

G U R P S[®]

WWII[™] Doomed White Eagle



**AN e23 SOURCEBOOK
FOR GURPS[®] FROM**

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES
FOR 3 TO 6 PLAYERS**

GURPS, Warehouse 23, and the all-seeing pyramid are registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. Pyramid, GURPS WWII: Doomed White Eagle, e23, and the names of all products published by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated are registered trademarks or trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, or used under license. Some art copyright © 2004 www.clipart.com. All rights reserved. GURPS WWII: Doomed White Eagle is copyright © 2004 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this material via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal, and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

Written by Michele Armellini and
Hans-Christian Vortisch

Edited by Alain H. Dawson

Additional material by Alain H. Dawson,
Michal Konwicki, and Grzegorz Franczak

Map by Ed Bourelle

Special thanks to Gene Seabolt
and the Hellions

STEVE JACKSON GAMES
e23.sjgames.com



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
<i>About GURPS</i>	3

1. POLAND AT WAR 4

FREE, A CENTURY LATE	4
Birth of a State	4
Troubled Times	5
Between Angry, Hungry Neighbors	6
<i>Dog Eat Dog</i>	6
<i>Who's In Command?</i>	7
WORLD WAR II BEGINS	8
On the Warpath	8
<i>Birth of a Myth</i>	9
Poland Fights On	11
A Hopeless Fight	13
<i>Did the Soviets Wait it Out?</i>	14
Bitter Victory	15
<i>What If . . . ?</i>	15
GERMAN-OCCUPIED POLAND (1942)	16

2. THE POLISH ARMED FORCES 17

PILSUDSKI'S PRIDE	17
Standard Units	18
Cavalry and Armored Units	18
Special Units	18
The National Guard	18
Operations and Tactics	19
A POOR MAN'S WEAPON	19
<i>Mathematicians and Chess Players</i>	19
A BROWN-WATER NAVY	20
SEPTEMBER 1939	20
The Polish Army	20
Polish Army Order of Battle	20
Polish Air Force Order of Battle	21
Polish Navy Order of Battle	21
AFTER 1939	21
In the West	21
The Home Army	21
The Polish People's Army	21

3. POLISH SOLDIERS . . . 22

Creating Polish Characters	22
Female Characters	22
<i>Polish Military Ranks</i>	22
BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS	23
Background Advantages	23
Background Disadvantages	23
Background Skills	23
Customization Notes	24
<i>The Shtetl</i>	24
ADDITIONAL TEMPLATES	25
Cavalryman	25
City Fighter	26
<i>Strangers, Abroad and at Home</i>	26

4. THE POLISH ARMORY 27

SURPLUS FROM EVERYWHERE	27
Personal Equipment	27
WEAPON TABLES	28

SMALL ARMS	29
Weapon Descriptions	29
<i>The Stenów</i>	30
ARTILLERY	31
100mm Skoda wz. 14/16P	31
THE GARAGE	32
Polski FIAT PF508/III Lazik	32
Samochód Pancerny wz. 34	33
<i>New Weapons</i>	34
Maly Czolg Rozpoznawczy TKS	35
Czolg Lekki 7TP	35
Drezyna Pancerna Tatra	36
THE HANGAR	37
PZL P.7	37
PZL P.23 Karas	37
PZL P.37b Los	38
Okret Podwodny Orzel	39
<i>Breakout from the Baltic</i>	40

5. ON THE FRONT 41

SOLDIERING	41
Basic Training	41
Service Culture	41
A HOME FAR FROM HOME	42
Regular Jozefs	42
<i>They Said It on the Radio</i>	42
Irregular Jozefs!	43
The Best of the Best	43
A MONTH-LONG WAR	44
Shattered Hopes	44
The Central Asia Tour	44
FOREIGNERS AND LOSERS	45
Blitzkrieg Again	45
Garrison Duties	45
<i>On Leave With Nowhere to Go</i>	46
WILLING PAWNS	46
In the Desert	46
A Costly Monastery	47
Plugging the Gap	47
<i>A German Propaganda Coup</i>	47
The Short Straw Again	48
Choosing One Enemy	48
IN A GERMAN COLONY	48
Keeping Their Heads Down	48
<i>Working for the Germans</i>	49
The Resistance	50
SEAMEN AND PILOTS	51
The Baltic and Beyond	51
The Real Winged Hussars	52
<i>Weird Objectives</i>	52

6. POLISH PRONUNCIATION GUIDE 53

CONSONANTS	53
VOWELS	53
Nasalized Vowels	53
DIPHTHONGS	53

BIBLIOGRAPHY 54

INDEX 55

While many of the events of the 1930s could have brought on World War II, historians generally settle on the German assault on Poland on September 1, 1939, as the start of the worldwide war. Few countries suffered as much from the war's direct or indirect effects as Poland.

It was Poland that first fell victim to the new German tactics that would become famous as "blitzkrieg." It was the Polish military that was the first to feel the German advances in key military technologies. It was Poland that first was occupied by a brutal oppressor in Europe. It was Poland that was divided among the two unlikely – yet in their inhumanity eerily similar – partners in crime, Hitler and Stalin. It was Poland that lost millions of civilians. And it was Poland that lost more of its Jewish citizens to the Nazi death camps than any other European country.

Yet it was also Poland that had the largest resistance movement in the whole of non-Soviet Europe. It was Poles in exile who fought in large numbers in all European and African theaters of war, some of their units showing almost reckless bravery. And it was

Poland that, in the end, received a good part of German territory in exchange for areas lost to the Soviet Union.

The proud white eagle of the Polish national symbol had to suffer a lot during the war, and so did its people. But in the end, with the help of the Allied world, it eventually flew proudly over its native soil again.



ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"×12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit www.warehouse23.com.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are W for *WWII*, W:AKM for *WWII: All the King's Men*, W:FH for *WWII: Frozen Hell*, W:GL for *WWII: Grim Legions*, W:IC for *WWII: Iron Cross*, W:MP for *WWII: Motor Pool*, W:RH for *WWII: Return to Honor*, W:WW for *WWII: Weird War II*. The abbreviation for *this* book is W:DWE. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

1. POLAND AT WAR

We in Poland do not recognize the concept of "peace at any price." There is only one thing in the life of men, nations, and states which is without price, and that is honor.

– Jozef Beck

FREE, A CENTURY LATE

In 1795, Poland's rapacious neighbors, Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Russia, carried out their final partition, helping themselves to the remnants of a once-powerful country. The Poles stayed under foreign rule for more than a century, save for a short-lived semi-independence backed by Napoleon. That state of affairs would last until 1918.

BIRTH OF A STATE

Poland's golden opportunity came at the end of World War I. During the war, Poles had been drafted into the armies of their oppressors, and the country had suffered greatly. With the defeat of Czarist Russia, the two Central Powers occupied Poland, but trouble on other fronts made their control shaky. The Poles were within reach of independence.

From the Ashes of Empires

Finally forced to sign an armistice, the Germans tried to play a pawn they had kept under wraps for some time: they sent Jozef Pilsudski to Warsaw. A former Socialist agitator and sworn enemy of Russia, he had commanded the Polish Legion against the Czarists. But Pilsudski was actually an enemy of any enemy of Poland. On November 11, 1918, he took control of a

Nationalist provisional government and sent the German administrators packing.

The two Central Powers had just been utterly defeated, with Austria disintegrating altogether; the Czarist empire was caught in the convulsions of its revolution. The French strongly supported the idea of a Polish counterbalance to Germany. The American president, Woodrow Wilson, had laid the foundations of peace with his Fourteen Points – one of which called for "an independent Polish state." Wilson, trying to set forth practical guidelines, but also following the principle of national self-determination, wanted it to have a "free access to the sea," and to include "the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations." The devil was in that detail.

Ethnic Hodge-Podge

A border separating Polish territories from everyone else's would have been a good idea, if feasible. Unfortunately, Poland had been divided for more than a century among two multinational empires and an aggressively nationalistic one, and any new border would strand ethnic minorities on at least one side . . . if not both.

In the west, there were Western Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia. Often, the land was made up of German cities surrounded by a Polish countryside. Silesia was the least clear-cut situation, with the largest German population.

To the southwest, the border with the new state of Czechoslovakia was defined by the natural barrier of the Tatra Mountains; nevertheless, the small duchy of Cieszyn (Teschen) would become a bone of contention.

To the east, Poles, Lithuanians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians were hopelessly intermingled. In 1919, the Allied Council recommended a line devised by the British Foreign Minister, Lord George Curzon, as the best possible demarcation. The Curzon Line would displease everybody involved.

In the midst of this reorganization, there was a large Jewish minority to be considered, as well.



A Botched Job

The Versailles Treaty (1919) assigned Western Prussia to Poland, together with a thin slice of Pomerania. This gave the new state its access to the sea. Danzig (Gdansk) was on the eastern edge of that coastline. It was a largely German city that was also the main seaport of Poland. Further east was German East Prussia, which was thus separated from the rest of Germany by a “Polish Corridor” (see p. 7). The Allies’ solution for Danzig was to declare it a Free City, with an autonomous local government, under the protection of the League of Nations. Poland would have some economic rights connected with the port, but not full control over it.

Plebiscites would determine the fate of Upper Silesia and of the districts of Allenstein and Marienwerder. Things went smoothly in the latter two, as their Poles were a small minority. But the plebiscite in Upper Silesia wasn’t held until March 20, 1921. Until that time, German *Freikorps* (see p. W:IC8) and police repeatedly clashed with Polish volunteers and barely disguised army units, in fights that ranged from street brawls to prolonged skirmishes. The Allies had to station garrisons in a few hotspots.

In the plebiscite, marred by this widespread violence and intimidation, some 60% of the population opted for Germany. In May 1921, the Polish Silesians launched an uprising under their Plebiscite Commissioner, Wojciech Korfanty.

This caused a dispute between the British and the French, but in the end, Upper Silesia was split. Germany got the larger slice, but Poland the richer one, with its coal fields; and, inevitably, a German minority. Thus the winners of WWI gave the Germans yet another reason for a slow-burning resentment.

The White Eagle Triumphs

In the east, a full-fledged war would be needed for Poland to squeeze the most out of the situation. The new Bolshevik state was still weak and engaged with the last White armies. In February 1919, the new Polish cavalry regiments began a steady penetration in Belarus and Ukraine. By September, they had taken Minsk. Some Ukrainians were siding with them.

In 1920, however, the Soviets managed to muster their forces and to apply pressure on the eager Poles. Kiev briefly fell into Polish hands, but Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky broke the Polish lines on the Berezina on July 4, and kept pushing west.

When the Red Army crossed the Vistula in August, it seemed that just one final battle was needed for the birth of a Polish Soviet Republic – under Russian rule, again. This would also have created a common border between the Soviet Union and the weak, left-leaning Weimar Germany. Instead, Pilsudski attacked Tukhachevsky’s lines of communication, surrounded

his army, and defeated him. This was the so-called “Miracle of the Vistula,” a victory that had a special place in the Polish national consciousness in the years to come. Other Soviet contingents had been too far away to reinforce Tukhachevsky’s troops, and they were driven back; at Komarow, the Poles defeated General Semyon Budenny’s Cossacks in the last full-sized cavalry battle in Europe.

The Treaty of Riga acknowledged Poland’s conquests. The would-be capital of Lithuania, Wilno (Vilnius) was also seized.

This war would have far-reaching consequences. Polish generals learned the wrong lessons from it. It also cast Poland in the role of bulwark against the

Eastern threat: in the 1920s, the Polish army would mainly train, build its barracks, and live along the Soviet border, not the German one.



Besides, in their effort not to leave Polish minorities outside their new state’s borders, the Poles had made sure they would have plenty of foreigners *within* those borders. The idealistic project of a Union of Poland, Lithuania, and a free Ukraine was soon abandoned.

TROUBLED TIMES

Pilsudski had succeeded in freeing his country and creating an army, but he failed at making them a democracy and a modern weapon, respectively.

Still a Backward Country

Not being interested in the day-to-day administration of the state, and nursing his dislike for politicians, the father of the nation withdrew from any political appointment in 1922; from then on, he just took care of his beloved army.

An unstable reformist coalition government took power under Wincenty Witos. Hampered by its own fractiousness and lack of experience, it attempted some land reforms and tried to tackle the worrisome situation of the economy, which had suffered greatly through WWI and the ensuing strife. The eastern regions were seriously underdeveloped. Poland had not been high on its masters’ lists of priorities, and the three rail networks ran toward their three capitals . . . and had different gauges.

Some progress was made; a new all-Polish seaport was opened in Gdynia, not far from Gdansk, and by 1929 it was linked to the Silesian coal fields by a new rail line; plans were initiated for industrialization. However, the deteriorating political situation and, later, the world crisis of 1929 would largely doom these efforts. In the 1930s, unemployment and social unrest worsened throughout the country.

Too Early for Democracy

In May 1926, exasperated by what he saw as the failure of a frail, corrupt parliamentary government, Pilsudski carried out a coup. The affair was not as bloodless as he had hoped, but after some street fighting in Warsaw, his own men took over the key positions. He reserved the Ministry of Defense for himself.

The new government lacked a clear social policy and long-term political goals; its only philosophy was *sanacja* (healing), an attempt at promoting national unity and curbing internecine political infighting by means of an apolitical administration of the state. This utopist line had some appeal, but, needless to say, it failed.

In 1930, the opposition parties gathered in Krakow and demanded that democracy be reestablished. The government answered by arresting the leaders, dissolving the *Sejm* (parliament), and holding new elections under a pall of terror, fraud, and gerrymandering. Still nominally a democracy, in reality Poland had come under a heavy-handed regime.

When Pilsudski died in 1935, power was handed down to his supporters, who formed an authoritarian, nationalistic government called the OZN (*Oboz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, Camp for National Unity – characteristically, they avoided the word “party”).

The Poles and the Others

Throughout these turbulent years, the Poles were also burdened with restless foreign minorities, whom they mistrusted, while clamoring that Polish minorities abroad were mistreated.

Unsurprisingly, the Germans in Silesia and Danzig espoused the Nazi cause. The Ukrainians had both a Nationalist and a Communist movement, and they were accused of many political assassinations (several key politicians were killed in the interwar period, including the first President of Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz, in 1922, and the Minister of the Interior, Colonel Bronislaw Pieracki, in 1934). None of these minorities were entitled to public schooling in their own language, nor could they get employment by the state (see *The Shtetl*, p. 24).

The Polish Jewry, lacking a foreign country to turn to, was the least dangerous minority. Nevertheless, anti-Semitic intolerance was rising throughout the 1930s, and it had multiple roots: religious and nationalistic prejudices, economic reasons, and political suspicion (the Jews were thought to be pro-Bolshevik). Also, the Jews were some 10% of the population, lived throughout the country and especially in cities, and were very visible; they were traditional scapegoats.

Thus, Poland in the late 1930s was roughly as chauvinistic and nationalistic as its neighbors – which played into Hitler’s hands. The Poles took part in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938; then, when the Nazi threat became evident, they were adamant in

DOG EAT DOG

While German ethnic and territorial stances during WWII are well known because of their final outcome, it shouldn’t be forgotten that in the interwar years, all of Eastern Europe was still a patchwork of bitterly claimed borderlands. Nationalists considered armed conquest either a fact of life, or a gross injustice, depending on whether they won or lost. Poland shared this attitude.

The League of Nations had been appointed as the guarantor of ethnic minorities by many international treaties, but it lacked the clout to be really effective. Thus, the minorities could be a real problem, and often a useful tool for nationalist demagogues.

Notwithstanding the general climate of intolerance, it was the presence of a bully in the neighborhood that incited everyone to behave like him. When Hitler made his move against Czechoslovakia (p. W11), Hungary and Poland wanted their share. In the case of Poland, the small district of Cieszyn, with its Polish population, was the prize.

On the one hand, this choice was understandable. There *was* a Polish minority there, Czechoslovakia stood a serious risk of crumbling under Hitler’s demands anyway, and if Poland had just sat idly, those Poles would have soon ended under a German “protectorate.” On the other hand, dog eat dog is never a good idea when there’s a wolf stalking.

refusing Soviet offers of help. But maybe the fate of the Baltic States proves they weren’t wrong.

BETWEEN ANGRY, HUNGRY NEIGHBORS

In the 1930s, Poland’s old enemies gathered their strength and renewed their claims. As its neighbors waxed again under ruthless dictators, Poland’s position began to wane.

In the Soviet Union, a cautious Stalin first needed to bolster the Communist Party’s position. He also broke the Ukrainians’ dreams of independence with the 1930-32 collectivization of their farms (and the ensuing famine). Meanwhile, however, he never gave up the claims to ex-czarist territories.

In Germany, Hitler came to power in 1933, on a platform calling for, among other things, the unification of all German-speaking peoples. This would clearly involve the German minority in Poland.

WHO'S IN COMMAND?

While formally a parliamentary republic, Poland had been ruled by an authoritarian generals' regime ever since the 1926 coup. New leaders emerged after the 1939 defeat.

Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly (1886-1941). Pilsudski's right-hand man, he was a veteran of the WWI Polish Legion and of the Russo-Polish War. At the time he had used *Smigly*, meaning "Fast," as a *nom de guerre*, and had chosen to keep it (thus he could be nicknamed "Fast Eddie"). After Pilsudski's death in 1935, he became Marshal, General Inspector of the armed forces, and most importantly the true power behind the President, ruling the country with a rod of iron. Rydz-Smigly was an intransigent, narrow-minded nationalist, and in *GURPS* terms he'd have Stubbornness and Intolerance; as a commander, his Strategy skill had become outmoded, dropping to an 11. He fled to Romania in 1939 and wasn't allowed to reach the West, but managed to go back to Warsaw to die there.

President Ignacy Moscicki (1867-1946). A scientist and a former socialist, as well as a long-time friend of Pilsudski, Moscicki became Poland's president when the strongman declined that honor after the 1926 coup. A mild, malleable man, he never was more than a respectable figurehead. Interned in Romania, he handed over his authority to the Polish government in exile.

Colonel Jozef Beck (1896-1944). Foreign Minister. Another veteran from Pilsudski's ret-

inue, his only training for diplomatic work came from his experience as an intelligence officer. Objectively he never had much room to maneuver, yet it was unfortunate for his country that he suffered from Overconfidence. His main skills can be rated as Intelligence Analysis-12, Diplomacy-10.

General Wladyslaw Sikorski (1881-1943). A moderate who had served in the Russo-Polish War, as a top commander of the army, and as premier, but all before the 1926 coup by Pilsudski. He then stayed in Paris until 1938, when he went back to Poland, but he was denied a command. Thus, in 1940 he had a brilliant resume, but had not been involved with the regime and had no responsibility for the 1939 disaster. In addition, he was respected in Western military circles. He efficiently commanded the Polish forces in exile until 1943, when he died in an air crash. He had at least Strategy-14 and a fine array of Social Skills.

General Wladyslaw Anders (1892-1970). A junior officer in the Russo-Polish War, he led the Novogrodzka Cavalry Brigade in 1939, and was captured by the Soviets. He was interrogated by the NKVD, or Soviet secret police, which understandably reinforced his Intolerance for the USSR. Ironically, he found himself in command of the ex-POW Polish forces in the Soviet Union, which he led out and eventually into the West (see p. 12). He commanded the 2nd Polish Corps with Strategy-14 and Operations (Land)-16.

Pilsudski did his best to chart a dangerous, equidistant course between the two hostile powers, and between 1932 and 1934 Poland signed non-aggression agreements with both.

The Polish Corridor

Hitler thought that the League of Nations had created a monstrosity (see p. 5); the Polish Corridor and the special status of Danzig, which he regarded as a fully German city, were nonsense to him. However, that nominally autonomous status could be cleverly manipulated, since the Danzig Senate was fervently Nazi. Starting in 1936, when Hitler thought he could force the Poles to be accommodating, things went smoothly in the Free City. When he felt the Poles were being difficult, the situation worsened; the local authorities obstructed Polish Customs, accidents happened.

By October 1938, the German demands congealed into a specific proposal. Danzig would become German, but an extraterritorial rail line would serve the Polish free seaport; similarly, an extraterritorial *Autobahn* would cut through the Corridor, joining Germany to Danzig (and East Prussia).

Acceding to these proposals would have gone against the grain of the Polish nationalist attitude; besides, such an agreement would have meant siding with one of the neighbors – thus antagonizing the other. This was exactly what Hitler wanted, and indeed the final proposal included the entry of Poland in an explicitly anti-Soviet alliance, the Anti-Comintern Pact.

The Poles said no, and began to worry about a German seizure of Danzig through East Prussia. Unfortunately for them, what Hitler had not gained in peace would become a good excuse for seeking much more, through war.

This Time It Will Be War

Hitler had sworn that the Sudetenland (see p. W11) was his last claim. On the contrary, on March 15, 1939, he forced the weak and helpless Czechoslovakian President, Emil Hacha, to accept a German protectorate over what remained of that country. A week later, Lithuania was similarly forced to cede its city of Klaipeda (Memel).

This was the last straw for Neville Chamberlain. The champion of appeasement saw that his own policy had failed. Great Britain offered forthright guarantees for the defense of Poland's sovereignty, this being clearly the next target in Hitler's sights.

The Polish government gladly accepted that blank check. The *Führer* exploited it, by construing it as a violation of the German-Polish non-aggression pact, which he promptly denounced. In any case, the British guarantee, and the French alliance, meant little in practice. They couldn't deploy troops in the Corridor; they couldn't do anything, short of total war – something for which they were woefully unprepared. What they needed was the Soviet help that they had declined when they allowed Czechoslovakia to be overrun.

A Pact between Thieves

The Western powers remained half-hearted about an alliance with the Communists – and the Poles were understandably wary of any deployment of Russian troops on their soil. Slowly, negotiations between the Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain had begun in that fateful summer of 1939, but the British were dithering and Stalin felt they were being evasive: he was afraid they'd happily let Communism and Nazism bleed each other white. Thus the Soviet leader resorted to the buffer strategy: he'd try to regain the ground the USSR had lost in the revolution, to use it as an additional safety cushion. To that purpose, Stalin was ready to use strong-arm tactics and to make deals with anybody.

Hitler had sensed that the situation was ripe for an unthinkable pact with the traditional enemy, and had made diplomatic advances. If he could bring on his side the only power that could do something useful to thwart his plans for Poland, then he believed the British and French guarantees would remain a bluff. Ribbentrop, with characteristic lack of true insight (see p. W:IC54), supported this view.

Thus the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was signed on August 23, 1939. Its secret clauses acknowledged the Soviet Union's "sphere of interest," which included eastern Poland. The area was roughly east of the Curzon Line, which made such a move from the USSR vaguely comparable, at least in Communist propaganda, to the Polish taking of Cieszyn.

This pact made Hitler's gamble possible. Plans for the invasion of Poland (*Fall Weiss*, or Case White) had been under way since April 3.

WORLD WAR II BEGINS

Danzig is not the object of the dispute at all. The question is our living space in the east.

– Adolf Hitler

ON THE WARPATH

Poland's intelligence service had fair estimates as to Germany's assets and overall intentions, and nobody could doubt Hitler was bent on war: the "border accident" on August 26 (see p. W:IC11) made that all too clear.

Polish planners were aware of their vulnerable strategic position. The western half of their country had enemies on three sides: to the west, to the north in German East Prussia, and to the south in Slovakia (see p. W11). The Tatra Mountains defended that latter border, but the rest of the land was flat plains. Roads were not as good as in France, and there were huge forests, but all in all it was tankers' terrain. There were a few wide rivers, but at the end of the summer they were less an obstacle than in other seasons.

Indeed, the Polish army might have withdrawn behind two such rivers, the Vistula and the San; but in so doing it would have surrendered one third of the country, and many industrial centers, not to mention the much-contested territory of Silesia.

This was unacceptable, both for practical reasons and because it was a matter of national pride. Additionally, if the Poles had not opposed a German move from its start, they were afraid that their allies would conclude that "dying for Danzig" was pointless; Czechoslovakia had disappeared from the map without a struggle, and that example was fresh in everybody's mind.

Therefore, the Poles decided to challenge the enemy on the border. Then, they would fight delaying actions everywhere, while withdrawing toward the center. They hoped they could thus concentrate their assets and be able to make a stand later. They also confidently planned to hold a sizable proportion of their forces as a reserve for offensive operations. They believed that they could soon counterattack.

This strategy was doomed. Poland had a large army, but it was outnumbered in all critical figures: tanks, aircraft, field artillery, AT and AA guns, trucks. They only had more horsemen. Additionally, Polish generals had no idea of what kind of mechanized onslaught the Germans planned; they ignored what mobility and firepower their enemy could muster. No Polish unit could wage a fighting retreat and stay abreast of a panzer division. Likewise, given the lack of mobility, the limitations of command and control, and the incomplete mobilization, the reserves could never react quickly enough.

Finally, the only purpose this strategy served was to buy time. So the Poles relied on the role others would play during that time: they expected the French to attack, and the Soviets to stay neutral. They were wrong on both counts.

Opening Moves

On September 1, 1939, the war began, with the veteran cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* firing at the Westerplatte garrison in Gdansk. The Luftwaffe did not destroy the Polish air force on the ground, but it did gain air superiority everywhere save over Warsaw. The German bombers didn't concentrate their attacks; against better defenses, this would have been risky, but the Polish fighters were outnumbered and obsolete, and the ground defenses not up to the task. Thus, Stuka strikes soon caused losses and widespread confusion everywhere, deep behind the front.

The main German attacks came in the south against Lodz and Krakow, and in the north across the Corridor and out of East Prussia. The Army Group South (under Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt) struck the heaviest blow. It lined up three large armies, the 8th, 10th, and 14th (from north to south). The central army, the 10th, would go for the deep, blitzkrieg thrust, while the other two would cover its flanks and, respectively, take the important industrial city of Lodz and advance beyond Krakow, along the Carpathian mountains and the southern Polish border.

The rest of the plan provided for a bold pincer movement by the Army Group North, made easy by its starting positions on both sides of the Corridor.

The Polish army lost the initiative. Though they beat back many initial attacks, the German units were trained to repeat them, aggressively and ruthlessly, and if necessary to shift the point of effort in order to achieve the desired result.

In three days, the Corridor was cut, Poznan, Lodz, and Krakow left behind; and in each of these places, there were Polish divisions surrounded or threatened with encirclement. At this time, Great Britain and France decided they would indeed honor their guarantees, but they were not yet mobilized for war.

BIRTH OF A MYTH

Well before the Polish resistance had ended, it was portrayed as brave, but outdated and foolhardy – in the quintessential image of lancers hopelessly charging German panzers. This is a propaganda falsehood. Polish cavalry were trained to deal with armor, and they would do that on foot (see p. 19).

The grain of truth in this story is that two squadrons of the 18th Lancers (of the Pomeranian Cavalry Brigade) did launch one of the few mounted actions in the campaign on the evening of September 1, near Krojanty, in the Corridor. However, the target was German infantry, caught unaware in the open, and the charge was fully successful. Unfortunately, while the squadrons were reforming, German armored cars attacked them and mowed them down with machine-gun fire. An Italian war correspondent saw the battlefield the day after, and he gave birth to the legend.

The German public wanted to believe the war would be as easy as that, and the rest of the world did not want to believe the Wehrmacht was as dangerous as it was. This is how the legend lasted.

Blitzkrieg

The Poles reacted, but chaotically. The plans to withdraw and redeploy on new lines went awry just like those calling for counter-offensives: the battered front-line units could not disengage fast enough, the railways were under unrelenting air attacks, and the communication systems were breaking down.

The Germans were simply moving too fast for the Poles' reaction times, looking for weak spots, and exploiting them with armored units. This was the blitzkrieg (see p. W16) that stunned the world. The German propaganda machine made a fairly good job of portraying the panzers as invincible.

The truth was somewhat different. The German tanks, especially the light early-war models (pp. W:IC77-78) weren't unstoppable behemoths. The 4. *Panzer-Division*, for instance, was beaten back by dismounted cavalry at Mokra on September 1. Every time the panzers attacked determined troops in well-prepared positions they took a beating – but the panzers could exploit their mobility and communications to *bypass* those positions, cutting the enemy's supply lines while the Stukas attacked their horse-drawn trains. The Polish armored units lacked the numbers and the doctrine to fight fire with fire, and the army as a whole did

not have the resources for a defense in depth that could wear down the armored thrusts.

Thus, notwithstanding the Poles' brave resistance, the "lightning war" worked, even better than in the German plans. In a week, most of the Polish forces west of the Vistula were threatened with encirclement or actually surrounded, and German vanguard units had reached the outskirts of Warsaw. In the north, General Guderian's mechanized troops advancing from East Prussia had broken beyond the Narew river and were attacking the Bug line, behind Warsaw; in the south, other mobile forces had advanced all the way to the fortress town of Przemyśl. An even wider pincer movement could be envisioned toward Lwów and Brześć, and this would indeed come true around September 15.

Claiming the Spoils

Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigły ordered a general withdrawal southeast on September 10. He hoped he could organize a resistance on a shorter front, but it was too late. By this time, several vanguard German formations were short on fuel and too far ahead; however, they had successfully cut off many Polish units from their bases. Thus, the Germans could switch to the defensive while the Poles had to attack east without updated orders, new supplies, or fresh reinforcements.

Yet attack they did. General Tadeusz Kutrzeba's Poznań Army managed to concentrate its forces, as well as a number of stragglers from other armies. Kutrzeba counterattacked south, across the Bzura river, to give

the Germans a taste of their own medicine by hitting the 30th Infantry Division in its flank. This unexpected strike drew German units from their drive east. However, Polish troops did not exploit these opportunities because the Polish command structure had collapsed: Kutrzeba was not supported, his divisions were neutralized, and only small numbers of his men made it to Warsaw for a final stand (see below). Other operations were haphazard and fruitless.

On September 17, the Red Army attacked, with no declaration of war. Stalin was claiming the spoils. While this made the Polish situation utterly desperate, it actually shortened the war by a few weeks at most. The Soviets moved in with overwhelming strength, fielding their tanks in an intentional display of muscle. In their path there were only a few, weak infantry divisions. The Russian attack was a deadly blow to morale, too, for soldiers who were waiting for news of a mighty French offensive against Germany. Grodno was gallantly, but uselessly defended. Lwów, which had beaten back several German probes, eventually surrendered to the advancing Soviets as Ukrainian insurgents attacked the weakened garrison.

Warsaw Concert

German armor vanguards had reached the southern suburbs of Warsaw (near Ochota) on September 7 already. The unlucky *4. Panzer-Division* was stopped cold in its tracks on September 9 when it tried a hasty attack on the capital; the Germans began to learn that



city fighting could be dangerous for their tanks, as the Poles claimed 57 vehicles destroyed on that day.

Thus a regular, old-fashioned siege had to be laid to subdue the stubborn Poles. Thousands of volunteers frantically dug anti-tank ditches and prepared improvised fortifications. The city was soon wholly surrounded, although many withdrawing Polish units would later force their way into the encirclement, determined to defend their capital; reinforcements came from a breakout near Kutno.

By September 16, General Walerian Czura, the garrison commander, had ignored a German ultimatum; the Luftwaffe celebrated the Jewish New Year by bombing the Jewish quarter. Aircraft and heavy artillery began to pound the city. The U.S. Ambassador reported to the rest of the world that the Germans were indiscriminately bombing civilian areas. A sizable proportion of the population had not been evacuated, and was trapped within the city. Civilian losses mounted; in the end, they would be variously rated at 20,000 to 40,000.

The government and high command had moved out of Warsaw and close to the Romanian border, in order to continue the resistance, but communications from that area were exceedingly bad and this contributed to the collapse of the chain of command. It also left troops in the capital without orders. Then the commanders had no choice but to seek internment in Romania.

A second ultimatum was issued on September 25, immediately accompanied by intense bombing. The responsibility fell on the courageous mayor, Stefan Starzynski, to capitulate two days later, in order to avoid a further, pointless bloodshed.

To the End

After the Soviets' move, Poland was hopeless, but the campaign was not over yet. General Kutrzeba's weakened divisions fought until a bitter surrender. Meanwhile, other Polish troops stubbornly headed south to seek internment in neutral Romania, in hopes to fight again one day. They found German Army Group South in their path, and they gave it a bad time; its units took more casualties in the second half of the month than during the drive of the first half. The largest tank-to-tank battle took place at this time, close to Tomaszow Lubelski.

The war petered out. The garrison of the Hel Peninsula surrendered on October 1, while the last fighting took place at Kock, in eastern Poland, some four days later, after the Germans had already held their parade in Warsaw.

Victory had come swiftly but not cheaply for Hitler. The campaign hadn't been painless, with 43,000 casualties (see p. W12), and Stalin had gained a sizable buffer he immediately ordered his troops to fortify. What's more, notwithstanding conciliatory speeches

from the *Führer*, the British and French were no longer listening; the war would eventually escalate to encompass the world.

POLAND FIGHTS ON

The Poles had lost their independent country, but they would keep up the fight, throughout WWII, at home and abroad. Poland had seen more than its share of crushing defeats and suppressed insurrections. There was an established tradition of Polish "Legions" serving under allied banners. As the panzers were still breaking through, arms caches were already being hidden in the forests for a guerrilla movement, and orders issued to rally any available troopers in France.

By October 1939, however, most of those men were interned in neutral countries: Romania and Hungary primarily (with about 35,000 and 31,000 internees, respectively) and also in Latvia and Lithuania. They should have remained there for the duration of the war, and those neutral governments immediately felt the German pressure for them to comply.

On the other hand, Polish-Romanian relations had been good, and no neutral country is ever happy to have huge numbers of internees to take care of. Internment camps were indeed set up, but surveillance was conspicuously lax. The internees began running away by the boatload. They would travel through Yugoslavia, or directly by sea. They all eventually headed to France, the country they were sure would defeat their enemy.

The Romanians could not afford to "lose" Marshal Rydz-Smigly, or any other important general or politician. That would have been too much for their relations with Germany. Thus, the commander of the Polish army in exile would be General Wladyslaw Sikorski (see p. 7).

Defeated Again

By the beginning of 1940, the Polish soldiers in France numbered around 35,000, and there was a large community of immigrant workers from which to recruit. The French had done very little to draw the Germans' attention in 1939 (see p. W:RH7); thus, they felt they had to make amends, and agreed to field four Polish infantry divisions. The problem was equipping them; the French barely had enough arms for their own troops. Besides, the Allies decided to wait for the German attack. Polish troops, however, took part in the ill-fated Norwegian sideshow, but they had to be evacuated back to France as the Germans were playing their blitzkrieg trick once more (see p. W14).

Indeed, the French army's day of defeat had come, and the Polish troops were swept away with it. At the time, only two infantry divisions were ready, with two more still in training. The 1st Grenadier Division fought bloody rearguard actions, defending the retreating

French 20th Corps they were assigned to; the division took some 40% casualties before disbanding. The newly reformed 10th Mechanized Brigade, outfitted with French tanks, also distinguished itself (see p. 43).

Of course, it was all to no avail. Of the Poles who were not killed or captured, some were interned in Switzerland, some hid and later joined the *Maquis*, and the luckiest fled again, to Great Britain this time.

Some Use for Veterans

No more than 20,000 men had made it over the Channel. That number included far too many officers, and there was again a shortage of weaponry, with the British Expeditionary Force having left much of it on the other coast. The Poles were stationed near Glasgow, but it seemed there was little use for them.

However, it turned out that nearly a quarter of those men were aircrews, who had been marginally involved in France and had been able to withdraw more easily than infantrymen; and many of them were veterans, who had precious combat experience against the Bf 109s. By August 1940, two squadrons were in combat, and their contribution was substantial. This increased the popularity of the Polish cause.

Meanwhile, the embryonic Carpathian Brigade was training hard in Palestine. A trickle of Polish refugees reached British territories through neutral countries and volunteered.

With Friends Like These

Operation Barbarossa caused a major shift in the alliances. The British hosts of the Polish government in exile welcomed the Soviet Union as a much-needed ally and wanted a united front against the common enemy. General Sikorski was forced to sign an agreement, even though Stalin yielded very little on his own part: he pointedly refused to consider territorial concessions. What he had grabbed in 1939 would never be part of a new Poland.

Nevertheless, more than 200,000 Polish soldiers had been captured by the Soviets in 1939, and more had been subsequently “resettled” or imprisoned; these could now be freed to fight the Germans. The Soviets insisted on fielding them as soon as possible, and on the Eastern Front; but these soldiers were malnourished and the USSR was unable or unwilling to outfit them. Their commander, General Wladyslaw Anders, refused to field a single barefoot division on the Eastern Front, to be used as cannon-fodder by the Communists.

After endless negotiations, and much British prodding on both sides, the Soviets agreed to send Polish troops to Iran and eventually on to fight in the Middle East and Africa. They did not allow recruitment of men who had lived in the Eastern third of Poland, and they seemed unable to provide information as to the whereabouts of a few thousand officers.

Just as the Polish troops began arriving in the Middle East, the strained relationship came to a showdown with the uncovering of the mass graves of Katyn (see p. 47). Polish protests, and their demands for an independent inquiry by the Red Cross, caused Stalin to break diplomatic relations with Sikorski. Stalin would later establish an alternative, “friendly” Polish government, and the Polish People’s Army (see p. 21). By mid-1943, only some 120,000 Poles (of these, 70,000 were veterans of 1939) had left the Soviet Union, and no more would come.

Through the Med

The Carpathian Brigade was fielded in September 1941. It took part in the fighting for Tobruk, fought side by side with Australian and British troops, and showed its mettle until it was moved back to Egypt and Palestine in March 1942. The duty of this cadre of veterans was now to train and command the men coming from the Soviet Union.

The Polish contribution to the Allied campaigns in the Mediterranean theater of operations cannot be overlooked. Unfortunately, their service began with a long, tedious year in Palestine and Iraq. The Poles trained and hoped and waited.

Finally, in September 1943, the 2nd Polish Corps was fielded in southern Italy, in order to weather a bad winter of static warfare (which they livened up with aggressive patrolling).

In May 1944, the time came for a key battle in the general offensive along all of the line. German troops in the monastery of Monte Cassino, which dominated the Liri valley, had already beaten back several Allied onslaughts (see p. W29). It was now the Poles’ turn. After several bloody clashes, on May 18 the German paratroopers were forced to retreat and the white-and-red flag was raised over the rubble.

The Polish troops soldiered on throughout the Italian campaign (see p. W:GL12), and time and again they had to crack German lines while marching up the Adriatic coast, until they eventually freed Bologna in April 1945.

Sweet Revenge

Poles served in the northwestern European Theater, too. The 1st Polish Armored Division landed in Normandy and on August 8 it spearheaded the 2nd Canadian Corps in the fight for the Falaise Gap. The Germans fought to get out of it, and the Poles managed to delay them long enough for the gap to be plugged. This was a serious blow for the Wehrmacht, with 50,000 men left behind in the pocket.

The Polish tanks continued their drive through northern France and Holland, and ended the war in the German port of Wilhelmshaven.

The last large battle featuring Polish troops in this theater was the airdrop of the Polish Parachute Brigade on the western bank of the Rhine, during Operation Market-Garden (see p. W23). The Polish drop was delayed several days, and when they arrived the Germans were fully alerted, the British already hard-pressed, and the two drop zones unable to support each other. The operation was a costly failure, through no fault of the Polish paratroops.



A HOPELESS FIGHT

Poland had no right to existence in the eyes of its Nazi conquerors. Large swaths of land in the north and west were directly annexed to the Reich, city names changed overnight, Polish schools and institutions closed, the language forbidden. The central third of the country, comprising Warsaw and Krakow, became the General Governorate, under the bloody rule of Hans Frank. The eastern third was annexed by the USSR, and later (after Barbarossa), partitioned between Frank's fief and military administration.

German plans for their subjects were simple and ruthless. Especially in the annexed lands, those Poles who could be "aryanized," because of their looks, ancestry, or willingness to collaborate, would become second-class citizens and serve the *Herrenvolk*. The others would be treated as most of the people in the General Governorate. This would become a giant slave plantation working for the Reich.

As always under the Reich, Jews would get the worst treatment possible (see pp. W:IC16, 23, 107).

The Home Army

The resistance began immediately in occupied Poland. At first, it was hoped that a belated but mighty French offensive would engage most of the German resources; therefore, small army units held out, hiding in the forests, ready to harass the enemy at the right time. That time never came, but these men formed the core on which the resistance was built.

The occupants' brutality was the strongest motivation for people to join the ranks of the Polish partisans. Men who were on the Germans' lists for reprisals, or who expected deportation, thought they might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.

The resistance was known as the *Armia Krajowa* (AK), or Home Army (see also p. 43).

It was born from previous attempts, such as the *Sluzba Zwyciestwu Polski* (Polish Victory Service) and the *Zwiazek Walki Zbrojnej* (Union for Armed Combat), and its allegiance was to the government in exile. Its most important commander was General Tadeusz Komorowski (codenamed *Bor*, Forest).

Until 1944, the AK harassed the Germans through sabotage operations and pinpoint attacks, trained its men, engaged in propaganda, gathered intelligence, and disposed of collaborators. The partisans were building up and biding their time: the plan was to launch Operation *Burza* (Tempest) only when the Nazis were on the point of collapse. Hopefully, this would prevent the Germans from practicing scorched-earth tactics and, most importantly, prevent the Soviets from taking over.

Jews Can Shoot Back

The persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe was more immediate and ruthless than anywhere else. The Nazis had fewer qualms than in Western countries, the Jewish population was large and conspicuous, and disposing of it was consistent with the objective of emptying the region for the German colonists' *Lebensraum*. The invaders immediately enforced restrictive measures. During 1940, they set up urban ghettos in sever-

al cities, and used them as concentration centers. Meanwhile, Poland's less populated areas were earmarked as ideal sites for the Nazi slaughterhouses that would dispose of Jews from all over Europe.

The ghettos became horribly overcrowded during 1941. The Nazis deliberately starved the inhabitants. Those Jews who had always lived there and who were wealthy sold their jewels for a day's food; the people who had been deported from Germany or Ukraine, and had arrived with nothing to sell, simply starved in the streets or died of typhus.

During 1942, as the extermination camps became operational, the Nazis began to empty the ghettos. The "resettlement" began on July 22 in the Warsaw ghetto. The Jews were told they would go to labor camps in the east. Only those who were working in factories and workshops supplying the Wehrmacht, or were otherwise useful to the Germans could remain.

The evacuation of the ghetto, which had begun in an orderly fashion, with its victims collaborating with it, became more violent and desperate over time. In the end, many Jews decided they would not go down without a struggle, and the *Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (Jewish Fighter Organization) was born. It acquired most of its arms (mainly pistols) on the black market, while the AK also supplied some.

On April 19, 1943, the Jews' armed resistance astounded the Germans. It cost them casualties and unexpected efforts to eventually clear the ghetto.

Abandoned

In the spring of 1944, the Armia Krajowa launched Operation Tempest. The time seemed ripe, especially in the east, as the Soviets were on the offensive again. The partisans' operation did tie down German units right behind the front line, thus facilitating the Russian advance, but they had only limited success on their own, because of the severe equipment shortage. The largest resistance movement in Europe had received a puny 500 tons of airdropped supplies (even the small Greek organizations got 10 times that amount). When the Soviet units met AK groups, these were disbanded, the leaders sent east, the rank-and-file pressed into service with the LWP.

Therefore, General Komorowski decided to order a general uprising in Warsaw as soon as the Soviets reached its gates. It was vital to free the city and to force the Soviets to recognize the AK as the provisional government. The insurrection began on August 1, as the Soviets were approaching.

The AK failed to secure the eastern bank of the Vistula. While the German front line troops reacted by counterattacking the Soviet vanguards, German "anti-partisan" SS specialists were sent into the city; they did their worst but achieved little. Regular forces, however,

began strangling the partisan positions – and razing the city in the process.

The AK received almost no outside help (see *Did the Soviets Wait it Out?*, below); for all practical purposes, they were left to their own devices. On October 4 Warsaw surrendered for the second time in the war. Some 200,000 Poles were killed, including half of the partisans; the Germans lost 15,000 men. This bloody failure gutted the AK. Surviving inhabitants were deported and the city was left a ghastly desert of rubble.

DID THE SOVIETS WAIT IT OUT?

The utter defeat of the AK in the Warsaw uprising made it that much easier for the Soviets to install their own men in 1945. Polish patriots accused the USSR of having deliberately chosen not to help the insurgents.

Actually, the Soviet troops in the field did not need nefarious reasons to stay out of the city – they had plenty of good reasons. They had other, more practical bridgeheads across the river, far from the narrow streets of the capital. They were under intense pressure from a German counterattack. Most importantly, they were overextended, at the end of a successful but costly spring offensive, and out of supplies – even the Western Allies were being slowed down by such problems. Indeed, the Soviets did try, and with Polish troops: by September 14, the 1st Polish Army of the LWP had succeeded in clearing the eastern bank; they even established some weak bridgeheads, but could not reinforce them.

However, other evidence looks damning. The Soviet-sponsored Polish-language radio had been inciting the citizenry to take arms. The Western Allies wanted to airdrop supplies over Warsaw, but they needed to stop over in Ukraine to maximize the payloads; Stalin refused his permission. The RAF flew without that logistical assistance, but had heavy losses and meager successes. On September 13, the Soviets finally allowed shuttle flights, and even ordered some supplies of their own to be launched; but it was too little, too late. The partisans controlled too small an area, and the much-needed arms largely dropped into German hands.

At this time, Stalin stated that the AK men were "criminals;" indeed, he would treat the survivors as such after the war.

BITTER VICTORY

By 1945, it was clear that Stalin would have his way in Eastern Europe; those countries were already garrisoned by his troops, anyway. News of the Yalta agreements of February trickled down the ranks, and the Polish troops, both in the west and the east, learned theirs would be a bitter victory.

The whole country of Poland was “shifted” west: since the USSR would never hand back western Ukraine and western Belarus, Poland was partially compensated with the utterly devastated former German territories of Silesia, Pomerania, and parts of Brandenburg and East Prussia. This caused a massive refugee crisis with additional untold casualties among Germans and Poles alike.

Poland arguably was the country that fared worst in WWII. It had suffered the highest casualty rate: with over 6 million losses (including more than 5.5 million

civilians) it had lost 19% of its population. This included about 3 million Polish Jews. Most cities had been destroyed, Warsaw virtually obliterated; not to mention other material losses.

But the worst was that, although it was on the winning side, Poland did not win its freedom.

Exiled Forever

The Soviets would not let the Polish divisions in the west come home as a whole. The units hung together until 1947, when it became clear what kind of government Poland would have (see *A Puppet Government*, p. 16). At that time, the Polish forces in the west disbanded.

Small numbers of individual veterans went back to their families. Many of them wound up in prison camps, together with former AK combatants; they would not be released until many years later, if at all.

The large majority of the Polish veterans in the west finally settled down in Great Britain, the USA, or

WHAT IF . . . ?

Alternate-history scenarios in which Poland plays an active, leading part have to take off in 1939 (or before), and thus they rapidly take a sharp turn away from the war we know.

A 1918-21 turning point, with the birth of a Union of Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania (see p. 4) would have radically changed the balance of power. The efforts of Hitler and Stalin would probably have been directed at breaking up such a fractious third player.

Without Cieszyn (see *Dog Eat Dog*, p. 6), it is just possible that Poland would have allied with Czechoslovakia in 1938. This could lead to a premature WWII, with Germans troops scrambling to face both the Czechs and the Poles, the British and French even less prepared than a year later, and the Soviets sure to jump in.

If in 1939 Great Britain, France, Poland, and the Soviet Union somehow managed to create a united front against Nazism, Hitler might well postpone his plans. This places diplomats, politicians and secret agents in the spotlight. The Nazis try to destabilize the alliance. The Soviets slyly encroach on Polish sovereignty, deploy more troops, and maybe finally attempt a Communist coup. At *this* time Hitler will strike, maybe with a stronger Wehrmacht!

Barring that unlikely alliance, another key for alternate reality is the behavior of France and the Soviet Union. The former might have attacked more vigorously; the latter might have decided that taking to the field would be too

risky. Both options are unlikely, so they require some pretty convincing rationale – maybe the Polish foreign relations were much better than in reality? Anyway, by mid-October the Poles precariously hold out around Lwow, the Soviets sit on the fence, the Germans have to shift reinforcements to the West, and the Romanians are under great British pressure to allow supplies through their territory. This is really an uphill start for Germany.

In other what-if stories, Poland may be the bone of contention rather than the protagonist. If Churchill got the Balkan landing he wanted instead of Overlord (see p. W30), the Polish troops would spearhead a drive to free their country, and the Polish Parachute Brigade (see p. 43) could indeed be dropped on the Warsaw airport. The Soviet reaction could well lead to the war among allies that the Germans were hoping for in real history.

A weird hypothesis shifts the focus of Hitler’s bottomless hatred from the Jews to the Poles; this is explored on p. W:IC125.

A success of the Warsaw uprising might lead the West to espouse the cause of the Polish “freedom fighters” – and to condemn their repression by Stalin. This would not change the war’s outcome, but could form the basis of interesting post-war *GURPS Atomic Horror* campaigns. The Polish post-1945 resistance to the Soviets might be much stronger than it actually was, and the West could very actively support it.

elsewhere. Many would never see their motherland again.

A Puppet Government

Meanwhile, in Poland, a supposedly coalition government had been established. It was actually under Soviet control. The fighting did not end in 1945, as a guerrilla war raged on, in the eastern provinces against the Polish Nationalist movement and the Ukrainian resistance, in the western ones against splinters of the AK. These skirmishes took years to peter out.

In 1947, the coalition was replaced by an out-and-out Communist government, led by the hard-liner Boleslaw Bierut. Even the leader of the Communist GL resistance group, Wladyslaw Gomułka, fell into disgrace.

The Poles now had the bitter but proud memories of another failed struggle. They remained the thorn in the Soviet Union's side, and, perhaps thanks to the reputation they had acquired in the war, no Russian tanks were ever used to quell riots in Poland, as happened elsewhere. It would take several decades more for true Polish freedom.



2. THE POLISH ARMED FORCES

The bravery and heroism of the Polish Army merits great respect. But the high command was not up to the demands of the situation.

– Gerd von Rundstedt

PILSUDSKI'S PRIDE

In the 1920s and 1930s, a grateful Poland took an immense national pride in its own army. The links between the nation and its armed forces were stronger than in any other country, which was unsurprising, since the same man was father to both: Jozef Pilsudski (see p. 4). Born during the death throes of WWI and forged by the Russo-Polish war, the army had been successfully cobbled together by Pilsudski as a jigsaw of volunteer militias, foreign legions, recruits from POW camps, and remnants of the occupying powers' military.

The Russo-Polish war had exactly the opposite effect on the Polish commanders that WWI did on the German general staff; instead of learning new lessons from a defeat, as the Germans did, they thought they could wage and win the next war as they had in 1920. Well before that, the Western armies had learned the bloody lessons of machine-gun fire, trenches, and barbed wire; but in the Russo-Polish war, the vast dis-

tances, lack of stable fronts, and scarcity of automatic guns had allowed the cavalry to dominate the battlefield, in a way that the Western Front carnage had already proved outmoded in 1914.

The alternative to static trench warfare was mechanization, intended for armored breakthroughs. While German planners ended up with a significant edge in these new concepts, French and British generals also studied them in the two decades between the wars. On the other hand, Polish generals, who tended to be conservatives for social reasons anyway, were reluctant to update their tactics and had no idea of the effectiveness of armored vehicles when correctly deployed. They thought all armored vehicles were as unreliable and weakly armed as their own tankettes. With a few exceptions, their tank doctrine was to spread around the vehicles in penny packets, and to use them for reconnaissance and as mobile MG nests supporting the infantry.

These problems were compounded by a general lack of funds. Poland was still a rural, backward country with limited industrial capabilities. Its economy had taken bad blows in 1929-1933, and still was in a downturn in 1938. The Poles invested a sizable share of their GNP in the armed forces, which is understandable considering who their neighbors were – but that was still a paltry sum compared to the German military budget, especially in the last few years before the war. In 1939, the total budget of the Polish armed forces was about 15% of the Luftwaffe's. Cavalry was not only a tradition but also a way to make do: it at least provided more tac-

tical mobility than infantry, given that there weren't enough trucks! Still, the cavalry used some 7% of the 1938 army budget, compared to a paltry 1.5% for armored units. Most of the artillery was also horse-drawn, and of WWI vintage or earlier; signals and engineering equipment also left much to be desired.

By 1936, Polish planners had acknowledged the Nazi threat, and began studying an overall modernization of their army. Good, modern antitank and anti-aircraft artillery were procured, but in small numbers. A new antitank rifle was secretly developed (see p. 34), and it was technically up to the average German tank's armor thickness. Four of the beloved cavalry brigades were slated for mechanization . . . by 1942. Unfortunately, by 1939 only one of them had achieved that status, and another mechanized brigade was hurriedly put together.

Thus, when the war began, the Polish army was not ready for the German forces; what's worse, its generals didn't know it.

STANDARD UNITS

The Polish infantry squad (*drużyna*) was very large, with 19 men; it included a squad leader, two seven-man rifle sections (*sekcja*), and a four-man LMG section. Three such squads made up a platoon (*pluton*), together with a six-man HQ. The company (*kompania*) had three platoons, a small HQ, and a mortar section with three 46mm mortars. It should also have had three AT rifles, but these were in short supply.

A battalion (*batalion*) had three companies, an HQ, and a MG company, with three MG platoons (each with four MMGs) and a mortar platoon (with two 81mm mortars). The regiment (*pulk*) fielded three battalions, plus its HQ, a recon company, an infantry gun company, and an AT company with three or four 37mm Bofors AT guns. The division (*dywizja*) had three infantry regiments, and artillery for a total of 24 75mm, 12 100mm, three 105mm, and three 155mm pieces. It also fielded an engineer battalion, and a company-sized unit each of AA (either with four 40mm Bofors guns or with varying numbers of MGs on AA mounts) and MMGs (12 MGs and two 81mm mortars). For recon duties, it had one cavalry and one bicycle squadron. Eleven divisions also had a scout company on 13 TK or TKS tankettes (see p. 35).

CAVALRY AND ARMORED UNITS

The Poles fielded 11 cavalry brigades (*brygada*), totaling some 10% of their forces, a very high proportion for WWII. The cavalry squad had six troopers, each platoon having three saber squads and one 5-trooper LMG squad. Three platoons made a squadron (*szwadron*); four

squadrons made up a regiment, together with a squadron of MMGs (12 guns), and a platoon each of AT guns (four 37mm Bofors guns) and cyclists. The brigade had three or four regiments, an infantry battalion, engineers, a horse artillery battalion (12 75mm guns), an AA section (two 40mm Bofors AA guns), and two recon units: one with eight armored cars and the other with 13 tankettes.

Poland also had armored units, but most of them were too small or spread too thin to be really effective; besides, the vehicles were usually too lightly armed and armored. There were three independent light tank battalions; two fielded 49 7TP light tanks each, the third had 45 French R-35 tanks that had just been imported. There were several independent light tank companies, equipped either with obsolete FT-17s or with 7TPs. Several recon squadrons fielded 13 tankettes each, and were attached to infantry divisions.

Poland's two mechanized brigades were the exceptions to this outdated organization of armored forces.

SPECIAL UNITS

The *10 Brygada Kawalerii Zmotoryzowanej* (10th Motorized Cavalry Brigade) was the one fully mechanized Polish unit (see also p. 43). Its men would later form the new 1st Polish Armored Division. The unit fought gallantly in delaying actions, though it was too small and underequipped. It had two truck-mounted "cavalry" regiments, a light tank company with 17 Vickers tanks, two 13-tankette squadrons (some mounting the 20mm autocannon), and motorized 75mm artillery.

Another unit, the *Warszawska Brygada Pancerno-Motorowa* (Warsaw Motor-Armored Brigade), was established in all haste. It cobbled together new, untested units and reserve or training formations. It had a tank company with 16 Vickers tanks, and two tankette squadrons with 13 vehicles each.

THE NATIONAL GUARD

The *Obrona Narodowa*, or national guard, was established in 1936. It was intended to support the army if the need arose, and to provide territorial defense. The latter was no trivial task in regions with large, restive minorities, and the Guard, indeed, was for Poles only. The basic unit was the battalion; in 1939 most were understrength, either by design (as there were different levels of planned readiness) or because younger guardsmen had been recalled to the army because of the mobilization. This left the national guard with weak units, obsolete weaponry, and aging servicemen. Nevertheless, some of its units performed well when attached to a local army command.

OPERATIONS AND TACTICS

Operationally, the Polish army relied on the offensive, or the counterattack if needed, led by infantry assaults and exploited by cavalry advances. Unfortunately, with its limited mobility and poor communications, offensive operations had to rely too much on “adaptability” – i.e., improvisation. Counterattacks were seldom well coordinated and they often remained isolated affairs. Nevertheless, they could throw the Germans off-balance, if only for a short time.

Even though French trainers and advisors had left Poland at the end of the 1920s, Polish tactics were initially influenced by French doctrine – at least in theory. The Poles carried out their trainers’ teachings much more aggressively than the French had intended. The LMG section would provide a fire base, while the two seven-man rifle sections would assault; this organization could provide for a flanking move by either section. In practice, Polish squads had to cope as they could; though they outnumbered their German counterparts, they had less automatic firepower.

Cavalry tactics dictated that a charge should be launched only against suitable targets, i.e. infantry in the open or artillery unable to return fire. The charge should be carried onto the enemy flank, not only to maximize its effects, but also to allow for supporting MG fire to suppress the enemy reaction. Otherwise, the troopers would dismount.

A POOR MAN’S WEAPON

The Polish air force (*Lotnictwo Wojskowe*) was not an arm of its own, but rather fell under the army’s administration. Just as with the ground forces, its short history had begun with captured leftovers and assorted volunteers: the *Tadeusz Kosciuszko* Squadron, which fought against the Soviets in 1920, relied on ex-German fighters flown by a dozen Polish-American pilots.

Such stopgap measures were wisely replaced by a national industrial concern, the *Panstwowe Zaklady Lotnicze* (State Aviation Industry). Its chief designer, Zygmunt Pulawski, was one of the first to abandon the cloth-and-wood biplane: his all-metal, high-winged P.1 prototype flew in 1929. By 1935, the air force commander, General Ludomil Rayski, decided he had

MATHEMATICIANS AND CHESS PLAYERS

The Polish *Biuro Szyfrow* (cipher bureau) scored its own most important point in the war of codes by acquiring, under a front company, a commercial version of the German Enigma ciphering machine in 1928; this was a very simple version if compared to what the German *Kriegsmarine* would use later, but it was a starting point. In 1929, a small group of mathematicians (and chess players) from the Poznan University began working on it in secret; they were led by Marian Rejewski, a young, promising mathematician who had also studied in Germany. By 1933 they could read some of the traffic. Carrying out all the permutations needed took time, and they could not break the messages on a daily basis; but it was enough for general intelligence, and it would prove invaluable later on. Building on the intelligence and the early model, the Poles managed to put together a fairly good replica of Enigma. The Polish machines and deciphering work made it to the French and British services at the eleventh hour, thus giving Bletchley Park (p. W41) a head start.

Later in the war, the resistance ran terrible risks to infiltrate the secret testing grounds in southern Poland in order to retrieve parts of unexploded V rockets. These components were then shipped to Great Britain through makeshift clandestine airfields. Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, who worked for Radio Free Europe after the war, was one of the couriers who made these adventurous journeys.

enough fighters, and shifted his meager resources to bombers. This prevented further research and development on fighters at a time when aircraft became obsolete very quickly, but keeping up with the arms race was impossible. Notwithstanding all the merits of the *Lotnictwo Wojskowe*, funding was very limited. In order to generate capital, the PZL industries began selling their products to other Eastern European countries.

Thus, in 1939 the air force was a poor man’s weapon. It was too small. Its fighters, though innovative in 1929, could not compete with the German Bf 109s a decade later. Its light bombers were expected to carry out the same low-flying strafing missions that WWI fighters had successfully flown in 1920 against Cossack columns – which had been devoid of anti-aircraft defenses. The ground observation and warning

network was good, but only as long as communications worked. The new medium bombers were very good, but just three dozen were operational.

Given these constraints, the air force was organized in three main groups. The Pursuit Brigade (*Brygada Poscigowa*) was a central fighter reserve, which could be shifted as needed but ended up mainly defending Warsaw. The Bomber Brigade (*Brygada Bombowa*) was the main strike force, comprising Poland's 36 medium bombers and some 50 light bombers. The rest of the air force was parceled out to the ground armies.

A BROWN-WATER NAVY

With the end of WWI, Poland had gained a “free and secure access to the sea,” as postulated by Wilson's Thirteenth Point. Since its traditional port, Gdansk (Danzig) was given a special status, this access meant a 90-mile stretch of coast with just a couple of small fishing harbors. Danzig could be used for trade, but not as a military base. The Polish navy began its life with similarly puny heirlooms, some two-dozen small torpedo boats and rusty gunships. During the protracted post-WWI conferences where politicians squabbled over war reparations, German negotiators successfully delayed and stalled the planned delivery of other minor vessels.

Thus Poland went about building a seagoing force almost from scratch. The fishing village of Gdynia was transformed into a naval base. The ships had to be built in foreign shipyards. The usual funding problems put severe restrictions on the fleet, and Polish planners dedicated sizable resources to small submarines and mine warfare vessels (although they also bought four destroyers). It was a brown-water navy, but this is not just a derogatory expression: the Baltic Sea *was* a confined, shallow body of water, so it made perfect sense to focus on insidious anti-shipping weapons such as mines and torpedoes. The Polish navy could at most hope to be a local deterrent factor in its own sea, and in 1939 it was reasonably suited to that task.

Notwithstanding all these efforts, and the bravery shown by Polish seamen in the campaign, that short coast remained an Achilles' heel: the enemy knew where to find those few vessels, and the Poles were unable to defend their base effectively, especially from air attacks.

SEPTEMBER 1939

This is the order of battle of the Polish armed forces at the very beginning of the war.

THE POLISH ARMY

The Polish ground forces had not completed their mobilization on September 1, 1939. However, they had sizable forces deployed on the borders with Germany. In total, they had 20 infantry divisions, which were either fully or almost ready (some still suffered from a manpower shortage), and all of these were facing the Germans. Additionally, they had mountain troops, two divisions and three independent brigades, guarding the Tatra range in the southwestern corner. The combat-ready forces also included 11 cavalry brigades and the one armored brigade they had.

Finally, there were 15 infantry divisions more, which were just beginning their mobilization. These were either part of the central reserve, around Warsaw, or deployed to the east (the reserve divisions were grouped up in secondary armies). The list below gives the complete order of battle south to north; minor formations are not listed.

POLISH ARMY ORDER OF BATTLE

Karpaty Army

2 mountain brigades (2nd, 3rd)

Krakow Army

6 infantry divisions (6th, 7th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 55th)

1 mountain brigade (1st)

1 fortress group (Katowice)

1 cavalry brigade (Krakowska)

10th Motorized Brigade

Lodz Army

4 infantry divisions (2nd, 10th, 28th, 30th)

2 cavalry brigades (Wolynska, Kresowa)

Poznan Army

4 infantry divisions (14th, 17th, 25th, 26th)

2 cavalry brigades (Wielkopolska, Podolska)

Pomorze Army

5 infantry divisions (4th, 9th, 15th, 16th, 27th)

1 cavalry brigade (Pomorska)

Modlin Army

2 infantry divisions (8th, 20th)
2 cavalry brigades (Novogrodzka, Mazowiecka)

Reserves and other units

1 mobilized infantry division (18th)
15 partially mobilized infantry divisions
3 cavalry brigades
Warsaw Armored Brigade

POLISH AIR FORCE ORDER OF BATTLE

The Pursuit Brigade was mostly deployed in satellite airfields around Warsaw. It had five fighter squadrons, for a total of 43 PZL P.11 (a and c versions) and 10 PZL P.7a fighters.

The Bomber Brigade had four medium and five light bomber squadrons, comprising 36 PZL P.37 Los bombers, 50 PZL P.23 Karas light bombers, and a handful of liaison aircraft.

The Army Air Force totaled 64 P.23s in seven squadrons, 95 P.11s and 10 P.7s in 10 fighter squadrons and a handful of independent wings, and 11 observation squadrons with RWD-14 aircraft and other models. For instance, the Lodz Army had one P.23 squadron (10 light bombers), two fighter squadrons plus a detached wing (9 P.11c, 2 P.11a, and 10 P.7a fighters), two observation squadrons (7 RWD-14, 4 RWD-8, and 7 Lublin R-XIIID aircraft), and a handful of liaison RWD-8s; this was a typical allotment to the main field armies.

POLISH NAVY ORDER OF BATTLE

Four destroyers: *Wicher*, *Burza*; *Bliskawica*, *Grom*.

Five submarines: *Wilk*, *Zbik*, *Rys*; *Orzel*, *Sep*.

One minelayer, *Gryf*, and six minesweepers.

Three gunboats, three training ships, and minor vessels, including 44 armed river boats.

AFTER 1939

The Polish forces continued to make a significant contribution to the Allied war effort throughout the war.

IN THE WEST

The Polish Armed Forces (*Polskie Sily Zbrojne*) went on fighting in the West. They contributed two infantry divisions (1st Grenadiers, 2nd Rifle), an incomplete armored division and the Highland Brigade (see p. 42) for the Battle of France and the Norwegian campaign. Two more infantry divisions were still training in France in May 1940, and one was hopelessly thrown in the fray.

In the Mediterranean theater, the Poles contributed to the desert battles with an independent unit, the Carpathian Brigade. This was to become the core of the much-expanded 2nd Polish Corps that landed in Italy. It included the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division (see p. 42), the 5th *Kresowa* Infantry Division, the 2nd Armored Brigade, and Corps assets.

The 1st Polish Corps, formed in England, comprised the 1st Polish Armored Division, the Polish Parachute Brigade, commando units, and other minor assets.

The Polish navy continued its grinding war from British harbors, both on its own battered vessels and on destroyers, escorts, and submarines supplied by the Allies; several RAF squadrons were manned by Polish personnel.

THE HOME ARMY

A rough estimate of the *Armia Krajowa*, or Home Army (see p. 43) is that it could count on some 300,000 men and women by the end of 1943. Not all of these were “full-time” guerrillas, but this figure does not include mere civilian supporters – who were just as important as the partisans themselves. Anyway, this was the largest spontaneous resistance movement in Europe (although the Soviet one was actually larger, it counted in its ranks many semi-regular formations).

THE POLISH PEOPLE’S ARMY

The 1st Army of this Soviet-backed organization fielded the 1st *Tadeusz Kosciuszko* Infantry Division (see p. 42) and, eventually, four more infantry divisions, all trained and equipped according to the Soviet model. It also had a tank unit, the *Bohaterowie Westerplatte* (Heroes of Westerplatte) Armored Brigade, a cavalry brigade, Corps artillery, and one each of independent heavy tank, self-propelled artillery, and engineer regiments. The 2nd Army also had five infantry divisions and an armored brigade, but it only saw some action at the very end of the war.



3. POLISH SOLDIERS

At first blush, a *GURPS WWII* campaign in Poland offers only bleak prospects – its military defeated, its citizens terrorized and murdered, its day-to-day life brought to a standstill. Aside from the initial defensive actions, most game settings would revolve around the heroic resistance put up by Poles from all walks of life – and their often bitter end. A more uplifting campaign might see Polish soldiers fight from the beginning of the war, flee to one of the Allied nations, and continue to fight all over Europe until they finally return home, six years later.

CREATING POLISH CHARACTERS

GURPS WWII and the other books in the line provide several templates for creating WWII characters. The following information is presented in the core book format, and the guidelines on pp. W68-85 can be followed. Treat Polish soldiers as Soviet ones for rank-based Wealth (p. W63).

POLISH MILITARY RANKS

MR	Polish Army/ Air Force	Polish Navy
8	Marszalek	–
8	General Broni	Admiral
7	General Dywizji	Wice-Admiral
7	General Brygady	Kontr-Admiral
6	Pulkownik	Komandor
5	Podpulkownik	Komandor-Porucznik
4	Major	Komandor-Podporucznik
4	Kapitan	Kapitan
3	Porucznik	Porucznik Marynarki
3	Podporucznik	Podporucznik Marynarki
2	–	Starszy Bosman
2	Starszy Sierzant	Bosman
1	Sierzant	Bosmanmat
1	Plutonowy	Starszy Mat
1	Kapral	Mat
0	Starszy Szeregowiec	Starszy Marynarz
0	Szeregowiec	Marynarz

FEMALE CHARACTERS

Women had no place in the short September campaign, except in medical services. However, they played a key role in the resistance, as well as in all aspects of life in occupied Poland, given the terrible shortage of men. Although Polish women actively fought with partisan groups, they more often had an equally dangerous role as messengers, couriers, and spies. Providing food for the partisans was a thankless but especially daunting task (see p. 50). Since the Germans wanted the Poles to be illiterate serfs, they had closed all schools in the General Governorate; thus, many women took to teaching what they knew in forbidden night schools, as a simple act of defiance and hope.

Ironically, the *Hausfrau* template (p. W:IC51) could be adapted for use for Polish female characters.

Polish Advantages

Purchase Military Rank and resulting Wealth, with remaining points spent among: +1 to HT [10]; Acute Senses (p. B19) [2/level]; either Collected (p. CI22) [5] or Composed (p. CI22) [5]; Combat Reflexes (p. B20) [15]; Common Sense (p. B20) [10]; Fearlessness (p. CI25) [2/level]; Reputation (Medals) (p. W63) or Reputation (Good conduct) (p. B17) [varies]; Strong Will (p. B23) [4/level]; Single-Minded (p. CI30) [5]; Toughness 1 (p. B23) [10].

Polish Disadvantages

A stereotypical set: Fanaticism (Patriotism) (p. B33) [-15] and Poverty (Poor) (p. W63) [-15]. Substitute from among: Addiction (Tobacco) (p. B30) [-5]; Bad Sight (p. B27) [-10 or -25]; Code of Honor (p. W64) [varies]; Chummy (p. CI87) [-5]; Hidebound (p. CI91) [-5]; Intolerance (p. B34) [-5/-10]; Overconfidence (p. B34) [-10]; Social Stigma (Minority) (p. B27) [-5]; Stubbornness (p. B37) [-5]; Truthfulness (p. B37) [-5]; Workaholic (p. CI95) [-5].

Quirks

Proud [-1] is common.

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

See pp. W62-65 for general guidelines. Specific notes for Polish characters are listed below. See also pp. W:IC42-45.

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES

Animal Empathy

see p. B19

This advantage wasn't common enough to be listed among the *Polish Advantages* (see p. 22), but it was part of the Polish horseman's mystique, and many fine riders could be said to have it.

Claim to Hospitality and Contacts see pp. CI21-22

In occupied Poland you often lived or died by your ring of "friends" (or lack thereof). These advantages are especially important for partisans, criminals, and Jews. Note that they should never be rated too highly; Polish organizations can at most offer a *little* help, and no Contact is more than "somewhat reliable" when your name can be tortured out of him.

Fit and Very Fit see p. W182

If the GM rules that these advantages require a healthy, rich diet, then they become very uncommon in occupied Poland. The opposite disadvantages (Unfit and Very Unfit, p. CI85) become common.

Status see p. B18, p. W180

The Polish society was very class-conscious. Noble titles had been officially abolished, but landed gentry still retained clout, wealth, and high Status. High rank became a double-edged sword after 1939, however, as both the Germans and the Soviets started a pervasive effort to deprive Poland of any kind of leadership. This included removing military, political, intellectual, and religious leaders, and of course noblemen on the Soviet side of the border. German administrators could be a bit more ambivalent toward conservative high-status families – provided they would become collaborators.

Wealth see p. B16, p. W63, W180

The occupation brought about a deliberate impoverishment of Poland. Possessions could easily be requisitioned. By 1941, firms working for the Wehrmacht fared well, but they had new German owners. A GM could reasonably drop any Polish character's Wealth by one level in 1942. On the other hand, black marketeers and other criminal types would be better off.

BACKGROUND DISADVANTAGES

Duty (Involuntary) see p. CI77

Forced laborers definitely qualify for this disadvantage. Farmers not meeting their quotas would also risk death or deportation.

Intolerance see p. B34, p. W185

All kinds of Intolerance (racial, religious, against a specific group, or against anybody else but your own kind) were relatively common in pre-war Poland, and actively encouraged by German authorities after 1939.

Social Stigma (Minority Group) see p. B27, p. W180

Not only the Jews (see *The Shtetl*, p. 24), but also *all* other minorities (Germans, Ukrainians, Lithuanians) were considered untrustworthy and often harassed in the years of bitter nationalism that led up to the war. Given that these are not small, close-knit communities, the GM might rule that the +2 reaction bonus "by your own kind" does not always apply.

BACKGROUND SKILLS

Generally speaking, technical skills were uncommon among Polish soldiers, with skills like Agronomy, Animal Handling, Riding, and Teamster being more common. City dwellers would have Bicycling much more often than Driving. During the bleak years of the occupation, Scrounging, Merchant (for bartering and haggling), and Streetwise were important skills.

THE SHTETL

In 1939, 30% of Polish Jews lived in towns and cities, but the majority remained in the *Shtetl* (pl. *Shtetlekh*) – the small market village – and the cultural roots of Polish Jewry were there, too. The local Jewish community enjoyed a degree of self-rule, by means of the democratically elected, often fractious *kehillah* (council, pl. *kehillot*). Originally overseeing religious matters, the local councils could decide to spend the money they collected for social purposes (education, community hospitals, mutual-aid organizations), and they did this more and more often, especially in cities. The Germans would later pervert the Warsaw *kehillah* into the *Judenrat*.

The *shtetl* was a model of complementary economic development: its Jewish craftsmen and shop-owners catered to a hinterland of Polish farmers, who in turn used the market to sell their agricultural produce. This arrangement had worked well in the past, when Jews could not own land. Besides, by being mostly self-employed or working for other Jews, they avoided the problems connected with holy days. Similarly, city-dwellers often were professionals or entrepreneurs: doctors, lawyers, jewelers, or businessmen.

The Jews' economic and social positions worsened throughout the 1930s: for starters, more Polish shops opened, and many had a sign reading "Christian Shop" in their window. Boycotting of Jewish firms became common; occasionally, fanatics just resorted to violence, in

small Polish versions of the *Kristallnacht* (see p. W:IC10). Meanwhile, state-owned employers (railways, tobacco factories, armaments industries, schools) would not hire minorities. Thus, while the slump had hit everybody, it was worse for the Jews.

The resurgence of anti-Semitism in the late '30s could be seen in the universities. Regulations restricting access were adopted, fanatical students harassed Jewish professors, and ultra-nationalist theories began circulating. A cruder, more violent version of this intolerance was lurking just below the surface in the eastern provinces, where pogroms had happened often, just a few decades before.

Jewish characters in Poland before the German invasion have Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10] and may have to face religious Intolerance. For most of them the native tongue would be Yiddish (M/A), though they would also know Polish. Cultured men could easily have invested a few points in Hebrew (M/A), Theology (Hebraism), and History and/or Literature with Jewish specializations.

After the German invasion, of course, the Jewish plight becomes much worse. They take the state as an Enemy worth a base -40 points, but usually at a frequency of 12 or less making it worth -80 points. During the occupation, the Germans often sent out "special troops" to eradicate several remote Jewish villages over the course of a single night.

CUSTOMIZATION NOTES

When using the templates on pp. W71-85, note the following modifications for the 1939 campaign: the Marine, Paratrooper, and Commando templates are not available. Most officers would use the Old Guard template (and many have Independent Income). Rifle units are green to average, cavalry is average to seasoned, armor crewmen would be green save for the 10th Mechanized Brigade (average or seasoned), artillerymen are average but horse artillery is seasoned. The air force can be rated average. The Polish mountain troops can use the mountain infantryman template found on p. W:GL22.

Things changed during the long years of exile. Commandos and paratroopers became available, and

they were at least seasoned. Most Polish unit had a strong cadre of experienced NCOs and hardened veterans. The Polish pilots joining the RAF for the Battle of Britain were at least seasoned.



ADDITIONAL TEMPLATES

The Cavalryman template covers a specialization not dealt with in the core book; the City Fighter is actually a lens for the Resistance Fighter (p. W85).

CAVALRYMAN 55 POINTS

Polish cavalry was the cream of the army, attracting the best officers and men. Riding to battle was the traditional way of fighting. The cavalry had won the 1920 war, and it summarized aggressiveness, initiative, and endurance, the qualities a good Polish soldier was expected to display.

Traditional cavalry was obsolete in mechanized WWII. Nevertheless, the Polish cavalymen demonstrated that controlled, surprise sweeps against infantry in the open could be deadly. Additionally, cavalry was faster than infantry over short distances and more mobile than trucks over difficult terrain, which made them suitable for recon and patrol duties.

Most importantly, Polish cavalymen were not only very good in the saddle (thanks to a national tradition of horsemanship), they were fully trained to double as mounted infantry. In this role, they suffered from a key weakness: when dismounted, about one third of the men remained behind as horse handlers. That was the price to pay for their flexibility. However, they had more familiarity with light tanks than the infantry, and usually more AT rifles, too.

In 1939, the lance was a training device, not supposed to be used in battle. Nevertheless, some units brought their lances along.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11[10]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Fit [5] and 25 points in *Polish Advantages* (p. 22).

Disadvantages: Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20] and -30 points in *Polish Disadvantages* (p. 22).

Basic Skills: Animal Handling (Horses) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-8/14; Broadsword (P/A) DX [2]-11; Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Guns (Light Auto) (P/E) DX+1 [1]-12*; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+2 [2]-13*; Jumping (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-10; Knife (P/E) DX [1]-11; Lance (P/A) DX-1 [1]-10; Soldier (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; Riding (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12; Spear (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-9; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-10; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-9; Traps (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9.

* Includes +1 from IQ.

Secondary Skills: Armoury (Small Arms) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-11; Demolition (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Gunner (MG) (P/A) DX [1]-11*; NBC Warfare (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9; Orienteering (M/A) IQ [2]-11; Scrounging (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Survival (Plains or Woodland) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10.

* Includes +1 from IQ.

Optional Skills: Spend 3 points on any of Bicycling, Guns (Pistol), Swimming (all P/E); Driving (Automobile), Gunner (Cannon, Mortar) (both P/A); Carousing (P/A – HT); Area Knowledge (any), Cooking, Leatherworking, Savoir-Faire (Military), Telegraphy (all M/E); Administration, Electronics Operation (Communications), Forward Observer, Gambling, Intimidation, Streetwise, Teamster (all M/A); Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Packing (both M/H).



STRANGERS, ABROAD AND AT HOME

After 1939, Poles could go to the West in order to fight on. There, they might suffer from a bad Reputation for a few months, because many thought Poland had folded too easily. After the French defeat, obviously, this disadvantage would disappear; however, the Polish émigrés may still face a certain patronizing attitude from British old-guard officers.

Polish characters in the Soviet Union would spend some appallingly bad time in a POW camp, and they would probably not be landowners, noblemen, senior officers, or priests – or if they were, they'd have a dangerous Secret. If they volunteered for service against Germany after 1941, they could be freed. If they were enthusiastic Communists, they might be consid-

ered somewhat reliable, but otherwise they'd still suffer from a reaction penalty.

As to characters living in occupied Poland, some guidelines can be found on pp. W:IC44-45. The hapless average Pole would stack the following disadvantages: Enemy (German state, on 6 or less, [-20]), Social Stigma (Minority Group, [-10], in territories annexed to Germany), and low Status (-1 in territories annexed to Germany, -2 in the General Governorate, [-5/-10]). That's a lot, but unfortunately it's realistic. High-status Poles would take a -2 decrease in their Status. It was possible to reduce these disadvantages, but this usually required a certain degree of collaboration. This in turn brought a bad Reputation (at least -2) from Poles, and possibly an Enemy (The Resistance).

CITY FIGHTER 50 POINTS

The Resistance Fighter template (see p. W85) is mainly focused on portraying guerrillas in the field; that is, in wilderness areas where they often had at least a fleeting control of the territory, because those areas weren't vital to the enemy's war effort. These places were invariably difficult terrain: mountains, forests, swamps. The fighters surviving there needed good outdoor skills to complement their combat capabilities.

On the other hand, Poland had few mountains and huge enemy garrisons. Thus, it had a significant proportion of urban, clandestine partisans. These waged dangerous undercover missions: spreading propaganda, gathering intelligence, attacking selected targets, and carrying out cunning sabotage actions, often arranged to look like unfortunate accidents (in order to prevent German reprisals). This is what they did, until the time came for bloody uprisings, when they could finally bear their arms openly. Because fooling the Germans and dealing with the help of criminal rings were important factors in their operations, these city fighters need slightly different skills than their countryside brethren.

This is a lens, customizing the template of p. W85; items not listed here remain unchanged.

Attributes: Optionally, reduce HT to 11 and upgrade either DX or IQ by 1.

Advantages: City Fighters may always take Contacts (p. CI22) [varies] as part of their *Polish Advantages* (p. 22).

Basic Skills: Replace Agronomy with any suitable Professional Skill. Replace Area Knowledge

(Home Region) with Area Knowledge (Home City). Remove Camouflage; add Guns (Pistol) at DX+1 and upgrade Traps from IQ-1 to IQ.

Secondary Skills: Remove Orienteering and upgrade Demolitions from IQ-1 to IQ. Replace Survival (Woodlands or other) with Survival (Urban).

Optional Skills: Add to the selection: Area Knowledge (Sewers) (M/E); Acting, Architecture, Foreign Language (German), Merchant, Shadowing (all M/A). Streetwise is already listed among the Optional Skills, and it's highly recommended.



4. THE POLISH ARMORY

SURPLUS FROM EVERY- WHERE

Poland could not afford to equip her military with the latest and best materiel. Much of their inventory had been acquired second-hand after WWI from France or other Allies, or even received as war reparation from Germany or as booty from Russia.

While Poland's first-line units were decently (if not to the latest international standard) equipped with Mauser repeating rifles and Browning machine guns (made locally under license), most of the second-line forces as well as the reserves had to do with a hodgepodge of old Austrian, French, German, and Russian equipment. The infantry particularly felt the lack of submachine guns and antitank weapons; while an adequate antitank rifle was in service, its distribution and use was very limited. An excellent antitank gun licensed from Bofors was in service (indeed, some had been exported to Great Britain), but this, too, was not available in sufficient numbers to stop the German panzers.

The Polish designation system for weapons and equipment is based on the year of adoption and the abbreviated form of *wzór* (model).

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The Polish rifleman or cavalryman was equipped with a field uniform, steel helmet, gas mask, loadbearing equipment, bayonet, entrenching tool, canteen, breadbag, and backpack with rolled blanket and mess kit.

The standard combat uniform was the khaki-colored *wz. 36*. Both the *rogatywka* forage cap and the stiffened garrison version had an uncommon shape: they were square-topped, thus echoing traditional Polish military headgear, harking back to the classic *czapka*.

The standard steel helmet was the Polish-designed *wz. 31* (similar in shape and function to the U.S. M-1, pp. B211, W87). However, the Polish forces had several other helmet types in service as well; prominent among them were the *wz. 16* (the German M1916, pp. HT90, W87) – mainly worn by the cavalry – and the *wz. 15* (the French Adrian Mle 15, p. HT90, made both in France and Poland) – common in reserve units.

Rifleman wore six pouches for two five-round rifle clips (60 rounds). The clip pouches were made of leather and very similar to the German kit (p. W:IC57). This was logical, given that they were designed to take the same ammunition. Machine gunners wore two pouches with three compartments for one 20-round LMG magazine each (120 rounds).

The entrenching tool was a short spade closely resembling the German one (p. W88).

Polish troops used several types of water canteens: the old *wz. 10* was of U.S. design and took 1 quart, while the Polish-designed *wz. 35* took 1.05 quarts and the *wz. 38* took 0.85 quarts (p. W87).

WEAPON TABLES

Semiautomatic Pistols – Use Guns (Pistol) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt.</i>	<i>AWt.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hld</i>	<i>Cost</i>
CZ wz. 28, .32 ACP	crit.	2d-1	10	2	100	1,300	1.8	0.25	3~	8+1	7	-1	0	\$16
FB Radom wz. 35 Vis, 9mm Parabellum	crit.	2d+2	10	3	150	1,850	2.7	0.4	3~	8+1	9	-1	-1	\$35

Rifles – Use Guns (Rifle) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt.</i>	<i>AWt.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hld</i>	<i>Cost</i>
FB Radom Mauser wz. 29, 7.92mm Mauser	crit.	7d	12	10	1,000	3,900	9.1	0.3	1/2	5+1	11	-3	-6	\$31
PWU-FK Mosin wz. 91/98/25, 7.92mm Mauser	crit.	7d	12	10	1,000	3,900	8.5	0.3	1/2	5+1	11	-3	-7	\$25
PWU-FK Maroszczyk wz. 35, 7.92mm Maroszczyk	crit.	12d-1 (2)	17	12	1,200	5,400	21	0.8	1/2	3+1	12B	-2	-10	\$135

Submachine Guns – Use Guns (Light Auto) Skill in Burst-Fire and Guns (Rifle) Skill in Semiautomatic Fire

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt.</i>	<i>AWt.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hld</i>	<i>Cost</i>
PWU-FK wz. 39 Mors, 9mm Parabellum	crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	10.3	1	8*	25	10	-1	-5	\$60
Blyskawica, 9mm Parabellum	16	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	8.4	1.4	8	32	10	-1	-4	\$20
Choroszmanów, 7.63mm Mauser	crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	11.2	1.5	10*	35	10	-1	-5	\$20

Machine Guns – Use Gunner (MG) Skill or Guns (Light Auto) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt.</i>	<i>AWt.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Hotchkiss wz. 25, 7.92mm Mauser	crit.	7d	20	10	1,000	3,900	78.9/138.7	25	8	300	22T	-1	\$300
Maxim wz. 10/28, 7.92mm Mauser	crit.	7d	20	10	1,000	3,900	70.2/169.6	17.8	10	250	22T	-1	\$300
PWU-FK Browning wz. 28, 7.92mm Mauser	crit.	7d	17	10	1,000	3,900	21.1	1.6	9*	20	12B	-2	\$270
PWU-FK Browning wz. 30, 7.92mm Mauser	crit.	7d	20	10	1,000	3,900	71.2/135.7	25	10	330	22T	-1	\$685

Hand Grenades – Use Throwing Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Wt.</i>	<i>Fuse</i>	<i>Hld</i>	<i>Cost</i>
PWU-FK Granat Obronny wz. 33	crit.	1d+2 [2d]	4-5	1.3	-1	\$10
PWU-FK Granat Zaczepny wz. 33	crit.	4d	4-5	0.8	-1	\$10
ET40 “Filipinika”	crit.	6d+1	0	1	-1	\$10
R42 “Sidolowa”	crit.	5d	4-5	1	-1	\$10

Mortars – Use Gunner (Mortar) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Ind.</i>	<i>Wt.</i>	<i>AWt.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>Cost</i>
PWU-FK wz. 36, 46mm	crit.	5d [3d]	20	5	110	880	17.6	1.7	1/3	1	\$195
PWU-FK wz. 31, 81mm	crit.	6d×2 [6d]	20	5	250	3,300	132	7.5	1/4	1	\$400

The breadbags wz. 26 and wz. 33 were pouches similar in cut to the German one (p. W:IC58).

The backpack wz. 25 was a small but heavy leather rucksack similar to old Austrian patterns (4.4 lbs., p. W87).

Finally, the mess kit was a three-part assembly like the German one (1.5 lbs., p. W88).

Officers and NCOs had 6× binoculars (+2/+3 to Vision, p. W87).

SMALL ARMS

See pp. W91-99 for more information.

WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

See pp. W94-99 for additional weapon descriptions, including many of the German weapons.

Hand Weapons

Hand weapons included the *bagnet wz. 28* (bayonet, p. W193), the *szabla wz. 34* (2-lb. cavalry saber with 1.2-lb. sheath, p. W193), and the 9.6-foot *lanca kawaleryjska* (French or German-made cavalry lance, p. B206). The bayonet was the only one of these that saw more than token service.

Automatic Pistols

The resistance fighters armed themselves with whatever pistols could be acquired, including many German weapons.

CZ Pistolet wzór 28 (1928): This Czechoslovakian pistol was the standard sidearm of the Polish customs police. It came with a detachable 1-lb. wooden shoulder stock (+2 Acc) that could also be used as a holster.

FB Radom Pistolet wzór 35 Vis (1935): The standard army pistol was the wz. 35, originally called WiS (after its designers, Wilniewiczyc and Skrzypinski) but soon changed to *Vis* (Latin for force). It was a neat design with some resemblance to the Colt M-1911A1. It could accept a detachable 1-lb. wooden shoulder stock (+2 Acc), but few of these were issued. Some 18,000 were at hand in 1939.

During the German occupation, production continued; hundreds of thousands were made for the German forces under the designation P 35(p) and prominently issued to the Luftwaffe's Fallschirmjäger (p. W:IC62).

Revolvers

The army and police had large numbers of the *Nagan Rewolwer wz. 30* [sic], which was a Polish-made copy of the Russian Nagant revolver (pp. HT110, W94).

Rifles

Aside from its front-line rifles, all chambered for the German 7.92mm Mauser cartridge, the Polish military also had huge amounts of obsolete second-hand weapons in the reserves. The most numerous was the French Lebel kb wz. 86 (pp. HT114, W:RH38), numbering some 145,000 pieces.

FB Radom Mauser Karabinek wzór 29 (1929): The standard Polish rifle was a copy of the Czechoslovakian ZB vz. 24 short rifle, which was itself based on the Mauser Gew 98 (p. HT114). It was quite similar to the Mauser Kar 98k (p. W95) in dimensions and performance. The army had 264,300 of these, a few hundred mounted a 2× scope (p. W88) for sniping.

The *Karabinek wz. 98* was the German-made Mauser Kar 98a, 263,000 having been obtained as reparation after WWI or built in Poland on German tools; Wt. 8.8.

PWU-FK Mosin Karabin wzór 91/98/25 (1926): Poland had inherited large numbers of Russian Mosin-Nagant rifles (p. W95), which were converted to fire the 7.92mm Mauser round during the 1920s. In 1939, it was the standard rifle of the border guards and the state police.

PWU-FK Maroszczyk Karabin Przeciwpancerny wzór 35 (1935): This huge bolt-action antitank rifle (5.8 feet long) fired the high-velocity 7.92×107mm Maroszczyk round with an AP bullet that was quite capable of penetrating the armor of many early tanks, although its behind-armor effect was limited. It had to be fired prone from its bipod. The kb ppanc wz. 35 fed from a three-round detachable magazine. Its barrel had a service life of only 200 rounds; after that, reduce Damage, Acc, and Range by 20%. Some 6,600 had been produced, but only half of these were actually in service when the war started, and few soldiers had ever seen it before the attack, let alone fired it (making it unfamiliar, p. B43) – it was generally listed as the *Karabin Ur*, for *Urugwaj*, as it was so secret that it was said to be made for export to Uruguay.

Captured weapons were briefly used as the PzB 35(p) by the German military, but soon dumped on the Italians in 1941-42.

Submachine Guns

Poland had practically no submachine guns in 1939. About 70 Tikkoski KP/31 Suomi guns (p. W96) and 50 Auto-Ordnance M-1921 Thompson guns (pp. CV68, HT115) were in use with the police; the mil-

itary had a grand total of 30 Auto-Ordnance M-1928A1 Thompson guns (p. W96), most of which were in the military police presidential security detachment.

PWU-FK Pistolet Maszynowy wzór 39 Mors (1939): The first Polish submachine gun was designed by the same men who developed the wz. 35 Vis pistol and was patterned after the German ERMA MPE (p. W:IC63), complete with the wooden foregrip. It was called *Mors* (Latin for death). Only some 50 had been made by the start of the war, and most saw combat.

Pistolet Maszynowy Blyskawica (1943): This unique submachine gun was designed and manufactured entirely in the underground during the occupation. The *Blyskawica* (lightning) used the barrel and magazine of the Sten, but followed the ERMA MP 40 (pp. HT116, W96) in exterior design and handling, including the folding stock (which allowed for better concealment). By the time of the Warsaw uprising, some 700 had been made at the chicken-wire plant Franciszek Makowiecki & Co. in Warsaw. The actual assembly took place in the catacombs of a nearby Catholic church, complete with an underground shooting range!

Pistolet Maszynowy Choroszmanów (1943): This copy of the Russian PPD-40 was made by the gunsmith

Grzegorz Choroszman and his sons under clandestine conditions. Only 22 were made in the winter of 1943-44, and used by the *Tadeusz Kosciuszko* resistance group (p. 42).

Machine Guns

Second-line units used almost 6,000 ex-German Maxim MG 08 water-cooled MMGs (pp. HT117, W96, and W:IC64) and 5,700 Maxim MG 08/15 water-cooled LMGs (pp. HT118, W:IC64), the former as the *ckm wz. 08*, the latter as the *lkm wz. 08/15*.

The resistance received more than 500 Enfield Bren LMGs (pp. HT119, W96) and 660 Rheinmetall MG 34 GPMGs (pp. HT119, W97) by parachute from the British; the Soviets supplied some Maxim PM-1910s (pp. HT117, W96) and DPs (pp. HT119, W97).

Hotchkiss Ciezki Karabin Maszynowy wzór 25 (1925): This was an export version of the French Hotchkiss Mle 14 air-cooled medium machine gun (pp. HT118, W:RH38). It was chambered for the 7.92mm Mauser round. Some 1,250 were in service; twice as many older *ckm wz. 14* in 8mm Lebel were in reserve.

Maxim Ciezki Karabin Maszynowy wzór 10/28 (1928): Poland had some 1,850 Russian PM-1910 water-cooled medium machine guns (pp. HT117, W96) at hand, which had been converted to fire the 7.92mm Mauser rounds. These were mounted on the 99.4-lb. Sokolov carriage, with its two wheels and small DR 25 gunshield.

PWU-FK Browning Reczny Karabin Maszynowy wzór 28 (1930): The *rkm wz. 28* was a licensed version of the Browning Automatic Rifle (pp. HT118, W96), but it incorporated some improvements introduced by FN of Belgium (which was the license-giver). Almost 20,000 were at hand, primarily equipping cavalry units and infantry, although some were also issued to tank formations and border guards.

PWU-FK Browning Ciezki Karabin Maszynowy wzór 30 (1931): The standard Polish medium machine gun was a licensed variant of the water-cooled Colt-Browning M-1917 (pp. HT118, W97) – or more precisely, the FN-Browning Mle 30. The weight includes 8.8 lbs. of cooling water. The army had 7,681.

Hand Grenades

PWU-FK Granat Obronny wzór 33 (1933): The standard defensive grenade, based on the French DF Mle 15 and similar to the Mk II “Pineapple” (pp. HT117, W98).

PWU-FK Granat Zaczepny wzór 33 (1933): A smooth-sided offensive grenade, based on the French OF Mle 15.

ET40 Filipinka (1940): The resistance movement designed several hand grenades, and made at least 266,000 during the war. One of these was the ET40 designed by Edward “Filip” Tymoszek, an impact

THE STENÓW

The Polish resistance received some 11,150 Enfield Sten submachine guns (pp. W96, HT116) – locally known as *Stenów* – from the British in parachute supplies, plus a few hundred Thompsons and Marlin UD42s (p. W:HS20), 350 ERMA MP 40s (pp. HT116, W96), and 128 Beretta Mod 38s (p. W96). Additional German weapons, including Bergmann types (pp. HT115, W96, and W:IC63), were captured.

The underground exploited the Sten’s simple design to copy it in about two dozen clandestine shops all over the country. It was the main weapon made by the resistance, produced in smithies, in metal working factories, and even (in secret) at the national rifle works at Radom. At least 1,300 were made, possibly many more, from about 1943.

Many differed from the standard configuration: some lacked the shoulder stock to make them more concealable (Holdout -4), with some adding a foregrip for better control; some had smoothbore barrels (Acc 3). Others were finished to a much higher degree, including a Polish Eagle being struck on the magazine housing. Still others were inferior copies with Malf 15.

grenade based on a pre-war prototype. Homemade cheddite or British-supplied plastic explosive was used as filler.

R42 Sidolówka (1942): This was a simpler design than the ET40. It was commonly known as the “Sidolówka,” since its body was made from a Sidol can, a popular brand of metal cleaner – this also allowed for relatively easy concealment.

Light Antitank Weapons

The resistance received small numbers of British PIAT launchers (p. W98) by parachute.

Mortars

Remarkably for an underground movement, the Polish resistance also had mortars; the British had delivered about 30 51mm and 81mm pieces (pp. HT121, W97-98) by parachute.

PWU-FK Granatnik wzór 36 (1937): This was a light mortar design, of which over 3,400 were at hand at the start of the war.

PWU-FK Moździer wzór 31 (1931): This battalion-level medium mortar was a licensed copy of the French Stokes-Brandt pattern (p. W97). Some 1,200 81mm mortars of various models were in service in 1939.

ARTILLERY

Polish artillery included the 37mm Bofors wz. 36 antitank gun (pp. W101, W:FH36); 40mm Star-Bofors wz. 36 antiaircraft autocannon (p. W:MP25); 75mm Star wz. 36 antiaircraft gun; 65mm Schneider wz. 06 mountain gun; 75mm Schneider wz. 97 field gun; 75mm Schneider-Putilow wz. 02/26 field gun; 100mm Skoda wz. 14/19P howitzer; 105mm Schneider wz. 29 howitzer; and 155mm Skoda wz. 17 howitzer.

75mm Schneider wz. 97

The French Schneider Mle 1897 field gun was the first artillery piece with recoil recuperation, allowing a stable fire platform and quick succession of shots (p. HT122). It was extremely common even during WWII. The Polish army used it as the *armata polowa 75mm Schneider wz. 97* (75mm Schneider field gun model 1897). Some 1,374 were in service, more than of any other gun.

There were two carriages, the original with wooden wheels drawn by six horses, and a slightly modernized one introduced in 1937, which featured pneumatic wheels for use in motorized units. The latter was normally drawn by a halftracked C4P artillery tractor, or alternatively a truck. A battery consisted of four guns.

The gun has a thin gunshield. It requires a crew of seven. Combat weight in position is 1.3 tons. Besides HE, it can fire APEX, WP, and illumination shells to a maximum range of some 12,200 yards.

The 0.85-ton limber could stow 24 rounds; the 1.1-ton caisson could stow 72 rounds.

Subassemblies: Very Small Wheeled chassis +2; two wheels +1.

Powertrain: None; towed.

Occ: None **Cargo:** 11

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
<i>Body:</i>	3/5	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
<i>Wheels:</i>	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

Weaponry

75mm Medium Tank Gun/wz. 97 [Body:F] (0 rounds).

Statistics

Size: 15'×6'×5' *Payload:* – *Lwt.:* 1.5 tons
Volume: 18 *Maint.:* 105 hours *Price:* \$3,605

HT: 11. HPs: 220 Body, 18 each Wheel.

gSpeed: *; *gAccel:* *; *gDecel:* *; *gMR:* 1.25; *gSR:* 2
Ground Pressure High. 1/6 Off-Road Speed.

* Use towing vehicle's statistics after adding towed weight.

Design Notes

Weight, cost, and HPs of the body were doubled.

Variants

The *Schneider-Putilow wz. 02/26* (1926) was very similar; captured from the Russians in WWI, the guns were rechambered to fire the same ammunition as the wz. 97. Some 446 were in service.

100MM SKODA WZ. 14/16P

The Czechoslovakian Skoda works produced a range of famous artillery guns starting in 1859. One of their most successful designs was the 100mm vzor 14, introduced early in WWI. This was also adopted by Poland, which acquired a slightly modified version as the *haubica 100mm Skoda wz. 14/16P* (100mm Skoda howitzer model 1914/1916P). Some 900 of these were in service.

The short-barrelled gun features a gunshield to protect its crew. It lacks modern tires, using wooden spoked wheels. Movement is accomplished by hitching

it to a limber and then pulling it with a team of six horses. It mainly fires HE shells.

The historical cost was 147,620 zloty (\$27,800).

Subassemblies: Very Small Wheeled chassis +2; two wheels +1.

Powertrain: None; towed.

Occ: None **Cargo:** 10.6

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	3/10	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

Weaponry

105mm Short Howitzer/wz. 14/19P [Body:F] (0 rounds).

Statistics

Size: 18'×6'×6' *Payload:* – *Lwt.:* 1.6 tons
Volume: 18 *Maint.:* 108 hours *Price:* \$3,415

HT: 11. HPs: 220 Body, 18 each Wheel.

gSpeed: *; *gAccel:* *; *gDecel:* *; *gMR:* 1.25; *gSR:* 2
Ground Pressure High. 1/6 Off-Road Speed.

* Use towing vehicle's statistics after adding towed weight.

Design Notes

Weight, cost, and HPs of the body were doubled.

THE GARAGE

Motorization of the Polish army was incomplete; much use was made of horses and carriages (p. W:MP28).

Motor vehicles used by the Polish army included the CWS Sokól 600RT motorcycle; CWS Sokól 1000 motorcycle; Polski FIAT PF508 utility car; Polski FIAT PF518 staff car; Polski FIAT PF618 Grom 1.65-ton truck; SPA 25C Polonia 1.65-ton truck; Polski FIAT PF621L 2.75-ton truck; Chevrolet 157 3-ton truck; Citroen-Kégresse P17 halftracked artillery tractor; C2P tracked artillery tractor; C4P halftracked artillery tractor; Ursus wz. 29 armored car; wz. 34 armored car; TK-3 and TKS tankette; Renault FT-17 light tank (p. W:MP46); Renault R-35 light tank (p. W:MP47); Vickers-Armstrong 6-ton Mark E light tank; and 7TP light tank. The Polish military also had a number of armored trains and draisines.

During the Warsaw uprising, the resistance captured and used a number of German vehicles, including

two SdKfz 171 Panther tanks (p. W:IC81) and two SdKfz 251/1 halftracks (p. W:IC75).

POLSKI FIAT PF508/III LAZIK

The PF508 *Lazik* (vagabond) was the Polish equivalent to the U.S. jeep (p. W106) or German Kübelwagen (p. W:IC72), a light general-purpose vehicle with a 0.5-ton cargo capacity that served numerous roles such as staff transport, radio/command vehicle, ambulance, reconnaissance, etc. A licensed Italian FIAT design, it was made by Panstwowe Zaklady Inzynierii (PZInz) from 1935-1939. Some 7,300 were in service at the outbreak of the war.

It seats up to four people in open seats; a light canvas roof is provided. A spare wheel is carried at the rear.

The PF508/III burns 0.8 gallons of gasoline per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel costs \$1.80. Historical cost was 5,400 zloty (\$1,015).

Subassemblies: Very Small Wheeled chassis +2; four off-road wheels +1.

Powertrain: 18-kW standard gas engine with 18-kW wheeled transmission and 12-gallon standard tanks [Body]; 2,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 XCS, 3 XPS **Cargo:** 4.6

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

Equipment

Body: Ragtop option for all seats.

Statistics

Size: 11'×5'×6' *Payload:* 0.55 tons *Lwt.:* 1.3 tons
Volume: 18 *Maint.:* 435 hours *Cost:* \$215

HT: 12. HPs: 85 Body, 14 each Wheel.

gSpeed: 53; *gAccel:* 3; *gDecel:* 10; *gMR:* 0.75; *gSR:* 4
Ground Pressure Moderate. 1/4 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

gSpeed was reduced by 12% to the historical figures.

Variants

The *PZInz 302* (1937) was a slightly larger variant using the front part of the PF508 and the rear axle of the larger PF518; *gSpeed* 40. It was mainly used as prime mover for the 37mm Bofors wz. 36 antitank gun, carrying its crew and 80 rounds. Some were used as machine gun cars, with a single 7.92mm Browning wz. 30 (Ground LMG, p. 30). Some 400 were made.

SAMOCHÓD PANCERNY WZ. 34

The *samochód pancerny wz. 34* (armored car model 1934) was the main Polish army wheeled combat vehicle. It had a rather interesting genesis: in the 1920s, a number of Citroen-Kégresse B2 10CV half-track chassis had been obtained from France, which had been fitted with armored bodies and turrets in Poland. The resultant wz. 28 did not live up to expectations, however, due to unreliability of the tracked transmission, low speed, and unimpressive off-road capability. So the armored halftracks were converted into armored cars, some 87 being constructed in 1934-1938.

Three minor variants were made, the majority – some 60 vehicles – receiving the engine of the Polski FIAT PF508 car (p. 32) and the rear axle and other components of the PF618 truck. There were also minor differences in armor layout.

About 30 of the 87 cars were armed with a 37mm Puteaux wz. 18 infantry gun, while the rest mounted a 7.92mm Hotchkiss wz. 25 machine gun (p. 30). The 37mm gun was an obsolete design useful against MG nests, but virtually useless against armored vehicles. The cannon model was usually assigned to troop and squadron leaders.

In action, the cars were intended for reconnaissance and guard details, but not for combat support; in the end, many had to be fielded anyway. Their combat record is not very impressive; the design was outdated in 1939 and the vehicles themselves worn out already before the fighting started. After the collapse, most were destroyed by the Germans, while some 18 were



supplied to the Croatian militia in 1941 for anti-partisan duties.

The wz. 34 has riveted armor (p. W:MP12), except for the wooden floor, and can be entered through doors in the left side and the rear of the body. The rear axle has twin wheels. Its crew consists of the driver and commander/gunner (who manually traverses the turret at 5° per second).

The wz. 34 burns 0.8 gallons of gasoline per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$65.

Samochód Pancerny wz. 34

Subassemblies: Very Small Wheeled chassis +2; full-rotation Medium Weapon turret [Body:T] +1; six off-road wheels +1.

Powertrain: 18-kW standard gas engine with 18-kW wheeled transmission and 14.5-gallon standard tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 1 CS Both **Cargo:** 3.4 Body, 1.5 Tur

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/30	4/30	4/30	4/20	2/3W
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
Tur:	4/30	4/30	4/30	4/20	–

Weaponry

37mm Infantry Gun/SA-18 [Tur:F] (96 rounds).

Statistics

Size: 12'×6'×7' *Payload:* 0.4 tons *Lwt.:* 2.4 tons
Volume: 23 *Maint:* 174 hours *Cost:* \$1,325

HT: 9. *HPs:* 85 Body, 9 each Wheel, 75 Turret.

gSpeed: 34; *gAccel:* 2; *gDecel:* 10; *gMR:* 0.75; *gSR:* 4
Ground Pressure High. 1/6 *Off-Road Speed.*

Design Notes

The TKS falls between the Midget and Very Small Tank chassis in size, which required breaking the rule that a superstructure cannot be larger than the body. This also required the driver position to be split between body and superstructure, which is not normally allowed. Designed with 2,500 7.92mm rounds. Lwt. was decreased by 6% and gSpeed was decreased by 36% to the historical figures.

Variants

Some of the early cars had a Citroen 15-kW engine instead.

Those armed with the 7.92mm Hotchkiss wz. 25 (Ground LMG) carried 2,016 rounds for it.

NEW WEAPONS

The following new weapons expand on those found on pp. W130-135.

TANK GUNS AND ARTILLERY

37mm Infantry Gun: A very short-barreled, low-powered weapon designed in WWI, with marginal effectiveness against armored targets. Represents the French 37mm Puteaux SA-17 and SA-18; can also be used for the Soviet 37mm PS-1 (7K) tank gun.

105mm Short Howitzer: A light artillery weapon also installed in some armored vehicles. It represents the U.S. 105mm M-2A1, M-3, and M-4; it can also be used for the Czechoslovakian 100mm Skoda vz. 14/19, vz. 28, and vz. 30; French 105mm Schneider Mle 34 and Mle 36; German 105mm Rheinmetall leFH 18; Polish 100mm Skoda wz. 14/18P; and Soviet 107mm 107-P-10/30.

Weapons Module Table

Tank Guns

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>VSPs</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Cost</i>
37mm Infantry Gun	1	200	\$1K
30 rounds APEX	0.2	[50]	[\$50]
30 rounds HE	0.2	[50]	[\$20]
30 rounds Canister	0.2	[50]	[\$10]
105mm Short Howitzer	4.4	1,100	\$3,300
6 rounds HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
6 rounds HEAT	1	[250]	[\$150]
6 rounds WP	1	[250]	[\$100]



Bombs

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>VSPs</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Cost</i>
660-lb. HE Bomb	2.6	660	\$1.3K

Vehicular Weapons Table

Tank Guns

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Ind</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Ldrs</i>
37mm Infantry Gun	Crit.	HE	1d [4d]	20	12	550	2,750	3,500	1/3	0
		APEX	6d×3 (2)+1d-2 [4d]							
		Canister	5d			90	460			
105mm Short Howitzer	Crit.	HE	5d×8 [10d]	30	13	900	5,000	12,200	1/5	1
		HEAT	11d (10)							
		WP	3d+1 [4d]							

Bombs

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Dam</i>
660-lb. Bomb	Crit.	HE	6d¥660 [12d]



MALY CZOLG ROZPOZNAWCZY TKS

In 1929, Poland bought 11 British Vickers-Armstrong Carden-Loyd Mk VI tankettes, a tiny tracked vehicle that was also the parent of the famous Universal Carrier (p. W:AKM72). Poland acquired a license to produce it to mechanize its cavalry and reconnaissance units.

The original design had many defects, and the first Polish production model, the *maly czolg rozpoznawczy* (small reconnaissance tank) *Tankietka-3* (TK-3 or simply TK) of 1931, was considerably modified. Some 300 were built until 1934, when it was superseded by the improved TKS, of which 390 were made. This vehicle would bear the brunt of the fighting in 1939.

The TKS was inadequately armed with a single 7.92mm Browning wz. 30 machine gun (p. 30) in the superstructure front, although many carried an extra 7.92mm Browning wz. 28 light machine gun (p. 30) internally, which could be fitted to a simple post on the roof for AA fire.

About two dozen were rearmed with a 20mm PWU-FK wz. 38 (20mm Long Ground AC w/ RoF 5*) with 250 rounds. These were issued to company commanders. On September 18, 1939, officer cadet Roman Orlik of the Volynian cavalry brigade succeeded in destroying three German PzKpfw 35(t) tanks of the 6. Panzer-Division with such a TKS.

It has a crew of two, driver and gunner.

The engine burns 1.5 gallons of gasoline. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$27. Historical cost was 47,800 zloty (\$9,000).

Subassemblies: Midget Tank chassis +2;

Large Weapon superstructure +2 [Body:T];
tracks +1.

Powertrain: 34-kW gas engine with 34-kW tracked transmission and 18-gallon standard tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 1CS Sup **Cargo:** 0.3 Body,
1.9 Sup

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/35	4/35	4/35	4/12	4/20
Tracks:	4/25	4/25	4/25	4/25	4/25
Sup:	4/35	4/35	4/35	4/12	-

Weaponry

Ground LMG/wz. 30 [Sup:F] (2,310 rounds).

Statistics

Size: 8'x6'x4' *Payload:* 0.3 tons *Lwt.:* 2.9 tons
Volume: 21 *Maint.:* 150 *Cost:* \$1,785

HT: 12. HPs: 400 Body, 150 each Track, 120 Superstructure.

gSpeed: 25; *gAccel:* 3; *gDecel:* 20; *gMR:* 0.25; *gSR:* 4.
Ground Pressure Very Low. 4/5 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

The TKS falls between the Midget and Very Small Tank chassis in size, which required breaking the rule that a superstructure cannot be larger than the body. Designed with 2,500 7.92mm rounds. Lwt. was decreased by 6% and gSpeed was decreased by 36% to the historical figures.

Variants

The original TK (1931) was slightly lighter and faster; Lwt. 2.7 tons, gSpeed 28. Its armor was DR 30 to the front, sides, and rear, DR 15 top and DR 25 on the underbody. Most were armed with the old 7.92mm Hotchkiss wz. 25 (Ground LMG) with 1,800 rounds. 300 were made.

The *prowadnica szynowa TKS* (rail runner TKS) introduced in 1938 consisted of a TKS with medium radio and a light rail car – really only a four-wheeled frame holding the tankette on the rails; Lwt. 4.6 tons. The tracks of the tankette touched the ground and provided movement. The tankette could mount the frame in two minutes and dismount in one, allowing operation independent of the rail tracks. About 50 were in service in 1939, four each assigned to an armored train (p. W:MP56-58).

CZOLG LEKKI 7TP

In 1932-33, Poland acquired 38 British Vickers-Armstrong 6-ton Mark E light tanks (p. W:FH36). While the basic design was sound, the engine proved to be troublesome, and the armament wasn't up to the latest standard either. The Polish army replaced these vehicles with an improved design, built under license, called the *7-Tonowy Polski* (Polish 7-tonne). This had thicker armor, new weapons, and an Austrian Saurer diesel engine (made in Poland under license), the first tank in history to feature one.

There were two models of this *czolg lekki* (light tank): the initial series mounted two small turrets armed with MGs (the turrets were taken from the old Vickers tanks), while the main variant mounted a larger turret with a 37mm Bofors gun. These turrets were imported complete (except for the coaxial machine gun, optics, and radio) from Sweden.

The 130 7TPs equipped two battalions (each with 49 tanks) and several independent companies around Warsaw. It was more than a match for the German PzKpfw I (p. W:IC77) and PzKpfw II (p. W:IC78) fielded during the Polish campaign.

After the defeat, the Germans used captured vehicles as the PzKpfw 731(p) for internal security duties, fighting Polish partisans.

The main armament was a 37mm Bofors wz. 37 tank gun, with a coaxial 7.92mm Browning wz. 30 water-cooled machine gun (p. 30) to the left. The turret houses the commander/gunner and a loader/radio operator. The turret is manually rotated at 3° per second. The driver sits in the body.

The 7TP burns 3.3 gallons of diesel per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$300. Historical cost was 231,000 zloty (\$43,500); the very high cost is probably due to the local production set-up and the importation of the turret.

Subassemblies: Very Small Tank chassis +2; full-rotation Small AFV turret [Body:T] +2; tracks +2.

Powertrain: 82-kW HP diesel engine with 82-kW tracked transmission and 48-gallon standard tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 2 CS Both **Cargo:** 1.3 Body, 1.1 Tur

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/65	4/45	4/45	4/20	4/35
Tracks:	4/30	4/30	4/30	4/30	4/30
Tur:	4/55	4/55	4/55	4/35	–

Weaponry

37mm Medium Tank Gun/wz. 37 [Tur:F] (80 rounds).*

Ground LMG/wz. 30 [Tur:F] (3,960 rounds).*

* Linked.

Equipment

Tur: Medium radio receiver and transmitter.

Statistics

Size: 15'×8'×7' **Payload:** 1 ton **Lwt.:** 10.9 tons

Volume: 47 **Maint.:** 87 **Cost:** \$5,300

HT: 12. **HPs:** 800 Body, 250 each Track, 150 Turret.

gSpeed: 23; **gAccel:** 2; **gDecel:** 20; **gMR:** 0.25; **gSR:** 5
Ground Pressure Low. 2/3 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Designed with 90 37mm and 4,000 7.92mm rounds. Lwt was increased by 18% and gSpeed was decreased by 15% to the historical figures.

Variants

The first 24 tanks made from 1934 mounted two small limited-rotation turrets side-by-side and are thus sometimes (but incorrectly, as there was no official designation difference) called 7TPdw (*dwuwiezowej*, twin-turreted); Lwt. 10.3 tons. The turrets had DR 45 all around and DR 20 top armor. Each mounted a 7.92mm Browning wz. 30 machine gun with 3,300 rounds. Only 16 remained in 1939.

A few imported *Vickers 6-ton Mark E Type B* (1934) tanks were also still in service. They had a 65-kW Armstrong-Siddeley engine and DR 50 on the body front and sides, DR 30 on the body rear, DR 20 top and underbody, and DR 50 all-around on the turret; Lwt. 8.1 tons. Armament consisted of a 47mm Vickers Q.F. Mk I (47mm short tank gun) with 50 rounds and a coaxial 7.92mm Browning wz. 30 machine gun with 5,940 rounds. Some 22 were in service in 1939.

DREZYNA PANCERNA TATRA

A draisine was originally a manually operated vehicle, but soon became to mean an auxiliary rail engine useful for various jobs (inspecting the rail tracks, transportation of personnel, etc.). Armored draisines appeared at the same time as armored trains (p. W:MP56-58), and were used during WWII for reconnaissance, patrol, and similar supporting tasks.

The Polish military had several draisine types in service, one of them consisting of a TKS tankette (p. 35), another one of a Renault FT-17 tank on a self-propelled wagon (p. W:MP46). A third one was the *drezyna pancerna Tatra* (armored draisine Tatra), a Czechoslovakian design acquired already in 1926. Fifteen were bought, most of them built under license in Poland.

Each Polish armored train included a platoon of armored draisines – two FT-17 carriers and four TK carriers – but two trains used two Tatra armored draisines instead. These were the trains Number 13 “General Sosnkowski” and Number 15 “Smierc.”

The Tatra armored draisine had entrance hatches on both sides and a small turret fitted with two 7.92mm Hotchkiss wz. 25 machine guns (p. 30). It could be coupled to other train wagons. It was fitted with a manual system to lift itself to a parallel track. This consisted of a jack under the car, rails used as side steps, and a revolving device. The whole procedure required between five and 10 minutes for a trained crew.

The Tatra burns 0.4 gallons of gasoline per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$45.

Subassemblies: Small Wheeled chassis +3; full-rotation Large Weapon turret [Body:T] +2; four rail wheels +1.

Powertrain: 9-kW standard gas engine with 9-kW all-wheel drive transmission and 21-gallon standard tanks; 2,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS, 2 PS Body, 2 CS Tur **Cargo:** 5 Body, 4.8 Tur

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/30	4/30	4/30	4/20	4/20
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
Tur:	4/30	4/30	4/30	4/20	–

Weaponry

Ground LMG/wz. 25 [Tur:F] (2,016 rounds).
Ground LMG/wz. 25 [Tur:F] (2,016 rounds).

Statistics

Size: 12'×6'×7' Payload: 0.7 tons Lwt.: 3.8 tons
Volume: 46 Maint: 179 hours Cost: \$1,255

HT: 8. HPs: 125 Body, 23 each Wheel, 120 Turret.

gSpeed: 28; *gAccel*: 2; *gDecel*: 10; *gMR*: 0.5; *gSR*: 4
Ground Pressure Very High. No Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Turret crew is half in body, half in turret. Designed with 4,000 7.92mm rounds; the historical figure was substituted. Lwt. was decreased by 12%, *gSpeed* decreased by 10% to the historical figures.

THE HANGAR

In 1939, the air force mainly fielded the PZL P.7 fighter; PZL P.11 fighter (p. W:MP98); PZL P.23 Karas light bomber; PZL P.37 Los medium bomber; RWD-8 liaison aircraft; and RWD-14 Czapla reconnaissance aircraft.

PZL P.7

Poland's fighter aircraft were all made by the *Panstwowe Zaklaty Lotnicze* (State Aircraft Factory) located in Warsaw. All were aerodynamically clean high-wing monoplanes of all-metal construction. Their gull-wing shape ensured superior maneuverability, reduced drag, and provided good all-around visibility. The P.7 was the first production model, and when introduced into service with the Polish air force in 1932, quite advanced – many foreign air forces still flew biplanes at the time.

The P.7a reached full combat status in 1933, but was soon replaced in most front-line squadrons by its superior successor, the P.11a (p. W:MP98). Nevertheless, some 30 of the 149 acquired remained in front-line service in 1939, and were used against the Germans. By then, they were too slow to intercept the more advanced German aircraft, and mainly relegated to reconnaissance duties. P.7a pilots were credited with 8.5 kills during September 1939.

The P.7a has a license-built British Bristol Jupiter engine. It is armed with either two synchronized 7.92mm Vickers Class E (RoF 14) or 7.92mm Brown-

ing wz. 33 (RoF 16) machine guns in the sides of the fuselage. The old Vickers guns were converted from .303-caliber and considered unreliable (Malf 16).

The engine burns 17.7 gallons of aviation gas per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$32. Historical cost of a P.7 was about 193,000 zloty (\$36,346).

Subassemblies: Light Fighter chassis +3;

Recon Plane wings with Fixed Strut and High Agility options +2; three wheels +0.

Powertrain: 353-kW aerial gas engine with 353-kW old prop and 84-gallon standard tanks [Body]; 2,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 XCS Body **Cargo:** 4.4 Body; 3.5 Wings

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C
Wheels:	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
Wings:	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C

Weaponry

2 Aircraft LMG/wz. 33 [Body:F] (700 rounds each).*

* Linked.

Equipment

Body: Navigation instruments.

Statistics

Size: 23'×34'×9' Payload: 0.4 tons Lwt.: 1.6 tons
Volume: 144 Maint: 93 hours Cost: \$4,600

HT: 8. HPs: 50 Body, 35 each Wing, 5 each Wheel.

aSpeed: 171; *aAccel*: 5.5; *aDecel*: 18; *aMR*: 4.5;
aSR: 1

Stall Speed 55.

gSpeed: 197; *gAccel*: 10; *gDecel*: 10; *gMR*: 0.5;
gSR: 2

Ground Pressure Very High. 1/8 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Designed with 1,500 7.92mm rounds. The historical 192-sf wing area was used for performance calculations. Lwt. was increased by 12%, *aSpeed* was decreased by 11% to the historical figures, *gSpeed* capped at *aSpeed*.

PZL P.23 KARAS

The PZL P.23 *Karas* (crucian carp) was the most numerous aircraft type in service with the Polish air force in 1939. Designated as a *samolot bomboworozpoznawczy* (bomber-reconnaissance aircraft), it was a three-seat light bomber.

The type saw much combat during the first weeks of the war, and most were lost.

Some 40 of the initial version, the P.23a, were made, but only used for training due to the unreliable engine. The P.23b entered service in 1937, and 250 were built.

It is armed with a synchronized 7.92mm Browning wz. 33 machine gun (RoF 16) in the nose and a flexible 7.92mm Vickers Class F machine gun (RoF 11) feeding from 97-round drums in rear-facing dorsal and ventral mounts.

The engine burns 25 gallons of fuel per hour of routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$60. Historical cost was 230,000 zloty (\$43,300).

Subassemblies: Light Fighter-Bomber chassis +3; Light Fighter-Bomber wings +3; three fixed wheels +1.

Powertrain: 507-kW turbocharged aerial gas engine with 507-kW prop and 30-gallon standard tanks [Body] and 150-gallon standard tanks [Wings]; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 3 CS Body **Cargo:** 14 Body, 3.6 Wings

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
<i>All:</i>	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3

Weaponry

Aircraft LMG/wz. 33 [Body:F] (500 rounds).
 Aircraft LMG/Vickers F [Body:T] (679 rounds).
 Aircraft LMG/Vickers F [Body:U] (388 rounds).
 4×220-lb.bombs [Wings:U]

Equipment

Body: Autopilot; navigation instruments; medium radio receiver and transmitter. **Wings:** 770-lb. hardpoint each [Wings:U].

Statistics

Size: 32'×46'×11' **Payload:** 2.1 tons **Lwt.:** 3.35 tons
Volume: 312 **Maint.:** 56 hours **Cost:** \$12,670

HT: 10. **HP:** 165 Body, 120 each Wing, 15 each Wheel.

aSpeed: 217; **aAccel:** 5; **aDecel:** 22; **aMR:** 6.25; **aSR:** 2

Stall Speed: 65. -2 aSpeed per loaded hardpoint.
gSpeed: 179; **gAccel:** 9; **gDecel:** 10; **gMR:** 0.5; **gSR:** 2
Ground Pressure Very High. 1/8 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Designed with 1,500 7.92mm rounds. The historical 288-sf wing area was used for performance calculations. aSpeed was slightly increased to the historical figure.

With maximum bombload (1,540 lbs), weight is 3.9 tons, gAccel 8, gSpeed 166, aAccel 4, aMR 5.5, and Stall 71.

The earlier *P.23a* (1935) had a 433-kW engine; aSpeed 198.

PZL P.37B Los

The PZL P.37 *Los* (elk) was designed to replace Poland's obsolete Fokker F.VIIIb bombers. It was the most modern airplane in the Polish inventory, a four-seat medium *samolot bombowy* (bomber aircraft) with relatively high speed and the largest bombload of any twin-engined bomber of its day.

The P.37b was a relatively small aircraft in order to make the most of the inefficient imported engines available. Its sleek fuselage held a crew of only four men: pilot, navigator/bombardier, radio operator, and gunner. The large bombload was carried in 16 bomb bays in the wings inside of the engine pods. The plane's defensive armament was weak.

When finally firmly ordered by the Polish air force, only 86 could be delivered before the German attack, and only 36 of these were operational. They had to be used against German tanks near Lodz, in a role for which they weren't designed, nor their crews trained. Losses mounted in similar missions, even after a further 10 replacements had been delivered. In mid-September, the remaining 27 fled to Romania and were used by the Romanian air force from 1941.

It is armed with three 7.92mm Browning wz. 37 machine guns (RoF 18) feeding from 91-round drums in nose, dorsal, and ventral mounts (both the dorsal and ventral gun can fire into the rear arc only). The standard bomb load for the P.37b consists of either two 660-lb. bombs and 18 220-lb. bombs, or 20 220-lb. bombs, or 20 110-lb. bombs.

The engines burn 67.6 gallons of fuel per hour of routine usage. Fuel and ammo (less bombs) cost \$125. Historical cost was 580,000 zloty (\$109,228).

Subassemblies: Medium Fighter-Bomber chassis +4; Heavy Fighter-Bomber wings +3; two Small AFV engine pods 1-2 [Wings:F] +2; three retractable wheels +1.

Powertrain: Two 676-kW aerial turbo/super-charger gas engines [Pods] and 552-gallon standard tanks [Body]; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 4 CS Body **Cargo:** 4.6 Body

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
<i>All:</i>	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3

Weaponry

Aircraft LMG/wz. 37 [Body:F] (364 rounds).
 Aircraft LMG/wz. 37 [Body:T] (637 rounds).
 Aircraft LMG/wz. 37 [Body:U] (637 rounds).

Equipment

Body: Autopilot; bombsight; navigation instruments; medium radio receiver and transmitter. **Wings:** 8

660-lb. bomb bays; 8 110-lb. bomb bays.

Statistics

Size: 42'×59'×14' Payload: 5.4 tons Lwt.: 10 tons
Volume: 472 Maint.: 40 hours Cost: \$27,625

HT: 7. HP: 210 Body, 225 each Wing, 150 each
Pod, 20 each Wheel.

aSpeed: 257; aAccel: 4; aDecel: 16; aMR: 4; aSR: 2
Stall Speed: 85.

gSpeed: 169; gAccel: 8; gDecel: 10; gMR: 0.5; gSR: 2
Ground Pressure Extremely High. No Off-Road
Speed.

Design Notes

Weight, cost, and HPs of the wings were halved. The wheels retract into the engine pods. Designed with 1,500 7.92mm rounds. Parts of the bomb bays were placed in the body for design purposes. The historical 576-sf wing area was used for performance calculations. aSpeed was increased by 7% to the historical figure and weight was decreased 6%.

OKRET PODWODNY ORZEL

The *Orzel* (eagle) was one of the few Polish submarines. It also was the first Allied submarine to sink a German ship, after a daring escape from an Estonian port and the subsequent flight from the Baltic Sea to England, serving alongside the Royal Navy in the North Sea.

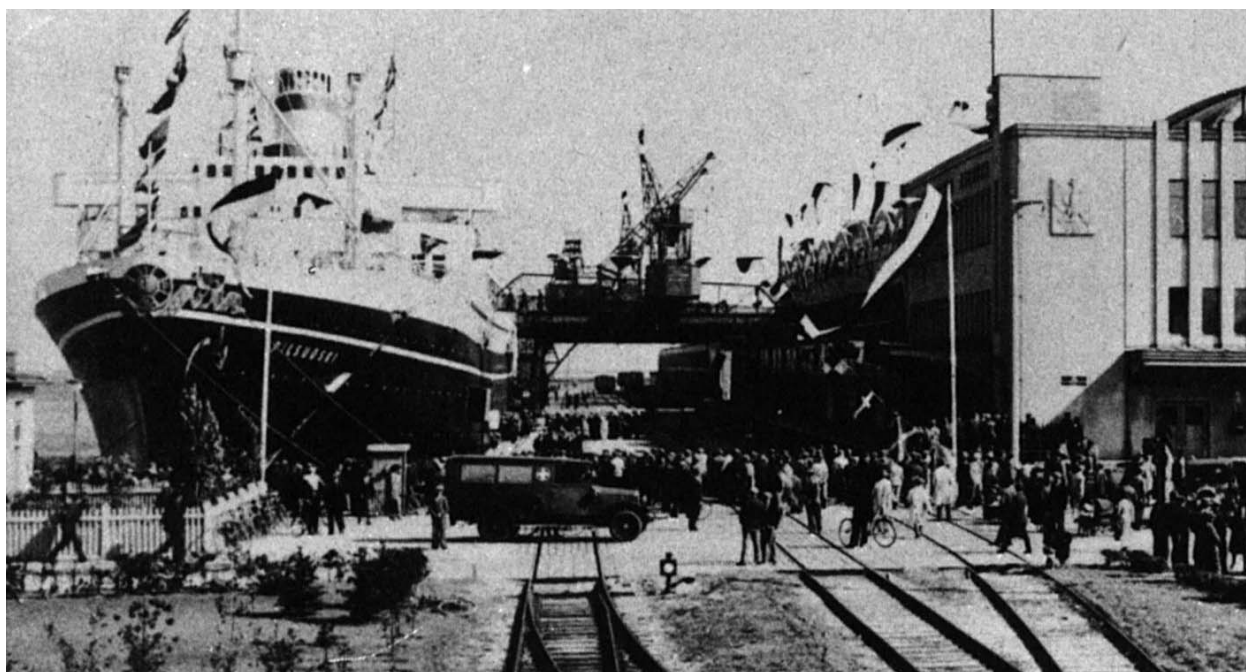
The *Orzel* was the lead boat of a small class of submarines built for the Polish navy in the Netherlands; its

sister was the *Sep* (vulture). A further two boats had been planned, but had to be canceled due to insufficient funds. The subs were similar to the Dutch O 19 class.

The boats entered service in early 1939. *Orzel* was paid for by public subscription, *Sep* from the navy's budget. The historical cost amounted to 20 million zloty (\$3.8 million) each.

After her escape from the Germans (see *Breakout from the Baltic*, p. 40), *Orzel* was based on the east coast of England, with three British liaison staff members onboard. While her guns were inoperable due to missing breechblocks, she still had torpedoes. She first engaged in convoy protection and then took up independent patrols in the North Sea. On April 8, 1940, she torpedoed and sank the German troop transport *Rio de Janeiro* near the Norwegian coast. She left for her seventh (and final) patrol on May 23, 1940 in the central region of the North Sea . . . never to return. On June 8, 1940, she was assumed lost. What fate befell her is not known, although rumors in Poland spoke of the capture and execution or imprisonment of the crew by the Germans. In reality, the *Orzel* most likely got caught in a minefield – either a German one, or, more likely and more tragic, a British one that had not yet been revealed to all Allied captains.

The Poles feared that the Germans would put pressure on the Dutch to not release the *Sep* to Poland. Before the *Sep*'s sea trials, the captain of the Polish crew on the sub was ordered to head to Poland rather than return to the Dutch shipyard. This “theft” was successful; although the Netherlands complained loudly, Poland paid for the boat. The *Sep* patrolled the Baltic uneventfully and was surrendered to Sweden in mid-September 1939, where she remained for the rest of the war.



Orzel has a crew of 60, including six officers. She has 12 550mm torpedo tubes (fitted with liners to fire 533mm torpedoes). The secondary armament consists of a 105mm Bofors wz. 25 gun in an open mount (2°/s manual traverse). Twin 40mm Bofors wz. 36 autocannons (p. W:MP25) were installed in a retractable mount in the rear part of the conning tower (5°/s manual traverse). Four of the submarine's tubes were located amidships as part of an internal, rotating mount, which allowed them to be fired left or right.

The engines burn 141.4 gallons of diesel fuel per hour of routine usage. Fuel, ammo, and provisions cost \$157,350

Subassemblies: Heavy Corvette chassis with Sub option +8; sealed Medium Secondary superstructure [Body:T] +4; full-rotation Medium AFV open mount 1 [Body:T] +2; limited-rotation Large Weapon open mount 2 [Sup:T] +2; limited rotation.

Powertrain: Two 1,768-kW marine diesel engines with two 1,768-kW water screws and 35,100-gallon standard tanks; two 410-kW electric motors with 21.6 million-kWs batteries†.

Occ: 20 CS Body, 5 CS Sup **Cargo:** 737.2 Body, 107 Sup, 3 OM1, 4.3 OM2

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/60	4/60	4/60	4/60	4/60
Sup:	4/60	4/60	4/60	4/60	–
OM1-2:	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	–

Weaponry

105mm Medium DP Gun/wz. 25 [OM1:F] (300 rounds).
 2×40mm Med. Ground AC/wz. 36 [OM2:F] (1,000 rds. ea.).*
 4×533mm Torpedo Tubes [Body:F].**
 4×533mm Torpedo Tubes [Body:B].**
 4×533mm Torpedo Tubes [Body:L/R].*
 * Linked. ** Linked in quadruples. 20×533mm torpedoes are carried.

Equipment

Body: Autopilot; two backup driver controls; 2,500-VSP bilge; 12 bilge pumps†; 32 bunks; cabin; 75-VSP cargo holds; 75-man environmental control†; fire direction center; 15 fire extinguishers†; 120-man-days life support†; navigation instruments; precision navigation instruments; 5,400-man/days of provisions; 2-mile passive sonar. **Sup:** Navigation instruments; 2×40' 15× periscopes; large radio direction finder; two very large radio receivers and transmitters; searchlight.

OM2: Universal mount.

† Limited access.

BREAKOUT FROM THE BALTIC

When Poland was overpowered, the *Orzel*, like other Polish submarines, remained at sea and tried to avoid contact with the German forces. Some minor damage and the illness of her commander forced her to dock at the neutral Estonian port of Tallinn on September 15. The Estonians interned the boat and put a watch on the conning tower, removing charts, gun breechblocks, and 14 of her torpedoes. However, her acting commander Jan Grudzinski (the captain lying ill) decided to attempt an escape. At 3 a.m. on September 18, the two Estonian guards onboard were overpowered and the *Orzel* escaped.

Without charts and with limited armament, she played cat-and-mouse with the Germans in the relatively shallow Baltic Sea for almost a month. She released the two Estonians on the Swedish island of Gotland, and then made a run for the narrow Danish straits to join the Allies. On October 14, she arrived at Rosyth on the British coast.

Statistics

Size: 276'×22'×30' **Payload:** 250 tons

Lwt.: 1,210 tons

Volume: 14,480 **MH:** 13 man/hours

Price: \$689,115

HT: 10. **HPs:** 60,000 **Body,** 750 **Sup,** 130 **OM1,** 80 **OM2.**

wSpeed: 23; **wAccel:** 0.4; **wDecel:** 0.3(0.5); **wMR:** 0.05; **wSR:** 4

Draft 14'. **Flotation Rating** 1,398 tons.

uSpeed: 10; **uAccel:** 0.08; **uDecel:** 0.3(0.4); **uMR:** 0.05; **uSR:** 4

uDraft 30'. **Crush Depth** 220 yards.

Design

Notes

Designed with 2,028 40mm rounds. OM2 can be retracted into Sup at 120% of its volume. The 1,620-ton historical submerged weight was used for underwater performance. Lwt. has been increased by 6%, wSpeed increased by 10%, Draft increased by 21%, uSpeed increased by 25%, uDraft decreased by 33%, and Crush Depth increased by 5% to the historical figures.

5. ON THE FRONT

Polish soldiers were on campaign well beyond 1939, and in the most diverse war theaters possible.

SOLDIERING

The great divide for Polish soldiers serving in WWII is obviously the 1939 defeat. Those who survived the hapless September campaign could well go on fighting for years to come.

Poland has not perished yet, as long as we still live. What foes by force have seized, at swordpoint we'll retrieve.

– Polish National Anthem

BASIC TRAINING

The Polish army was conscription-based, and its training system resembled the French one (see p. W:RH17). Training was thus traditional and mainly meant to instill a habit of prompt obedience; discipline was harsh. Infantrymen usually served for 18 months, while more specialized troopers served the full two years that the regulations specified. Soldiers were given sketchy lessons as to antitank tactics, AA defense, or urban warfare.

A limited exception to this was cavalry. Its troopers were expected to display a degree of initiative, and they were accustomed to armor; each cavalry brigade had a small armored detachment, and troopers got some actual training together with these units.

By 1939, this system had created a reserve of almost 2.5 million trained men, a hefty number. The standing army was never too small, but an effective defense would always require the complete mobilization of those reserves – which was a cumbersome process.

SERVICE CULTURE

The 1920 victory had left the Polish army confident in its strength – too much so for its own good, con-

sidering that its neighbors were still powerful and vengeful. As evidenced by their national anthem, the Poles acknowledged that their nation would always ultimately rely on sheer military force for survival. Throughout the 1930s, Polish officers became more and more aware of the threat of Hitler's growing claims, and military planners strove to improve their combat readiness. Nevertheless, having learned the wrong lessons from the 1920 war, and having become the bulwark of a very conservative society, the army was ill suited for innovation and creative thinking.

Thus, the Polish army was a mirror of its society: the officers were landowners and the soldiers their tenants or small farmers, and the service as a whole was proud, nationalistic, and backward. They relied on “the good old ways” to beat the enemy.

The shock and shame of the defeat changed the Polish servicemen's attitude toward the means for winning the war, but it did not diminish their resolve and dedication.

Commendations

Honorable service in the 1920 war usually gave a +1 reaction bonus. The Cross of Merit was awarded for bravery beyond duty (+1). The Cross of Valor was more rare (+2) and could be conferred multiple times (+3). The top military awards were the medals of the *Virtuti Militari* Order, the basic Silver Cross (+3) being available to all ranks for outstanding deeds and slightly less rare than the Gold, Knight's, and Commander's Cross (all +4).

The Order of the White Eagle (*Orla Bialego*, +3) was for exceptional services to the nation and was awarded to important personalities only. The Polish forces in exile had their own campaign ribbons and crosses; the Monte Cassino Cross probably was the most important (+1) in 1944-45.



THEY SAID IT ON THE RADIO

In those fateful days of September 1939, the populace would carefully listen to their radios for the latest information; but sometimes they got disinformation. The Germans used fake radio broadcasts against the Poles several times, both to sow confusion and make the Poles look bad.

The German radio station in Gleiwitz (Upper Silesia), close to the border, was attacked on the evening of August 31, and an inflammatory, nationalistic speech was broadcast in Polish. A few dead bodies were found in the area; they wore Polish uniforms. This *casus belli*, however, was an SD (p. W50) fabrication. The Nazis had attacked their own station and killed a few concentration camp inmates, to be photographed as evidence of this Polish aggression.

Later on, Polish civilians and soldiers heard with dismay that Warsaw had surrendered on September 10. They heard it in Polish, on the frequency of Radio Warsaw – but it was a fake by the Germans.

A HOME FAR FROM HOME

For most of their war, Polish soldiers lacked a chance to go home on leave, because their homeland was in enemy hands. They served among strangers even when they weren't on the front. They had no news from their families, and when on leave they were in a foreign land. This took its toll in terms of stress and frustration, but it also made all the more important what they had instead: their comrades. Thus, Polish units were extremely close-knit.

The following sample units will offer adventure ideas and different campaign styles.

REGULAR JOZEFS

Even the average formations could provide considerable variety.

23rd Infantry Division

The experience of this run-of-the-mill Polish division was typical of the 1939 campaign. Deployed west of Krakow and close to the 10th Mechanized Brigade (see p. 43), it was forced back with heavy casualties by the powerful German 10th Army's thrust. Strafed by the Luftwaffe, its remnants withdrew again and again under threat of encirclement, and unsuccessfully tried to establish a new defensive line along the river San. The luckier of its men made it to the Romanian border.

1st Independent Highland Brigade

This unit (*Samodzielna Brygada Strzelcow Podhalskich*) was formed in France, in January 1940, partly from volunteers; it traced its lineage to the Polish mountain troops of the *Podhale* (Highlands) region. Intended as a help for the Finns (see **GURPS WWII: Frozen Hell**), it wasn't ready in time, but it was sent north, nevertheless, against the German invasion of Norway. It was equipped like the French *Chasseurs Alpains* (p. W:RH20), with which it was fielded; its men showed their mettle in the vicious hillside fights above Ankenes. Pulled out to Brest, it was overrun in the hopeless fight for Bretagne.

3rd Carpathian Rifle Division

This was a long-lived unit of the Polish army in exile. Formed in Syria by Polish refugees who had escaped through the Balkans, it was shipped to Tobruk in 1941 and took part in the Gazala battles. Withdrawn in 1942, it was enlarged with the Poles coming out of the Soviet Union, and underwent intensive training in Palestine. Its final stretch in the war was through most of the Italian campaign. This unit can certainly be full of veterans.

1st Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division

This was the first unit of the Polish People's Army, and as such it was larger than the others. Its composition gives ample scope for tense roleplaying, as the men mostly came from Soviet POW camps, and among these only a few were Communists; conversely, the officers were Polish Communists, or Ukrainians, or simply seconded from the Red Army. The division was on the front line on September 1944, just opposite Warsaw (see *Did the Soviets Wait it Out?*, p. 14), but despite several attempts, it could not hold its bridgeheads. Token elements even took part in the final clash in Berlin (see p. W:IC103).

IRREGULAR JOZEFES!

These organizations are suitable for Polish partisan characters.

AK

The *Armia Krajowa*, or Home Army, was the umbrella organization of the Polish resistance. It still did not cover everyone: the Communist *Gwardia Ludowa* (People's Guard, later renamed *Armia Ludowa*) and the ultra-nationalist *Narodowe Sily Zbrojne* (National Armed Service) chose to stay out of it. Both were small groups, and the latter, active in eastern Poland, fought against everyone else: Soviet occupants first, then the Nazis, and Communist and Jewish partisans too. By 1944, they formally joined the AK, but never cooperated. As to the GL, it looked east for its patron. Typical activities for partisan characters are described on pp. 48 and 50. For more ideas about partisan campaigns, see also pp. W:RH24-28.

ZOB

As within the AK, each Jewish political faction in the ghetto had created its own tiny militia, but in the grim winter of 1942, as the Germans had launched their "resettlement" operation, they formed a confederation, the *Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (Jewish Fighter Organization). At the time of their uprising, the ZOB had 22 groups, with the major parties (the Zionists, the Communists, the Socialist Bund) fielding 4-5 groups each. They were led by young, baby-faced Mordechai Anielewicz.

Each unit counted about 30 men and women, for a grand total of 650 fighters. Most were very young, between 18 and 22, had no military training, and were armed with pistols only. They also relied on Molotov



cocktails and a few homemade mines. Their fight was desperate from the start, but these youngsters, by using ambush tactics, firing from attics and bunkers, and exploiting their greater knowledge of the area, managed to keep the Germans at bay for a month. The GM should note that historically, these Jewish freedom fighters had to be very wary of the non-Jewish resistance and criminal elements with which they dealt for crucial supplies and sup-

port. These "allies" sometimes led them into German traps.

The city fighter template (see p. 26) is particularly suitable for this kind of character; this setting mostly lends itself to one-shot adventures, but a few ZOB partisans did make it out.

THE BEST OF THE BEST

These units represent the true elite, and are suitable for cinematic campaign styles.

Wolynian Cavalry Brigade

This outfit (*Wolinska Brygada Kawalerii*) was above average even for cavalry. It distinguished itself in the September campaign, which it began by fighting a gallant delaying action. Subsequently, these brave horsemen doggedly opposed German thrusts, even as their supply elements were destroyed by air strikes and their beloved horses hit by artillery. This short-lived unit can be a good starting point for exceptional Polish characters. Nevertheless, they will have to find another way to fight on.

10th Mechanized Brigade – 1st Polish Armored Division

This was the one sizable Polish armored unit. It was called the *Czarna Brygada* (Black Brigade) because of the unique leather coats worn by its men. Led by Colonel Stanislaw Maczek, it fought gallantly in 1939, and in order to escape to Romania it broke through German armor.

Trained Polish tankers being rare, its veterans were the core of two subsequent reincarnations, the first one equipped with French R-35 tanks and fighting in some of the hottest engagements in 1940. Colonel Maczek ordered the survivors to disband and try a dash for Britain only after losing 80% of his tanks. But the 1st Armored Division would fight again in France, near Caen and at the Falaise Gap, finally exacting its revenge. Polish tanker characters, if they are lucky, could make it through all these battles in this unit.

Polish Independent Parachute Brigade

Highly trained and motivated, the volunteers of this unit hoped they would be dropped in Poland, to aid the Home Army. This was not to be, and many planned drops were cancelled, so their one opportunity to fight was during Operation Market-Garden. This unit is perfect for a one-off adventure.

A MONTH-LONG WAR

The September 1939 war makes for a good, fast-paced beginning of a WWII role-playing campaign, both for Polish and for German characters. Foreigners (such as American Embassy personnel) caught in between may witness the Nazis' ruthlessness and get away because they are neutrals – this time.

SHATTERED HOPES

If the first blitzkrieg campaign astounded the whole world and was even faster than the German General Staff had expected, it's easy to imagine its psychological effect on the Polish citizens.

On September 1, Poles were so confident that there were toasts about riding into Berlin, and these weren't made by the man in the street, but by officers. The German invaders soon shattered these hopes.

A Polish soldier's first experience of the German onslaught often was a strafing run by the Luftwaffe while he still was on a train in a marshalling yard. The recruits had no idea about the new forms of warfare, and there were cases of tank panic; the Stukas, with their built-in screaming sirens (see p. W114), were possibly even more fearsome for their psychological impact than for their bombs. The GM may require Fright Checks, especially the first time a soldier faces a panzer or an air attack. Infantry units often lacked any effective weapon against such threats, or they could be unfamiliar with their one AT rifle.

On the front line, Polish soldiers were very often elated at pushing back the first German probe. Then they were ordered to withdraw in all haste . . . because the enemy already was behind them. Once on the dusty roads, their units were bombarded or strafed again, often sharing their fate with civilian refugees. They ran out of ammo and food, and received contradictory orders. Tactical encounters could reveal that the Germans weren't supermen, and their armor wasn't unbeatable; Polish troops may prove this, on the Bzura river or in Warsaw. However, each small-scale success was wiped away by the overall failure.

Mixed-up remnants of battered units, or small clutches of stragglers, could fight their way into Warsaw for its defense, only to discover it was hopeless. The besieged city was a sweltering chaos. As the utilities, specifically targeted by the Germans, broke down, procuring clean water quickly became a major problem. Civilians suffered together with the soldiers as the Germans bombarded residential areas.

If this is not to be a one-off adventure, Polish PCs will need to disengage. They can make it to Romania, be captured by the Soviets, or become partisans (see below). If this is a prologue to a war-long campaign, there may be a final battle to break through a German (or Russian!) screen before the border.

Rallying Abroad

The most common first rallying point for Polish soldiers in the winter of 1939 was Romania (closely followed by Hungary). In these neutral countries, they would be rounded up in internment camps. Given that their hosts had no resources to spare, these were one or two rungs below the average Western POW camp – which still meant a paradise in comparison with the fate of Polish POWs in German or Soviet hands.

Security quickly became intentionally lax. The Polish army in exile was being organized in France, and everybody wanted to leave to fight on. Greasing the wheels meant an easy and safe departure, but even destitute internees could run a few risks and jump the fence; only top officers were closely guarded, as their escape would have meant seriously irking the Germans.

The Poles bought or otherwise procured civilian clothes and, with suspect documents or none at all, either traveled by train to Yugoslavia or reached the seaport of Constanta. Some just walked all the way, scrounging food as they could. Dodging the local police was always the safer choice, but sometimes the authorities were actually willing to turn a blind eye: Nazis weren't popular.

Once in a port, the exiles found a passage for France. Some of those who could not pay were hired as seamen. Others traveled as stowaways, either for real or with a sympathetic crew's acquiescence.

Those who had sought refuge in a Baltic country traveled through Sweden and Great Britain. France was the final destination for them all.

THE CENTRAL ASIA TOUR

The Polish POWs in the Soviet Union experienced almost two years of camps, mistreated, malnourished, and subject to forced labor. Some had to build fortifications along the new border that bisected their own country. Many more were sent far into Siberia. From time to time, new deportees would arrive, as a result of the de-Polonization of Western Ukraine. On the other hand, officers tended to disappear (see *A German Propaganda Coup*, p. 47).

The situation changed in the summer of 1941 with Operation Barbarossa; General Sikorski was forced to come to terms with Stalin. The guards had suddenly

become “friends” – but their brutal behavior was often difficult to forget. Rumors spread like wildfire. POW characters wouldn’t know of the high-level tug of war over where and how to field them, but they would be subject to Soviet unpredictability; one day the camp commissar would be friendly, the next he would forbid recruiting attempts by visiting Polish officers. Things were unbearably slow for men who ached to fight again.

In the end, however, many of the volunteers were allowed to leave. This did not include men who were born in the eastern half of Poland; Stalin did not consider these to be Poles, regardless of ethnicity. Being allowed to leave meant wrapping one’s feet in rags and marching, always under close surveillance, always being poorly fed. Eventually, the soldiers would reach some rail line, and slowly travel through the Central Asia Soviet Republics until they arrived in Iran. From there, they would normally be assigned to the Carpathians in Palestine. For some of these wanderers, this tour took many months.

FOREIGNERS AND LOSERS

During the years of the German high tide, the outlook was bleak even for the British – and more so for their Polish guests.

BLITZKRIEG AGAIN

Once they had arrived in France, the Poles spent many idle months in French barracks or camps, without even a chance of training with modern weapons. Some had even been issued moth-eaten light blue uniforms. The Polish soldiers knew their hopes depended upon French goodwill; although they were sour about the insufficient help they had received, they were confident things would change.

Of the two infantry divisions that were ready in May 1940, the 1st Grenadier Division occupied the tiny Saar bulge that the cautious French offensive had created. This propaganda deployment meant that the unit was only involved in rearguard actions, well after the whole French front had collapsed to the north. Its commander, General Bronislaw Duch, made a point not to give up covering his French allies’ retreat, even after General Sikorski was forced to order all the Polish units to seek refuge on the Channel as best as they could.

The men of the 2nd Division, being close to the Swiss border, had the option to be interned there; many chose to fight on as *maquisards*.

The 10th Mechanized Brigade also fought rearguard actions during the retreat toward Dijon, and suffered heavy losses while giving back what it could; it was supported for some time by a Senegalese regiment.

The fight would continue from Great Britain; Polish PCs who make it through both the 1939 and the 1940 defeats might well have acquired Stubbornness, or Strong Will, or both!

Norwegian Diversion

While all of the Poles itched for the return match, some itched more than others; these volunteered for the Independent Highland Brigade (see p. 42), which also included a core of veterans from the Polish mountain units. This Brigade, originally intended as part of an Allied move in support of Finland (see p. W:FH18), was sent to Scandinavia in reaction to the German invasion of Norway (see p. W13). It was part of a mixed force deployed in the region of Narvik in May 1940. The Allies had some Royal Navy support, but the skies belonged to the Luftwaffe; it was a short, bloody campaign of mountain infantry engagements with little artillery, and the Poles gained the upper hand against the German *Gebirgsjäger* (mountain troopers). The Allies pulled back by the end of May.

GARRISON DUTIES

In Great Britain, the Poles had to face the same prejudices about supposedly being a walkover in 1939. Nevertheless, in the light of the outcome of the Battle of France, the British were revising their derogatory judgments about the 1939 campaign. Churchill allowed the Sikorski government in exile to organize its own, autonomous Polish army, though of course it would need British equipment and support. The language was a problem, but it also was a good excuse to prevent the outright dispersion of the Polish veterans throughout the British army.

Once settled down in barracks around Glasgow, the Polish soldiers were left with little to do. They could train, and wait; in the gloomy days of 1940-41, freeing Poland seemed a far-fetched dream. Gradually, they were assigned garrison and coastal defense duties; they manned AA positions and armored trains patrolling the British coasts. In a few cases, the crews of these trains were entirely made up of surplus officers (an unusual situation for high-ranking PCs used to riding a horse). As most émigré forces, the Poles had too many officers and not enough privates. On the Burmese front, the British troops lacked cadres, and later on a small group of Polish volunteers would be sent to fight far from their homeland.

If the army had little to do, the spotlight turned on the pilots when the Battle of Britain began. Two full Polish fighter squadrons were formed with the men who had already faced the enemy, and some 70 more Polish pilots served in other fighter units. The 303rd Polish Squadron scored more kills than anyone else in the Battle of Britain.

ON LEAVE WITH NOWHERE TO GO

Polish soldiers, no matter where they were after 1939, couldn't go home on leave. For that matter, even a few hours of free time had to be spent as foreigners among strangers. Smart characters would soon learn English (or Russian), but being stationed in Scotland that was not always enough; if the GM can produce a strong enough Scottish accent, language rolls will be needed!

Staying with one's comrades at all times was an option, but this could create conflicts of its own. Free-time interaction with Polish NPCs may be tense; there are closet Communists, defeatists, and more simply and tragically, men who break down (developing Chronic Depression, Alcoholism, or suicidal tendencies).

Going to a pub was an easy way to have a good evening. It should be remembered, however, that Glasgow workers were largely left-leaning, and if they make no more than a passing reference to "our ally, Uncle Joe," that could easily spark a fight.

Just like any soldier far from home, Polish troops will sooner or later look for women. A light-hearted off-the-battlefield interlude might deal with a NPC comrade who falls in love with a Scottish lass, but her belligerent brothers "won't have none of that." In reality, many Polish veterans did settle down in Scotland with local women.

British civilians, and even officials, were paranoid about the presence of German spies. Any foreign-looking fellow speaking with a strange accent will have to undergo suspicion and nosy questions. A particularly clever policeman or Home Guardsman might even argue: "Polish? Yeah, that'd be a good cover for a Hun! You're explaining away your *German* accent with that!"

For the Carpathian riflemen in Palestine, time off would mean visiting exotic locales, and possibly meeting with Jew Zionist activists and Arab Nazi sympathizers.

Power Politics

The Polish privates in their Scottish barracks had a limited view on global war strategy. They knew both the Germans and the Soviets had attacked their country and occupied it; they thought that Operation Barbarossa had changed little. They were patriots; they read their own magazines, urging them to fight on for Polish freedom.

On the other hand, they also saw British propaganda changing its tune. The Soviet Union was an ally. Stalin became increasingly popular in Great Britain. By 1942, there were posters lining up, with the British and American flags, the Soviet one – right where the Poles would have wanted to see their own.

When the Germans uncovered the mass graves at Katyn (see *A German Propaganda Coup*, p. 47), the Western Allies preferred to believe this was a Nazi sham, but the Poles, while acknowledging Hitler was making a propaganda coup, did their math: thousands of officers found killed, thousands of officers captured by the Soviets not accounted for. The rage of the Polish soldiers in the West reached a new high; meanwhile, the troops serving alongside the Red Army were kept in the dark.

General Sikorski died in June 1943, in an air crash. This was a troubling loss for the Polish cause, as he had been highly respected by the British. As the war dragged on, left-leaning propaganda would portray the Poles' will to get back their own homeland as the anti-Communist fanaticism of a small clique of backward landed gentry who just wanted their estates back. The Poles in exile, however, would serve on and honor their commitments, though in bitter resentment, especially after the Yalta agreements.

WILLING PAWNS

Even as Polish soldiers realized they were being used as pawns, they remained willing to serve as such, in the ever-diminishing hope they would finally achieve their goal of a free Poland.

IN THE DESERT

The first ground engagement alongside Commonwealth troops took place in September 1941, when the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Brigade (see p. 42) was fielded in Tobruk (see pp. W:AKM96-97 for more details about this campaign). Although on the defensive, the Polish soldiers patrolled aggressively at night, while during the day they endured a climate radically different than

that of Poland. During the December breakout, they successfully advanced against Italian infantry and took Acroma. They then participated in the Gazala battles until March 1942.

The Brigade's recon unit, the Carpathian Uhlans, were assigned to rear-area patrol duties with their odd collection of vehicles, which included Universal Carriers (see p. W:AKM72), Marmon-Herrington (see p. W:MP40) and Rolls-Royce armored cars (see p. W:MP37), and even a handful of captured Panzer III tanks (see p. W:IC79). Since Axis special forces sometimes carried out missions similar to the LRDG (p. W41), the Polish tankers' boring assignment could suddenly become exciting.

Once moved back to Palestine, the Brigade became the core of the newly forming Carpathian Division, and many months were spent in welcoming, shaping up, and training the men out of the Soviet POW camps. Veteran Poles by now are likely to have become at least NCOs, which might mean interesting character development but also a splitting up of the party. Alternately, some PCs may have good reasons not to deserve a promotion! Another approach is to have NCO characters assigned as squad leaders within the same platoon, though this will mean a large cast of NPCs.

During this period malaria, flies, and poor accommodations dogged the Poles. But there was a dim hope of a Balkan campaign striking straight north, i.e., toward Poland.

A COSTLY MONASTERY

The Balkanian idea was ruled out as impractical, and the new front the Allies chose was Italy. The Polish forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations had grown to Corps size, with two infantry divisions and one armor division. They spent the exceptionally bad winter of 1943 on defensive positions along the Sangro line. On May 12, 1944, they were sent to have their try against the key German position that blocked the Allied advance: the Monte Cassino monastery (see p. W29).

The steep, broken ground made armor support problematic, and although Polish artillerymen played deadly hide-and-seek counterbattery games with their enemy counterparts, the fight over the exposed hilltops boiled down to infantry units capable of dislodging crack German paratroopers, and then willing to take a steady toll of casualties from enemy bombardments in order to keep the position gained. Hill 593, overlooking the monastery, was taken, then lost, and taken again, under massive artillery shelling. The Polish commitment allowed the British 13th Corps to keep pushing on, gradually outflanking the Germans, who finally withdrew. A week of fighting had cost 25% of the two

A GERMAN PROPAGANDA COUP

In April 1943, following the local inhabitants' directions, the Germans began unearthing a mass grave in the Katyn forest, close to Smolensk. The final tally was around 4,500 bodies, each killed by a shot to the back of his head. Many were identifiable – all of them were Polish officers, and all had been captured by the Soviets in 1939.

The Germans immediately publicized their grisly findings, knowing they would drive a wedge between their enemies. The Soviets denied everything, claiming the victims had been in POW camps that had been overrun by the German advance. The Western Allies had very good reasons to believe the Soviets were the culprits, but it was much more expedient to blame the Germans, who were undoubtedly capable of such atrocities.

This left the Poles in the West the only ones demanding a Red Cross independent inquiry. Such a request was portrayed by Stalin as evidence that the Sikorski government connived with the Germans; relations were broken. A Polish character, either in Poland or in Great Britain, who discovers a relative was killed in that way, might well experience a major change of mind as to whom his main enemy actually is.

Stalin's and the NKVD's responsibility for these murders was eventually acknowledged by the Russians some 50 years after the event.

Polish infantry divisions. Characters surviving this ordeal should feel very lucky indeed, and they may have acquired some Disadvantage (see p. W158).

PLUGGING THE GAP

The climactic moment of the Allied breakout from Normandy was the battle for the Falaise gap (see p. W32). The spearhead of the Canadian prong of the Allied pincer was the Polish 1st Armored Division. Its tankers rushed to the job. Some German units managed to get through the bottleneck, fighting desperately, but most remained stuck, and it was the Polish tankers who plugged that hole on the hilly ground around Chambois. They were isolated and nearly overwhelmed, until the British to the north and vanguard American units from the south linked up.

The Polish division had taken heavy losses, but strangely enough it ended the battle with more men than it had at the start! It turned out that some of the enemy units that were captured in the Falaise pocket included Poles who had been forcibly levied by the Germans. They were more than happy to join their countrymen.

THE SHORT STRAW AGAIN

The Independent Parachute Brigade, earmarked for deployment into Poland to help the expected uprising, had been training hard and had reached high readiness standards for this purpose. It was committed to Operation Market Garden instead. Although its commander, General Wladyslaw Sosabowski, was rightly concerned that their drop zone was too far from the British one, too many airborne operations had been cancelled. The paratroopers spent two days waiting for the aircraft to be done with the first waves, and three nervous days more waiting for good weather. Radio communications with the British troops on the ground were spotty at best, and the Poles weren't warned that their own drop zone was by then heavily guarded; they took many casualties while floating down and had to fight hard to clear a small perimeter.

Despite repeated, bloody attempts, they could not send meaningful reinforcements across the river, by now firmly in German hands. The Poles lost about 25% of their elite; in the end they could do nothing but cover the British paratroopers who swam across the river, and retreat with them.

CHOOSING ONE ENEMY

When the relations between the Soviet Union and the government in exile broke down, Stalin gave the go-ahead for his own Polish government and army, the *Ludowe Wojsko Polskie*, or Polish People's Army. A training camp was set up close to Moscow, and a recruitment drive began. Polish soldiers still in labor or POW camps could choose to stay there, or to fight at least one of their country's enemies. Many chose to fight.

Most of the surviving officers had left with Anders; thus, while the Polish army in the West had too many men in the higher ranks, the LWP had to fill in with Soviet citizens of Polish extraction, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, or simply seconded Red Army officers. Most of the Polish officers were Communists.

The 1st Infantry Division was first fielded in October 1943, in battles around Smolensk. It took some

30% losses, as Anders had feared; later on, the LWP's casualty rate was roughly on par with the Red Army rifle units' (which still didn't offer a good chance of survival for the average infantryman). This setting qualifies for the "War is Hell!" approach (see p. W158).

The LWP steadily increased in numbers since, as the Soviets advanced west, more recruits became available. The Poles served with the crack 8th Guards Army and crossed the Bug river during July 1944. The LWP attempted to relieve the Warsaw insurgents, in vain. In tough winter fights, the 1st Polish cleared the coast from Kolobrzeg to Szczecin (Stettin).

By the time of the 1945 offensive, the 1st and 2nd Polish Armies counted about 200,000 men, a substantial 9% contribution to the final drive on Berlin; of these, 32,000 were lost on this final stretch. The survivors' reward would be bitter indeed.

IN A GERMAN COLONY

If I wanted to have a poster put up for every seven Poles who were shot, the forests of Poland would not suffice for producing the paper for such posters.

– Hans Frank

KEEPING THEIR HEADS DOWN

With the exception of Russians in the German-occupied territories, Poles in their own country probably were the ones who fared worst throughout the war. Poland was partitioned again. In order to make room for the German colonists, Hans Frank's General Governorate employed concentration camps, deportation, and scientific starvation to whittle down the local population. A Pole's life was worth nothing, unless he could somehow be useful to his new masters. Thus, many were deported for forced labor in Germany, or within the Governorate (see p. W:IC107). In the countryside, the farmers had to deliver fixed quotas for feeding the Wehrmacht. The Germans requisitioned the small home millstones, so that the women could not mill flour on their own and would be forced to deliver the harvest. Even so, the peasants could usually hide some food-stuffs for themselves – and for the partisans; on the other hand, townspeople had to resort to black marketeers if they did not want to starve on their official

WORKING FOR THE GERMANS

The one occupied country in Europe that did not form a collaborationist, “*quisling*” government was Poland. Poles were rightly proud of this, though it should be remembered that the Germans did not want such a puppet because they preferred to run things directly.

The Polish economy was thus incorporated into the German war effort; all important industries produced for it, and all Poles, ultimately, worked for the Germans. This could range from an ordinary job having long hours, little pay, and meager rations, to forced labor in camps where the inmates were worked to death.

Notwithstanding the death penalty and pervasive controls, the Polish industrial output was rife with built-in defects, some very cleverly conceived. Dud rounds, defective capacitors, and wrong-sized accessories were shipped daily. Accidents happened. It was a deadly game for the Polish employees who pitted their wits against their German overseers’, in the factories, rail yards, and even in the Ghetto workshops. The partisans could sometimes be as insidious as

the insider saboteurs, and sometimes much more blunt.

Small numbers of Poles fully collaborated. The Germans had created a few Polish police units, which were of some limited usefulness as long they didn’t fight the partisans. These traitors usually needed to be bolstered with contingents of Germans, or more often foreign SS volunteers. However, a few policemen played an extremely dangerous double-agent game.

The German minority had formed its own militia, the *Selbstschutz* (self-defense), which came under SS control and soon acquired a reputation for its excesses; as western Poland was annexed, this organization was disbanded in early 1940.

Later in the war, Poles living in those territories would qualify for full German citizenship after 10 years of good conduct. This immediately made them eligible for service in the Wehrmacht! Needless to say, many of them deserted at their first opportunity.



rations. Meanwhile, they needed a German-approved job and German-issued papers (even to own a bicycle, one needed a permit stating which routes one could use from home to workplace).

Everybody was always subject to random abuses. A German needed no reason to beat a Pole. Casual sweeps would be made to fill up deportation trains. The smallest sabotage was punished by the shooting of hostages. Sometimes these were picked at random, but the Germans also kept lists of people to shoot in the event of a partisan attack, and made sure that people knew they were listed.

Poles needed to be utterly deferential toward Germans; if honored by a *Heil Hitler*, they were not allowed to salute back, they were to stand at attention. Not knowing at least a bit of German was unhealthy.

THE RESISTANCE

If life was bleak for the average Poles who chose to stay out of the fray, it became both bleak and extremely dangerous for the members of the resistance.

A sizable number of men and women were just part-time fighters, carrying on their day-to-day routine and occasionally running errands for their group. These could be as simple as delivering leaflets, counting the soldiers at a checkpoint, shadowing an administrative officer or relaying intelligence from their daytime jobs; yet each of these trivial tasks could cost their life, and, as a consequence of torture, the lives of their comrades. Cells were kept small for this very reason.

From time to time, these partisans would be assigned more important and risky tasks. Sabotage was an option, usually against the rail lines, but it carried the price of several hostages' lives. Thus carefully staged "accidents" were preferred. These were also used to get rid of the occasional collaborationist. Procuring weapons or forged documents from the black market and the underworld was also dangerous; criminals often were patriotic, though greedy, but sometimes they'd sell the pistol to the partisan and the partisan to the Germans.

Full-time partisans stayed deep in the forests and often barely survived. Poland was heavily garrisoned, the Germans carried out sweeps, and the freedom fighters were always hungry and pathetically under-armed.

Later in the war, however, they switched to a more aggressive stance.

Both the part-time members and the rural sorts wouldn't survive long without a network of sympathizers. Peasants provided food, railway workers supplied information, ordinary citizens distributed propaganda. They were risking their lives, too.



Characters in the resistance will experience boring drudgery, hunger and fatigue, and the occasional exciting moment when they can really strike back. They should also be faced with the moral quandaries linked with the German reprisal policy. Hard choices can be expected when it comes to dealing with the collaborationists, trusting other groups, helping the Jews, and deciding what to do about the impending arrival of the Soviets.

Life and Death in Warsaw

The ghetto uprising and the Warsaw uprising are two climactic moments in the history of the Polish resistance, and partisan characters might well be involved in either or both. This is when the city fighter template (see p. 26) comes in handy.

When the ghetto uprising began, the Germans had already "resettled" tens of thousands of Jews. Some ghetto areas had been emptied, closed and barricaded, and only "wild" people, half-mad with hunger, lurked there. Most of the others had a job in some ghetto workshop producing for the Germans, either for real or as a cover, but at this time their official ration had fallen below 900 calories a day – one meager meal of groats and potatoes.

On April 19, 1943, the Germans were totally surprised by the reaction of the ZOB fighters (see p. 43), even though small skirmishes had already taken place. The Nazis had to use flamethrowers, engineers, SS troops, and even outright artillery bombardments. It took them a month to clear the ghetto, not without loss-



es (about 400 between Germans and foreign auxiliaries) and a painful humiliation at the hands of poorly trained, pistol-armed Jewish youngsters. The Germans leveled almost all the buildings and used poison gas against the underground bunkers and the sewers, which provided the escape route for a few lucky survivors.

A year and a half after the Jews rebelled, the whole city rose up against the Germans. On September 1, 1944, the resistance had some 40,000 men in Warsaw, but most were not adequately armed. Soviet tanks were sighted in the vicinity; no reports reached the AK about the German reinforcements rushing to the area. The uprising was successful, but the enemy kept a foothold at the Okecie airport, and most importantly, in the Praga suburb, on the Eastern bank of the Vistula.

The AK fighters were proud and elated that they were openly confronting their enemy at last; this could be a high point for partisan characters. They poured all they had into the fight; men, women, and boys, including the *Szare Szeregi* (Grey Ranks, or Boy Scouts). They also captured significant enemy stocks; German MGs and “*panterki*” (camouflage suits) were now available in numbers, and there were even a few tanks.

The Germans sent in SS police and penal units, as well as Ukrainian SS men. They massacred the civilian population but could not reduce the AK strongholds. The district of Wola had few partisans and many civilians, and on August 5 the SS attacked there. They slaughtered everyone they met in their rampage, presumably up to 8,000 unarmed civilians. Artillery, Stukas, demolition teams, and flamethrowing tanks had to be called in to do the serious work. In the end, the AK could not hold out on its own. Partisan (and, indeed, civilian) characters need to plan a clever way out of the city, because all survivors were deported.

SEAMEN AND PILOTS

THE BALTIC AND BEYOND

The Polish navy, with its destroyers, submarines, and minelayers, could wage a limited, defensive war in the confines of the Baltic, provided that its bases could be held – an iffy proposition. Thus it was wisely decided to send three destroyers to Great Britain.

For Polish seamen, the September campaign was as shocking and violent as for infantrymen. On land, they came under constant harassment from the air and occasional bombardment from the *Schleswig-Holstein*. At sea, they were vulnerable to the Stukas and the battlegroup suffered losses from such an attack. At night, there would be raids by German torpedo boats. In the end, the bases were overrun from the land side; one of the last Polish forces to surrender was the garrison in the navy base of Hel.

Some submarines were interned in Sweden, but two of them succeeded in the risky voyage to Great Britain; the *Orzel* had an especially adventurous journey (see p. 40).

By November 1939, the Polish navy was acknowledged as an allied force, with bases mainly in Scotland. Its losses would be made good with former British vessels (that is how it got its first cruiser), and with a few ex-French ones. Its history would become inseparable from the Royal Navy's.

In order to update their skills, and to solve communication problems, small groups of officers and NCOs served tours of duty on British ships, which would provide interesting interaction opportunities for Polish characters.

Overall, Polish seamen ended up serving the thankless jobs on the unglamorous minor ships: escort duties and anti-submarine patrols, churning thousands of miles with their propellers. On the other hand, for political reasons, they also got very good chances to take part in all important combat actions, and the pleasure of carrying out shore bombardments against the Germans. A few Polish ships were present at Narvik, Dunkirk, the hunt for the *Bismarck*, and at most landing operations.

THE REAL WINGED HUSSARS

In WWII, some Polish units still used the symbol of the 17th-century "winged hussars," but the Polish pilots were their true heirs.

The Polish air force was a small but competent force in 1939, relying on a cadre of well-trained pilots. They were swamped by enemies flying much better aircraft, but even so the air war wasn't a one-sided show, as the Luftwaffe bombers' losses proved. Most pilots flew a high number of missions over just a few days; coordination was poor, and the engagements often were random fights. The Pursuit Brigade fought desperately to ward off bombers from Warsaw. Soon, the airmen were swept away with the retreating ground troops, and some of them were sacrificed in suicidal low-altitude strafing runs, in a hopeless attempt at slowing the Germans down. The lucky ones made one last hazardous flight toward neutral airports.

But their war had just begun. In 1940, fighter pilots were a valuable commodity in Great Britain, and pilots who had actually met the Bf 109s and survived were invaluable veterans. At first, the RAF was reluctant to form foreign squadrons, but, while the ground forces had too many men and not enough arms, the reverse would soon become true for Fighter Command. The Polish pilots underwent intensive training with much better aircraft than they flew in 1939, and crash courses in English. Soon they were flying as often as their British colleagues, and scoring more often.

Throughout the war, the number of Polish squadrons grew to 10 fighter squadrons (eventually mostly flying with Mustangs) and four bomber

squadrons. These would be useful for a straight air campaign using Polish airmen; interactions with British ground crews, inspectors, and civilians would always be interesting. The bomber squadrons took part in the ill-fated attempts at resupplying the resistance, and some of the crews were downed on their own beloved land.



WEIRD OBJECTIVES

For a weird-war twist to the 1939 campaign, one might consider that the much-contested border region of the Corridor wasn't just rich in iron ore, but also in Teutonic Order castles (p. W:WW36).

Another focus for unusual activities was the Jordanow-Zakopane region, in the mountains between Poland and Czechoslovakia. As early as September 15, 1939, the area fell under the direct control of the SS, who deported most of the local inhabitants and exploited slave labor to build test facilities for advanced weapons and to carry out "mining operations." They were allegedly extracting uranium (which is intriguing in its own right), but according to legends, the Babia Gora mountain hides an entrance to the Underworld. Were they actually looking for an access to Agartha (p. W:WW126)? Interestingly, Friedrich Wichtl, the occultist and Theosophist whose 1918 work (*World Freemasonry, World Revolution, World Republic*) had stirred Himmler's interest in the occult, also used to spend time in Zakopane.

There is another important link between Poland and Agartha: Ferdinand Ossendowski, the Polish author and explorer who had traveled through Mongolia before writing his ground-breaking *Beasts, Men and Gods* in 1922. Ossendowski almost certainly knew more than he disclosed, and spiriting him away to Sweden in 1939 (together with his bulky and exotic private collection) would be an important mission for Polish patriots.

While the original golem's home was in Prague (p. W:WW96), Jewish sages and kabbalists (p. CB77) could probably be found in Poland, too; either in the Warsaw ghetto (soon to become a death-aspected place) or hiding in some countryside village. Golems would make fearsome soldiers, but can they be controlled?

6. POLISH PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

This pronunciation guide is a highly simplified version to cover the anglicized spellings in this book, and does not cover special Polish letters. For more detailed pronunciation guidance including use of special symbols, search the Web. There are several helpful pages available: www.travlang.com/languages/polish/pronounce.english.html, members.fortunecity.com/john_deere/Polish2.html, and www.cusd.claremont.edu/~tkroll/EastEur/pol-pron.html were referenced in compiling this guide.

In polysyllabic words, stress the third syllable from the end.

CONSONANTS

Letter	Pronunciation
B, F, K, L*, M, P, Z	as in English
C	“lots”
CI	“chip”
D, N, T	as in English, but place the tip of the tongue on the upper teeth
G	“gone”
J	“yes”
NI	as Russian “nyet”
R	rolled, as in Spanish “perro” or Scottish usage
S	as in English, soft like “say,” not zzz like “says”
SI	as S, with a slight Y sound following
W	“vet”

* Sometimes pronounced as “win.”

Some consonants are pronounced differently when they come at the end of a word; e.g., “singing” would be pronounced “singink.” The normal pronunciation is *voiced*, the ending pronunciation is *devoiced*.

Voiced	Devoiced
B	P
D	T
G	K
W	F
Z or RZ	SZ

VOWELS

Letter	Pronunciation
A	“was”
E	“get”
I	“it”
O	“hot”
U or ó	“shoot”
Y	“it”; never sounds like “sky”

NASALIZED VOWELS

Two vowel sounds in Polish are “nasalized.” They are pronounced with a short “n” sound, such as “bon” in French. The sound can be approximated more simply by adding an English “n” after the vowel.

Letter	Pronunciation
A	“gone”
E	“when”; at the end of a word, pronounced like “E” above

DIPHTHONGS

Letter	Pronunciation
AJ	the long I sound, as in “bike”
CH	“hot”
CZ	“cheer”
DZ	“kids”*
DZI	sounds like “wild Zhivago,” pronounced as one unit
EJ	the long A sound, as in “case”
RZ	“television”
SZ	“shirt”
SZCZ	sounds like “fish chow,” pronounced as one unit
ZI	“zipper”

* Exception: when followed by the letter I, DZ is pronounced like J as in “Jim.”



BIBLIOGRAPHY

History Books

Anders, Wladyslaw. *An Army in Exile. The Story of the Second Polish Corps* (Macmillan, 1959). Through the eyes of the Polish commander, not impartial but vivid and detailed.

Davies, Norman. *God's Playground* (Vol. 2, Columbia University Press, 1982). Polish history from 1795 to 1981. Sympathetic with the Poles' plight, but complete. An updated edition is due in 2004.

Hogg, Ian. *Military Small Arms Data Book* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 1999). Information on small arms.

Magnuski, Janusz. *Wozny Bojowe: Polskich Sil Zbrojnych 1940-1946* (Wydawnictwo Lampart, 1998). Highly detailed inventory of all armored fighting vehicles used by the Free Poles in the West. Only available in Polish.

Read, Anthony and Fisher, David. *The Deadly Embrace – Hitler, Stalin and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, 1939-1941* (Penguin, 1988). A wealth of information about the diplomatic maneuvering that sandwiched Poland in this deal.

Smith, Walter and Smith, Joseph. *Small Arms of the World* (Gallahad, 1973). Illustrates and describes most small arms.

Tarczynski, Jan, with Barbarski, Krzysztof and Jonca, Adam. *Pojazdy w Wojsku Polskim 1918-1939* (Oficyna Wydawn Ajaks, 1995). Very detailed and well-illustrated inventory of the Polish army motor vehicles, from motorcycles to tanks. Includes summaries in English.

Zaloga, Steven J. *Blitzkrieg* (Arms and Armour Press, 1990). German, Polish, and Soviet armor (among other armor of 1939-1940).

Zaloga, Steven J. and Hook, Richard. *The Polish Army 1939-45* (Osprey, 1982). General information on the Polish army as well as the usual glorious color plates.

Zaloga, Steven J. and Madej, Victor. *The Polish Campaign 1939* (Hippocrene Books, 1991). Detailed military history.

Fiction and Memoirs

Grass, Günter. *The Tin Drum* (Pantheon Books, 1963). The protagonist may be unrealistic, but the background scenes in Danzig are largely historical.

Harris, Robert. *Enigma* (Random House, 1995). Deals with code-breaking, but a full explanation of its relevance would be a spoiler.

Hershey, John. *The Wall* (Hamish Hamilton, 1950). A moving book about the Ghetto.

Mazor, Michel. *The Vanished City: Everyday Life in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Marsilio Pub, 1994). Memoirs. The title says it all.

Michener, James A. *Poland* (Random House, 1983). Romanticized but well-researched, spans all of Polish history, with a hefty chapter about the war.



Film

Polanski, Roman. *The Pianist* (Universal, 2003). A movie about the bleak but miraculous survival of a Warsaw Jew, based on a true story.

Wajda, Andrzej. *Kanal (Sewers)* (Kadr, 1956). In this movie, partisans try to fight and survive in the Warsaw sewers during the uprising.

Internet

Polish Armour of 1918-1939. Detailed site covering tanks, armored cars, armored trains, and other vehicles. Available at derela.republica.pl/armcarpl.htm.

Polish Army TO&E. Detailed organizational charts of most Polish army units. Available at www.geocities.com/kumbayaaa/polreparmy.html.

Polish Aviation History. Details the Polish air force and its equipment. Available at ww2-aviation.net/polavhist.

Polish Cavalry 1939. Quick overview of weapons and vehicles. Available at www.heroica.org/polish.htm.

Polish Firearms. Just that. Available at hem.pas-sagen.se/dadkri/index.htm.

Militaria. This site has tons of info on the Polish military. In Polish, but easy to navigate. Available at www.militaria.cyberk.pl/wrzesien/.

Seabolt, Gene. *The Warsaw Ghetto*. Available to Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/) subscribers, an in-depth treatment of the ghetto as a grim setting.

INDEX

Advantages, 22, 23.
Air force, 19.
Aircraft, 37.
Alternate history, 15.
Anders, Wladyslaw, 7.
Animal Empathy advantage, 23.
Anti-Semitism, 6.
Armistice, 4.
Armored units, 18.
Armory, 27.
Army, 20.
Artillery, 31.
Basic training, 41.
Beck, Jozef, 7.
Bibliography, 54.
Birth of a myth, 9.
Birth of a state, 4.
Blitzkrieg, 9.
Campaigns, 44-52.
Carpathian Brigade, 12, 21.
Cavalry units, 18.
Cavalryman template, 25.
Chamberlain, Neville, 8.
Characters abroad, 26.
Ciphers, 19.
City fighter template, 26.
Claim to Hospitality advantage, 23.
Codes, 19.
Commendations, 41.
Contacts advantage, 23.
Customization notes, 24.
Disadvantages, 22, 23.
Disinformation, 42.

Dog eat dog, 6.
Duty (Involuntary) disadvantage, 23.
Elite units, 43.
Ethnic hodge-podge, 4.
Female characters, 22.
Fit advantage, 23.
Germany, 4-6.
Guderian, 10.
Home Army, 21.
Hungary, 11.
Intolerance disadvantage, 23.
Irregular Jozefs, 43.
Jews, 6, 13, 14.
Map of Poland, 16.
Mathematicians and chess players, 19.
Military ranks, 22.
Moscicki, Ignacy, 7.
National Guard, 18.
Navy, 20.
New weapons, 34.
Operations and tactics, 19.
Order of battle, 20-21.
Personal equipment, 27.
Pilsudski, Jozef, 4-6.
Polish corridor, 7.
Polish People's Army, 21.
Pronunciation guide, 53.
Propaganda, 42.
Puppet government, 16.
R.A.F., 12.
Regular Jozefs, 42.
Resistance, 13.
Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, 8.

Romania, 11.
Rudz-Smigly, Edward, 7, 10.
Service culture, 41.
Shetl, 24.
Sikorski, Wladyslaw, 7.
Skills, 23.
Small arms, 29.
Social Stigma disadvantage, 23.
Soldiering, 41.
Soldiers, 22.
Soviet Union, 6.
Special units, 18.
Sphere of interest, 8.
Standard units, 18.
Status advantage, 23.
Stenów, 30.
Submarines, 39.
Surplus from everywhere, 27.
Tables, *weapon*, 28.
Tactics, and operations, 19.
Templates, 25.
Treaty of Riga, 5.
Vehicles, 32, 33, 35-40.
Versailles treaty, 5.
Very fit advantage, 23.
Warsaw concert, 10.
Wealth advantage, 23.
Weapon tables, 28.
Weapons, new, 34.
What if . . .?, 15.
Witos, Wincenty, 5.
World War I, 5.

Stuck for an adventure? No problem.

**e23 sells high-quality
game adventures
and supplements
in PDF format.**



- Get complete sample adventures free!
- PDFs from the major players in online publishing – plus gems from the up-and-comers, and digital editions of out-of-print classics.
- See the ratings other users have given . . . and add your own ratings.
- Buy it once, have it always. Download your purchases again whenever you need to.

Download ● Print ● Play

e23 is part of Warehouse 23, the online store at Steve Jackson Games. Warehouse 23 is also the official Internet retailer for Dork Storm Press, Atlas Games, and many other publishers. Visit us today at www.warehouse23.com for all your game STUFF!