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BLITZKREIG IN POLAND  
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CAMPAIGN IN POLAND

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the German Blitzkreig in Poland from 1 - 28 September, 1939. In effecting this coverage the operations of the Fourteenth, Tenth, Eighth, Fourth, and Third German Armies are developed.

As a means of orientation, it is felt that the international political picture that led to this campaign be delineated; also no synopsis would be correct if some mention were not made of Hitler's moves.

When Hitler withdrew from the League of Nations in October 1933, he launched himself on a rearming and land extortion program short of war. (1) In following this program Hitler would demand a certain part of a country, Then after some of the big powers of Europe strived to mediate the dispute, Hitler would supposedly submit his claim to negotiations but would always terminate all efforts for mediation by refusing to accept any offer. (1)

Hitler's tactics netted Germany the Saar Basin in January 1935. (2) In March 1936, German troops marched into the Rhineland to continue Germany's expansion program. (3) Not content with the additions to his growing empire, Hitler now felt it necessary to annex Austria on March of 1938. (4) Driven forth by the success of his extortionary tactics, the Nazis started high-pressuring Czechoslovakia for the Sudetenland. (5) This brought about the appeasement move at Munich, wherein Germany again gained her objective--Sudetenland. (6) By now Hitler was more convinced than ever that the rest of Europe was not ready nor willing for war, so the German effected the absorption of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. (7) This marked the end of Hitler's tactics which were short of war.

Hitler now had reached the end of his bully and bloodless strong-arm tactics; moreover, he knew that France and Britain were allying themselves with anti-Nazi countries in Europe to resist his growth of power. (7)

(1) C, p. 12; (2) C, p. 14; (3),(4) C, p. 26; (5) C, p. 32; (6) C, p. 34  
(7) C, p. 37.

It was at this time that Hitler's diatribes were directed against Poland's supposed mistreatment of Germans in Poland. (8) Storm troopers were meanwhile being sent into Danzig as tourists. (9) Finally to culminate his desires to acquire Danzig and the Polish Corridor, Hitler demanded that the above mentioned areas be given to Germany. (10)

These demands were only issued as a pretext to attack Poland, for no time was given to Poland to negotiate with Germany inasmuch as Van Ribbentrop presented a sixteen-point document to Polish ambassador at midnight on 30 August, 1939 making the aforementioned demands. To further obviate any possible action by Poland on this document, the Polish ambassador was left incommunicado. (11)

The scene was set for the invasion of Poland because by now a non-aggression pact had been completed with Russia, and, equally important, Germany had her invasion force concentrated to jump off on 1 September 1939. (12)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

World War I had obscured to most military minds the feasibility of the offensive and maneuver in Europe. Most military men chose the defensive over the offensive and accordingly these convictions pervaded most nation's doctrine of building extensive fortifications. On the other hand the Germans did not agree with the defensive concepts of the world; Clausewitz still had a place in the German doctrine:

"If the defensive is the stronger form of conducting war, but has a negative object, it follows of itself that we must only make use of it so long as our weakness compels us to do so, and we must give up that form as soon as we feel strong enough to aim at a positive object..... A war in which victories are merely used to ward off blows, and where there is no attempt to return the blow would be... absurd.

"Let us not hear of generals who would conquer without blood-

(8) C, p. 42; (9) C, p. 38; (10) C, p. 40; (11) C, p. 43; (12) C, p. 40.

shed. If a bloody slaughter is a horrible sight, then that is ground for paying more respect to war, but not for making the sword we wear blunter and blunter by degrees...., until someone steps in with a sword that is sharp and lops off the arm of our body." (13)

Plane and tank development was not the reason for Germany's superiority but instead it was the Allied defensive strategic doctrine. (14)

Though Poland had the fifth largest army in Europe, it fell victim to Germany's onslaught. (15) This feat was probably the most important for it proved the Germans correctness of military doctrine and the correctness of her reorganization and choice of weapons. (16)

The vertiginous swiftness of German conquest came as a blow to the world, for in eight days the Polish Army was in a demoralized retreat. Military history is without an equal in annihilation of one million men in the short time of one month.

Prior to the German jump-off, Germany had concentrated thirty-five (35) horse-transport infantry divisions, three (3) mountain divisions, four (4) motorized divisions, five (5) heavy mechanized (panzer) divisions, and four (4) light mechanized divisions. In all the Germans had six thousand tanks of which three-fourths were organized in mechanized divisions, the balance forming GHQ tank regiments. (17)

Through civil and military training the German Air Force had one hundred thousand pilots. These pilots plus seven thousand first line planes were formed into four air fleets. (18)

On the other hand Poland had only thirty infantry divisions, twelve independent cavalry brigades, plus attached army, corps, and special troops. (19)

The Polish Air Force had only nine hundred first line planes plus six hundred second line planes. All these Polish planes were inferior to the German planes. (20)

Though there was little discrepancy in numerical numbers between Poland

(13) D, p. 1; (14) D, p. 1; (15) D, p. 1; (16) D, p. 2; (17) D, p. 3;  
(18) D, p. 4; (19),(20) D, p. 5.

and Germany, still Germany's superior training, equipment, armament, and highly mechanized units made for the difference in outcome. (21)

Poland, having been deceived by the non-aggression pact of 1934, agreed to by herself and Germany, built fortifications on the Russian border; but Germany in the meantime had constructed fortifications near Frankfurt to protect Berlin, and in East Prussia she had built a pillbox line to protect East Prussia. (22)

Because of Germany's geographic location in Europe, Hitler was plagued with the thought of a two front war. This fact plus the desire to seize the initiative and to gain surprise caused Hitler to attack Poland. (23)

Germany had the choice of attacking France or Poland but Poland was the logical victim for the following reasons:

1. A quick decision could be got in Poland. *(accepted)*
2. The West Wall could *hold longer* stave off attacks longer than the eastern fortifications. *German Fort in the East*
3. The Allies were helpless to aid Poland before its destruction.
4. The Maginot Line might delay an attack against France, thereby giving the Poles a chance to attack Germany's rear.
5. A quick success might influence Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary favorably in their future actions.
6. Russians could help Germany with Poland eliminated. (24)

Poland's terrain is suited for modern warfare and the Nazis were quick to see this. A vast plain extends north to the Baltic from a line through Cracow and Lwow; this plain varies from three hundred to one thousand feet above sea level. In this large plain there are only three points rising above two thousand feet. These are: Lysa Gora Hills near Radom, an uneven plateau between Czestochowa and Cracow, and a spur of the Carpathians reaching north through Lwow to Lublin. The only major obstacles were found in the High Tatra and Carpathian Mountains for the elevations here in some parts are above eight thousand feet. The major passes from Slovakia are Joblunka and Dukla whose respective altitudes are eighteen hundred and sixteen hundred and fifty feet. (25)

Poland's broad rivers are generally to be considered major obstacles but

during the German invasion these rivers were extremely shallow and fordable. (26)

The Polish High Command placed too much stress on the defensive value of the muds made famous by Napoleon. That this fact is true was borne out by the fact that the rains following the summer drouth did not come till the conclusion of the German Campaign. (27)

#### THE GERMAN PLAN OF ATTACK

The German plan of attack was to employ the "Cannae" principle as taught by Count von Schlieffen. To effect this plan the Germans had massed eighty per cent of their combat power on the Polish border. (28)

A light center hinged on the Frankfurt fortifications was to defend in place. The rest of the plan was thoroughly offensive to the letter since the two strong wings were to puncture the enemy's line and to envelope the Polish divisions. In the enveloping part there was to be two envelopments depending on the success of the primary envelopment. And the mission of the secondary envelopment would be to trap any units escaping the primary envelopment. This plan, based on the terrain, was highly favorable. (29)

The German High Command reasoned and received information that Poland would defend along her borders since her industry was located west of the Vistula River. These industrial areas were at Lodz and between Teschen and Wisloka River. (30)

Here is the way that the German armies were to operate: (See Map 1) General von Reichenau's Tenth Army and General von Kuechler's Third Army would make the main attack of the primary envelopment by attacking toward the area between Warsaw and Siedlce. (31) The Fourth Army under General von Kluge was to cross the Corridor as quickly as possible to secure the right flank of the Third Army; at Graudenz the Fourth was to make contact with the Third; and finally the Fourth was to reinforce the Third Army for this army's envelopment. General List's Fourteenth Army and General Blaskowitz's Eighth Army were to protect General von Reichenau's flanks. In addition the Fourteenth

(26) D, p. 9; (27) D, p. 9; (28) D, p. 9; (29) D, p. 9; (30) D, p. 9;  
(31) D, p. 9.



Army had the missions of enveloping without destroying industrial areas of Teschen, Cracow, and Tarnow. To accomplish his secondary mission, List directed his main effort from Marisch Ostrau toward Cracow. Here at Cracow were to converge successive drives from the mountain passes near Neumarkt, Nowy Sacz, and Sanok. To prevent the escape of any Polish units into neutral Rumania, General List was to reach Lwow as rapidly as possible. (32)

The use of the secondary envelopment was to be flexible as to time, place and forces engaged; also its use was to be dependent on Polish reaction to the main envelopment. (33)

With the aid of reinforcements from the Fourth Army the Third Army was to concentrate near Johannesburg for the secondary envelopment from the north and troops were to be massed near Lwow to form the southern half of the secondary envelopment. (34)

#### THE POLISH PLAN OF DEFENSE

Even at this time the Polish plan for his defense is obscure and highly controversial but from the results and its initial dispositions some idea of what their plan was, can be gained.

Because all of her resources were in the west, Poland attempted to use the cordon defense along the thousand mile frontier. In addition to the cordon defense she probably planned a delaying action if her positions along the frontier became untenable. Poland's second position was to be behind Narew-Bug-Vistula-San River line. Finally, there is reason to believe that the Polish cavalry planned a diversion from Posen on Berlin. (35)

To accomplish her defensive mission the Polish High Command had divided their forces into six army groups equivalent to a field army. The initial dispositions (See Map 2) made no provision to hold out a reserve; however, it was expected that a reserve would be obtained from the divisions not yet mobilized. (36)

Two cavalry brigades were left on the eastern front to maintain surveillance over the Russians. (37)

(32) D, p. 10; (33) D, p. 10; (34) D, p. 10; (35),(36),(37) D, p. 11.

<sup>United</sup>  
Till the very last moments, before her territorial integrity was destroyed, Poland counted on France's aid to extricate Poland from her impending plight.

(38)

#### THE ATTACK ON POLAND

##### The Break-Through, 1 - 5 September (See Map 2)

At 0500 hours on 1 September 1939, the German armies launched on the invasion of Poland. (39)

The Fourteenth Army sought to take Cracow by the use of a double effort. One effort was delivered east from Marisch Ostrau while the second effort was launched northeast from Zilina through Neumarkt. By 5 September these two attack elements had disrupted all opposing resistance, hence their convergence at Cracow. Also on the 5 September a third attack group jumped-off at Zips moved north to Nowy Sacz. The coordinated effect of these three attack groups added to the deep thrust by the Tenth Army to the north of Katowice, caused the quick Polish withdrawal from the Upper Silesia industrial area leaving this area with intact mines and factories. Part of the Fourteenth mission had already been accomplished. (40)

The Tenth Army's composition, two mechanized and two infantry divisions made it a hard and mobile striking force. The mechanized corps were the XVI and the XV, commanded, respectively, by Lieutenant General Hoepner and General Hoth. (41)

The Tenth was concentrated between the towns of Kreuzberg and Tarnowice with Hoepner's corps on the left flank and additional and reserve divisions giving depth to this main attack force. (42)

To the Tenth's front were four Polish divisions and one cavalry brigade. This Polish force was in proximity of the frontier. Part of this force was behind the uncompleted pillbox line of the Warta River while the remainder was west of Czystochowa. This Polish disposition left four of its divisions far to the east beyond supporting distance. (43)

(38),(39) D, p. 11; (40),(41),(42),(43) D, p. 11.

The Tenth struck a devastating blow to its front and overran the Warta River line <sup>and</sup> plus capturing the town of Czestochowa. On 3 September the XVI mechanized corps had reached Radomsko, fifty miles from the frontier. This move outflanked the Warta line positions and to maintain this advantage a part of Hoepner's corps attacked south to envelope this resistance which was being attacked frontally by infantry divisions. By the 4 September the attack of the Tenth Army was causing the Polish strength to crumble <sup>where</sup>. And as evidence of the effectiveness of the German Tenth, three Polish divisions withdrew toward Tomaszow Maz and one toward Lodz; ~~on the other hand~~ one Polish division near Czestochowa was destroyed being unable to escape. (44)

The northeast retreat of four Polish divisions plus the annihilation of one near Czestochowa created an opening in the line which the left flank mechanized corps exploited unhesitatingly. On the evening of 5 September the mechanized corps had reached the Piotrkow-Checing, followed by infantry divisions moving by forced marches. (45)

What had been the Silesian Group was now a scattered and demoralized force; ~~for~~ one division had been destroyed, four were withdrawing northeastward, and four reserve divisions were seeking the security of the Vistula. The Tenth Army's success had in five days moved the army Seventy miles. (46)

The Eighth Army was the weakest of the German armies for it was the smallest. Its part of the line was in middle Silesia between Trebnitz and Kreuzberg. The north flank of the Tenth Army was to be protected by the Eighth and to secure his left flank General Blaskowitz echeloned the 30th division to the army's left rear in anticipation of a possible attack from Posen and Kalisz. (47)

After pushing one Polish division aside, 5 September found the Eighth in Zdunska Wola. This initial success had served to establish a bridgehead east of the Warta River for advance toward Lodz. (48)

The German invasion was going according to plan on the southern flank; now let us see how the northern group was faring. (49)

(44),(45),(46),(47),(48),(49) D, p. 12.

Before 1 September the Fourth Army was massed in two separate groups. The stronger was made up of three corps along the German frontier around Schneidemuhl and faced the broad base of the Corridor. At Butow was the weaker group--one corps. (50)

The Fourth had the Corridor to reduce by advancing on either side of the Vistula to Bromberg and Graudenz. Subsequently, the Fourth was to cross the Vistula on both sides of Chelmo to continue its advance on Modlin and Warsaw. (51)

The main effort of the Fourth was to be made by the II Corps under General Strauss. To secure its southern flank, a weaker corps was left on the south flank. The north flank was commanded by General Guderian, peacetime inspector of the mechanized and motorized troops. To supplement the Fourth's Army attack the XXI Corps from the Third Army was to take Graudenz. This attack was to cut <sup>the</sup> Corridor off and to trap any remaining Polish troops. (52)

The Fourth was successful and by the 4 September the Vistula and Netze Rivers line between Marienwerder and Naklo had been reached. General Guderian's boldness was a factor in the successful attack <sup>and resulted in</sup> plus the capture of twenty five thousand Poles. It was on the north where the Third Panzer division opened up a five mile hole in the Polish line and advanced to the Vistula without regard for its flanks. (53)

Meanwhile the Butow Corps met bitter opposition although its action was of no strategic significance. By 15 September Gdynia had been occupied while the Hela peninsula did not fall till 1 October. (54)

After the crossing at Chelmo on the night of 4 - 5 September, the Fourth pushed out strong bridgeheads and established contact with XXI Corps near Graudenz. (55)

The Third Army, under General von Kuechler, was concentrated in Osterode-Neidenburg-Allenstein area before 1 September in preparation for penetrating (through) the Polish fortified line on either side of Mlawka. This army's main

(50) D, p. 12; (51),(52),(53),(54) D, p.13; (55) D, p. 13.

objective was to push southeastward over <sup>the</sup> Narew and Bug Rivers to the area east of Warsaw. (56)

*Repetition* On the 5 September the Third and Fourth Armies established contact after Graudenz was captured by the Third Army's XXI Corps. (57)

To make the Third Army main attack von Kuechler massed three infantry divisions, a panzer division, one cavalry brigade plus reserve units; these units were located north of Mlawa. The Third Army launched its attack only to be repulsed on the 1 and 2 September. (58) But the German doctrine being the offensive, von Kuechler shifted his main attack on the night of 2 - 3 September to the east by moving motorized elements from near Mlawa to Willenberg. This flexibility of plan on the German commander's part served to surprise the Poles, and by the evening of the 3 September von Kuechler had gained the important road junction of Przasnysz. This decisive maneuver caused the Polish force in Mlawa to fall back towards Warsaw. (59)

Maintaining its advance toward the Narew River on 4 and 5 September, the left wing of the Third Army reached Rozan by the evening of the 5th; at the same time the right wing took the town of Ciechanow. This success brought the Third Army in contact with the defensive positions along the Narew River after puncturing the Frontier line of fortifications. (60)

To maintain the continuity of the campaign, General von Brauchitsch initiated a regrouping of his forces. As a consequence, the Twenty Third Infantry Division and the Third Panzer Division were sent to the Third Army to add momentum to its attack on Bialystok and Brest Litovsk; on this operation the Germans <sup>depended</sup> ~~relied~~ for strategic success. (61)

Not too much stress can be given to the role that the German Air Force played in the victorious campaign in Poland. On 1 September at dawn Polish Air Force ground installations were bombed systematically and such was the case for the next three <sup>ensuing</sup> days. The 3 September saw a shift of the German Air Force to bombing railroads west of the Vistula River. Then by 5 September even troop columns were being attacked. Finally, most aircraft factories were demolished <sup>and</sup> plus the munitions-works at Sandomir within this period. (62)

(56),(57),(58) D, p. 13; (59),(60),(61),(62) D, p. 14.

### THE EXPLOITATION

6 - 8 September (See Map 3)

To further the effects of the penetrations into the Polish line, the Fourteenth Army moved swiftly from the West and north of Cracow in Northeast and east directions to maintain an increasing pressure on the Cracow and Przemysl Groups, which were now attempting to take refuge behind the San River without committing themselves to a decisive battle with their pursuers. The headlong retreat by the Polish southern groups was potent evidence that the Polish GHQ at Warsaw had no control and that the southern group commanders were on their own responsibility. (63)

On 6 September the Marisch Ostrau attack group captured Cracow, the leading city of southern Poland, without encountering any opposition. The Zips group, also being successful, occupied Nowy Sacz and continued toward the Wisloka River. (64)

By the 8 September not only Tarnow and Gorlice were taken but a bridgehead had been established at Debica on the eastern bank of the Wisloka River. (65)

The Tenth Army's line on the evening of the 5th was a frontage of seventy miles, being from Piotrkow to Checiny. More specifically, Hoepner's Panzer Corps was around Piotrkow; Hoth's Panzer Corps was on the right flank observing the enemy divisions to the south around Cracow against possible attacks from that direction. (66)

General von Reichenau's had started the disorganization of the Polish Silesian Group after the Tenth's initial assault; these Polish divisions were on 5 September making a retrograde movement to Lodz. While the above divisions were escaping from the Germans, four reserve divisions from the same group were moving eastward from Tomaszow Maz toward the Vistula River with the idea of stemming the German pursuit along the line of Lysa Gora Hills in front of Radom. (67)

The divergent routes of retreat used by the Silesian Group created a hole (63),(64),(65),(66),(67) D, p. 15.

in the Polish lines, the Tenth Army now had a chance to (exploit its mobility) since no large Polish force opposed its advance along the best paved road in Poland which stretched between Piotrkow and Warsaw. To avail themselves of the above opportunity, Hoepner's forceful and potent panzer corps stood at Piotrkow. Here, then, for the first time in the history of armies could mechanized troops evince their strategic capabilities to the world. (68)

The momentum of the German Tenth Army was now irresistible, hence the 6, 7, and 8 September saw what was a battlefield deluge. (69)

On the 6 September Hoepner's corps captured Tomaszow Maz and without delay proceeded towards Warsaw.

Rawa Mazowiecka was taken on the 7th and the southwestern suburbs of Warsaw were taken by the evening of the 8th. Both of these objectives fell captive to one of Hoepner's columns. The right column of Hoepner's corps were equally successful but theirs was a more easterly route by way of Gora Kalwaria and thence along the west bank of the Vistula River. This column came upon the Warsaw outskirts on the eve of 8 September. (70)

Warsaw at first gave no signs of any organized resistance but as it turned out ~~neither nor~~ both of Hoepner's columns could <sup>not</sup> undertake the occupation of Warsaw for this sort of assignment exceeded the panzer units capabilities. (71)

(Hoepner's corps had outdistanced the vital and indispensable support of the infantry divisions but the German could also be wary at the proper as he could be aggressive given the opportunity.) The Poles were believed to be in and around Lodz in strength and as such were a constant threat to Hoepner's left flank and rear. But as this panzer corps waited for support, the German high command was fully aware that the Tenth Army's penetrations had altered the strategic situation. (72)

Strong remnants of the Thorn, Posen, and Silesian Groups lay west of the German wedge and only through a masterful operation could these Polish units retreat. Poland's military dilemma was <sup>such</sup> ~~one~~ that only a miracle could spare her the looming catastrophe. (73)

(68),(69),(70),(71),(72),(73) D, p. 15.

While the left wing of the Tenth was advancing, the center and right advanced on Lysa Gora Hills and Radom. The important city of Kielce fell on the 6th as the advanced progressed. On the 7th this army was in a frontal battle with Third and Twelfth Polish divisions in and around Skarzysko Kamienna. It happened that on this day the Nineteenth and Twenty-ninth divisions of the Silesian Group were retreating from Tomaszow Maz through Radom to safety of Vistula. <sup>Posen</sup> All these favorable days for the Germans had obviated the use of Hoth's corps for right flank protection as the Cracow Group was also retreating eastward. (74)

To make the Tenth's pursuit destructive of Polish units seeking retreat; Hoth's corps, that was southeast of Kielce, was directed to advance along the west bank of the Vistula River in general direction of Zwolen to sever lines of Polish retreat between Radom and the river. (75)

Upon receipt of orders, Hoth was quick to advance which resulted in the capturing of Zwolen and Radom during the afternoon and evening of 8th. The panzer corps cut across the Polish lines of retreat to make the German pursuit mission a success. (76)

The northeast advance of the Eighth German Army was a contrast to the Tenth's advance as no important incidents occurred. On the 6 and 7 of September normal advances were made from the Warta River bridgeheads. Continuing its advance on the 8th, the Eighth Army passed on either side of Lodz without occupying this city; and during the evening of this day reached Ozorkow and Brzeziny. (77)

In the course of his advance General von Blaskowitz echeloned the Thirtieth German division to protect his left flank against any attacks from the Posen. <sup>Don't</sup> Though the proper security measure was taken, still this German commander was not aware of the proximity of five Polish divisions which were withdrawing from Kalisz. That this intelligence failure seriously threatened the success of the German plan is rather obvious. (78)

Though the Fourth Army was weakened by the previous regrouping, it (74),(75),(76) D, p. 15; (77),(78) D. p. 16.



continued to push on both sides of the Vistula River. By the 8 September the III Corps on the army's right had neared Honensalza. This action kept the Fourth on the heels of Polish units clearing Posen and Thorn in their retreat on Warsaw. (79)

The II Corps on the east side of the Vistula River captured Strasburg and crossed the Drewence River on the 8 September. To reach Modlin the II Corps had only weak detachments in its path to destroy.

On the 5 September the Third Army had its striking force in two groups one at Ciechanow and the other facing Rozan on Narew River. To employ these two groups the intention of the army commander was to drive southeastward over Narew and Bug Rivers towards Siedlce, fifty miles east of Warsaw, the capture of which would isolate Warsaw. This <sup>move</sup> intention would save attacking frontally the fortifications north of Warsaw. (80)

Being successful on the 7th, the Third Army crossed the Narew River at Pultusk and Rozan so that by the 8th, the Third was pursuing towards the Bug River in direction of Wyzkow and Brok. (81)

The Third's success influenced entire strategic situation for the Narew line was the only Polish defensive north of Warsaw; at once it is easy to see that Warsaw and Vistula position must be retained if Poland were to defend successfully. (82)

The time was ripe for an enveloping force, <sup>the</sup> because interior of Poland was now wide open. (83)

As proof to sound and advance planning, the Third Army commander was massing a new force at Lyck-Johannisburg area just as the Narew was crossed. This concentration was for the purpose of moving towards Bialystok and Brest Litovsk. This force was not utilized till the 9th. (84)

Though the German units were enjoying much success, still the Air Force continued its attack on airfields and communications of western Poland. To impede the eastward retreat from Thorn, Posen, and Kalisz, railroads in these areas were heavily bombed. Also the Deblin bridge was bombed out thereby (79), (80), (81), (82), (83), (84) D, p. 17.

increasing the difficulty of retreat of those Polish divisions near Radom who were also threatened by Hoth's corps. Surely at this stage the Polish forces west of Warsaw were in a desperate situation. (85)

#### THE ENCIRCLEMENT

9 - 14 September (See Map 4)

For the Fourteenth Army the period 9 - 14 September was that of the pursuit. The Cracow and Przemyśl Groups did not offer any strong opposition anywhere. By the evening of the 8th the Fourteenth had reached the general line of Gorlice-Debica-Pinczow. (86)

Polish units were attempting to reach defensive line behind the San River. (This attempt resolved itself in two directions but not entirely orderly.) The Cracow Group retired in a northeast direction toward Chelm to defend lower San River and Vistula from Zawichost to Lezajsk. The Przemyśl Group, on the other hand, retired due east toward Lwow to deny upper San River to pursuer. (87)

To block any Polish attempts to prepare the San crossings for defense, two mechanized divisions were cut loose to beat the Poles to the move. These mechanized divisions were successful in seizing the San River crossings at Radymno, Jaroslaw, and Sanok and then proceeded to pursue for the next three days. (88)

The right wing reached Sambor on the 12th and sent strong infantry detachments to Lwow in requisitioned trucks, and on this same day mechanized units from Przemyśl reached Lwow outskirts. (89) For the next few days a series of confused battles took place within the interior of Lwow. At the same time the retreat of two Polish divisions were stopped thirty miles west of Lwow near Grodek. (90)

The northwest mechanized units on 13 September effected crossing of the Lublin-Lemberg (Lwow) Highway at Tomaszow and Rawa Ruska. This mechanized thrust resulted in the main elements of the Polish Cracow Group near Bilgoraj on east bank of San River far in rear of German mechanized

(86), (87), (88) D, p. 18; (89), (90) D, p. 19.

forces. When the Germans took the San River line, theirs was an important strategic gain for this was the last tenable defensive position in southern Poland, and without this position eastern Galicia was left defenseless and retreat to Rumania was blocked. Now the Cracow Group at Bilgoraj could only hope to retreat to the Pripet Marshes. (91)

Even though the pursuit of the Fourteenth was relatively concerted, the Tenth Army fought in widely separated combat groups. The left wing was repelled from Warsaw and subsequently aided the Eighth Army in fighting Polish units seeking to cut their way back to Poland. By contrast the right wing, seventy miles to the south, annihilated four divisions at Radom. The Third, Twelfth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-ninth Polish divisions at Radom and Zwolen had been blocked from Vistula on the 8th but Hoth could not destroy these divisions since they had sixty thousand troops. These Polish divisions were encircled completely on 9th and 10th and after futile efforts surrendered on the 12 September. (92)

Hoepner's detachments were repulsed at Warsaw and before help could arrive (93) the Eighth Army was faced with a serious threat.<sup>h<sup>u</sup></sup> It was at this time that units of the Tenth were diverted to help the Eighth Army extricate itself. (94)

The Eighth Army had on 8 September passed on either side of Lodz and by the evening had reached Ozorkow and Brzeziny since Lodz was not to be occupied till the 9th. Von Blaskowitz hoped to seize line of Bzura River on the 9th in order to protect the left flank of the Tenth Army. Though the Germans knew that Polish units were in and around Kutno and along the Bzura, the Germans grossly underestimated the actual strength, for while the Polish divisions numbered twelve infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades, the Germans estimated five divisions and two cavalry brigades. It is significant to note that half of these Polish units had not been engaged. (95)

That von Blaskowitz's security measures taken by echeloning the Thirtieth Division to the army's left rear saved his army will become evident. It was (91),(92),(93) D, p. 19; (94), (95) D, p. 20.

*not clear*  
early on the 9th that the Eighth assumed the offensive against line of Bzura River. (Because he met a doubtful situation, von Blaskowitz had decided on the offensive which complied with the German doctrine when in a doubtful situation attack.) It was after the initial successful attacks that the Germans were stopped and thrown back along the whole Eighth Army front by virtue of a Polish counterattack. (96) *continuation of*

This crisis developed in the Thirtieth Division's zone when it was struck in the left flank by five Polish divisions that forced the Thirtieth to give ground. (97)

Because the Eighth could not handle the surprise attack, it became necessary for the Tenth to divert all the possible combat power to aid the Eighth; moreover, the reserve divisions following the Eighth were used; and then too the Air Force had to be called to help check the Poles. By the 15 September the danger passed and the Germans were again on the offensive. (98) *See page 2*

On 8 September the Fourth Army was still moving in two groups on either bank of the Vistula. The main accomplishment of the army during this period was much marching. The foot elements moved southeast to join the fight between Kutno and Lodz; these foot elements were approaching Kutno on the 15th and this move placed them in a position to help the Eighth and Tenth Armies. The group on the east bank of the Vistula had on 15 September reached Modlin to keep the Poles from escaping from Kutno. (99)

*?*  
~~As it is recalled~~ the Third Army had by 8 September forced the fortified line of Narew River between Pultusk and Rozan. So the Third Army proceeded to cut Warsaw's communications for by the 15th the railroads from Warsaw to Bialystok and Siedlce had been cut. Warsaw was now completely encircled. (100)

The Third's second major operation was started on the 9th. It was this day that the troops in the Lyck-Johannisburg area moved in the direction of Brest Litovsk. This force was so weakly opposed that by the 14th it had taken Brest Litovsk, plus capturing or destroying the small Polish forces encountered. (101)

Thus the aggressiveness of the Germans prevented any possible Polish (96),(97),(98) D, p. 20; (100),(101) D, p. 21.

defense east of Warsaw. (102)

#### THE ANNIHILATION

15 - 28 September (See Map 5)

During the final phase of this campaign the demoralized Polish divisions were annihilated. It was during this period that the Russians invaded Poland from the east; this action, however, had no important bearing on the final outcome of the campaign. (103)

At this point we find the Fourteenth with its center near Lwow, <sup>which</sup> ~~this~~ town had been thinly outposted on three of its sides. The right wing was near Samhor while the bulk of the mechanized troops were on the left wing; it is to be remembered that these mechanized troops had also cut the Lublin-Lwow highway between Tomaszow and Rawa Ruska. (104)

*most confusion* The Galician Polish forces were by now half demoralized and weak by long retreats and by straggling. This force was divided into two groups <sup>with</sup> the larger group withdrawing northeast and by the 15th was along San River to southeast of Sandomir. (This force was composed of five divisions) The smaller group, being two divisions, was between Przemyśl and Lwow; since there were mechanized troops near Lwow retreat into Rumania was not possible. (105)

*this was a winning or losing? should be crumbling* The increasing crumbling of the Polish army did not decrease the serious fighting that occurred between the left wing of the Fourteenth Army and the strong Cracow Group around Bilgoraj on the 16 September. Possibly the ferocity of the fight stemmed from the fact that this group could no longer retreat for it had been intercepted between Zamosc and Chelm by German mechanized troops; in addition German infantry divisions had come up the west and southwest to join the fight. This battle, aided by Tenth Army units, came to an end on the 20th when General Pekor, the Polish commander, and sixty thousand Poles surrendered. (106)

Ten thousand Poles of the Przemyśl Group were captured at Rawa Ruska on the 18th; those not captured escaped to Rumania and Hungary where they were interned. (107)

(102),(103) D, p. 21; (104),(105),(106),(107) D, p. 22.

The 17th saw motorized reconnaissance battalions of the Fourteenth make contact with like units of the Third Army near Wlodawa. These two armies had completed <sup>the</sup> first stage of the outer double envelopment. This outer ring could have easily been ruptured by a strong Polish attack. (108)

The surrender at Warsaw, Kutno, and Bilgoraj <sup>made</sup> outer net unnecessary but its successful execution demonstrates the thorough indoctrination of the German high <sup>in</sup> in the principles of annihilation as laid down years before by Count von Schlieffen. (109)

The Tenth Army continued to fight in two groups in this operation. The left wing cooperated with the Eighth and part of the Fourth in forcing the surrender of forces between Kutno and Bzura while the right wing advanced toward Lublin. It was the right wing that assisted List at Bilgoraj. (110)

The Polish forces at Kutno were surrounded <sup>(redundantly)</sup> (on all sides) this attack started on the 15th. The Tenth attacked west from Warsaw, Eighth pushed from south against Bzura line, and right column of the Fourth advanced south-east from Wloclawek on Kutno. From Plock to Wysogrod <sup>the</sup> retreat across the Vistula was blocked to the Kutno force by Fourth army elements. (111)

This attack by large German units broke Polish resistance without any delay. By now efforts to break out were futile and by the 17th, the Poles had been compressed into a very narrow area between the Vistula and the Bzura southwest of Wysogrod. Continuous harassment by the encircling forces and by air bombardment finally led to the surrender of one hundred and seventy thousand Poles. This was one of the biggest mass surrenders of any field army in all military history. <sup>up to this date</sup> (112)

While the Warsaw annihilation was being terminated, the Third and Fourth Armies were tightening their blockade around Warsaw and Modlin. To the east other Third Army units near Siedlce were rounding up twelve thousand Poles who later surrendered. (113)

The Air Force was not as active at this time though it bombed troop concentrations and columns east of the Vistula. Also the airfields near the (108),(109) D, p. 22; (110),(111),(112),(113) D, p. 23.

Russian border were bombed extensively. (114)

Decimation of the Poles had been very systematic and thorough so that by the 20th the only Polish troops at large were at the Warsaw garrison; the Modlin garrison; the naval garrison of Hela peninsula; small forces in Lwow; and a considerable number of Polish units, mostly reserve, between Deblin and Lublin. (115)

On 21 September Lwow fell while on the 22nd Germans withdrew to the San River in compliance with German agreement with Russia. Then on 1 October the Hela peninsula garrison surrendered. (116)

On the 22nd the Eighth and the Third Armies were besieging Warsaw from their sides on the Vistula as Strauss operated against Modlin. Both pushed in siege lines after limited attacks were successful. (117)

An artillery and aerial bombardment started on the 24th and continued until the 27th without cessation. This bombardment destroyed twenty per cent of all houses and sixty per cent of all houses received one or more hits. Then on the 25th a coordinated infantry attack was launched. Finally on the 27th Warsaw fell but forces east of Deblin resisted till 5 October. This was at last the end of the Polish campaign. (118)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

After studying this campaign it is not difficult to see that the Germans had a well balanced army whereas the Polish army was comparatively weak and in addition was guilty of faulty application of defensive principles.

The Germans from the start depended upon speed and surprise to defeat the Polish army. It is a known fact that the Polish high command did not expect the Germans to attack as soon as they did. While the strategic concept of the defense was not entirely correct, still the Germans had the preponderance of combat power as the result of a military team well balanced with air power, mechanized troops, and infantry troops.

Even at this time it is not known what the Polish high command intended to do. If they intended to fight a delaying action and then defend behind (114), (115) D, p. 23; (116), (117), (118) D, p. 24.

the strong Narew-Vistula-San River line, it seems that the Polish forces were incorrectly disposed. On the other hand for the Poles to accept battle with the Germans seems to indicate lack of Polish intelligence service or a faulty estimate of the German army. In any case the Polish defense can be classified as a cordon defense.

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Probably one of the greatest factors in the German Army's success were speed and qualified leadership. The German tactical doctrine and training accentuated the responsibility for individual leadership and initiative of subordinate commanders. Each combat unit was organized for fire and movement; this fact was furthered by the assignment of appropriate objectives and the minimum of supervision was given subordinate leaders by higher commanders.

Prior to this campaign no mechanized or panzer divisions had been employed as such. In the Tenth Army, General von Reichenau employed his armor in panzer corps to exploit the break-throughs. Mechanized divisions were used similarly in the Fourteenth Army by General List. The tactical employment of these units proved highly successful and their success is further attested to by the fact that the American armored divisions were employed in the same manner against the Germans. Because these armored units cannot hold ground, it was found necessary to have the infantry divisions following as closely as possible to consolidate and to hold any objectives taken by the armored units.

Considering this campaign purely from the military viewpoint, much credit is due the Germans for their thoroughness in the preparation for this campaign. The plans were complete, thorough, but still ~~were~~ highly flexible. Also, it must be said that the word flexible includes the use of the German Air Force; the employment was both tactical and strategic.

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In summary the German victory was not only a brilliant success but also a very important one, for the German Army learned that their organization, armament, and tactical doctrine were correct. These last named facts were particularly true for the mechanized division which underwent a most rigorous test.



### LESSONS

Some of the lessons learned from this campaign are:

1. Strategic surprise is most important for the attacker. Poland was completely demoralized from the shock of surprise.
2. The cordon defense is a futile and desperate type of operation. Once the defense is pierced the whole defensive set-up is jeopardized.
3. A commander must base his <sup>plans</sup> operations on his <sup>actual</sup> capabilities and not on the expected capabilities or strength.
4. Plans must be flexible. This flexibility was shown when units from the Fourth Army were transferred to the Third Army. Also the employment of the Air Force showed flexibility.
5. Mechanized units with their high mobility can exploit successes very effectively.
6. A commander must have adequate intelligence. The lack of intelligence almost disrupted the German plans when the Eighth was surprised by the Poles.
7. Training must teach subordinate leaders to lead by the use of initiative.