

3. The G4 and the Second World War

With the invasion of Czechoslovakia in October 1938, Mercedes-Benz G4s became mute witnesses of the prelude of WWII. The Germans' triumphant entry in the Sudetes was immortalized in the famous photos taken at the time as they crossed at the Wildenau barrier, on the Czech border, before formations of fervorous troops excited about the events that were unfolding. From that moment, the G4 became the Führer's vehicle of choice for his appearances, replacing the limousines used previously, as well as for traveling, outings and public events.

The G4s appear in the Polish campaign from September to October 1939, at the multitudinous reception in Berlin on 16 July 1940, with images of the impressive motorcade of Mercedes G4s carrying the Nazi leaders under a banner that proclaimed "Ein Völk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer" (One People, One Nation, One Leader) before a delirious population unaware of the hard times the war would bring. Likewise, at the turbulent welcome by the inhabitants of the recently liberated Danzig, three splendid G4s carried the Führer and his entourage.



A Mercedes G4 in service at the front, armed with a heavy machine gun. The headlights are fitted with black-out covers to avoid detection and the soft-top is protected under a cover. (K. Miller Collection).



The G4 in the foreground is Hitler's, as indicated by the standard on the hood. Fuel cans can be seen secured in front of the radiator and the headlights are blacked-out to leave only a narrow beam of light. (K. Miller Collection).





Luftwaffe General Albert Kesselring using a G4. (K. Miller Collection).



Because of its poor cross-country performance the G4 was mostly used for ceremonial duties, but here a unit commander in Belgium is using one in the field. Quite an unusual photo. (K. Miller Collection).

They appeared on many occasions in the occupied Polish countryside and on 5 October, Hitler rode through the deserted streets of Warsaw, with his Mercedes leading the retinue consisting of several more G4s with support staff and an escort armed with heavy machine guns, ready to act if necessary. They

were also seen in the Western Campaign, the Balkans Front, the invasion of Belgium, always in iconic locations. Of the occasion of Hitler's triumphant parade down the Champs Élysées, the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower provide beautiful backdrops to the presence of this vehicle throughout the war.

The Mercedes G4 remained as Hitler's personal vehicle until the end of the war, when Allied troops captured the Führer's stronghold, leaving his Mercedes G4, along with other automotive marvels of the time, abandoned at the Reichskanzlei (Reich Chancellery) on 24 April 1945.



Army officers in a G4. The passenger's seat is occupied by a civilian, but the occupants' identity and the location of this photograph are unknown. (K. Miller Collection).



Luftwaffe General Carl Dessloch on field maneuvers in his G4. (K. Miller Collection).



The photographer was raised on a boom lift platform to nearly 22 yd. to take photographs from a bird's eye view.

Never seen before: a plan view of the car.



This photograph shows a Luftwaffe General's G4, armed with two MG-34 heavy machine guns for its defense and protection. (K. Miller Collection).



Army General Erich von Manstein observing Hitler's Mercedes G4. Behind him is a rare Krupp 6-wheels belonging to the Führer's escort. (K. Miller Collection).

From 1930 to 1945, a near-mythical personage at Mercedes, Mr. Jakob Werlin, established a direct relationship between the auto-maker and the Nazi regime. After many years of endeavoring to minimize its

industrial contribution to the regime, Mercedes finally opened its archives allowing access to a number of historians including the renowned Bernard P. Bellon, in late 1986. Bellon discovered and disseminated

data revealing the industrial connections between Mercedes and Nazi Germany, and wrote "the company declared that it was responsible for helping to motorize the movement".



In this photograph, Generalfeldmarschall Werner von Blomberg rides in one of the earliest versions of the G4. The difference in the rear wheel arch with regard to the G4-540 is clearly visible. The spare fuel can stowed on the right side of the Mercedes is also totally different to subsequent models. (K. Miller Collection).



Generalfeldmarschall Werner von Blomberg alighting from his Mercedes G4. Note the corresponding standard on the right-hand-side of the vehicle. (K. Miller Collection).

Werlin, associate director at the firm, had been a personal friend of Hitler's since the Putsch in 1923. The Mercedes dealership at which he worked as manager was next door to the Völkischer Beobachter offices. There, he sold Hitler a Mercedes for use by the Party, for which he subsequently provided lim-

ousines. According to American intelligence documents obtained by Mr. Bellon under the Freedom of Information Act, it appears that Hitler purchased a portfolio of shares in Daimler-Benz that Werlin administered on his behalf. In 1934, he joined the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party)

and, after his appointment as Inspector General for Motor Transportation thanks to his close relations with the Chancellor, became an honorific member of the SS. He was involved, jointly with Dr. Ferdinand Porsche, in the People's Car project (Volkswagen), although he was critical of its success.



A Mercedes G4 on the tarmac at an airport. Owing to the distance and poor quality of the photograph, the subjects cannot be identified. (K. Miller Collection).



Hermann Göring in a Mercedes G4. It is interesting to note that this car has a Berlin registration number. Göring used at least two Mercedes G4 with Berlin plates. (K. Miller Collection).