

THE 10th ARMY IN THE POLISH CAMPAIGN OF 1939.

COMMANDERS AND STAFF OFFICERS – A COLLECTIVE PORTRAIT¹

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KOREŚ, D.: The 10th Army in the Polish Campaign of 1939. Commanders and staff officers – a collective portrait. *Vojenská história*, 2, 29, 2025, pp 29-48, Bratislava.

In this study, the author provides brief biographical portraits of commanders and staff officers of the German 10th Army, emphasising their career progression before and after the military aggression against Poland. It concerns officers of higher-level units subordinate to this formation, beginning at the divisional level. In presenting these findings, the author primarily used the results of his extensive research in German military archives. This study also serves as an introduction to the author's forthcoming scholarly work, which will focus on the initial decisive battles of the 10th Army along the Vistula.

Keywords: German 10th Army, 1939, officer corps, invasion of Poland

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69809/vojhist.2025.29.2.2>

The leadership of the German Ground Forces (*Oberkommando des Heeres*, hereafter: OKH), while planning the aggression against Poland in accordance with the “White Variant” (*Fall Weiss*), at the tactical level consistently assigned the command of the 10th Army and its subordinate commands to the key task: penetrating by force deep into Poland, in order to reach the Vistula River as quickly as possible (disregarding the wings left in the void) to the north and south of the capital - Warsaw - where it was to meet the forces under the Army Group “North”² (*Heeresgruppe Nord*), attacking from the north. According to the Chief of the Army General Staff, General of the Artillery Franz Halder, it was the 10th Army that was to bring about the immediate defeat of the Polish army, which was largely cut off and encircled west of the Vistula River. Although the actual course of the 1939 Polish campaign was different from what the German operational planners had assumed, the 10th Army played the leading role in the battle west of the Vistula, which ended in complete success for the German side. It was a success that opened the way to victory for the entire Polish campaign, and it was also a testing laboratory for the use of air-supported armored assaults, which a few months later reached a mature form of *Blitzkrieg*. It was also a practical training for staff and army commanders, many of which formed the future elite of the *Panzerwaffe*. The astonishing fact is, however, that 85 years after the events, it has not been properly analyzed operationally by either German or Polish military historiography.

Due to the large volume of the original text, it has been divided into two articles: the first of which is entitled The 10th Army in the Polish Campaign of 1939: *Commanders and*

¹ The text is the outcome of research conducted within the framework of the international scientific project “Polish Campaign 1939. Synthesis”, carried out by the Academy of Military Art in the form of a task commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science (contract no. MEiN/2021/DPI/319).

² Koreś, Daniel, „Niemieckie planowanie operacyjne do wojny z Polską 1938–1939. Ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem roli Śląska oraz tzw. luki częstochowskiej / German Operational Planning for the War with Poland (1938-39) with Particular Emphasis for the Role of Silesia and the so-called Częstochowa Gap”, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, no. 3, (2024): 87-125.

Staff Officers – a collective portrait and serves as a prosopographical introduction to the core issue discussed further in the second article: *The key to victory – the battle west of the Vistula River bend. The Operational Role of the German 10th Army in the First Phase of the Polish Campaign of 1939*. The second text will also be published in “Vojenská história”. I am aware that the following article is written in a rather specific format, which directly results from the fact that it serves as an introduction to the main issue presented in the article: *The key to victory – the battle of the Vistula River bend*. Only together do both articles form a coherent entirety. Therefore, in the first article, the narrative part of the text was deliberately reduced in favor of a relatively concise overview of the key command staff of the 10th Army, offering concise information about their careers before the outbreak of the war and after the end of the Polish campaign of 1939. Greater emphasis was placed on this second aspect – as it demonstrates the role of the Polish campaign as both a test and a catalyst for the further careers of the German command staff during World War II. It also allows for conclusions to be drawn regarding the criteria for selecting individuals for various command and staff positions, along with a broader reflection on the overall quality of the senior officers of the Wehrmacht’s ground forces at the outbreak of the war. I would also like to add that I have made every effort to identify the first names of the officers mentioned in the text. Unfortunately, in many cases, these efforts were doomed to failure due to the common omission of the first names in German sources.

The 10th Army Command was formally established on August 26, 1939, in Leipzig, and it was based on the then-disbanded 4th Land Army Group (*Heeresgruppenkommando 4*)³ which in point of fact functioned in secret, at least since the end of the first decade of May 1939, under the disguised name of Working Headquarters (*Arbeitsstab*)⁴ ‘Oppeln’ and, in

³ One of the six highest operational-level commands in the Wehrmacht peacetime structures, the Group Command supervised the training process in subordinate tactical associations and reported directly to the Supreme Commander of the Land Forces. Group Commanders were required to submit an annual report on their work to the Supreme Commander by November 15 each year. In the event of mobilization, the Groups were to be developed to the level of army commands (or army groups). The Group Command in Leipzig was established on April 1, 1937 as „*Gruppenkommando 4*.” One year later, on April 1, 1938, it was renamed „*Heeresgruppenkommando 4*.” The Group Command was subordinated to the three most modern motorized army corps in the entire Wehrmacht: the 14th, 15th, and 16th. These corps included armored, light (which actually corresponded to armored divisions), and motorized infantry divisions. It was headed since March 1, 1938 by Major General of Artillery Walter von Reichenau (see Bundes-Militärarchiv in Freiburg im Breisgau [hereinafter: BA-MA], Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/13, [Dienstlaufbahn Walter von Reichenau], p. 6; Burkhart Müller-Hilebrandt, *Das Heer 1933-1945. Entwicklung des organisatorischen Aufbaues*, Bd. 1, *Das Heer bis zum Kriegbegin* (Darmstadt: E.S. Mittler&Sohn Verlag, 1954), 132; *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1648-1939*, Bd 7, *Wehrmacht und Nationalsozialismus 1933-1939* (München: Othmar Hackl, Manfred Messerschmidt, Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1978), 306; Rudolf Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, Bd. 4, 5. *Februar 1938 bis 31. August 1939* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1979), 171, 182, 187; Georg Tessin, *Deutsche Verbände und Truppen 1918-1939. Altes Heer, Freiwilligenverbände, Reichswehr, Heer, Luftwaffe, Landespolizei* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1974), 227; David Westwood, *The German Army 1939-1945. Organization and Personnel*. OKW, OKH, Army Groups, Armies, Corps Including Orders of Battle, Officer appointments, Locations and Engagements (Smalldale: Military Library Research Service, 2004), 133).

⁴ BA-MA, OKH-General Stab, RH 4/223, [Adolf Heusinger] Fernschreiben! An OKH GZ gltd.: General der Luftwaffe beim OKH, H.Gru.Kdo. 5, Gen.Kdo. XIV A.K., Gen.Kdo. XV A.K., Gen.Kdo. XVI A.K., 1.Abt. (I) Gen St d H, Nr. 1560/39 g.Kdos., 22 VIII 1939 r., p. 7. „Das Heeresgruppenkommando 4 führt im Übungsgelände die Bezeichnung: Arbeitsstab Oppeln. Änderung der Bezeichnung wird seinerzeit bekannt gegeben werden”.

internal correspondence, the name “Command of the 10th Army (*Armeeoberkommando A.O.K. 10*)⁵ was already in use. The Command was assigned the organic army units of the “D” (Dresden) batch (*Armeetruppen des Pakets “D”*), which consisted of the following units: The 540th Rear Command (referred to in German nomenclature as *Korück* - the acronym was derived from “*Kommandant rückwärtiges Armeegebiet*,” which translates to “Commander of the Rear Army Area.”), the 541st Army Supply Command (*Armee-Nachschub Führer*)⁶, and the 549th Army Communications Regiment (*Armee-Nachrichten Regiment*)⁷. Furthermore, the *Koluft AOK 10* (*Kommandeur der Luftwaffe*) was assigned to the 10th Army, which was established on August 26 based on the command of the 3rd Reconnaissance Training Squadron *Lehrgeschwader 2* from Jüterbog, led by Colonel Günther Lohmann⁸.

From the moment German operational planning against Poland entered the active phase, with the issuance of Directive No. 4150/39 on 1 May 1939 by the Supreme Command of the Land Forces (*Oberkommando des Heeres*)⁹, The 10th Army was the foundation upon which this process relied. Colonel Günther Blumentritt, the head of the Operations Department (Ia) at *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* (the veiled command of Army Group “South”), held the following view:

The 10th Army, which represents the center of gravity of AG South, has been assigned the objective of conducting a deep breakthrough, with the aim of rapidly advancing towards Warsaw without allowing the flanks to become a source of concern. The assault will be led by armored and light divisions, followed by infantry divisions supported by aviation and heavy artillery. The infantry divisions are to be deployed as rapidly as possible. The 10th Army is afforded the latitude to exercise command and select the means of inflicting strategic impact through deep offensives and a gradual buildup of forces. The early destruction or seizure of several crossings on the Vistula is of decisive importance. This will obstruct the route of retreat for the Polish troops situated to the west of the river, thereby making it more challenging to potentially draw reinforcements from the east and north-east” (BA-MA, AG “South“, Ref. RH 19-1/16).¹⁰

This remained essentially unchanged until the commencement of hostilities¹¹. The only variable in the 10th Army’s war preparations was the *ordre de bataille* (or, more specifically,

⁵ A.O.K. 10 appears already in the first draft of the army’s operational plan, in the heading of the document prepared by Maj. Gen. Friedrich Paulus (see BA-MA, OKH, ref. RH 19-1/16, [F. Paulus] Bez.: Ob.d.H. I.Abt. (I) GenStdH No. 4150/39 g.Kdos. Chefs. v. 1 V 39 an Arbeitsstab Rundstedt, Berlin, Entwurf, A.O.K. 10 Arbeitsstab, 9020/39 g.K., Berlin 10 V 1939, p. 40; see also D. Koreś, „Niemieckie planowanie operacyjne do wojny z Polską 1938–1939 ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem roli Śląska oraz tzw. luki częstochowskiej / German Operational Planning for the War with Poland (1938-39) with Particular Emphasis for the Role of Silesia and the so-called Częstochowa Gap”, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, no. 3 (2024): 108.

⁶ These two structures were managing a number of other smaller formations and subdivisions.

⁷ Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1945*, Bd. 3, *Landstreitkräfte 6–14* (Frankfurt am Main: E.S. Mittler&Sohn, 1965), 160.

⁸ See *Koluft AOK 10*, Retrieved 3 November 2024, from https://luftwaffedata.co.uk/index.php/Koluft_AOK_10.

⁹ Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation in Podolsk (hereinafter: CAMO) f. 500, o. 12459, d. 4, [F. Halder] Entwurf der Aufmarschanweisung „Fall Weiss”, Der Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, I.Abt. (I) Gen St d H, Nr 4150/39 g.Kdos., Berlin 1 V 1939, p. 1–56.

¹⁰ BA-MA, AG „South“, ref. RH 19-1/16, [G. Blumentritt] Beurteilung der Lage, Arbeitsstab Rundstedt Ia Nr 91/39 geh. Kdos. Chefs., Berlin 7 May 1939, p. 24.

¹¹ See more extensively on this subject: Koreś, Daniel, „Niemieckie planowanie operacyjne do wojny z Polską 1938–1939 ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem roli Śląska oraz tzw. luki częstochowskiej / German Operational Planning for the War with Poland (1938-39) with Particular Emphasis for the Role of Silesia and the so-called Częstochowa Gap”, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, no. 3, (2024): 114ff.

the composition of the army's initial line of defense). The core of the army was comprised of the three tactical-operational associations of armored and motorized troops, which had previously been subordinated to General von Reichenau's Leipzig Land Army Group. These were the XIV, XV and XVI Army Corps (henceforth: AC) (mot.), which included almost half of the Wehrmacht's fast divisions:¹² The 1st and 4th Panzer Divisions, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Divisions and the 13th and 29th Motorized Infantry Divisions. This was a direct consequence of the transformation of the 4th Land Army Group into the 10th Army, and the aforementioned units were subordinate to the Leipzig Command from the moment of their formation. Furthermore, the army was reinforced by two additional corps-level commands, namely the 4th and 11th Army Corps, as well as tactical compounds: The 4th and 46th Infantry Divisions were assigned to the 4th Army Corps, the 18th and 19th Infantry Division were assigned to the 11th Army Corps, and the 14th and 31st Infantry Divisions were attached to the 16th Army Corps (mot.). Previously, these units had been subordinated to the Group Command in Leipzig or had originated from military districts (*Wehrkreise*) that were not under the authority of *Heeresgruppenkommando 4*.

The staffing of the most important positions in the command of the 10th Army, at the end of August 1939, was as follows:¹³

Army Commander – General of Artillery Walter von Reichenau

Chief of Army Staff - Major General Friedrich Paulus

1/ Command Group¹⁴ (*Führungsabteilung*):

Operations Branch (Ia)

1st General Staff Officer (Chief of the Operational Branch Ia) - Col. Gen. Staff Off. Eduard Metz (the head of the entire Command Group)

4th General Staff Officer (Id) - Capt. Herbert Herzog

1st Orderly Officer (*Ordonnanzoffizier O 1*) - Capt. Count zu Münster

4th Orderly Officer - Major Bierling

Intelligence Branch (Ic)

3rd General Staff Officer (head of the Intelligence Branch Ic) - Capt. Rudolf Karl Paltzo

3rd Ordnance Officer (translator) - Capt. Birck

Counter-intelligence ordnance officer - Maj. Josef Johann Ibel (*Abwehroffizier AO* - head of the Abwehr III desk)

Counter-intelligence ordnance officer – Capt. Retired Freiherr von Redwitz (deputy chief of the Abwehr III and head of the 580th Secret Field Police Group)

¹² Outside the structures of the 10th Army was: XIX Army Corps (mot.) of Gen. Heinz Guderian's armored brigade composed of: 3rd and 10th Panzer Division and 2nd and 20th Motorized Infantry Divisions subordinated to the 4th Army command; XXII Army Corps of Gen. Ewald von Kleist consisting of: 2nd Panzer Division and 4th Light Divisions and included in the VIII Army Corps the 5th Panzer Division of Lt. Gen. Heinrich Vietinghoff-Scheel subordinated to the command of the 14th Army; and Panzer Division 'Kempf' of Maj. Gen. Werner Kempf was subordinated to the command of the 3rd Army in East Prussia.

¹³ BA-MA, 10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/16, Mobilmachungs – Stellen des A.O.K. 10, Nr 145/39 IIa g.Kdos, p. 24ff.

¹⁴ For the internal organization of the German operational and tactical level commands see: Burkhart Müller-Hilebrandt, *Das Heer 1933–1945...*, Bd. 1, 87ff.

6th orderly officer - Lt. Dr. Lehman

Translator – 2Lt. Retired Jaschik

Translator – 2Lt. Res. Mehnert

Land Forces censorship officer - Lt. von Olberg

Land Forces censorship officer - 2Lt. Retired Dr. Krüger

Aviation censorship officer - Lt. Lehmann

2/ Quartermaster Group (*Oberquartiermeisterabteilung*):

Quartermaster Branch - army quartermaster Lt. Col. Gen. Staff Off. Alfred Kretschmer¹⁵

1st Division (Qu 1)

2nd General Staff Officer (Qu 1) - Capt. Gen. Staff Off. Wolff

2nd Ordnance Officer - Capt. Herber

Ammunition and gas specialist - Maj. Backhaus

Specialist for infantry and artillery equipment - Maj. Wohllebe

Sapper equipment specialist - Maj. Retired Blum

Communications equipment specialist - Lt. Res. Diehl

Specialist for motor transport - Col. Otto Deindl¹⁶

Specialist for general equipment - Maj. *der Landwehr* Kupfer

2nd Division (Qu 2)

5th general staff officer (Qu 2) - Capt. Lutz

5th ordnance officer - Lt. Res. Donner

3/ Adjutant of the army (IIa)

1. adjutant (IIa) - Col. Rüdiger von Schuler

2nd adjutant (IIb) - Capt. Werner

4/ Chief Army Intendant (*Armeeintendant*) (IVa) - *Korps-Int.* Hagl

5/ Chief army physician (*Armeearzt*) (IVb) - *Generalstabsarzt* Dr. med. Walther Haubenreisser

6/ Chief army veterinarian (*Armeeveterinär*) (IVc) - *Generalstabsveterinär* Dr. Albert Thieme

¹⁵ Later Lieutenant General, military attaché in Tokyo (1941-1945) and after the war an employee of the Gehlen Organization as head of the internal affairs department. His personnel file erroneously states his assignment (as of June 26, 1939) to the 6th Army command (see BA-MA, Personnel File, ref. PERS 6/300064, [Dienstlaufbahn Alfred Kretschmer], p. 1, 3, 4a). This mistake (also regarding other officers) is due to the fact that the 6th Army was formed already after the end of the Polish campaign (October 10, 1939), on the basis of the 10th Army.

¹⁶ The situation with this officer is analogous to that of the army quartermaster, 2Lt. G. Kretschmer. In 1939 he was listed in the command of the 6th Army, although there is also correct information that he served from December 15, 1938 on the staff of *Gruppenkommando 4*, from which the 10th Army was later formed (see BA-MA, Personale Files, ref. PERS 6/299542, [Otto Deindl's service record cards], p. 1, 3). In Deindl's case, by the way, a full personnel file is available (rather than the abbreviated one, containing only abbreviated service record cards and extracts from the opinions of superiors), and there we find Deindl's application of July 17, 1939 for his assignment to a new duty post in connection with the abolition of his previous one (motor transport specialist in *Heeresgruppenkommando 4*) in the fall of 1939, and letters from future 10th Army commander Col. Gen. von Reichenau to the Personnel Office (*Heeres-Personalamt*) of the OKH, dated July 22, 1939, regarding Deindl's assignment to the command of the operational association, which was at that point disguised as *Arbeitsstab Oppeln* and was to be the future 10th Army (see BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/1171, p. 19).

7/ Commander of the army headquarters (H.Qu.) - Maj. von Winckler

8/ Army communications commander (Armee-Nachrichtenführer) - Maj. Gen. Josef Russwurm¹⁷

9/ Sapper officer to the army command (Armee-Pionier-Offizier) - Col. Georg von Majewski

Let us consider the personnel matters pertaining to the command of the 10th Army and those in the subordinate motorized and armored tactical-operational corps, and the tactical divisions. Appointed as army commander, General of Artillery von Reichenau was a seasoned General Staff officer with a well-documented history of national socialist sympathies. In a recollection of von Reichenau's views, biographer Bernd Boll noted that the officers under his command should be "National Socialist, even in the absence of formal party membership."¹⁸ His appointment was largely due to the patronage of Adolf Hitler, with whom he had established a relationship in April 1932¹⁹, even before Hitler became Chancellor. Hitler then appointed him head of the Reichswehr Minister Office²⁰ in February 1933. He was Hitler's candidate for Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces following the scandal and dismissal of Col. Gen. Werner Freiherr von Fritsch on 4 February 1938. However, a number of generals, led by Wilhelm Keitel, protested against his appointment, and the Führer subsequently withdrew his nomination. Instead, he was assigned command of the 4th Land Forces Group, which comprised the Wehrmacht's most modern armored-motorized units. While the leadership of the Land Forces, headed by Generals Walter von Brauchitsch and Franz Halder, may have been somewhat conservative in outlook, they were also opportunistic. Not particularly fond of von Reichenau due to his Nazi affiliations, nevertheless they did not question his command skills. Consequently, as part of the operational planning for *Fall Weiss*, von Reichenau was given command of the most important army. In this regard, the opinions of OKH and Hitler were in alignment. Furthermore, Friedrich Paulus was assigned to him as chief of staff, a decision that was not arbitrary. Von Reichenau was spontaneous, energetic, charismatic, consistent, and able to make instant decisions. He required a calm and conscientious, well-organized, even pedantic general staff officer, which Paulus undoubtedly was. This was an archetypal example of two contrasting personalities attracting each other, which complemented each other to form an exemplary command and staff duo²¹. Paulus had been associated with the motorized forces since the spring of 1934, initially assuming command of the 3rd Motorized Battalion in Wünsdorf/Zossen (which was converted in October 1934 to a motorized reconnaissance battalion). He subsequently served as Chief of Staff of the Armored Forces Command (since October 15, 1935), before assuming the role of Chief of Staff of the 16th Army Corps (mot.) (since February 1938) under the command of then-Lieutenant General Heinz Guderian²². Eventually, von Reichenau and Paulus were promoted to the rank of Field Marshal and held positions as army/army group commanders, receiving the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. An ex *Grenzschutz* member Eduard Metz, a Bavarian artilleryman and since

¹⁷ Throughout his personnel file the information that he was communications commander of the 6th Army can be found (see BA-MA, Personnel File, ref. PERS 6/300578, [Dienstlaufbahn Josef Russwurm], p. 1, 5a).

¹⁸ Bernd Boll, "Generalfeldmarschall Walter von Reichenau" in *Hitlers militärische Elite. 68 Lebensläufe* ed. Gerd R. Ueberschär (Darmstadt: Der Theiss Verlag, 2015), 195.

¹⁹ Torsten Diedrich, *Paulus. Trauma Stalingradu* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2009), 135, 136.

²⁰ Boll, *Generalfeldmarschall Walter von Reichenau...*, 196.

²¹ Diedrich, *Paulus...*, 136, 137.

²² Ibidem, 110, 116, 122.

August 1, 1938 the head of the Operations Branch (Ia), had served on an analogous position in the command of the 4th Land Army Group (where he came directly from the Berlin General Staff Academy), and was therefore already well known to the commander of the 10th Army. Following the conclusion of the Polish campaign, this officer proceeded to pursue a career in armored forces, attaining the rank of chief of staff of the 14th Army Corps (mot.) on October 3, 1939, and subsequently assuming command of the 5th Panzer Division on September 16, 1942. Additionally, he was bestowed with the Knight's Cross on January 5, 1943.²³ Due to a heart condition, he was compelled to conclude his wartime career as commander of the 302nd Higher Artillery Command (*Höherer Artillerie Kommandeur* or *Harko*) (effective Sept. 25, 1943) but was still promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General (effective Jan. 1, 1944). The three officers responsible for the 10th Army's operational activities during the Polish campaign were highly qualified specialists, all graduates of the General Staff Academy, with at least one year of experience with armored forces prior to the outbreak of war. In the case of Paulus, he can be considered one of the pioneers of this new formation within the German Land Forces.

With regard to the commanders of subordinate corps and their closest associates, it can be reasonably asserted that these individuals represent the elite of the officer corps²⁴. The commander of the XIV Army Corps (mot.) was Wrocław-born Gen. Gustav von Wietersheim, one of the most prominent talents in the Wehrmacht. In 1935-1936, he was appointed by Col. Gen. Ludwig Beck as the First Deputy Chief of the OKH General Staff for Operations (he was succeeded by another notable figure within the Wehrmacht, Lt. Gen. Erich von Manstein). Subsequently, Wietersheim served as commander of the 29th Motorized Infantry Division, after which he was promoted to lead the XIV Panzer Division in the aftermath of the Polish campaign. However, on September 15, 1942, he was punitively relieved of his duties under direct orders from Hitler and subsequently denied any further assignments until the conclusion of the war. He was bestowed with the Knight's Cross on April 20, 1941.²⁵ His chief of staff was Major General Friedrich Wilhelm von Chappuis (subsequently promoted to infantry general, commander of the 15th and 16th Infantry Divisions and XXXVIII Army Corps, decorated with the Knight's Cross, committed suicide on August 27, 1942)²⁶,

²³ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/300232, [Dienstlaufbahn Eduard Metz], p. 1, 1a, 3, 4a; BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/755, [Dienstlaufbahn E. Metz], p. 6, 6a; ibidem, Auszug für die Personalakte mit sofortiger Wirkung wird ernannt: der Oberst Metz, im Generalstabe des Armeekorps 10, zum Chef des Generalstabes des XIV. Armeekorps, H.Qu.O.K.H., den 3 X 1939, p. 15; ibidem, Bescheinigung – Herr Generalmajor Metz steht hier wegen anginöser Herzbeschwerden in stationärer Behandlung, Reserve-Lazarett Bad Tölz, Kr.Abt.Ia, Bad Tölz 11 V 1943 r., p. 37.

²⁴ The following section provides a concise overview of the careers of officers in key staff roles within the motorized corps and the armored and light divisions that constituted its structure. It was the high-speed units that played a pivotal role in the battle west of the Vistula arc and in the 10th Army, accounting for nearly 50% of the initial strength [see Magnus Pöhlmann, *Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung des Krieges. Eine deutsche Geschichte 1890 bis 1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016), 304]. The limitations imposed by the article constraints preclude the creation of a comprehensive collective portrait of the commanders and staff of the 10th Army. However, a more expansive prosopographical study would undoubtedly prove insightful.

²⁵ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/301339, [Dienstlaufbahn Gustava von Wietersheima], p. 1-2a; Telford Taylor, *Sword and Swastika. Generals and Nazis in the Third Reich* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1952), 106; Samuel W. Mitcham Jr., Gene Mueller, *Hitler's Commanders. Officers of the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe, the Kriegsmarine, and the Waffen-SS* (Lanham–Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 75, 76.

²⁶ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/106, Tod Gen. d. Inf. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Chappuis. Inhaber des Ritterkreuzes des Eisernen Kreuzes 1939, Oberkommando des Heeres, Nr. 3468/42 – PA (Z) Gr.III/IIIb, Berlin 29 VIII 1942 r., p. 15; Wolf Keilig, *Die Generale des Heeres und die Sanitätsoffiziere im Generalsrang* (Friedberg: Podzun Pallas Verlag, 1983), 59.

whereas 2Lt. G. Hans Georg Hildebrandt (subsequently promoted to Lt. Gen. among other ranks) served as chief of staff of XXXIX Panzer Division and commanded the 21st Panzer Division and the 715th Infantry Division, after their reconstitution in France.²⁷ The XV Corps was commanded by one of the most renowned and easily identifiable German armored warfare officers of the Second World War: Infantry General Hermann Hoth, who later held the positions of commander of the 3rd Panzer Group, the 17th Army, and the 4th Panzer Army. This officer, primarily associated with the brilliant actions of the Wehrmacht's large armored-motorized units on the Eastern Front in 1941-1943, nicknamed "*Papa Hoth*" by his subordinates, initially served in an infantry capacity, including a period as the commanding officer of the 18th Infantry Division between 1935 and 1938. Upon assuming command of the XV Army Corps (mot.) on November 10, 1938, he had no prior experience with armored weapons, but he was already decorated with the Knight's Cross²⁸ for his role in the Polish campaign on September 30, 1939 (and with the Oak Leaves and Swords to the Knight's Cross for his command on the eastern front²⁹). Hoth was aided in his role as commander of the XV Army Corps (mot.) by his chief of staff, Major General Johann Joachim "Hajo" Stever, who was later promoted to lieutenant general and commanded the 4th Panzer Division during the 1940 French campaign, as well as the 336th Infantry Division. He retired from military service during the war due to health reasons³⁰. Additionally, Hoth was supported by the intelligence and operations officer, Second Lieutenant count Theodor von Sponeck (subsequently promoted to lieutenant general and commanding the 90th African Light Division of the Panzer Army "Africa" from 1942 to 1943, decorated with the Knight's Cross on 12 September 1941)³¹ and, last but not least, the most robust tactical and operational link of the 10th Army – XVI Army Corps (mot.). The corps commander was Cavalry General Erich Hoepner, an exceptionally capable General Staff officer who rapidly advanced in the Wehrmacht following 1935: promoted to Major General in 1936 and another two ranks higher until the outbreak of war; chief of staff of the 1st Land Forces Group in Berlin 1935-1937; commander of the 1st Light Brigade and subsequently the 1st Light Division, before assuming command of the 16th Army Corps in November 1938. He was decorated with the Knight's Cross for his role in the Polish campaign and subsequently served as commander of the 4th Panzer Group and the 4th Panzer Army during Operation Barbarossa. As a result of his exemplary command in Poland and subsequently in France, he was inducted into the select group of experts in the operational level of German armored weapons (*Panzerwaffe*) and already in 1940 he was promoted to the rank of colonel

²⁷ Ibidem, 141.

²⁸ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/38, Begründung für den Vorschlag zur Verleihung des Ritterkreuzes des Eisernen Kreuzes, A.H.Qu.Starachowice, 6 X 1939. The proposal, signed by the commander of Army Group "South" Col. Gen. Gerd von Rundstedt and the commander of the 10th Army, reads: „Infantry General Hoth demonstrated exemplary leadership and initiative in commanding his corps. He displayed remarkable courage by repeatedly visiting the front line. The victorious battle of Radom is largely attributable to his strategic guidance.”

²⁹ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/38, [Dienstlaufbahn Hermann Hoth], k. 5-5a; BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/299909, [Dienstlaufbahn H. Hoth], k. 3-4a; Gerd F. Heuer, *Die Generalobersten des Heeres. Inhaber höchster deutscher Kommandostellen 1933–1945*, Verlag Arthur Moewig, Rastatt 1988, 122-126; Reinhard Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite. Rang- und Herkunftsstruktur der deutschen Generale und Admirale 1933–1945* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1982), 169, 290.

³⁰ Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 333.

³¹ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/881, [Dienstlaufbahn Theodor von Sponeck], p. 5, 5a; BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/300686, [Dienstlaufbahn T. von Sponeck], p. 1, 1a, 3.

general.³² Until May 1939, the corps chief of staff was Maj. Gen. Paulus. Following his transfer to the chief of staff of the 10th Army, his position was assumed by Col. Ferdinand Heim. This officer originally hailed from the artillery, but, like numerous other capable General Staff officers, having graduated from *Kriegsakademie* in 1937, he was drawn to the expanding domain of armored weapons. In the XVI Army Corps (mot.), he served as Chief of the Operations Branch (Ia) from November 3, 1937. Following the French campaign, he assumed the role of Chief of Staff of the 6th Army and, subsequently, commander of the 14th Panzer Division and XXXXVIII Panzer Corps on the Eastern Front. He was awarded the Knight's Cross³³. Heim's appointment as the Chief of the Operations Branch (Ia) of the XVI Army Corps (mot.) on August 1, 1939 was superseded by that of 2Lt. Col. Walter Chales de Beaulieu, another youthful and capable cavalry officer (from 1935-1937 he served in the command of the 2nd Panzer Division, and he was also a lecturer in tactics at the *Kriegsakademie* from 1937 to 1939). On May 1, 1944 de Beaulieu was promoted to the rank of General Lieutenant and served as chief of staff of the 16th Army (from February 15, 1940). He subsequently commanded the 4th Panzer Group (from February 16, 1941) and the 168th and 23rd Infantry Divisions (between 1943-1944).³⁴ Following the conclusion of hostilities, he authored a comprehensive biography of his commander from the Polish campaign, Hoepner, which offers valuable insights into their shared experiences.

To gain a deeper prosopographic understanding of these figures, it is necessary to examine the profiles of the commanders of the fast divisions of the 10th Army and their officers in the General Staff (Ia). The list commences with the command of the 1st Panzer Division, a pioneering tactical unit of the *Panzerwaffe* established on 15 October 1935 in Weimar. The division was headed by Lieutenant General Rudolf Hermann Schmidt, a Berliner from the corps of signal officers, who was known by his subordinates as "Panzer-Schmidt". The sobriquet speaks volumes about Schmidt's role within the *Panzerwaffe*. He was a dynamic and assertive commanding officer, yet he maintained a close connection with his subordinates, who affectionately referred to him also as "Papa-Schmidt", a moniker analogous to that of Hoth³⁵. It is also noteworthy that the celebrated career of "Panzer-Schmidt" came to an abrupt end in April 1943 with the revelation that his younger brother, Lt. Hans Thilo Schmidt, a high-ranking official of the Cipher Bureau at the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (*Chiffrierstelle des Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*)³⁶ was a spy who had been recruited in the 1930s by French intelligence (alias 'Asché') and significantly facilitated breaking of the Enigma cipher by Polish cryptologists from the Cipher Bureau of the Second Division of the Polish Army General Staff.³⁷ Prior to attaining the title of "Panzer-Schmidt," he had served on the General Staff of the Land Forces as Third Deputy (*Oberquartiermeister*) and on October 1, 1937, he assumed

³² Walter Chales de Beaulieu, *General Erich Hoepner. A Military Biography* (Havertown-Oxford: Casemate Publishers, 2021); David Stahel, *Hitler's Panzer Generals. Guderian, Hoepner, Reinhardt and Schmidt Unguarded* (Cambridge: University Press, 2023), *passim*; Heuer, *Die Generalobersten des Heeres...*, 112-116.

³³ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/299820, [Dienstlaufbahn Ferdinand Heim], p. 1-2; BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/614, [Dienstlaufbahn F. Heim], p. 6a.

³⁴ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/299376, [Dienstlaufbahn Walter Chales de Beaulieu], p. 1-2, 4, 4a; BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/493, [Dienstlaufbahn W. Chales de Beaulieu], p. 7.

³⁵ Stahel, *Hitler's Panzer Generals...*, 108.

³⁶ See Günther K. Weisse, *Geheime Nachrichtendienste und Funkaufklärung im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Deutsche und alliierte Agenten-funkdienste in Europa 1939-1945* (Graz: Ares Verlag, 2009), 39ff.

³⁷ See Paul Paillole, *The Spy in Hitler's Inner Circle. Hans-Thilo Schmidt and the Intelligence Network that Decoded Enigma* (Havertown-Oxford: Casemate Publishers, 2016).

command of the 1st Panzer Division. Following the conclusion of the Polish campaign, on February 1, 1940 he assumed command of the XXXIX Army Corps (mot.). On the Eastern Front he was promoted to lieutenant general (1 January 1942) and appointed commander of the 2nd Army and subsequently the 2nd Armored Army (from 25 December 1941 to 11 April 1943). He was bestowed the Oak Leaf to the Knight's Cross³⁸. His Chief of Staff was Chief of the Operations Section (Ia), 39-year-old Major Walter Wenck (from April 1, 1939). Prior to this appointment, Wenck had served in the Armored Forces Command (since July 2, 1936), in the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion (since October 6, 1936), the 16th Army Corps (mot.) Command (since April 6, 1938), and as commander of the 1st Company in the 2nd Armored Regiment (from November 10, 1938). His subsequent career trajectory was remarkably spectacular, commencing with the rank of major and concluding with the appointment as a General of the Armored Brigade (promoted on April 7, 1945); he was decorated with the Knight's Cross; from July 21, 1944, he was a chief of the Operations Branch (*I. Abteilung*) of the OKH General Staff from September 1, 1944; he subsequently served as the 1st Deputy Chief of the OKH General Staff for Operations and ultimately as the commander of the 12th Army, also referred to as *Armee-Wenck*³⁹, the mythical ultimate salvation of Berlin in 1945, at least in Hitler's imagination. Schmidt and Wenck, who was 14 years Schmidt's junior, constituted an excellent command and staff duo in the 1st Panzer Division, which ensured the effective deployment of the substantial armored unit in any operational context.⁴⁰ The 4th Armored Division was commanded by an officer whose identity needs no introduction: he was General Lieutenant Georg Hans Reinhardt, who belonged to the elite group of high-ranking Wehrmacht officers, having already been promoted to the rank of Colonel General on January 1, 1942. In 1940, he was appointed Commander of the XXXXI Army Corps (mot.). On October 5, 1941, he took command of the 3rd Armored Group and on January 1, 1942, he was appointed commander of the 3rd Panzer Corps. His career culminated in his appointment as Commander of the Army Group "Center" (August 16, 1944 to January 26, 1945), and he was awarded with Swords and Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross⁴¹. Equally fascinating is the cooperation of the commander of

³⁸ Heuer, *Die Generalobersten des Heeres...*, 180-183; Stahel, *Hitler's Panzer Generals...*, passim.

³⁹ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/301301, [Dienstlaufbahn Walter Wenck], p. 1, 1a, 3; Dermot Bradley, *Walther Wenck, General der Panzertruppe. Soldatenschicksale des 20. Jahrhunderts als Geschichtsquelle* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1982); Günther W. Gellermann, *Die Armee Wenck – Hitlers letzte Hoffnung. Aufstellung, Einsatz und Ende der 12. deutschen Armee im Frühjahr 1945* (Koblenz: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1990).

⁴⁰ Lieutenant General Friedrich Kirchner, Schmidt's successor as commander of the 1st Panzer Division (and, during the 1939 Polish campaign, commander of the 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade in the division) offered Wenck the following assessment: "Mentally and physically very well disposed, impeccable character, cheerful temperament, sincere personality. High sense of duty combined with great diligence, very efficient [in his position]. Very good tactical and operational sense, thinks logically, clear command language, confident decision-making. He enjoys complete confidence from all sides. Lieutenant Colonel Wenck is a valuable support for me as head of the Ia [operational] department." (see BA-MA, Personnel Files, Ref. PERS 6/391, [Lt. Gen. F. Kirchner] Beurteilung (für Offiziere in Gen. St. Stellen) über den Oberstlt. i. G. Wenck Walter, Kommando 1st Pz.Div., 8 II 1941, p. 21).

⁴¹ Heuer, *Die Generalobersten des Heeres...*, 158-164; Stahel, *Hitler's Panzer Generals...*, passim. He was decorated with the Knight's Cross for the Polish campaign: "Lieutenant General Reinhardt led his division through the most difficult terrain in continuous combat with the Polish Volhynian Cavalry Brigade and the 29th [Infantry] Division until September 8 [1939], up to Warsaw, which he blocked from the southwest and west, [then] he attacked the enemy from September 14 to 17 [1939] on the Bzura, on September 18 and 19 [1939] he was transferred to another sector, where a strong enemy was attacking, east of the Bzura River. With unparalleled personal tenacity, he commanded two assaults on Warsaw on September 8 and 9 [1939]. On the

the 4th Panzer Division with Maj. Wolf Dietrich Freiherr von Schleinitz. This officer was promoted to the rank of major general at the end of the war (April 20, 1945). Previously, he served as Chief of Staff of the XXXIX and XXXXVI Motorized Army Corps (from June 8, 1940 to June 30, 1941). He then served on the OKH General Staff (including on the Operations Department and as a General Staff representative at the *Oberkommando der Marine*). After the war, he joined the newly formed Bundeswehr with the rank of Brigade General (*Brigadegeneral*) and held an important diplomatic post of military attaché in Washington (from 1956 to 1962).⁴²

Among the light divisions, the one with the number 1 actually corresponded in strength to an armored division (shortly after the end of the Polish campaign it was reformed into the 6th Panzer Division). It was the only one to have an armored brigade (No. 6), comprising of the 11th Armored Regiment and the 65th Armored Battalion (a total of 226 tanks of various types).⁴³ From November 24, 1938 the division was commanded by Major General Friedrich Wilhelm von Loeper, a Silesian cavalryman originally from Prieborn (present-day Przeworno, a village located to the southeast of Strzelin). This officer was criticized by von Reichenau and Hoth during the Polish campaign as the commander of a tactical armored division.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, on September 1, 1940 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general. During the French campaign in 1940, he commanded the 81st Infantry Division and then the 10th Infantry Division, which was transformed into a motorized division in November 1940. During Operation *Barbarossa*, he was awarded the Knight's Cross (September 29, 1941). His line career was interrupted in mid-April 1942, after critical but objective opinions from the commander of the XXXX Army Corps (mot.), Lieutenant General Georg Stumme, and the commander of the 4th Army, Infantry General Gothard Heinrici⁴⁵ (they suggested that von Loeper serve in training and reserve units, as best suited to his abilities and temperament). First he was moved to the *Führerreserve* and then, on May 1 of that year, he became commander of the 178th Reserve Infantry Division (mot.), which was transformed into the 178th Reserve Panzer Division on April 15, 1943. On August 31, 1944 he took command of the improvised, training Panzer Division *Tatra*, which he commanded well during the fighting in Slovakia in September of that year. On January 31, 1945, he took command of Infantry Division *Friedrich Ludwig Jahn* of the LVII Panzer

night of September 18–19 [1939], he fought at the head of a smaller part of the division near Tuchowice [sic! actually – Tułowice – D.K.], surrounded by an overwhelming enemy, not only managed to break the ring of enemy forces and re-coordinate all parts of the division, but also captured 2 Polish generals and 10,000 soldiers” (see BA-MA, Personal Files, ref. PERS 6/50, [Colonel General W. von Reichenau] Vorschlag zur Verleihung des Ritterkreuzes des Eisernen Kreuzes Generalleutnant Reinhardt, Leipzig, October 7, 1939, p. 5).

⁴² BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/300780, [Dienstlaufbahn Wolf Dietrich von Schleinitz], p. 1, 1a, 3-4a; <https://www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Personenregister/S/SchleinitzWolfDietrichFhrv.htm> [accessed 1 IX 2024].

⁴³ Thomas Jentz, *Panzertruppen. The Compleat Guide to the Creation & Combat Employment of Germany's Tank Force 1933–1942*, vol. 1 (Atglen: Schiffer Military History, 1996), 91; see also Wolfgang Paul, *Brennpunkte. Die Geschichte der 6. Panzerdivision (I. leichte) 1937–1945* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1993), 19, 20; Michael Schadowitz, *Panzerregiment 11, Panzerabteilung 65 und Panzerersatz- und Ausbildungsabteilung 11, Von Blitzsieg zu Blitzsieg – Oktober 1937 bis September 1941*, vol 1 (Würzburg: Flechsig Verlag, 2013), 97ff.

⁴⁴ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/720, [W. von Reichenau] And as Oberkommando des Heeres – Heerespersonalamt, Betrifft: Gen.Major v. Loeper, Kdr. 1. lei. Division, Armeekorpskommando 10, Abt. IIa Nr 197/39 g., A.H.Qu. Starachowice, 26 IX 1939 r., p. 23.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, [G. Stumme, G. Heinrici] Beurteilung zum 1 V 1942 r. über den Generalleutnant (akt.) v. Loeper Friedrich-Wilhelm 10. I.D. (mot.), p. 36, 36a.

Corps. This rebellious commander, with a difficult character and openly hostile to Hitler,⁴⁶ was finally released to the reserve in February or March 1945.⁴⁷ Von Loeper's right hand in the command of the 1st Light Division was a fellow cavalryman (although he had been a sapper during World War I), Major Volkmar Schöne (Colonel from February 1, 1942). This officer held a number of staff positions during the war, before assuming command of the 18th Panzergrenadier Division at the end of January 1945. Thereafter, at the end of April 1945, he became the last commander of the renowned 3rd Panzer Division, with which he ultimately surrendered in Austria in May of that year.⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that also a cavalryman, Capt. Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg⁴⁹ served in the capacity of Quartermaster in this division.

On November 10, 1938 Lieutenant General Georg Stumme, yet another officer from the cavalry, was appointed commander of the 2nd Light Division (which was later reorganized into the 7th Panzer Division). Despite being diagnosed with coronary artery disease, this officer's career was exemplary until 20 July 1942. He commanded the 7th Panzer Division until January 1940, when he assumed command of the XXXX Army Corps (for commanding the corps during the French campaign, Stumme was awarded the Knight's Cross on July 19, 1940). In September of that year, the corps was transformed into a motorized corps and on July 9, 1942, it was transformed again, this time into an armored corps. On June 4, 1941, he was promoted to the rank of Armored General. On July 20, 1942, however, Stumme was stripped of his command and soon faced a court martial. He was one of three officers accused of negligence, which resulted in the disclosure of the plans for the summer offensive of *Blau* to the Soviets. The plane, flown by an officer from the command of the 23rd Panzer Division, which was subordinate to the command of the XXXX Panzer Division of General Stumme, crashed behind enemy lines along with the plans for the Wehrmacht's summer offensive. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, but having served only a few weeks he was granted clemency and reinstated to service due to intervention by numerous high-ranking officers. On September 20, 1942, he was appointed commander of the Panzer Army *Africa*. However, on October 24, 1942, he died of a heart attack during an attack by a British fighter on the car he was traveling in.⁵⁰ The chief of staff and, concurrently, the operations officer of the 2nd Light Division was Major Otto Heidkämper. This young sapper officer (born on March 13, 1901) had no prior involvement with fast weapons units until his transfer to the command of the 2nd Light Division on

⁴⁶ It is probable that the reason for his dismissal from service was the delay in the transmission of information regarding his attitude following the assassination attempt on Hitler. This resulted in him being „only” dismissed from service on the orders of Heinrich Himmler (as commander of the Reserve Army) with a discrediting opinion from the head of the Heerespersonalamts, Infantry General Wilhelm Burgdorf (see ibidem, [W. Burgdorf] Dem Chef Ag P 2, Der Chef des Heeres-Personalamts, FHQu.). (12 XI 1944, p. 52). Notwithstanding Himmler's directive, the documentation unambiguously demonstrates that von Loeper remained in service for a number of additional months, even assuming command of a division at the front.

⁴⁷ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/300149, [Dienstlaufbahn Friedrich von Loeper], p. 1, 4, 5a; Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 208.

⁴⁸ *Armored Bears. The German 3rd Panzer Division in World War II* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2013), 2:289ff.

⁴⁹ Friedrich Stahl, *Heeresinteilung 1939. Gliederung, Standorte und Kommandeure sämtlicher Einheiten des Friedensheeres am 3.1.1939 und die Kriegsgliederung vom 1.9.1939* (Eggolsheim: Edition Dörfler im Nebel Verlag GmbH, nd), 173.

⁵⁰ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/360, Betr.: Tod Gen.d.Pz.Tr. Georg Stumme, Inhaber des Ritterkreuzes des Eisernen Kreuzes, Oberkommando des Heeres Nr 4268/42 – PA (Z) Gr. III/IIIb, Berlin 27 X 1942 r., p. 6; Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 339.

May 1, 1939. Nevertheless, he must have met the standards in this role, as he retained his position following the transformation (until mid-November 1940) of the 2nd Light Division into the 7th Panzer Division. He then proceeded to assume a similar role in the 4th Panzer Division, remaining in this position until April 1942. His career advanced significantly with his promotion to the role of chief of staff of the XXIV Army Corps (mot.) on May 13, 1942, which was subsequently renamed the Armored Corps. He was initially promoted to the rank of Colonel on June 1, 1942. During the challenging retreat in the winter of 1942/43, following the deaths of successive commanders of the XXIV Panzer Corps (Generals: Arno Jahr, who committed suicide, and Karl Eibl, who died as a result of “friendly fire” from an Italian unit), he assumed command of the Corps and effectively led it for the subsequent three weeks. In recognition of this, he was awarded the Knight’s Cross on February 8, 1943. On May 5, 1943, he assumed the role of Chief of Staff of the 3rd Panzer Army. He subsequently held a similar position in the „Centre” Army Group (September 1, 1944) and in the “North” Army Group (January 25, 1945). During this period, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General (November 9, 1944). He concluded the war in command of the 464th Infantry Division.⁵¹

Since November 1938 the 3rd Light Division was led by another cavalry officer, Major General Adolf Friedrich Kuntzen. From 1933 to 1938 he had been the head of a division in the Personnel Office of the Land Forces, initially within the structures of the Ministry of War and from 4 February 1938, he was the head of the *Heerespersonalamt* at the OKH. Kuntzen’s career continued unhindered until the conclusion of the Battle of Normandy in late August and early September 1944. He commanded the 8th Panzer Division (which was formed on 18 October 1939 after conversion from the 3rd Light Division) until February 1941. He was decorated (on 3 June 1940) with the Knight’s Cross for the French campaign. Subsequently, Kuntzen served as a corps-level commander for an extended period: held the commands of LVII Army Corps (mot.) from 15 March 1941, then from 1 April 1942 XXII Army Corps and finally LXXXI Army Corps from 28 May 1942. Following the defeat of the Normandy campaign, Kuntzen was relieved of his duties, transferred to the *Führerreserve*, and retired on 31 December 1944.⁵² Kuntzen’s assistant in the command of the 3rd Light Division was Major Harald Freiherr von Elverfeldt, a young infantry officer (born February 5, 1900), who had only been promoted to fast weapons in August 1938⁵³. This capable and courageous commander demonstrated an excellent aptitude for service in the Operations Department in armored weapons, a position he assumed in February 1940 with the XV Army Corps (mot.). In November of that year, he proceeded to a similar role with the 3rd Panzer Group. On March 15, 1941, von Elverfeldt assumed the role of chief of staff of the LVI Army Corps (motorized, later LVI Panzer Corps). He retained this position until January 1943, after which he was appointed chief of staff of the 9th Army, a promotion that accompanied the new assignment. He was promoted to the rank of Major General on September 8, 1943. On November 1, 1943, he assumed the role of chief of staff of the 17th Army for a period of two weeks. Subsequently, he was reassigned to the *Führerreserve* and in February 1944, he was transferred to serve in a military school. On September 21, 1944, he was appointed commander of the 9th Panzer Division on the Western Front, assuming command of this tactical armored unit until his death on the battlefield

⁵¹ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/299819, [Dienstlaufbahn Otto Heidkämper], p. 1, 3, 5; Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 132.

⁵² BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/300089, [Dienstlaufbahn Adolf Kuntzen], p. 1, 3; Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 193.

⁵³ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/1211, Oberkommando des Heeres Az.21 c GZ (I), Nr. 1943/38, Berlin 2 VIII 1938 r., p. 26.

on March 6, 1945, during the battles for Cologne. For his service, he was awarded the Knight's Cross on December 9, 1944, and posthumously the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross on March 23, 1945⁵⁴.

The group portrait ends with the commanders and operational officers (chiefs of staff) of two motorized infantry divisions. The 13th Infantry Division (mot.) was commanded by Lieutenant General Paul Adolf Otto - a senior officer who had graduated from the *Kriegsakademie* in Berlin in 1914 - who became commander of this tactical unit before it was motorized (15 October 1935). After the Polish campaign, he was appointed Head of the German Military Mission in Slovakia (1 November 1939) and promoted to General of Infantry (1 December 1940). In May 1942 he became Commander of the IX Military District (*Wehrkreis*) and Commander of the IX Army Corps, and was retired a year later.⁵⁵ However, for his Operations Officer, Second Lieutenant Friedrich Fanghor, 18 years his junior, a distinguished career was in store, marked by a series of promotions, culminating in his appointment as Lieutenant General (Infantry General on March 16, 1945). Additionally, he was bestowed with the Knight's Cross on June 9, 1944. From the 13th Infantry Division (mot.) Fanghor moved to the Operations Division of the XXXXI Army Corps (motor) on February 5, 1940, and finally to the Chief of Staff of the LVII Army Corps (mot.) on February 1. From May 5, 1941, to July 15, 1942, he served as Chief of Staff of the 4th Panzer Army. He remained in this position until June 15, 1944. Subsequently, he was appointed to command the 122nd Infantry Division (from August 23, 1944) and then the I Army Corps (on February 21, 1945).⁵⁶ The commander of the 29th Infantry Division (mot.) was one of the more distinguished *Panzerwaffe* officers during the war. Lieutenant General Joachim Hermann August Lemelsen initially trained as an artillery officer, subsequently completing a course for General Staff officers in Sedan in 1917. Following the Polish campaign, he proceeded to ascend the ranks with remarkable rapidity. He assumed the role of Commander of the 5th Panzer Division on May 22, 1940, and subsequently served as Commander of the XXXXVII Army Corps (mot.) from November 25, 1940, until October 1943. From June 1942, he held the additional title of Commander of the XXXXVII Panzer Corps. Following a brief period of recuperation within the *Führerreserve*, as a general of armored weapons (from June 4, 1941) he assumed a provisional role of a commander of the 10th Army (November 4, 1943). In the final two years of the war, he led numerous operational units, including the 8th Army (as a provisional replacement, from March 5, 1944) and the 1st Army (as a provisional replacement, from May 10, 1944). He subsequently held the positions of commander of the 14th Army (from June 2, 1944), again the 10th Army (from October 24, 1944), and again the 14th Army (from February 15, 1945). He was bestowed the Knight's Cross on 27 July 1941 and subsequently awarded the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross on 7 September 1943.⁵⁷ It is beyond doubt that he was a member of the elite of the Wehrmacht and *Panzerwaffe*. During the Polish campaign in the capacity of Operations Officer in the 29th Infantry Division (mot.), served (from June 15, 1939⁵⁸) Major Gerhard Franz. He was promoted to the rank of

⁵⁴ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/2999607, [Dienstlaufbahn Harald Freiherr von Elverfeldt], p. 1, 2, 4a; W. Keilig, *Die Generale...*, s. 81.

⁵⁵ W. Keilig, *Die Generale...*, s. 250.

⁵⁶ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/299625, [Dienstlaufbahn Friedrich Fangohr], p. 1, 2, 6, 6a.

⁵⁷ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/300120, [Dienstlaufbahn Joachim Lemelsen], p. 1, 2; Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 200.

⁵⁸ Transferred from the 5th Infantry Regiment, initially temporarily for two weeks, confirmed in the position on 1 July 1939 (see BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/1247, Oberkommando des Heeres Az.21 c PA/GZ

Major General (December 1, 1944) during the course of the war. Franz was a reliable staff officer whose career advanced without significant impediments (although he did encounter a potential disruption in the form of an incident that could have derailed his continued service⁵⁹). He held the position of chief of staff for: XXXV Army Corps (from December 23, 1941), XXXX Army Corps (mot.) (from May 10, 1942), *Deutsches Afrika Corps* (from December 7, 1942), and XXXXII Army Corps (from August 1, 1943). On September 1, 1944, he was appointed commander of the 256th Volksgrenadier Division, a post he retained until April 1945, when he was taken prisoner. He was awarded the Knight's Cross while still serving as Operations Officer in the 29. Infantry Division (mot.) during *Barbarossa* campaign (July 24, 1941).⁶⁰

The conclusions derived from the aforementioned prosopographic sketch irrefutably demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of officers occupying pivotal roles within the 10th Army (and its subordinate tactical and operational units) on September 1, 1939, attained the status of high-class specialists within the Wehrmacht following the conclusion of the Polish campaign. A visible manifestation of this process was the multiple promotions to higher ranks (practically all key officers attained general ranks, whereas Reichenau and Paulus became field marshals⁶¹), as well as the service positions attained (acting army/army group commanders or, analogously for Operations Officers, acting army/army group staff chiefs) and the highest combat decorations achieved. It is evident that at the outset of the war, the higher command and staff cadre of the 10th Army were merely theoretically well-prepared to direct military operations in the context of contemporary warfare practices. The majority of these officers had completed a course at the Berlin *Kriegsakademie*, had served in various command roles during the Great War, and later in the Reichswehr and Wehrmacht. In the case of the Operations positions within the tactical fast weapons associations, there was a preponderance of young (typically under 40 years of age) officers with the rank of major, sporadically lieutenant colonel *im Generalstab*. The Polish campaign served as a significant proving ground for these officers, who emerged from it with considerable experience. Therefore, we may conclude that apart from one case – that of Major General von Loeper, albeit in the context of his later career it is difficult to assess his case in a purely negative light – the higher command and staff cadre of the 10th Army passed the first war exam with flying colors. In terms of its personnel, the armored fist of Army Group “South” was well prepared for the *Angriffstage*.

(I) Gen St d H, Nr. 1220/39, Berlin 7 VI 1939 r., p. 8).

⁵⁹ He was a passionate hunter, but during a hunt on 31 January 1940, he inadvertently shot and killed Gerhard Koch, a rifleman from the 3rd Company, 71st Infantry Regiment (mot.) of the 29th Infantry Division (mot.). He was acquitted by the XXXXI Army Corps' (mot.) court martial (see *ibidem*, Feld-Urteil, In der Strafsache gegen den Major i. G. Gerhard Franz, Gericht Generalkommando XXXXI A.K., St. L. 30/41, K.H.Qu. 9 February 1941, p. 9 et seq.).

⁶⁰ BA-MA, Personnel Files, ref. PERS 6/299657, [Dienstlaufbahn Gerhard Franz], p. 1, 6; W. Keilig, *Die Generale...*, 94, 95.

⁶¹ The higher command and staff cadre in the army corps subordinate to the 10th Army were not subjected to analysis in this study. However, it should be noted that Maj. Gen. Otto Moritz Walther Model, who served as chief of staff of the IV Army Corps, was also promoted to the rank of field marshal during the war (March 30, 1944). In 1944, he was awarded the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds and became one of the most renowned (though arguably not the most gifted) officers of the Wehrmacht during World War II, see Robert Forczyk, *Walther Model* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2011).

D. KOREŠ: DIE 10. ARMEE IN DER POLENKAMPAGNE 1939.
EIN KOLLEKTIVES PORTRÄT DER KOMMANDEURE UND STABSOFFIZIERE

Im Rahmen der Planungen für die Aggression gegen Polen (sog. Fall Weiss) im Jahr 1939 wies das deutsche Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH) der 10. Armee aus taktischer Sicht eine besonders wichtige Rolle zu. Das Ziel ihrer Aktivitäten war es, die polnische Verteidigung in der Tiefe zu durchbrechen und durch entschlossenes Vorgehen möglichst rasch die Weichsel nördlich und südlich von Warschau zu erreichen, wo die Verbindung mit der Heeresgruppe Nord vorgesehen war. Das Armeekommando 10 wurde am 26. August 1939 in Leipzig eingerichtet. Zum Oberbefehlshaber wurde der General der Artillerie Walter von Reichenau ernannt, die Funktion des Chefs des Stabes übernahm Generalmajor Friedrich von Paulus. Der Autor dieser Studie konzentriert sich ad hoc auf die Darstellung kurzer biografischer Porträts der Kommandeure und Stabsoffiziere der deutschen 10. Armee, mit einem Schwerpunkt auf ihrer Karriereentwicklung vor und nach der sogenannten Polenkampagne. Es handelt es sich um Offiziere höherer Einheiten, die dem erwähnten Verband ab der Ebene Division unterstellt waren. Für die Darstellung dieser Erkenntnisse nutzte der Autor vor allem die Ergebnisse seiner umfangreichen Recherchen in deutschen Militärarchiven. Die vorliegende Studie stellt gleichzeitig eine Einleitung zu einem weiteren geplanten wissenschaftlichen Beitrag des Autors dar, der thematisch die ersten, entscheidenden Kämpfe der 10. Armee an der Weichsel behandeln wird.

D. KOREŠ: 10. ARMÁDA V POĽSKEJ KAMPANI V ROKU 1939.
KOLEKTÍVNY PORTRÉT VELITEĽOV A ŠTÁBNÝCH DÔSTOJNÍKOV

Nemecké veliteľstvo pozemných síl (OKH) v plánovaní agresie voči Poľsku (tzv. Fall Weiss) v roku 1939 určilo z taktického hľadiska dôležitú úlohu 10. armáde. Cieľom jej aktivít bolo prelomiť poľskú obranu do hĺbky a srdnatým postupom pokiaľ možno čo najskôr dosiahnuť riekou Vislu v priestore severne a južne od Varšavy, kde bol naplánované spojenie so skupinou armád „Sever“ (Heeresgruppe Nord). Veliteľstvo 10. armády bol zriadené 26. augusta 1939 v Lipsku. Za jej veliteľa bol menovaný generál delostrelectva Walter von Reichenau, funkciu náčelníka štábu prevzal generálmajor Friedrich von Paulus. Autor sa v uvedenej štúdii ad hoc zamerail na prezentáciu stručných biografických portrétov veliteľov a štábnych dôstojníkov nemeckej 10. armády s dôrazom na ich kariérny rast pred tzv. poľskou kampaňou a po nej. Ide o dôstojníkov vyšších jednotiek podliehajúcich uvedenému zväzku počínajúc stupňom divízia. Pri prezentácii týchto poznatkov autor využil predovšetkým výsledky svojho rozsiahleho výskumu v nemeckých vojenských archívoch. Uvedená štúdia zároveň predstavuje intro k ďalšiemu plánovanému vedeckému príspevku autora, ktorý bude tematicky pokrývať úvodné, rozhodujúce boje 10. armády na Visle.

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