops in the south retired across the San. Simultaneously, German troops forced the river crossing in the Sanok-Jawornick sector as well as at Radynna and Jaroslau. In the meanwhile the investment of from four to five divisions in the Radom area between Kielce and the Pilica and Vistula Rivers made further progress. Attempts on the part of the encircled Poles to break the German iron ring failed. A thrust by German mechanized units blocked the retreat of another group of Polish forces which was falling back on Warsaw.

#### 11 September.

While the great battle in the area west of Warsaw continued unabated, the German forces in South Poland reached



COMMENCEMENT OF ANNIHILATION PHASE—SITUATION AS OF 11 SEPTEMBER

the San by forced marches and crossed the river. German mountain units on the extreme southern flank captured Chypew, south of Przemysl.

In the zone of operations between Lodz and Warsaw, several Polish divisions made a desperate attempt to escape the encirclement by breaking through to the east. All their efforts failed.

Other Polish forces, after withdrawing from the Province of Posen and the area: Bromberg—Thorn were now confronted by units of the Silesian, Pomeranian and East Prussian Armies around Kutno. They likewise tried in vain to escape to the south. The five Polish divisions and two cavalry brigades encircled in that area found their retreat hopelessly blocked.

#### 12 September.

The German forces of the southern wing continued the swift pursuit. Attacking astride Przemysl, German mountain units captured Sambor and Jaworow. While mechanized elements occupied Crocowice, a town located northeast of Przemysl, strong forces in the region east and southeast of Warsaw crossed the Warsaw—Siedlce highway and railway.

#### 13 September.

The German forces made further important gains. Mechanized and motorized forces in East Poland made rapid advances in the area north of Lemberg and reached the Lublin highway at Rawa Ruska and Tomaszow. On the front farther north, the Polish divisions encircled at Kutno made another attempt to break through the German lines in conjunction with a Polish thrust from the direction of Warsaw, but these efforts failed. Meanwhile the German



forces attacking Warsaw were about ready to join hands with the units that had crossed the Vistula south of the Polish capital. The battle of annihilation in the Radom area had netted 60,000 prisoners including several Polish generals and 143 guns of various calibers and 38 tanks.

14 September.

The strong Polish forces surrounded at Kutno made another desperate but unsuccessful attempt in a south-easterly direction to break through the German ring.

The German forces east of the Vistula were closing in on Prague, a suburb of Warsaw, from the north, east and southeast. There, too, they defeated all Polish efforts to escape to the east.

15 September.

The German troops continued their rapid advance, the pursuit of the Polish units in East Galicia and Wollynia also continued at an undiminished pace.

Two German divisions crossed the San on the 15th. These were the same units which in the early days of the advance had broken through the Polish lines of fortification in the industrial region of Upper Silesia; they were now following the mechanized units by forced marches for the purpose of wiping out the remnants of Polish resistance on the southeastern front. The Polish Silesian Army had now ceased to function as a coherent unit. The fortress of Przemysl, South Poland's mightiest bulwark, fell into German hands and motorized units occupied Wlodzmiers, a town far to the east.

16 September.

Lemberg was now enveloped on three sides and the Polish forces in the area between Lemberg and Przemysl

were cut off from a retreat to the southeast. German units in the region north of the mouth of the San pushed on in the direction of Lublin and captured Deblin, where 110 planes were taken. Deblin was occupied the following day.

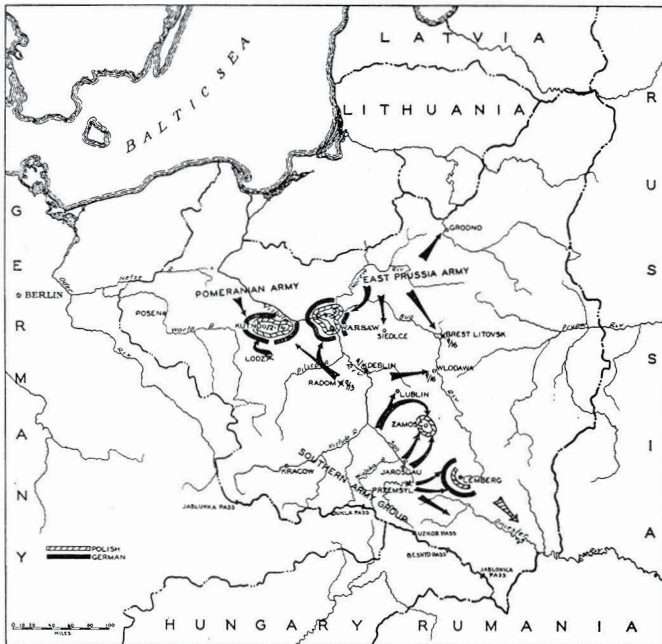
The reconnaissance units of the East Prussia, Upper Silesian and Slovakian troops joined hands at Wlodawa, a town south of Brest-Litovsk.

German forces seized Kutno and then headed north. Warsaw was closely surrounded. The German air forces conducted repeated raids on Polish troop concentrations and marching columns in the region east of the Vistula, thus preventing the Poles from reorganizing. The radio stations of Wilna and Baranowicze were destroyed by air raids. German forces captured the citadel of Brest-Litovsk.

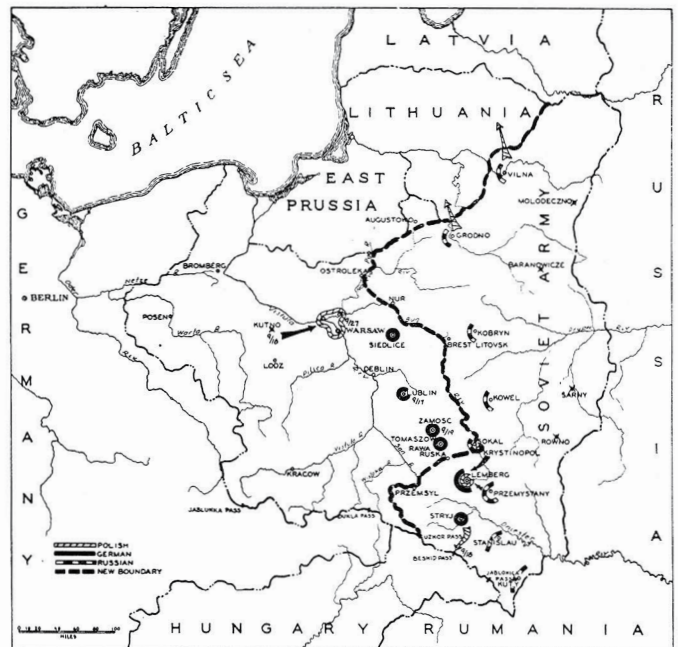
17 September.

On the night 16-17 September, the Soviet Government handed the Polish Ambassador in Moscow a note informing him that the Soviet Government was compelled "in order to safeguard its own interests and to protect the White Russians and Ukranian minorities in East Poland—to order the Red Army to cross the Soviet-Polish border at 6:00 A.M., 17 September, Moscow time." As announced in the note, the Red Army took up the advance simultaneously along the entire frontier from Polosk in the north to Kamene-Podolski in the south.

On 20 September, the Russian troops, after weak resistance by three Polish divisions, 2 to 3 cavalry brigades and border detachments, reached the line: Wilna—Grodno—Kobryn—Kowel—Stanislau. On the 22d Russian troops moved into Lemberg, whence the German troops were withdrawn. The Polish forces laid down their arms (120,000 men). The Russian invasion has been called the "knock-out blow," that rudely changed the aspect of that war, but it



ANNIHILATION PHASE—SITUATION AS OF 16 SEPTEMBER 1939



COMPLETION OF ANNIHILATION PHASE  
SITUATION AS OF 21 SEPTEMBER 1939



is a fact that Poland's Army was disorganized and collapsing before a single Red soldier had stepped into Polish territory.

On 21 September the line of demarcation shown on sketch went into effect.

The war in Poland was practically brought to an end on 20 September, although Warsaw held out under heavy artillery and air bombardment until 27 September when it surrendered unconditionally. German troops delayed formal occupation of the city until 5 October. Modlin, the Poles' last fortress, yielded to German siege on the 28th.

### THE POLISH CAMPAIGN

Few campaigns have begun with such overwhelming immediate advantages as those possessed by Germany when she launched her Blitzkrieg on Poland on 1 September. Time, strategic situation, matériel and numbers were all on her side. Time, because the Siegfried Line freed her from the risk of any serious ground attack on the west for a considerable period. She was fully mobilized, while the Polish forces in East Poland were not, although those in the western part of the country were.

The strategic situation for Germany's invasion of Poland was ideal, all was cut and dried for her favorite strategy of envelopment. In this she was greatly assisted by the initial concentration of the Polish armies: a strong center well forward with weak flanks, the ideal setup for a Cannae. To the south she outflanked Poland from Slovakia and Silesia, to the north from East Prussia. From the west she was faced by huge open plains, ideal for the movement of cross-country vehicles. Even the weather was on her side, for the summer had been unusually dry, so that the roads, few and poor as they are, were at their best for the purpose of withstanding heavy traffic.

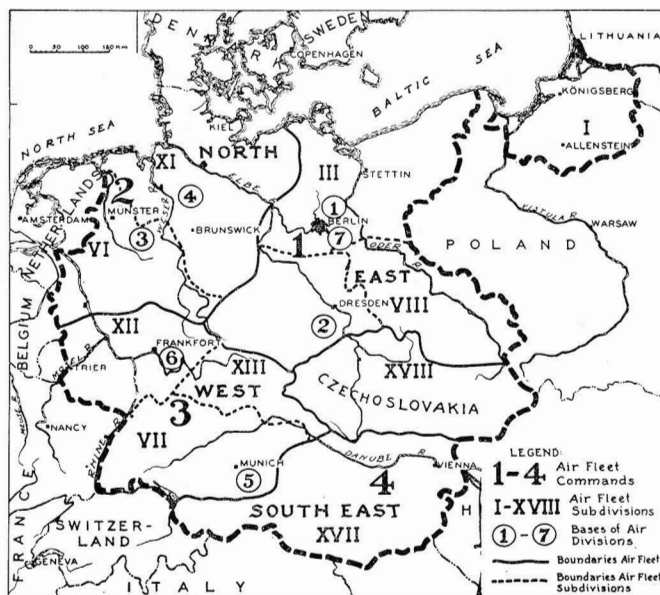
In matériel, she disposed of a superiority of probably more than four to one in aircraft; she had an enormous superiority in mechanized forces and a considerable superiority in artillery—both in quality and quantity. In actual numbers, her strength was perhaps less than three to two, hardly sufficient to command success against a brave opponent, had other things been equal. But other things were not equal, for the German forces were superior not only in strength, but also in training, equipment and leadership.

### THE WAR IN THE AIR

On 1 March 1935, Hitler, by official decree, organized the Army of the Air. The Reich was, more recently, divided into four air commands as follows:

1. Air Fleet No. 1, facing Poland.
2. Air Fleet No. 2, oriented towards Netherlands, Belgium and England.
3. Air Fleet No. 3, oriented towards the French and Swiss frontier.
4. Air Fleet No. 4, recently organized, oriented towards the southeast.

Marshal Goering was appointed Commander in Chief of the Air Force with Major General Jeschonneck as his Chief of Staff.



TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE GERMAN AIR FORCE.

Air Fleets Nos. 1 and 4, commanded by Generals Kisserling and Loher, respectively, conducted the bulk of air operations in Poland, their mission being the destruction of the Polish air fleet and cooperation with the ground forces.

The German advance was helped tremendously by their superiority in the air; in fact, it may be said that the factor which told most heavily against a Polish stand was that of the air. German reinforcements could be brought up without fear of decimation by Polish bombers. The retreating Poles could be harassed, their communications cut, their bridges destroyed and their nerves kept constantly on edge, even when resting behind the lines. Ground strafing, the low bombing and machine gunning of troops, had great telling effects on the retreating Poles.

The preliminary surprise bombing of the Polish airdromes such as Tczew, Graudenz, Miwa, Katowice, Kracow, Wilna, was devastating in its effects. Polish losses in the air became serious and by the end of the first week of war, the need for reinforcements became urgent. The Polish airplanes were greatly outnumbered and the Germans gained command of the air from the very first day of the war and from then on it was just like a blind man fighting a man with perfect eyesight. The result was that the Poles were unable to locate concentrations of German troops moving up to attack while the Germans were able to bomb every concentration of Polish troops. The systematic bombing of railway stations, road junctions, roads and bridges, hampered very much the mobility of the Polish forces, never good in a country of relatively poor communications. The repeated attacks against Polish air bases, military installations, munitions plants and the efficient cooperation with the ground forces played a decisive part in the demoralization of the opponent and in the weakening of his strength. The Germans operated from captured Polish airdromes, so that they could take off with big loads of bombs and little fuel and return quickly to rebomb and refuel.



As the war progressed and Polish losses increased, the German superiority in the air became more and more complete. This led to the paralysis of organized Polish resistance. The chains of command, of supply and of communication were snapped, so that the defense became sporadic and uncoordinated.

Once the Poles were driven from the air, their cause was hopeless, and it may be asserted that the remarkable success of the German forces would have been impossible without the splendid support given them by the air force.

By itself, control of the air cannot decide a war, but it can enable an army to win a quick decision. The campaign in Poland has confirmed the lessons learned from the wars in Spain and China, namely, that the air weapon is one of the most essential adjuncts in modern warfare.

#### CAUSES OF THE POLISH COLLAPSE

The reasons for the Polish collapse may be summed up as follows:

1. The Polish High Command underrated the German Army and erred in the belief that the Polish forces could conduct successfully an offensive war in the East—at least to a certain degree—in consideration of the strong German forces that would have to be retained on the Western Front.

2. Faulty Polish initial concentration as a result of an erroneous estimate of the situation. The battlefield is simply the execution of a preconceived plan.

3. Superiority of the German Air Force in numbers and efficiency.

4. Overwhelming German preponderance of mechanized and motorized forces.

5. Insufficient equipment on the part of Poland.

The Polish Army, consisting principally of cavalry and infantry, organized and equipped in World War style, faced a highly mechanized, modern Reich war machine. The Poles did not have adequate antitank guns or other satisfactory defense against the German Panzer divisions, and the German tanks, supported by infantry, rolled through a perfect demonstration of a "blitzkrieg."

6. Lack of adequate Polish antiaircraft defense system.

7. Perfect cooperation between mechanized and motorized units and aircraft which was a feature of the German victory.

8. Failure of the Polish engineers to erect obstacles and coordinate the work of demolition of roads and bridges. The passes over the Western Carpathians afforded excellent opportunities to the engineers; yet, the attacking forces operating from Slovakia negotiated them very quickly. This thrust had disastrous consequences for the Poles. Their industrial area of Katowice, which they were defending against a German drive from the West was taken in rear by the advance across the Carpathians and their old capitol of Krakow had to be abandoned almost without fighting.

9. Collapse of radio communication.

The German information service proved to be very able. The position of the Polish G.H.Q. was constantly known to the Germans and consequently bombed from pillar to post.

10. Ability of attackers to concentrate in overwhelming numbers at three different points: Silesia, the Corridor and

East Prussia, while the defenders attempted to cover the whole front. The bulk of the Polish Army was never effectively engaged at all.

11. Weather conditions—persistently fine—which was an immense help to aircraft action and an even greater help to the action of the German mechanized detachments which were pushed forward with the greatest vigor.

12. Lack of proper organization of Polish defensive or delaying positions and slow mobilization of Polish forces.

#### CONCLUSION

The Polish campaign will go down in history as one of the most brilliant campaigns of all times. In the incredibly short period of three weeks the military destruction of a nation of 30,000,000 people, defended by an army of 1,500,000 men was completed. This tremendous achievement bids fair to revolutionize many concepts of warfare. Never had large military units, even in peace time, moved so fast. The speed of the German Army was paralyzing, shattering all previous forecasts.

It showed, among other things, the efficiency of well trained and well led mechanized forces in a war of movement and it also proved that an army, no matter how brave, organized along World War lines of 1914 is no match for a modern army of 1939.

The remarkable success of the German armies was due to the sound strategic conception upon which the German concentration was based, the expert employment of units—particularly the air forces and the mechanized forces—and the quick exploitation of the advantages offered by the initial situation

The quality of the individual soldier still is, and will ever be, a factor of the highest importance; but, under identical conditions, the weight of destructive armament decides the issue. The plane, the tank, mobile artillery and motorized infantry have made the modern army fast and deadly.

Infantry, cavalry and the air force must operate together if an army ever hopes to develop the smooth technique and efficiency of which the German Army gave such an impressive demonstration on the battlefields of Poland.

#### THE WESTERN FRONT

Since the outbreak of hostilities (3 September) between Germany and the Allies—England and France—there have been no engagements of major importance. During the early days of September there was some fighting at Lauterbourg and at Saarbrücken, capital of the important industrial province of the Saar. A few experimental raids have been made by the British and the Germans against each other's naval bases. The submarine warfare against commerce has been active and a number of daring exploits have occurred, such as the sinking of the Royal Oak at Scapa Flow and the bombing of the German base at Wilhelmshaven. However, the main activities up to the present time have consisted of extensive preparations, diplomatic parleys and propaganda by both belligerents.

The armies have been mobilized along the Maginot and Siegfried lines; the British have transported safely across the Channel a powerful expeditionary force, while the Germans have brought heavy reinforcements from Poland.





BRITISH BABY TANKS PASSING THROUGH A VILLAGE BEHIND THE LINES SOMEWHERE ON THE WESTERN FRONT. *Wide World Photo.*

That is all. The French made some gains into German territory during the first two weeks of the war; however they have given up the ground gained and returned to their original positions.

The war in the west has had none of the aspects of the "blitzkrieg." As yet, no cities have been bombed on either side; no attempts have been made to demoralize the enemy by an overwhelming attack capable of paralyzing both the armies and the civilian population. Nothing has happened on the Western Front that resembles the great battles of the World War. The reason for this inaction is apparently that both sides know the great defensive strength of their positions.

In order to have a clear conception of possible eventualities, a study should be made of the military leaders of the three powers and the impregnability of the famed Siegfried and Maginot Lines.

The combined English and French Armies on the Western Front are under the Supreme Command of 66-year old Generalissimo Marie Gustave Gamelin, a master strategist, scion of a family identified with the army for generations. Educated at the College of Stanislaus, cradle of many

French generals, he received a commission in the infantry. He served three years in North Africa, returning to gain admission to the Staff College, where he became a pupil of the late Marshal Foch. He served under Joffre when the latter became Commander in Chief of the French Army in 1911.

Then came 1914 and the unexpected thrust of the Germans through Belgium in accordance with the Schlieffen Plan which upset the prearranged plans of French military leaders; saw the retreat of the French Armies almost to the gates of Paris. Gamelin convinced Joffre that the time had come to stop the retreat and attack the exposed right flank of the German Army. This resulted in the Battle of the Marne which saw the German Armies in full retreat.

In June 1915, Gamelin became G-3 of French G.H.Q. and at the end of the year, at the age of 44, Joffre made him Chief of Staff. Later he became division commander when Joffre was relieved of command. He served in Brazil as head of the French military mission, from where he was recalled in 1927 and promoted to command a corps. Four year later he became Chief of Staff of the army and as such superintended the construction of the Maginot Line and the modernization of the French Army. In January 1938,





*Wide World Photo.*

MAGINOT LINE SHOWING SEEMINGLY ENDLESS ZIG-ZAGGING STRETCHES OF BARBED WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS AND UP-ENDED STEEL RAILS.

he was given the newly created position of Chief of the General Staff of National Defense, carrying with it the responsibility of combined operations of the army, navy and air forces.

Viscount Gort, Commander in Chief of the British field forces, a descendant of an old army family, has 800 years of tradition behind him. He has spent 34 of his 53 years of life in the military service.

Following family tradition, Viscount Gort entered the World War as a young officer in the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards. He won the Victoria Cross, highest British decoration, for extraordinary bravery under fire, for his heroism in aiding the capture of 200 prisoners while wounded (he was wounded three times during the war). He was called "The Tiger." After the War he served as Colonel in India and as Colonial Chief in Shanghai during the 1927 revolution.

After the close of the World War, the English people, navy-minded for hundreds of years, promptly proceeded to disregard the fate of the army. The situation became so unsatisfactory that when Hore-Belisha became War Secretary

in the Chamberlain Cabinet, drastic measures were adopted that resulted in the most important British Army "shakeup" since the World War, and as a result Viscount Gort became Chief of Staff in December 1937.

There is no hesitation in the English mind of Gort's ability to lead the British Army. This idea was strongly expressed in 1937 by Sir Ian Hamilton, when Viscount Gort became Chief of Staff: "Thank God! We are under a proper soldier."

The German Army is commanded by General Walter von Brautchitsch, fresh from a victorious whirlwind campaign in Poland. The salient points of his career are given in this issue under "The Collapse of Poland."

The Maginot Line built at an enormous cost and completed in 1934, has been constantly improved. Well-sheltered electric plants provide power for lighting, elevators, narrow gauge railroads and a system of ventilation which protects against seepage of poison gas by an increase of air pressure within the casemates. While it was thought that the LINE, which, in fact, is a series of fortified units, could not be broken, it was feared that flanking movements might take





Wide World Photo.

THE SIEGFRIED LINE, SHOWING SEEMINGLY ENDLESS ROWS OF TANK TRAPS, COMMONLY TERMED "GRAVESTONES OF TANKS."

and trap the garrison from the rear. Thus, two wings, one north along the Belgian border and the other south along the Swiss Jura were added to the main structure facing Germany. Both were completed this year.

The Maginot Line is relatively shallow, whereas the Siegfried Line—which should be called the "Siegfried Zone"—is very deep. The Maginot Line is of immense, but rigid strength; the strength of the Siegfried Line is much less at any given point, but defense is provided by the interdependence and mutual support of its various parts. The former might be compared to a steel wall, the latter to a series of steel buffers distributed in depth.

The Maginot Line stands for passive defense, the Siegfried for defense based upon the counterattack. To break through the Maginot Line would be a task of almost inconceivable difficulty, but once accomplished, the attacker would find himself up against the mobile field forces in rear of that line. To breach the Siegfried Line is a physical impossibility before the German Army is actually defeated, because the system would expand to the rearward and develop new lines of defense with fresh divisions continuously being brought up to replace those exhausted by counterattacks. The Siegfried

Line is based upon a more modern tactical doctrine which has the strong support of recent experience, namely, that owing to the striking power of modern weapons, the best defense is not to withstand the shock, but to absorb it, to slow it down, to muffle and blanket it, and then, at the proper moment, when the hostile impetus has spent itself, to react vigorously by means of a counterattack.

The existence of the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line makes a concerted offensive along the first World War lines very dubious.

Up to now the activity on the western front has been nominal. It is claimed that the Allies are willing to have this situation continue. They believe that the blockade, despite the supplies that Russia will send to Germany, will ultimately weaken the Reich. The Allies feel that in view of this circumstance, it is sounder for them to attack later, after Germany has been somewhat weakened by the blockade. There is also some evidence that the Allies are counting on this situation to force Germany into an offensive in which the Reich would have to hurl enormous numbers of troops against the French Maginot Line. The theory behind this opinion is that Germany faces the prospect that the block-



ade will make her progressively weaker, thus compelling her to attack before its devitalizing effect is severely felt. If the Germans attack the Maginot Line, the Allies' hope is that heavy German casualties, plus the shooting away of a large amount of German military matériel, which then will be difficult to replace, will insure the success of a later Allied counteroffensive against Germany.

That the Allies are pinning their hopes in the effectiveness of the blockade can be seen from the following warning by Paul Reynaud, France's outspoken Minister of Finance, when he said recently: "Those who believe that only artillery speaks with authority are deluding themselves. The outcome of this war will not depend on where we can pin little French or British flags on war-maps. I am telling the truth when I say that already in great measure Germany is exhausted by her gigantic effort of past years to prepare herself for war. Do not forget that while the military front is vital, behind it must be the support of an invulnerable economic, financial and monetary front \* \* \*. I might point out that today the Bank of France possesses twice as much gold as it had in August 1914. Our economic and financial position is immensely superior to that of the enemy."

The stalemate along the German-French border cannot continue indefinitely. It is difficult to foretell what will happen in the immediate future, but there seems to be at the moment three possibilities.

1. A general offensive against France, combined possibly with a turning movement through Belgium, or Belgium and Holland, or, more improbably, through Switzerland.

2. A strong air offensive against Britain and France, which might be combined with a ground offensive against the Maginot Line.

3. A severe air and submarine offensive from bases established either in Belgium or the Netherlands, against the British with the hope of sinking the British Navy, breaking the blockade, and sinking the British merchant fleet, thus compelling Britain to accept peace terms.

The French Newspaper "La France Militaire," 23 September 1939, reports that the French covering forces found the following signs put up by the Germans facing the French frontier: "Ne passez pas la frontière at nous ne tirons pas." (Do not cross the frontier and we won't shoot.)

On the other hand, from Switzerland comes the report that French military engineers, after politely warning German sentinels on the opposite bank of the Rhine, dynamited on 21 October a small steel foot-bridge spanning the river near the electric plant at Kembs, twelve miles north of Basel, Switzerland.

To a great many people the war being waged on the Western Front is as strange as it is mystifying. It has, up to the moment of this writing, followed no accepted forms or precedents nor are there parallels for it in the recorded history of armed conflicts.

A definite estimate of the aspects of another major war on the Western Front is impossible, in view of the progress made by aviation and mechanization; but there is no question that both sides, armed as never before, are planning events to attain the same objective with all the means at their disposal, namely, to destroy the enemy's will to fight and compel him to surrender.

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