

**AGE 10**

**1939**

**THE WAR BEGINS**



*If there is going to be a war,  
I do not want to miss it.*



Author Julian Kulski's family—1939.  
L-R: sister Wanda, mother Eugenia, father Julian, and  
the author.

**AGE 10: 1939 —THE WAR BEGINS****THURSDAY, AUGUST 24**

Today, Father, Mother, Wanda, and I came to Kazimierz. My father says that war is imminent, and he is anxious that we be safe. He does not know, of course, how long he will be able to stay here with us.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 26**

Kazimierz is an old city on the river Vistula, famous for its marketplace, its ancient synagogue, and its historic buildings. We are staying at the Filipkowskis' boardinghouse, set amid varied and beautiful trees on a grassy hillside near the town center. Not far from our boardinghouse are small houses occupied by Orthodox Jews. Yesterday evening, Friday, the Jewish men, dressed in long black robes and skullcaps, celebrated their holiday. The rooms were lit with candles, and the men bowed as they prayed in loud voices. The Filipkowskis' son, Jędrek, and I watched them through the window, then rattled it and ran away.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 27**

The weather is splendid. We have been going for walks, and swimming in the Vistula. Last night, however, a car came with a letter from City President Stefan Starzyński, the Lord Mayor of Warsaw, ordering my father to return to the capital at once. Father told us that we should stay in Kazimierz until he either returns or sends for us. I asked to go back with my father. If there is going to be a war, I do not want to miss it. Besides, my school has collected money for the defense of Poland and has contributed to a motor torpedo boat, so I feel I should be allowed to fight. Father told me that I was too young to fight, as I am only ten, and that I should look after Mother and Wanda. I pointed out to Father that boys my age had disarmed Germans on the

**THE COLOR OF COURAGE**

streets of Warsaw during the World War, but he is adamant that I do as I am told. I am very disappointed.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 28**

Jędrek, the youngest son of Mr. Filipkowski, is eight years old. He and I put frogs in the well today so we are in trouble. My mother, with the other women, is looking after the cow, the garden, and the fields. She says it is the first time in her life that she has dug potatoes, taken a cow to pasture, and carried water from a well, but she seems to be enjoying it.



*I have no doubts that Poland will win  
the war, but I am so afraid that it will be over  
before I have a chance to participate.*

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1**

Today, Friday, I was in the woods picking mushrooms with a friend. A white eagle had been hovering lazily over the deep gorge, but suddenly the eagle disappeared, and we heard the sound of engines. We saw planes flying overhead, just above the treetops. They had black crosses on their wings and heavy canister-shaped objects under them. The noise they made frightened us. We ran back toward the old town at the foot of the hill, and as it was market day, we headed for the main square.

The old town square was filled with wagons, and mangy horses with fly-covered ribs. It was bursting with pigs and chickens. Peasant women in colorful babushkas perched on the wagons, selling their goods to black-clad Jews, the babble of Polish-Yiddish mixing with the cackling and squealing of the animals. We decided to leave and started our climb back up the

**AGE 10: 1939 —THE WAR BEGINS**

Father and Mother—1919.

hill past the synagogue. Halfway up I left my friend, Zula, at her house and took a back trail home through the woods.

My mother was waiting for me when I reached home. She told me that she was getting worried about what was going on in Warsaw. She had not been able to learn much from the news on the radio, and she was thinking of Father. However, this much we do know—Germany has invaded Poland, and the war has started. I have no doubts that Poland will win the war, but I am so afraid that it will be over before I have a chance to participate.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10**

Today the Germans bombed the town. I was scared and asked Mother if this was happening all over Poland, or if it was just Kazimierz. She said she had no way of knowing, and I wished Father were here so that I could ask him. He would know the answer. Many people went to the ravines, taking food and bedding with them and spending several hours there. The synagogue caught fire.

**THE COLOR OF COURAGE****FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15**

The Germans have come in their dirty green uniforms and helmets, carrying rifles. They didn't appear at all as I have imagined—in fact, I wasn't impressed, but Mother doesn't share my feelings. The noise of their motorcycles on the cobblestones shook the streets. They went to the main square and placed a field gun there, while cars with loudspeakers went around the city telling the inhabitants of Kazimierz that they had been freed by the armies of the Third Reich. Then a military band played, and they raised the German flag.



Invading German troops advance through the forest.



German troops entering Kazimierz.

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## INVASION OF POLAND – SEPTEMBER 1939



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----- German - Soviet Demarcation Line

- September 1, 1939** - German forces invade Poland from the north, west and south.
- September 17, 1939** - Soviet forces invade Poland from the east.
- September 28, 1939** - Germany and the Soviet Union agree on the demarcation line partitioning Poland between them.



**AGE 10: 1939 —THE WAR BEGINS****THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21**

Today Zula and her family left Kazimierz. I will miss her, but they want to get back to Warsaw.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**

Last night, after I was supposed to be asleep, I went back downstairs. Mr. Filipkowski and some of the others were sitting around the table, busily discussing the news of the war.

We knew that some of our soldiers have been hiding in the house, and Mother asked what they would do. Mr. Filipkowski said that, in view of Russia now also having invaded Poland—from the east this time—the soldiers will have to try and get out through Hungary. Then they will attempt to rejoin their units, which are regrouping and organizing to get back into the war. This latest news bewildered me completely. I know why the Germans are fighting us, but I wondered what the Russians had to do with it since they, like us, are traditional enemies of Germany.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23**

This afternoon we heard a broadcast from Warsaw. It was Mayor Starzyński speaking:

...I wanted Warsaw to be great...and Warsaw is great. It has happened sooner than we thought. I see her through the window in her full greatness and glory, surrounded by swirling clouds of smoke, reddened by flames of fires, grandiose, indestructible, great Fighting Warsaw.

Although where there were going to be beautiful homes, rubble now lies; although where there were going to be parks, there are

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today barricades, thickly covered with bodies; although our libraries are aflame—not in fifty years, not in a hundred years, but *today* Warsaw is at the height of her greatness and glory.

His words were suddenly cut short. Radio Warsaw was silent. I do hope Father is all right, and I wish I were with him in Warsaw.



Stefan Starzyński—1933.

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

It has turned cold so my mother has had to borrow warm clothes for us. It was summer when we came to Kazimierz, and now it is almost winter.

We are fretting and waiting. We hear on the radio that Warsaw has fallen, and we are getting more and more anxious about Father.



*Poland is not yet lost as long as we live.*



### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1

Father came in an official car to collect us today, and I told him I thought it was about time. But when I calmed down a bit I realized how haggard and tired he was. There were no other cars on the road except German ones, and it was an eerie—but surprisingly uneventful—ride back to Warsaw. On the way, my father told us of the surrender of Warsaw, which took place on September 28.

The fighting units entered Krasiński Square from Bonifraterska Street. With colors forward, marching along Słowacki and

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**Cena 10 gr.**

Czwartek Dnia 28 września 1939 r.

**KURJER WARSZAWSKI**

ROK SETNY DZIEWIĘTNASTY

**WARSZAWO!**

Po 28 dniach zmagania po nieprawdopodobnych ofiarach i poświęceniach uratowałeś swój honor do ostatniej chwili. Uratowałeś Warszawo Honor Polski.

Tysiące rannych i zabitych z podróży ludności cywilnej, całe ulice w gruzach, najpiękniejsze, najwspanialsze, najdawniejsze gmachy świadczące o nieziszczalności ducha Polski — nie istnieją.

Wojska nasze po bohateraku broniły swych murów zmagając się z przeważającą liczebnie i technicznie armią niemiecką. Cokolwiek bądź się stanie i jakie nas dni czekają, musimy pamiętać o tym, że miasto nasze, stolica Polski, musi się z tych gruzów podnieść. Aby to osiągnąć, potrzebne nam są niezwykle sily ducha energii i wytrwałości fizycznej.

Nie dajmy upaść swej woli i nie ulegajmy często rozstrzęsionym wskutek ostatnich przeżyć nerwom. Zimna krew, wytrwałość i praca to program nasz na dni najbliższe.

Stawajmy wszyscy na swoje posterunki pracy. Starajmy się jaknajprędzej zaleczyć ciężkie rany stolicy i jej życia społecznego.

Ciężkie być może czekają nas dni i ciężka praca. Niechaj nas krzepi w tych godzinach próby pamięć na bohaterstwo przeszłych pokoleń polskich. Niechaj nas krzepi wiara Ojców naszych.

Niech żyje Polska.

**Nie ma miejsca na swary**

Polska przeżywa ciężkie, tragiczne dni. Dziś nie ma miejsca ani czasu na wspomnianie sobie win wzajemnie. Dziś musimy żądać od każdego Polaka, aby wszystkie urazy partyjne zapomniał. Cały wysiłek musi skierować do jednego celu:

**dla POLSKI.**

Każdy z nas musi spełniać swe obowiązki z wyteżoną siłą. Nie wolno nam tracić nadziei, ale też trzeba zapomnieć o winach przeszłości. Gdy nadejdzie dzień odpowiedzialności, wówczas zbadawszy i dobrze rozsądzwszy może będzie trzeba powołać lego czy innego do odpowiedzialności. Dziś jednak nie ma winnych i nie ma tych, którzy mieli rację. Są tylko Polacy karni, posłuszni, z poczuciem odpowiedzialności za przyszłość.

**NIECH ŻYJE POLSKA!**

Niech żyje Prezydent Mościcki. Niech żyje Rząd Rzeczypospolitej.

WARSZAWA (14 numerów) 10 gr. w tygodniu, 30 gr. w miesiąc, 1 zł. w kwartał, 3 zł. w półrocze, 6 zł. w rok. Wskazywanie na adresy: Warszawa, ul. Długa 10, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450, 500, 550, 600, 650, 700, 750, 800, 850, 900, 950, 1000. Wskazywanie na adresy: Warszawa, ul. Długa 10, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450, 500, 550, 600, 650, 700, 750, 800, 850, 900, 950, 1000. Wskazywanie na adresy: Warszawa, ul. Długa 10, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450, 500, 550, 600, 650, 700, 750, 800, 850, 900, 950, 1000.

September 28, 1939—Warsaw has surrendered.

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# WARSAW!

After 28 days of struggle, after unbelievable sacrifice and devotion, you have upheld your honor to the very end.

Warsaw, you have upheld the honor of Poland.

Thousands of injured and dead civilians, whole streets in ruins, the most beautiful, the finest, the oldest buildings, testimony to the indestructibility of the Polish spirit, are no more.

Our armed forces have heroically defended their ramparts against the numerical and technical superiority of the German army. Whatever may happen and whatever awaits us, let us remember that our city, Poland's capital, will rise from these ruins. In order for this to happen we need to display exceptional courage, energy and physical endurance.

Let our resolution not flag and let not our nerve, badly shaken by recent events, fail. A cool head, resilience and hard work are our immediate goals.

Let us all attend to our places of work. Let us with all haste heal the grievous wounds that the capital and its everyday life have suffered.

Hard days may well lie ahead, as may hard work. In these hours of trial let us draw strength from the memory of past heroic Polish generations. Let us draw strength from the faith of our Fathers.

Long live Poland!

## **This is no time for quarrels**

Poland is now experiencing difficult and tragic days. Today is neither the time nor the place for blaming one another. Today we must demand that every Pole forget any party political slights. Our whole effort must be focused on a single goal:

## **POLAND**

Each and every one of us must do his duty with all his strength. We must not lose hope, and we must also forget the mistakes of the past. When the right day comes, then, after careful inquiry and thought, we may bring to book those who deserve it. Today, however, there are no guilty people and there are no righteous people. There are only disciplined and obedient Poles who feel responsible for the future.

## **LONG LIVE POLAND**

**Long Live President Moscicki.**

**Long live the Government of the Republic.**

Translation of announcement from the *Kurjer Warszawski*, September 28, 1939 (immediately preceding).

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Mickiewicz Streets from the suburb of Bielany, wounded and unwounded alike reached the foot of the statue of Kiliński, still standing with saber in hand.

In the middle of the square, they laid down their arms. A few civilians were standing by, in tears. A colonel in full battle dress, worn but erect, entered the square. Father had a copy of the surrender speech that the colonel then made:

**Soldiers of Warsaw!**

Our misfortune is temporary.

Victory is on our side.

Poland is not yet lost as long as we live.

And this which has been taken by force, we will take back by force.

The country thanks you, soldiers of all ranks, for all your hardships, for your bold and unfettered stand in this heroic battle.

Remember that we will leave this world, but the fame and memory of your deeds will live forever.

When we reached the city, we saw rubble, burned-out cars, and dead horses. Buildings still standing had empty, gaping windows. The only people on the streets were Germans, but for some reason they didn't stop our limousine.



*It is our house but it is different.*



Our house in Żoliborz has lost half its roof where a bomb fell. There is no glass in any of the windows, and the staircase is covered with dirt and slivers of glass which crunch under my feet. The furniture is in place, but dust and dead leaves have

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Warsaw Mayor Stefan Starzyński (third from left) surrenders the city to the Germans.



The defenders of Warsaw laid down their arms.

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NARA

Surrendered Polish Army materiel at foot of Kiliński Statue in Krasinski Square.

**THE COLOR OF COURAGE**



NARA

The once beautiful Royal Castle, which has stood at the heart of Warsaw since the 17th century, is reduced to rubble within the first four weeks of the war.



AAN



**AGE 10: 1939 —THE WAR BEGINS**

drifted into the rooms. The plants in the conservatory have withered and died, and my pets are gone. It is silent, save for the wind blowing through the rooms.

It is our house but it is different.



Nearly half the buildings in Warsaw are damaged or destroyed.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5**

Against my mother's orders, I went to see Zula this afternoon. As I was walking along a rubble-strewn street I noticed German soldiers and policemen evacuating almost the entire length of Ujazdowskie Avenue—not only the apartment houses on the boulevard itself, but those on the side streets as well. Men, women and children were forced out of the buildings and marched off. They carried nothing. I noticed that the window shades were drawn in every building, and wondered what on earth was happening.

As nobody tried to stop me, I went on. When I got to Zula's building I rang the bell, wondering if she too had been marched off. She let me in, and we went upstairs; she told me that an hour earlier the Germans had gone up and down the streets

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announcing that all windows must be closed and all blinds drawn. Anyone seen either on a balcony or at a window would be shot without warning. Zula was alone, as her parents had gone to see some friends on Miła Street, so she was glad to have company.

At first, we could hear only the rumble of tank treads on the cobblestones. I cautiously moved the window shade. Rolling in perfect formation, row upon row of gleaming tanks were moving down Ujazdowskie Avenue, with black-uniformed troops standing at attention in the open hatches. There was a band playing across the street, but we could barely hear it above the noise of the tanks.

Then came the artillery, followed by goose-stepping, steel-helmeted troops in rows of twelve. I marveled at how they raised their legs with such perfect precision. The march-past of the magnificent robots continued beneath the long sinuous red flags that were suspended from the light standards on both sides of the boulevard. In the center of each flag was a white circle with a twisted black cross. Its sense of jagged movement carried with it an inexplicable feeling of fear and foreboding.



*This was a parade of Germans for Germans.*

*It was not for us.*



The band played on as the last rows passed Belweder Palace, once the home of Marshal Piłsudski. Then I remembered the military parade on Piłsudski Square on the Third of May, 1938—a glorious parade of different tanks, different colors, and different men. The magnificent horses, the yellow-capped cavalry—the Ułani, with drawn swords shining in the sun—all were missing today. The somber, Bach-like march of

**AGE 10: 1939 —THE WAR BEGINS**



Goose-stepping, steel-helmeted German troops march along Ujazdowskie Avenue, October 5, 1939.

industrialized machines, the robotlike soldiers, conquerors of a ruined city—what a contrast to the gay music, the horses with lively tails, and the proud and smiling Ułani, with red and white guidons flying on lances above their heads.

But this was not a victory. This was a parade of Germans for Germans. It was not for us. Here in the heart of Warsaw, a

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German Führer Adolf Hitler in Warsaw, on the way to his victory parade.



German officers in Pilsudski Square salute as Hitler passes by.

**AGE 10: 1939 — THE WAR BEGINS**

place close to the heart of every Pole, the pulsating drums of an ancient enemy reached a dreadful crescendo before receding in the autumn dusk.

The center of attention was in Łazienki Park, where there was a podium with generals taking the salute. They stood behind a solitary figure whose right arm was raised at an angle. If he spoke, we could not hear him.

I had to leave Zula soon after that in order to get home before curfew. As I made my way to nearby Lublin Union Square to catch the streetcar, I felt more determined than ever that I was going to participate in this war somehow.



German tanks roll down Ujazdowskie Avenue, passing in front of their Führer.

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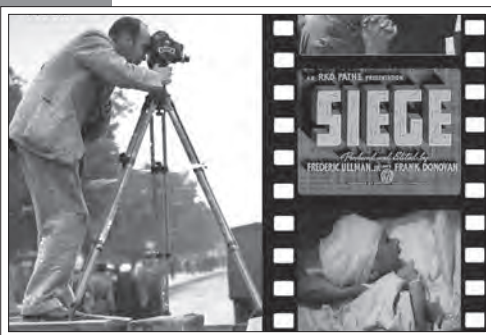
DIGITAL EXTRAS



[www.polww2.com/Rebuild](http://www.polww2.com/Rebuild)

**WARSAW WILL REBUILD!**

Warsaw Mayor  
Stefan Starzyński  
Radio Address  
September 17, 1939



[www.polww2.com/Siege](http://www.polww2.com/Siege)

**SIEGE:  
WORLD WAR II  
BEGINS**

An excerpt from the  
1940 Academy Award-  
nominated newsreel



**Digital Extras** are short videos that we have assembled from original historical film and audio material to accompany *The Color of Courage*. These videos are stored online—to view them, scan the QR codes with your smartphone’s QR code reader. Alternatively, you can type in the URL that appears under each image.

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[www.polww2.com/Surrender1939](http://www.polww2.com/Surrender1939)

## WARSAW SURRENDERS

September 1939



[www.polww2.com/GermanVictoryParade](http://www.polww2.com/GermanVictoryParade)

## GERMAN VICTORY PARADE

Warsaw  
October 5, 1939

