

In the early days of World War II, Hitler and his forces invaded and bombed Poland. The devastation was astonishing as the Poles witnessed a new type of warfare which the Nazis called *Blitzkrieg* ("lightning war"). What was "lightning war?" Constant, ferocious, unbearable pounding of gunfire, bombing and other forms of intimidation intended to cause people to submit to Hitler's superior military power (and his plan of conquest). The impact on people, like nine-year-old Ryszard Pajewski, is self-evident as we can see in this photo by Julien Bryan. It depicts the young lad sitting on a pile of rubble—former homes—in the Praga area of Warsaw.



Although the people of Warsaw bravely held-out as long as they could, after eighteen days of continuous bombardment by German forces, the city surrendered to the Nazis on September 27, 1939.

The precise time of the surrender was at 2 o'clock that afternoon.

With the fall of Warsaw, and Poland, Hitler believed that the war would be over soon. He anticipated France and Britain would accept the terms of his peace offer.

When both Britain and France turned him down, Hitler would have realized that the war would *not* be over quickly. He was finally defeated on the 30th of April, in 1945 (when he committed suicide in Berlin).

Meanwhile, however, his policies caused destruction and a vast loss of life throughout Europe. And ... with the fall of Poland, in 1939 ... Hitler had a path to a Nazi-orchestrated Holocaust. Many of his deadliest concentration camps, like Auschwitz, were located in Poland.

The photograph of Warsaw, by an unnamed photographer, depicts the inner city of Warsaw burning following massive bombing in September, 1939.

Credits:

Image, at the top of the page, is a public-domain photo by an unnamed photographer, depicting the devastation in Warsaw (during September of 1939), online via the Polish National Digital Archive.

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Media Stream



Julien Bryan Films a War

Julien Bryan, an American photographer and film maker, was in Poland when Hitler's forces invaded that country, starting World War II in September of 1939.

In this photo, we see Bryan filming while standing at the top of the American Embassy in Warsaw. He is capturing footage of German planes and the damage they are inflicting on the people of Warsaw.

Later, in his book *Siege*, Bryan describes what he was doing on this September day, in 1939: *Toward the end of the siege I was on the roof of the embassy.... It was so exciting and thrilling that I quite forgot my fear.*

During the next half-hour I took three hundred feet of film as Nazi planes dove down within a few hundred yards of the embassy roof, seeming, through my view finder, to be almost upon me. (Quoted, in an article published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which maintains a copy of the photograph).

Click on the image for a better view.

Image, described above, online via the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. PD

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Impact of War on a 9-Year Old Boy

After Hitler had his forces mercilessly bomb Warsaw, in September of 1939, the city was devastated.

Julien Bryan, an American photographer and film maker, happened to be in the area when the Germans invaded Poland. He had been documenting daily life in Germany, the Soviet Union and Poland between 1935 and 1939.

Among his other works, Bryan filmed a documentary called *Siege*, about the Siege of Warsaw, as the people of the city endured the relentless German onslaught.

One of the poignant images he captured, in September of 1939, was that of a 9-year Polish lad named Ryszard Pajewski who was sitting on a pile of rubble in the Praga area of Warsaw. Reflecting on the child, and his circumstances, Bryan gave the image this caption in his book *Warsaw: 1939 Siege* (which was published, by Doubleday, Doran & Company, in 1940):
A BOY'S WEARINESS: Ryszard Pajewski was a study in dejection when I saw him sitting on a pile of rubble. Only nine, he had suddenly been made the family breadwinner - and there was no bread to be had. Now a truck driver, he remembers that when he saw me last, I was carrying two "boxes" - my cameras.



*Pajewski had survived the war, but the devastation of his city and the years of uncertainty had taken their toll on him. Bryan met him, during a return visit to Poland in 1959. He wrote about it in *LOOK Magazine's September 1959* issue:*

The spot where nine-year-old Ryszard Pajewski sat atop a pile of rubble in 1939 is now a smooth lawn. But a friend saw my picture of this scene and told Pajewski. He came to see me.

The rubble pile had been near his home, and he had taken time out from a search for food, for his mother and brother, to rest. His father was later taken away by the Nazis, and he never returned. Pajewski, who is divorced, now lives alone outside Warsaw.

Such is the devastation of war ... upon child after child after child ... in war after war after war.

Image, described above, by Julien Bryan taken in September of 1939. The image is now held at Poland's Institute of National Remembrance. Copyright expired.

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Hitler Invades Poland

Historical footage, online courtesy Britannica.com at Google Video.

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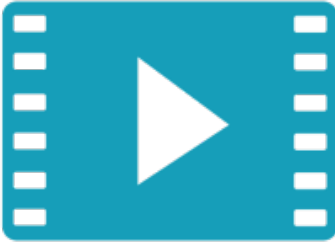
Hitler and His Plan of Conquest - The Nazis Strike

Why We Fight, #2: "The Nazis Strike" (1943), produced by the US Army Special Service Division and directed by Frank Capra.

Video online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Hitler - Last Known Film Footage

Historical film footage of Adolf Hitler included in this clip from *The Secret Life of Adolf Hitler*. Online, courtesy Archive.org.

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Original Broadcast - "Hitler is Dead"

Clip of the news from May 2, 1945, as rebroadcast by the BBC on May 2, 1995. Online, courtesy BBC Worldwide at YouTube.

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