

GERMAN MILITARY SITUATION MAPS
(ARMY HIGH COMMAND/ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND)
“LAGE OST” (EASTERN THEATER), 1939 –1945

The “Lage Ost” (Military Situation – Eastern Theater) maps, June 1939-May 1945, constitute a highly significant and unique source of documentation for the 1939 Polish campaign and the Soviet-German war, 1941-45. These maps, which number approximately 2,075 and were prepared for the daily use of the German Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW) , detail the dispositions and movements of German forces and their opponents in the Eastern Theater throughout the Second World War. In 1999-2000 the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) filmed these records in the format of 8” x 10” color transparencies, the negatives and reference prints of which were retained by NARA while the original maps were restituted to the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, Germany.

History

As with other series of theater-level maps, the “Lage Ost” collection consisted of wall-sized maps initially prepared by the German Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres, OKH). The maps were first printed by the Mapping and Survey Branch (Abteilung für Kriegskarten und Vermessungswesen), and then annotated by the OKH’s Operations Branch (Operationsabteilung) to indicate specific headquarters and unit locations. New maps were prepared daily as staff officers collated radio and teletype reports from front-line commands to indicate advances, withdrawals, or other changes in locations and shifts in geographic boundaries. The “Lage Ost” series described here comprises the set of maps forwarded to the OKW’s Operations Staff (Wehrmachtführungsstab) for their use in following the daily military developments in eastern Europe. At times Adolf Hitler personally reviewed these maps in consultation with his senior OKW advisors. The approximate size of the originals varied from 60” x 96” to 76” x 76.”

After the war these and many other German military maps were seized by the U.S. Army and brought for exploitation to the United States, where they were collectively identified as Record Group (RG) 1045 among various collections of captured German records. In time they were transferred to the custody of NARA, where they became part of the National Archives Collection of Seized Enemy Records, 1942 - , RG 242. While most German textual records were microfilmed and restituted to Germany during the period 1958-68, the “Lage Ost” maps remained in NARA custody as no technical means of reproduction was available that could cope with their oversized format and accurately capture their color and detail. By 1998 this technical problem had been resolved and preparations for the filming of the “Lage Ost” and over 3,000 additional German military theater-level maps had begun. NARA plans to complete the filming of the latter maps over the course of 2001 and return the last originals in 2002.

Description

The maps are arranged chronologically and maintained in individual folders that identify the date, time of day if “morgens” or “abends” (discussed in the succeeding paragraph), and number of prints (e.g., “Pts. I-II” indicate two prints). Each map is reproduced in the form of two to four 8” x 10” color transparencies, duplicated as both reference prints and negatives. The usual map scale is 1:1 000 000, but a few are scale 1: 300 000. Identified on each map are the positions of German and Polish or Soviet army group-, army-, and corps-level headquarters and individual units down to the division-level. German and other Axis forces are indicated in blue; Polish and Soviet forces in red. Printed on each map are topographical features designated either by color (e.g., tan to brown for rising elevation) or by standard symbol (e.g., for floodplains and marshes). Many maps also include such additional features as handwritten notations on weather conditions, observed large-scale movements of Soviet forces behind the lines, designated boundaries of occupied areas under German civil administration, and affixed notes comparing German and Soviet strengths in units and armor in particular sectors.

For most of the period covered, at least two maps per day were prepared. During the Polish campaign, an early (“früh”) version indicated morning developments, and a final version revealed final positions achieved for the day. For most of the history of the Russian campaign, each day included a “morning” (“morgens”) or movements map that indicated large-scale movements or thrusts (and often annotated only for units of corps size and above), and an “evening” (“abends,” “abds.”) map that reflected the final positions for all major units down to division level. During the period November – December 1941 a third daily map (scale 1:300 000) was typically included to indicate the progress of the Second Panzer Army (Panzer – Armeekommando 2, PzAOK 2), in its advance on Moscow. During the periods May - July 1943 and February 1944 - May 1945, “Lage Ost” usually comprised only the “evening” map for each day. From November 1939 to June 1941, the interval between the Polish and Russian campaigns, a situation map was only periodically maintained.

The “Lage Ost” series effectively ended 19 April 1945, as Allied and Soviet forces prepared to link up in central Germany and an ‘Eastern theater’ ceased to exist. From 21 April to 22 May 1945 the remnant OKW headquarters prepared a set of periodic “Lage Reich” maps to illustrate force dispositions, and these have been included at the end of the “Lage Ost” series.

No maps have been identified for the following dates:

5 December 1941	12 - 13 February 1944
31 December 1941	28 February 1944
15 June 1943	5 December 1944
18 June 1943	26 January 1945
21 – 22 June 1943	20 April 1945
1 – 2 February 1944	22 – 23 April 1945
6 February 1944	27 – 28 April 1945
8 February 1944	1 – 3 May 1945

In addition, many maps known to have been prepared as either the "movements" or "final" version for particular days are also missing. Where only one map is available for a day where two might be expected, the extant map has been identified as "(only)" in the folder identification. In rare instances (e.g., 9 October 1941, 2 December 1941) only portions of a map have survived.

Of particular note are some historical maps that summarize the development of the Polish campaign, located at the beginning of September 1939. These maps, varying in scale from 1:750 000 to 1:1 000 000, were prepared after the completion of the campaign as a historical study.

In addition to the "Lage Ost" maps, two small series of maps for Army Groups Vistula (Heeresgruppe Weichsel) and Courland (Heeresgruppe Kurland) directly supplement the Eastern Theater collection with daily documentation of military operations, respectively, in the sector of central Poland from Warsaw to the Oder River, 23 January – 30 April 1945 (84 maps), and on the Courland peninsula of Latvia, 24 January – 19 April 1945 (83 maps). All maps in these series are scale 1:300 000. These series immediately follow the "Lage Ost" collection.

Excluded from the "Lage Ost" maps was information relating to Finnish forces and units of the German 20th Mountain Army (Gebirgs-Armeeoberkommando 20) operating out of Finland and in the Soviet Arctic region. Maps for these forces are located among the collection of Northern Theater maps, filmed and described elsewhere among German military situation theater-level maps.

It should be noted that all map annotations are in German, as are the transliteration of Slavic place names (e.g., "Wilno" for Vilnius, "Woronesh" for Voronezh). A knowledge of German is therefore necessary for a comprehensive use of the maps. German and enemy command headquarters are also identified according to the German Army's standard tactical symbols, examples of which accompany this description.

Related Records

Closely related to the "Lage Ost" series are the daily situation maps maintained by each German army group operating in the Eastern theater. These maps, generally of the scale 1:300 000, provide more detailed information on the tactical movements and dispositions of German and Soviet forces. There are also several small series of specialized maps for the Eastern Theater that document strength comparisons ("Gegenüberstellungskarte," 1:500 000), aerial reconnaissance ("Luftaufklärungsergebnissekarte," 1:1 000 000), Red Army situation ("Lage der Roten Armee," 1:1 000 000), and railroad information ("Eisenbahnerkundung," 1:1 000 000). All of these series constitute original maps in NARA custody as part of RG 242 (duplicate originals have already been restituted to the Bundesarchiv).

Also retained within RG 242 are copies of two bound atlases prepared by the OKH Operationsabteilung as commemorative editions of significant maps for specific campaigns. They comprise **Der Feldzug in Polen, 1- 30 September 1939** (The Campaign in Poland, September 1939), and **Der Feldzug in Frankreich vom 10. Mai bis 25. Juni 1940** (The Campaign in France, May-June 1940). A bound third atlas, pertaining to the Balkan campaign, has not been identified, although the draft collection of maps for this edition is also located in

RG 242. A fourth atlas, prepared for the first six months of the Russian campaign, is available at the Map Room of the Library of Congress.










Textual records of the OKW Wehrmachtführungsstab are reproduced as part of National Archives Microfilm Publication T-77, Records of the German Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht – OKW), described in *Guide Nos. 18 and 75 of Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Va.* (Washington, DC, 1956-). Records of the OKH's Abteilung für Kriegskarten und Vermessungswesen are reproduced as part of National Archives Microfilm Publication T-78, Records of the German Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres – OKH), described in *Guide No. 29*. Many tactical-level maps of German armies, corps, and divisions were filmed with the textual records of those units, although the lack of color identification and the filming of a single map over many images reduces their usefulness.

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A. BASIC SYMBOLS AND COMPOSITION OF TACTICAL SYMBOLS

Section I. Basic Symbols for Headquarters

Headquarters are represented by flag symbols. The shape and marking of the flag denote the size of the command.

Current	Old	German	U. S.	British
		Oberkommando des Heeres.....	High Command of the Army.....	Army GHQ
		Heeresgruppenkommando.....	Hq of an army group.....	HQ army gp
		Armeeoberkommando.....	Hq of an army.....	HQ army
		General(Korps)kommando.....	Corps Hq.....	HQ corps
		Divisionskommando.....	Division Hq.....	HQ div
		Brigadestab.....	Brigade Hq.....	HQ bde
		Regimentsstab.....	Regimental Hq.....	HQ regt
		Bataillonsstab.....	Battalion Hq.....	HQ bn (or bty)
		Führer einer Kompanie.....	Hq (or commander) of a company (or equivalent unit)	HQ (or comd) of coy (sqn or tp)

The branches of service of the above headquarters are indicated by the addition of the basic symbol for the respective branch of service. EXAMPLES:

	Stab eines Artillerieregiments.....	Hq of an artillery regiment.....	HQ arty regt
	Kommando einer Gebirgsdivision.....	Hq of a mountain division.....	HQ mtn div
	Stab einer Panzerjägerabteilung.....	Hq of an antitank battalion.....	HQ A tk bn

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Reference Prints and Negatives Box List

- Box 1: 26 June – 16 October 1939
- Box 2: 17 October 1939 – 15 July 1941
- Box 3: 16 July – 10 August 1941
- Box 4: 11 August – 4 September 1941
- Box 5: 5 – 21 September 1941
- Box 6: 22 September – 13 October 1941
- Box 7: 14 – 29 October 1941
- Box 8: 30 October – 15 November 1941
- Box 9: 16 November – 3 December 1941
- Box 10: 4 – 19 December 1941
- Box 11: 20 December 1941 – 8 January 1942
- Box 12: 9 – 27 January 1942
- Box 13: 28 January – 26 February 1942
- Box 14: 27 February – 2 April 1942
- Box 15: 3 April – 4 May 1942
- Box 16: 5 – 25 May 1942
- Box 17: 26 May – 27 June 1942
- Box 18: 28 June – 17 July 1942

Box 19: 18 July – 15 August 1942

Box 20: 16 August – 9 September 1942

Box 21: 10 September – 1 October 1942

Box 22: 2 – 27 October 1942

Box 23: 28 October – 22 November 1942

Box 24: 23 November – 18 December 1942

Box 25: 19 December 1942 – 15 January 1943

Box 26: 16 January – 12 February 1943

Box 27: 13 February – 5 March 1943

Box 28: 6 March – 2 April 1943

Box 29: 3 April – 2 May 1943

Box 30: 3 May – 19 June 1943

Box 31: 20 June – 10 August 1943

Box 32: 11 August – 12 September 1943

Box 33: 13 September – 13 October 1943

Box 34: 14 October – 13 November 1943

Box 35: 14 November – 16 December 1943

Box 36: 17 December 1943 – 20 January 1944

Box 37: 21 January – 16 March 1944

Box 38: 17 March – 11 May 1944

Box 39: 12 May – 9 July 1944

Box 40: 10 July – 3 September 1944

Box 41: 4 September – 27 October 1944

Box 42: 28 October – 21 December 1944

Box 43: 22 December 1944 – 14 February 1945

Box 44: 15 February – 7 April 1945

Box 45: 8 April – 22 May 1945

Box 46: Heeresgruppe Weichsel, 23 January – 13 March 1945

Box 47: Heeresgruppe Weichsel, 14 March – 30 April 1945

Box 48: Heeresgruppe Kurland, 24 January – 19 January 1945