



The Black Devils' March - A Doomed Odyssey: The 1st Polish Armoured Division 1939-45

Evan McGilvray

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The Black Devils' March is an account of how the 1st (and only) Polish Armored Division in the West under the leadership of General Stanislaw Maczek, arose out of the ashes of defeat and while attempting to avoid the internal politics of the Polish Government in Exile, was able to return to Europe in August 1944 on the side of the Western Allies. In Europe the Division achieved glory, honor and victory but was unable to liberate Poland owing to the politics of the postwar settlement in Europe.

The account of the formation and combat service of the Division is fully researched from Polish, English and German sources, and includes training in Scotland, the unit's sharp introduction to warfare in the Normandy bocage, the Falaise Gap and Hill 262, the advance into Belgium and Holland, and final victory on German soil. The text is supported by nearly 100 photographs (many previously unpublished), maps, and detailed appendices, including a list of the Division's medal recipients.

The politics of the Polish Army are examined as well as the historical legacy of the Polish soldier in exile. This helps the reader understand the frustration of the Poles as they sought to form an armored unit - not only was it of value as part of the Polish Army fighting alongside the Allies, it was also of considerable political value to the Poles as they sought to preserve their dignity and sovereignty. The conclusion points to a rather hollow victory for the Poles by May 1945, as Germany may have been vanquished but Poland remained occupied, this time by the Soviet Union.

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