***by Andrew Danyluk***

As with the first two installments of this series on Diversity of Design, this article will discuss the modeling of late war German armour in tactical wargames. While the physical equipment is of note, including the peculiarities of speed, armour protection, and fire power (the Holy Trinity of tank design), also of interest here are tactics and doctrine.

***Definitions***

It may be necessary to start the examination with a few definitions. The word *panzer* itself is simply German for *armour*. But the word itself has come to have "a significance well beyond the original meaning." Just as the Allies used the word *armour* to refer to a full range of tracked and turreted tanks, half-track trucks, self-propelled guns, and the "funnies", the German term *panzer* was often combined in compound words to describe such things as anti-tank guns (*panzerabwehr* (armour defence) and, later, *panzerjäger* (armour hunter)), mechanized infantry (*panzerschütze*, later *panzergrenadier*), and *Panzergruppe* (armoured unit).1

*...outside the German forces the word Panzer had an awesome mystique quite out of proportion to its potential. This appears to have been acquired in Poland in 1939 and in Western Europe in 1940 and 1941. Even when the Panzers had run into serious trouble...the word still kept its prestige...Even to those that fought and destroyed them the word had an emotional overtone which could not be altered. There was something enigmatic about Panzers; they came rapidly to fame and then after a period of glory were eclipsed. Their ultimate failure was as mysterious as their intrigue.*2

Germany's armoured forces got off to a modest beginning when the war started in Poland in September 1939. The still-evolving *Panzerwaffe* (armoured force) was not completely prepared for war, lacking armoured vehicles of all types, from medium tanks to personnel carriers. The majority of vehicles were of Panzerkampfwagen I and II type, armed only with light weapons. Tank procurement had not been aided by stifling bureaucracy and a refusal to mobilize the economy on a wartime footing. The Germans made up for shortages in medium tanks (PzKpfw III and IV) by deploying captured Czechoslovakian types. Poland's 30 divisions "should have been enough to stand a good chance of holding Germany's 41 available divisions" had they been fighting in 1914.

*But this was not 1914. Ten of the Wehrmacht's divisions were armoured in one way or another and the ability of such units to change both the pace and face of war was about to have a spectacular demonstration.*3

As the war progressed, a number of additional armoured vehicle types, and organizations to deploy them with, were introduced.

**Panzer-Brigade** – the main component of the Panzer Division at the start of the war, a Pz.Brigade consisted of two regiments, each of 2 battalions of tanks. As the war progressed, the divisions were split into smaller divisions, with a single **Panzer Regiment** and greater proportion of mechanized infantry.

**Panzer-Abwehr** – anti-tank units, equipped with either towed or self-propelled anti-tank guns. As tactics changed, and the Germans went onto the defensive, these units evolved into **Panzerjäger** (tank hunter) units. Towards the end of the war **Panzerzerstörer** (tank destroyer) units made an appearance.

**Panzeraufklärungs** – armoured reconnaissance units were the eyes and ears of the Panzer Division, and fielded an array of equipment including halftracks, armoured cars and self-propelled guns.

**Panzergrenadier** – the motorized infantry of the early panzer divisions were renamed in July 1942 to become Panzergrenadiers. The title was purely inspirational, reflective of Hitler's admiration of Frederick the Great, whose soldiers had been titled Grenadier.

**Panzerpionier** – armoured engineers, who used armoured halftracks to aid in their battlefield tasks of construction and elimination of obstacles.

**Panzernachrichten** – armoured signals, who likewise used armoured vehicles to carry radio equipment and permit the passage of information in a timely manner.

**Panzerartillerie** – specifically referred to self-propelled artillery pieces designed for indirect fire, though the majority of artillery, even in the Panzer Divisions, were guns towed by unarmoured prime movers.

**Sturmartillerie** – "assault artillery", referred to self-propelled guns, using fully enclosed and turretless chassis, generally the Sturmgeschütz. StuG units were generally army-level resources.4

***Background***

Space prohibits a detailed history of the German *Panzerwaffe*. The success of the tank-equipped divisions in Poland was mixed. Vulnerability to massed anti-tank fire became evident after the first week of the Polish Campaign, particularly the early types which formed a majority of deployed tanks. In terrain suited to their deployment, however, the ability to quickly deploy and move proved beneficial.

*Air power had played a decisive part, but in the final analysis it was the tanks of the Panzer and Light Divisions which actually out-manoeuvred the Poles. This had prevented a trench-war developing which would have given time for the Poles to shake themselves out of their confusion and fully mobilize their forces.*5

france, n.a., russia

1. Warner, Philip Panzer (Arthur Barker Ltd., London, UK, 1977) ISBN 978-0297773160 p.8

2. Ibid

3. Grove, Erik German Armour 1939-1940: Poland & France (Almark Publishing Co. Ltd., Somerset, UK, 1976) ISBN 0-85524-260-4 pp.7-10

4. Pruett, Michael H. and Robert J. Edwards Field Uniforms of German Panzer Forces in World War 2 (J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing Inc., Winnipeg, MB, 1993) ISBN 0-921991-15-0

5. Grove, Ibid, pp.11-20