

# THE « LEOPARD 2 » TANK

At the end of the '60s, the Porsche design department started the experimental development of a 40 Ton tank destined to take over the Leopard 1 tank, baptised « Keiler » (boar). The Keiler prototype was born at the moment when it had been decided that the German-American MBT70 program would be terminated.

Further to the American episode, the Germans froze the configuration of the Leopard 2's mass production, when delivery to the Bundeswehr was to start in 1979.

The Leopard 2 tank keeps the quite classical architecture it inherited from the Leopard 1 tank : a crew of four men, three of whom are in the turret, the motor-driven propeller at the rear of the chassis. The version 1 (up to the A4) of the Leopard 2 tank has benefited, as the American M1 tank, from the transfer of the British technology of the Chobham composite armouring. The obtained level of protection was sensibly inferior to the M1's one, i.e. the equivalent of 300 mm of plating steel against the arrow projectiles and of about 600 mm of plating steel against the hollow charges. ob.

In 1988, a modernization program was implemented to give birth to the A5 version : The Chief of Tank's panoramic sighting tube was moved, the plating was increased on the turret's front and on the suspensions and tracks, installation of a thermal camera was done for the commander (the shooter already had one, which could be copied by the commander), and a GPS/inertial navigation device was installed. On the A6 version, the L/44 – 120 mm gun was replaced by the L/55 – 120 mm Rheinmetall, longer version.

2,950 tanks were actually manufactured between 1979 and 1992.

Specifications :

Dimensions : Length 9.67 m, Width 3.7 m, Height 2,48 m

Weight : 55 Ton.

Speed : 72 km/h

Range : 550 km

Armament : 1 *off* 120 mm gun, 2 *off* 7.62 mm machine guns and 2x8 smokers

Plating : 75 to 400 mm plating in *Chobham* composite alloy

Crew : 4 men

