

# 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<sup>1</sup>

DANIEL KOREŠ



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This study builds on the author's previous article on the personnel composition of the command corps of the 10th German Army prior to the invasion of Poland, published in the preceding issue of Military History (2/2025). Here, the author examines the first phase of the 10th German Army's operational deployment in Poland from 1 to 9 September 1939.

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In the first article of this mini-series dedicated to the role of the German 10th Army during the Polish campaign of 1939, we examined the collective portrait of the most important commanders and staff officers (chiefs of staff and operational officers – Ia) of this operational unit<sup>2</sup>. A glance at their careers before the beginning of the war and primarily after the end of the Polish campaign led to the formulation of a thesis that the strength of the 10th Army resided in not only an overwhelming advantage of concentration in a relatively narrow line of advance, consisting of fast units (tank, light and motorized divisions), but also in an outstanding higher officer corps that commanded these units. This article concerns the proper – operational significance of the army commanded by General Walter von Reichenau, starting with the final preparations for the aggression against Poland and ending on the morning of September 9, 1939, when the victorious battle west of the Vistula River for the 10th Army was drawing to a close, and the unexpected Polish offensive against the left flank of the 8th Army – which became known in history as the Battle of the Bzura – was beginning, catching the Wehrmacht command by surprise. The actions of Reichenau's army within these first eight days of the war were the key to victory in the entire Polish campaign of 1939.

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The operational intentions of the German Army General Staff towards Poland (primarily personified by General of the Artillery Halder and his First Deputy General of the Infantry, Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel) assumed the destruction of most of the Polish Army forces west of the Vistula and Narew rivers, as first set forth in the initial draft (*Entwurf*) of Direc-

<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> See Koreš, Daniel „10. Army in the Polish Campaign of 1939: Leaders and Staff – collective portrait”, In: *Vojenská história* 29 (2025) issue 2, pp. 29 – 47.

tive No. 4150/39 of May 1, 1939,<sup>3</sup> and subsequent documents, including the draft no. 9020/39 (May, 10<sup>th</sup>)<sup>4</sup> of the operational plan for the 10th Army prepared by *Arbeitsstab Oppeln* (Pawlus and Metz), the operational directive number 1/39 of 20 May developed in *Arbeitsstab Rundstedt* (by Blumentritt in agreement with von Manstein)<sup>5</sup>, and an OKH directive for the deployment of forces within the framework of *Fall Weiss* no 4200/39 of June 15<sup>6</sup> and finally the ultimate operational plan of the 10th Army command (based on the latter document) no. 500/39 of June 29.<sup>7</sup> As already mentioned, the main role in this work was assigned to the 10th Army, which – without regard to the wings – was to break through the border defenses with armored and motorized forces and then violently invade the Polish operational space, striving to reach the Vistula north and south of Warsaw. In general, the German operators did not foresee any complications on the Polish side that could disrupt this plan. At least, they did not include such predictions in the planning documents that I have managed to access.

German intelligence and reconnaissance documents show that the 12th Army General Staff Department (i.e., *Fremde Heere Ost*, hereafter FHO<sup>8</sup>) was expected to provide precise hourly information on the movements of Polish units within five days of the announcement of the *Y-Tag* (i.e., general mobilization, which meant that the operational units would move to the initial attack positions), i.e., by the time the reconnaissance organs subordinate to the Army Group and individual armies would begin their work. As far as the needs of the 10th Army were concerned, emphasis was placed on the crossing of watercourses and the reconnaissance of possible fords, with special emphasis on the siltation of the banks and the examination of the condition of the Polish fortifications on the Katowice-Częstochowa-Wieluń section.<sup>9</sup> From the beginning of the third decade of August 1939, the command of the General Staff "South" received relatively accurate intelligence reports on the areas of concentration and fortifications on the Polish side. However, it is difficult to consider these data as particularly precise, since, for instance, in the report of August 21, on the axis of attack of the I Corps of the 10th Army, the German intelligence recognized: two infantry divisions of the Corps District Command (*Dowództwo Okręgu Korpusu*) no. IV in Łódź (7th and 10th Infantry Division), without specifying the exact concentration areas of these divisions; 23 battalions mainly from the area of Corps District Command No. II (Lublin) and Corps District Command No. IX (Brest-on-the-Bug), some of which, according to FHO analysts, were to belong to the 27th Infantry Division (sic!); and „strong cavalry” from the area of Corps District Command No. II, which was not recognized as the Volhynian (*Wołyńska*) Cavalry Brigade. The total force against the 10th Army was estimated at 5-6 infantry divisions (later

<sup>3</sup> 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 Special Reference to the Role of Silesia and the So-called Częstochowa Gap], *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojenny* [Historical and Military Review], no. 3, (2024): 105.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 107, 108.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, 109-111.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, 113,114.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, 114-116.

<sup>8</sup> See Magnus Pahl, *Fremde Heere Ost. Wywiad Wojskowy Hitlera* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Napoleon V), 2015.

<sup>9</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG "South", ref. RH 19-I/95, Betrifft: Feindaufklärungswünsche der höheren Stäbe des H.Gru.Kdo, Arbeitsstab Rundstedt, Berlin 31 VII 1939, p 23, 23a. This document, like many others, was saved from an archive fire and is to some extent incomplete (the manufacturer's header and case number are missing). I will always provide the record of this type of incomplete documents in the most precise wording possible, although they may differ from each other, depending on the degree of their preservation.

these estimates were reduced to 4-5 divisions), concentrated in the area “south of Krzepice, Wieluń and a strong group of armored vehicles south of Osjaków [this last information was also quickly negatively verified - D.K.]”.<sup>10</sup> It seems that the decision was made that a more detailed reconnaissance of the Polish side was unnecessary, as the summary stated: “The structure adopted by the command of the Army Group “South” is arbitrary since the Poles do not have corps commands in peacetime”.<sup>11</sup> This is to be understood as follows: since the Polish side does not have appropriate, intermediate command structures, there is no questions of the initial structure of operational units subordinate to the command of the Army Group „South” and the plan established by the OKH in May-June 1939 is to be implemented. It was evidently not feasible to dismiss the Polish operational command capabilities in a more definitive manner, a decision that had ramifications during the Polish campaign. One notable example is the offensive maneuver of the “Poznań” and “Pomorze” Armies against the left wing of the Army Group “South,” which culminated in the Battle of Bzura. It is noteworthy that the document identified Polish fortified positions, which were assessed as follows: „Field fortifications included trenches, wiring, and individual machine gun positions, though not continuous or extensive, they were meticulously developed over months of preparation and were ready for defense.”<sup>12</sup>

The reconnaissance conducted by the Intelligence Branch (Ic) under supervision of Captain Paltzo (3rd General Staff officer) from the command of the 10th Army yielded slightly more precise data. In the initial information communiqué dated August 19, Captain Paltzo provided a more accurate delineation of the concentration areas. He also identified the presence of the Polish 2nd, 7th, and 10th Infantry Divisions, as well as the elements of Volhynian Cavalry Brigade (19th and 21st Uhlan Regiment), placed on the flank of the 7th Infantry Division. Paltzo provided the following summary of the operational intentions of the Polish side: „The army command anticipates minimal opposition from the Border Guard and National Guard forces stationed directly along the border. Between the border and the designated waiting position [*Warthestellung*], the enemy is likely to attempt to defer the advance of its own units to the waiting position with the forces of regular units concentrated in this area. Once in the waiting position, the enemy is expected to maintain a constant defense [*Verteidigung*]”.<sup>13</sup> A few days later, the Intelligence Officer of the 10th Army reported: „The enemy is in front of the 10th Army. In general, there is no evidence to suggest an increase in enemy forces in comparison to the information provided in the intelligence report no. 1 on the enemy’s position. Therefore, there are 6–7 divisions [of infantry], we should also expect 1 cavalry brigade and 3 tank battalions. Nothing is certain yet about the structure of the divisions’ deployment and their combination into operational groups. [...] Permanent fortifications [...] we should expect further work to be completed [...]. There is no information about the facilities near Częstochowa. However, it is said that further facilities are being built east of Częstochowa [the last information underlined in red pencil – D.K.]. [...] There are no new reports about the operational intentions of the forces located opposite the 10th Army front.”<sup>14</sup> The 10th Army command was apparently not bothered by

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, Feindlage, Arbeitsstab Rundstedt, no 289/39 g.Kdos, Neuhammer 21 VIII 1939, p. 55, 56.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. RH 19-I/95, [R. Paltzo] Feindlage vor der Front des A.O.K. (Feindnachrichtenblatt 1.), Nr. 25/8, 19 VIII 1939, p. 66.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, [F. Paulus] Feindlage vor der Front des A.O.K. (Feindnachrichtenblatt 2.), Armee\_Oberkommando 10, Ic/AO Nr. 60/39 g.Kdos., Oppeln 26 VIII 1939, p. 94–96.

such a lack of knowledge of the Polish command structure and troop deployment. The only thing that worried the German staff officers was the construction of permanent fortifications that might slow the advance of the armored columns toward the Vistula. However, there is no mention of any fears that the German attack might be permanently or in any way interrupted. The staff officers of the 10th Army did not anticipate such a possibility. This situation did not change in the last days before the war. On August 30, the 10th Army's intelligence, based on the observed activity of the field fortification works, predicted that the Poles were going to move 3 infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade of armored vehicles to a strip from Bolesławiec (in the present province of Łódź) to Lubliniec, stretching almost 80 km along the border, in order to conduct a border battle there in the 10th Army's attack line. The reserve of this group was to be the 30th Infantry Division, which was to occupy the main line of resistance behind the Warta and Widawka Rivers on the Szczerców-Sieradz line. In addition, it was announced that the 9th Infantry Division would join the reserve of this „group” (sic!), which was to immediately reinforce the field positions on the 70 km long Częstochowa-Nowa Brzeźnica-Szczerców line, which in the imagination of the German operators was to become the second line of defense behind the Warta River.<sup>15</sup> In general, the intelligence of the 10th Army assumed – perhaps by analogy with the deployment of the tactical units of the “Łódź” Army in the attack zone of the left wing of the 8th Army and the XI Army Corps of their own army<sup>16</sup> – that the Poles would carry out a similar maneuver in the entire attack zone of von Reichenau's army. They may have even made this assumption *a priori*, based on the strength of the armored and motorized units of their own army, considering it impossible for the Polish side not to recognize them and downplay the threat posed by the penetration of these forces into the so-called Częstochowa Gap.<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, however, contrary to the rational calculations of the German staff officers of the 10th Army, this section of terrain was an insufficiently manned contact point of two Polish operational groups (the “Łódź” and “Poznań” armies). It was only reinforced at the last moment by the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade (introduced into the defense belt of the neighboring army)<sup>18</sup> on the initiative of the “Łódź” Army command, but they were still unable to extend the defensive position of the isolated 7th Infantry Division concentrated in the Częstochowa

<sup>15</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. RH 19-I/95, [F. Paulus] Feindlage vor der Front des A.O.K. (Feindnachrichtenblatt 3.), Armee-Oberkommando 10, Ic/AO Nr. 74/39 g.Kdos., Oppeln 30 VIII 1939, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> On the subject of the advance of the “Łódź” Army to the forefront of the main defense position, see. Jan Wróblewski, *Armia “Łódź” 1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1975), 53–59; Daniel Koreś, *General brygady Aleksander Radwan-Pragłowski (1895–1974). Studium biograficzne* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012), 236ff (further references are also given there).

<sup>17</sup> This is perfectly illustrated by the sketch with the alleged position of the Polish forces in the 10th Army's attack zone, with particular density of forces and positioning in the depth of the defense between Krzepice and Wieluń, as well as marked areas of forest collapses between Lubliniec and Tarnowskie Góry and anti-tank barriers (traps) in the Dylewo area (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/294, Lagekarte vom 17.VIII.1939, Anlage 1 zu H.Gr.Ko. 4 Ic/A.O. Nr 28/39 g.K., no pagination). Also in the KTB (*Kriegstagebuch*) of the Ia of the 10th Army, edited after the end of the campaign, there is an attached sketch showing that there were up to 7 Polish infantry divisions (sic!) in the army's attack zone (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, file no. RH 20-10/1, excerpt from the 10. Army's Campaign in Poland (Autumn 1939), p. 27a).

<sup>18</sup> See Mieczysław Bielski, *Grupa Operacyjna “Piotrków” 1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1991), 53; Andrzej Wesołowski, *Szczerców – Góry Borowskie 1939. Walki 30. Poleskiej Dywizji Piechoty i jej sąsiadów w dniach 3–6 września 1939 r.* (Warszawa: Fundacja Polonia Militaris), 2006, 63; Andrzej Wesołowski, Juliusz S. Tym, *Mokra – Działoszyn 1939. Działania wielkich jednostek Grupy Operacyjnej “Piotrków” w pierwszych dniach kampanii 1939 roku*, Warszawa 2014, 544; Daniel Koreś, „Kwestia tzw. luki częstochowskiej w polskich studiach operacyjnych 1935–1939”, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, no 1 (2025) (in print).

area<sup>19</sup>. The Polish Supreme Command left the German armored battering ram a half-open door to the interior of the country, which almost looks like an encouragement to the 10th Army to use the Częstochowa gap for this purpose.<sup>20</sup> For the Germans, this “invitation” – even if they mistakenly believed that opposite the 10th Army between Częstochowa and Wieluń there would be 5 Polish infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade<sup>21</sup> – was like an opportunity, a winning lottery ticket: „The general picture shows that the enemy wants to fight a battle with most of his divisions near the border – Paulus noted in the message, adding almost enthusiastically that – this provides the opportunity that the army [referring to the 10th Army - D.K.], after breaking through the enemy’s defenses, will perhaps be able to quickly start a free operation deep into [Poland] without the enemy being able to oppose it with significant additional forces.”<sup>22</sup> On the eve of the invasion, Reichenau and his chief of staff rightly sensed a chance for quick success. Little did they know that it would be much easier than they had anticipated.

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In the evening of August 31, 1939, the 10th Army deployed along the border, in the designated attack strip, seen from the left wing: XI Army Corps of General Emil Leeb (18th and 19th Infantry Divisions), XVI Army Corps (mot.) of General Hoepner (1st and 4th Panzer Division, 14th and 31st Infantry Divisions), IV Army Corps of General Viktor von Schwedler (4th and 46th Infantry Division), and XV Army Corps (mot.) of General Hoth (2nd and 3rd Light Divisions). In the second echelon of the army’s left wing (which was to support the XI Army Corps) was the 1st Light Division, and in the general reserve of the army was the XIV Army Corps (mot.) of General Wietersheim (13th and 29th Motorized Infantry Divisions).<sup>23</sup> This was the result of the recent reorganization of the

<sup>19</sup> See Lech Mastalski, *7 Dywizja Piechoty w latach 1918–1939* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2012), 356ff; Adam Kurus, *Czołgi na przedmieściach. 7 Dywizja Piechoty w obronie Częstochowy 1–3 września 1939 roku* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Napoleon V, 2015); idem, *Oddział Wydzielony “Lubliniec”. Działania bojowe 74 Górnosłąskiego Pułku Piechoty w ramach Oddziału Wydzielonego “Lubliniec” I IX 1939* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Napoleon V), 2018.

<sup>20</sup> I explain the reasons for this state of affairs in other publications (see Koreś, *General brygady Aleksander Radwan-Pragłowski... 185, 186*; idem, *Kwestia tzw. luki częstochowskiej... [in print]*).

<sup>21</sup> This was the assessment of the Polish Group by Ic of the 10th Army (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Heeresgruppen-Befehl Nr. 1, Heeresgruppe Süd, Ia Nr. 390/39 g.Kdos., Neisse-Heiligkreuz 30 VIII 1939, time: 1 pm, p. 4); it was a “realistic” estimate on part of the Ic, who saw a total of nine infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade opposite the 10th Army, including four in the “center” (7th, 12th, 27th, and one with an unknown number) and “1 Gruppe” in the Wieluń-Radomsko area with four divisions and one cavalry brigade supported by tanks (Infantry Division C, 20th and 30th Reserve Infantry Division, 27th Infantry Division, and Wołyńska Cavalry Brigade); in the second wave the 2nd Infantry Division was „recognized” in Kielce (BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. no. RH 19-I/5, Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Süd in Polen 1939, 12 VIII 1939 – 3 X 1939 – Heeresgruppenbefehl Nr. 1, Heeresgruppe Süd, Ia Nr. 390/39 g.Kdos., Neisse – Heiligkreuz 30 VIII 1939, 13:00, p. 11). Most of the „recognized” divisions were concentrated in completely different regions of the country or never existed (e.g. Infantry Division C or the 20th and 30th Reserve Infantry Divisions, whereas the 2nd Infantry Division was stationed in Kielce in peacetime).

<sup>22</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. RH 19-I/95, [F. Paulus] Feindlage vor der Front des A.O.K. (Feindnachrichtenblatt 3.), Armee\_Oberkommando 10, Ic/AO Nr. 74/39 g.Kdos., Oppeln 30 VIII 1939, p. 105.

<sup>23</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/293, Gliederung der 10. Armee für den Angriff am X. Tag, no pag.; for regions of concentration of corps and divisions on X. Tag see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/294, Unterbringungen der 10. Armee durchgeführt bis 31 VIII 1939, no pag.

10th Army<sup>24</sup> following the cancellation of the surprise attack (*Überraschung*) on Poland on August 26.<sup>25</sup> In light of the aforementioned, there was a concern that the Polish forces might have gained the opportunity to reinforce their defensive positions. Consequently, a decision was made to implement minor adjustments to the structure of the 10th Army's initial corps. Infantry divisions were tasked with breaching a path for armored and light divisions, which were to advance into operational depths through these corridors in Polish positions. Two motorized infantry divisions (the 13th and the 29th) were to constitute a mobile reserve, ready for rapid deployment. The cessation of the attack resulting from the unexpected alliance between Poland and Britain on August 25 and the diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict<sup>26</sup> did not render the 10<sup>th</sup> Army inactive.<sup>27</sup> In fact, it did not halt the scheduled on that day general mobilization or the subsequent influx of reservists and the rapid completion of divisions that had previously been designated for the second line. It became evident that concerns about a potential conflict on two fronts, the conservative stance of the Italian government, or diplomatic efforts to avert the war were insufficient to deter Hitler. The mobilization commenced, and the *Führer's* directive reached the OKH, indicating that the armed forces should be prepared for renewed aggression against Poland no earlier than the sixth day after its declaration. On August 28, the decision was made that X-Tag (*Angriffstag*) would be September 1.<sup>28</sup>

The tactical units and corps commands had been in combat readiness for a week. On August 24, the Supreme Commander of the Land Forces, Colonel General Walther von Brauchitsch, sent a telegram to his subordinate Army Commands and Army Groups with the following message „According to the intelligence information about the enemy's position, which arrived on August 24, most of the mobilized Polish forces have taken up positions in the Polish border areas opposite the borders with Slovakia, the Reich and East Prussia. Most of the Army forces [here meaning the Land Army - D.K.] were basically

<sup>24</sup> Just three days earlier, the left wing of the army corps had been the XIV Army Corps (mot.) composed of the 4th Panzer Division and the 18th and 19th Infantry Divisions, with the XI Army Corps (1st and 3rd Light Division, 13th and 29th Infantry Divisions /motorized/) in reserve (see CAMO, f. 500, op. 12472, d. 643, Befehl für die Neugliederung der 10. Armee, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Abt. Ia Nr. 100/39 g.Kdos., Bezug: H.Gruko.4, Ia Nr. 500/39 g.K.Ch.v. 29 VI 39, 27 VIII 1939, p. 2ff).

<sup>25</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/1, Auszug aus dem Kriegstagebuch der 10. Armee über den Feldzug in Polen (Herbst 1939), p. 1; Koreś, *Niemieckie planowanie operacyjne do wojny z Polską...*, 117.

<sup>26</sup> Nikolaus von Vormann, *Der Feldzug 1939 in Polen. Die Operationen des Heeres* (Weissenburg: Prinz Eugen Verlag, 1958), 43, 44; *Der General-Quartiermeister. Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen des Generalquartiermeister des Heeres General der Artillerie Eduard Wagner*, ed. Elisabeth Wagner (München: Günter Olzog Verlag, 1963), 94–98; Helmuth Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehrroffiziers 1938–1940. Mit weiteren Dokumenten zur Militäropposition gegen Hitler*, ed. Helmut Krausnik, Harold C. Deutsch, Hildegard von Kotze (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1970), 183–186; Wilhelm Deist, Manfred Messerschmidt, Erich Volkmann, Wolfram Wette *German and The Second World War, The Build-up of German Aggression*, (Oxford: University Press, 1990), 2:711ff; Marco Smedeberg, Niklas Zetterling, *Andra världskrigets utbrott. Hitlers anfall mot Polen 1939* (Stockholm: Norsdets, 2007), 66–68; Roger Moorhouse, *Polska 1939. Pierwsi przeciw Hitlerowi* (Kraków: Znak Horyzont, 2019), 112ff; Robert Forczyk, *Fall Weiss. Najazd na Polskę 1939* (Poznań, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2020), 165, 166.

<sup>27</sup> CAMO, f. 500, op. 12472, d. 643, Ziettafel für die Durchführung der Neugliederung, Anlage 1 zu A.O.K. 10, Ia Nr. 100/39 g.K., p. 7, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Christian Hartmann, *Halder: Generalstabschef Hitlers 1938–1942* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 138; Franz Halder, *Dziennik wojenny*, t. 1, *Od kampanii polskiej do zakończenia ofensywy na Zachodzie (14.8.1939 – 30.6.1940)*, ed. Hans Adolf Jacobsen, Alfred Philippi (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1971), 63, 69.

mobilized and transported to the concentration areas. Some reserve formations were mobilized and moved to the border. There is no certain information about the rest. It seems clear that the enemy's intention is to prepare for battle in advance [in German this sentence reads: *Eindeutig scheint die Absicht des Gegners zu sein, sich frühzeitig zum Kampf zu stellen* – D.K.]. Within the framework of the expected strategic defense, active counterattacks must be expected from the Polish side. My intention, as specified in the deployment instructions and orders to the army groups, results from the recognized development of the enemy's forces: the aim of the operation remains the rapid destruction of the Polish armed forces. Even if it will no longer be possible to completely prevent the orderly mobilization of Poland, it must be assumed that the concentration of the Polish army is not yet fully completed and that it is still possible to prevent the planned arrival of some of the mobilized Polish tactical units in defensive positions. The timing, the attack of the army and the strength and mobility of the attacking forces will continue to surprise our opponents. Therefore, I expect an uncompromising attack on the entire offensive front and the most daring exploitation of any approaching success, then the superiority of our leadership and the superiority of the German soldiers over the Poles will have a quick and decisive influence on achieving victory".<sup>29</sup> Brauchitsch clearly suggests that the final deployment of forces within the framework of the *Fall Weiss* and the task of quickly destroying the Polish army was a derivative of the recognized, cordoned-off formation of Polish forces along the borders.

The suspension, on the evening of August 25, of the order to begin the aggression proved to be the most problematic precisely in the case of the 10th Army, because until late in the evening there was no contact with Reichenau, who had gone to the border to personally supervise the *Übertritt über die Grenze* of the subordinate units<sup>30</sup>, which, however, should be considered a disgrace for the Signal Command headed by Major General Russwurm.<sup>31</sup> Fortunately, however, it was possible to withdraw the order to attack in almost one hundred percent,<sup>32</sup> which was commented on in a triumphant manner in the army KTB.<sup>33</sup> Maj. Gen. Kurt von Tippelskirch, then the 4th Deputy (*Oberquartiermeister, OQu IV*) of the Chief of

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<sup>29</sup> CAMO, f. 500, op. 12472, d. 637, [W. von Brauchitsch] Fernschreiben – An den Herrn Oberbefehlshaber des Arbeitsstabes Oppeln, Gltd: Oberbefehlshaber der Heeresgr. Sud und Nord, 3., 4., 8. u. 14. Armee, SSD HBZG 3022 2124, 24 VIII [1939], p. 8, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Foreczyk, *Fall Weiss*..., 165.

<sup>31</sup> This was not reflected in the KTB, where on 25 August 1939 it was written: "Radio telegram: 26 August, day Y, white variant [start of the hour] 4:30; [hour] 21:30 – the attack was called off by telephone" (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/31, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1 Armeenachrichtenführer beim A.O.K. 10, p. 5a).

<sup>32</sup> The most famous incident was, of course, the attack by an Abwehr sabotage group under the command of Lieutenant Hans Albrecht Herzner on the Mosty railway station and the railway tunnel in the Jablunkov Pass in Zaolzie. The action took place on the night of August 25-26, 1939, in the area operationally subordinated to the 7th Infantry Division of the 14th Army [see BA-MA, OKW-Abwehr Amt, RW 5/147, Heinrich Knoppek, Tätigkeitsbericht der KO Jablonkau und Umgebung, Jablonkau 10 September 1939, no pagination; Andrzej Szefer, *Prywatna wojna leutnanta Alberta Herznera czyli niemiecki napad na Przełęcz Jablonkowską w nocy z 25 na 26 sierpnia 1939 roku* (Katowice: Śląski Instytut Naukowy, 1987)].

<sup>33</sup> "All preparations for the border crossing on August 26 were made during the day. The soldiers were moving to their starting positions near the border or had already reached them, when at 21.00 h an order was unexpectedly received by telephone prohibiting the commencement of military operations, which was immediately transmitted to all subordinate units. Already at 22:05, Army Group "South" received the information that the above-mentioned order had been transmitted to the subordinate commands. Thanks to well-rehearsed communication, it was possible in a short time to stop the equipment, which was already working according to plan, like clockwork, down to the smallest unit" (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/1, Auszug aus dem Kriegstagebuch der 10. Armee über den Feldzug in Polen /Herbst 1939/, p. 1)

the General Staff of the Land Forces, supervising the 3rd and 12th Intelligence Units of the General Staff (*Freimde Heere West und Ost*), rightly noted that Polish intelligence actually failed to recognize the threat of aggression starting on August 26.<sup>34</sup> This is confirmed by numerous preserved FHO reports and Polish intelligence documents.<sup>35</sup>

On August 28, the 10th Army command engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning session. The failure of the *Überraschungsangriff* surprise attack, deemed by the OKH to be a critical factor for the expeditious success of *Fall Weiss*,<sup>36</sup> prompted concern among the German staff officers.<sup>37</sup> On the preceding day, intelligence had reached Opole (*Oppeln*) indicating that abandoning the plan to launch a surprise attack on Poland would merely postpone the commencement of hostilities by a few days only. Given that up until the commencement of active operations in *Fall Weiss* German operators had typically overestimated the strength of the Polish forces (calculating Polish mobilization capabilities to be equivalent to 60 infantry divisions<sup>38</sup>), they believed that the decision to defer the date of aggression would provide the Polish side with the opportunity to reinforce its defensive positions (primarily through the deployment of further tactical units created as a result of implementing subsequent mobilization waves). This demonstrates the shortcomings of German intelligence operations concerning Poland, including those conducted by the *Abwehr* and FHO. It also illustrates the necessity for caution in such circumstances. Ultimately, the German war machine was only theoretically invincible at that time, as it had not yet had an opportunity to demonstrate its capabilities in combat. Even after gaining experience in warfare during the Polish campaign, *Wehrmacht*'s actions in September and October 1939 can hardly be seen as the legendary Blitzkrieg, which was characterized by the precise maneuvering of German armored columns, supported by air and artillery, and conducted with surgical precision. This propaganda image has recently been refuted by Niklas Zetterling.<sup>39</sup> On August 28, 1939, in Nysa, the staff officers of the

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<sup>34</sup> Kurt von Tippelskirch, "Operativer Überblick über den Feldzug in Polen 1939", *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, no. 6 (1954): 258; Halder, *Dziennik...*, 1:65.

<sup>35</sup> 20. 1939 August 26, Warsaw - Information Report No. 167 of the Second Section of the General Staff on the Military-Political Situation in Germany [in:] *Przygotowania niemieckie do agresji na Polskę w 1939 r. w świetle sprawozdań Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego WP (dokumenty) / German Preparations for Aggression against Poland in 1939 in the Light of the Reports of the Second Section of the General Staff of the Polish Army (Documents)*], ed. Mieczysław Cieplewicz, Marian Zgórniak (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich - Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1969), 137ff. Of course, signals of a possible attack on August 25 or 26, 1939, were noted [see Piotr Kołakowski, *Czas próby. Polski wywiad wojskowy wobec groźby wybuchu wojny w 1939 roku* (Warszawa: Demart SA, 2012), 181] but they were scattered and not considered reliable enough to be used as a basis for formulating a report on the real threat of German aggression on the morning of August 26, 1939. This proves the effectiveness of the German camouflage and gives reason to assume that if the attack had actually taken place, it would have been a much greater surprise for the Polish side as an surprise attack (*Überraschungsangriff*) than the actual outbreak of war on September 1, 1939.

<sup>36</sup> Halder, *Dziennik...*, vol 1, 42.

<sup>37</sup> Adolf Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit. Schicksalsstudien der deutschen Armee 1923–1945* (Tübingen–Stuttgart: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1950), 57ff.

<sup>38</sup> N. von Vormann in *Der Feldzug 1939 in Polen...* on page 44 claims that the German General Staff used intelligence data which showed that Poland would be able to field the following in three mobilization waves: 43 infantry divisions, 2 motorized brigades, 16 cavalry brigades, 10 Border Protection Corps brigades). Hitler allegedly contested this data, reasonably claiming that having an appropriate number of reservists for 60 infantry divisions did not mean that all of them would be equally well armed and equipped.

<sup>39</sup> Niklas Zetterling, *Blitzkrieg. From The Ground Up* (Philadelphia–Oxford: Casemate Publishers, 2017), 79ff.

10th Army, relying on the order of the Army Group „South” from the previous day<sup>40</sup> and intending to break through the Polish defensive positions, did not display the level of audacity in action<sup>41</sup> which less than a year later the *Panzerwaffe* would in their French campaign – even though to some degree such characteristics were already evident in the former case, yet in Poland they were not implemented in practice. This is clearly reflected in the following entry in the KTB:

“The fundamental premise of implementing the orders<sup>42</sup> was to position all infantry divisions on the front line, in accordance with the proposal submitted to the Army Group, inclusive of the provisional measure. The 1st and 4th Panzer Divisions were to be made available for deployment for the XIV and XVI Army Corps with the objective of advancing deep into enemy territory, following the breach of enemy border positions. Further considerations in the context of a clear concentration of tanks led to the following intention: the 1st and 4th Panzer Divisions will be subordinated to the XVI Army Corps, which will then have the 31st and 14th Infantry Division in the first echelon and two panzer divisions in the second line. The 1st Light Division will maintain its status as a reserve unit. The command of the XIV Army Corps will be superseded by that of the XI Army Corps. No further alterations are required. In the initial echelon, the XV Army Corps will be comprised solely of the 2nd Light Division. The 3rd Light Division will remain in reserve on the Odra (*Oder*) River. The fundamental operational concept is to utilize the infantry divisions to breach the enemy’s defensive positions, which, based on available intelligence, have likely been reinforced significantly in the recent days. Subsequently, the armored divisions will be employed to traverse the interstices in the Polish defensive perimeter. The objective is to advance the 1st Light Division and position it behind the armored divisions, creating a V-formation with the XVI Army Corps, the 1st and 4th Armored Divisions, and the 1st Light Division, which will spearhead the army. In order to facilitate the formation of the armored corps, the XVI Army Corps relinquished the 31st Infantry Division to the XI Army Corps in the north and the 14th Infantry Division to the IV Army Corps in the south. In addition, both infantry divisions formally reported to their overall command, which also exercised peacetime command authority over them. The XV Army Corps was to attack towards Koscęcin (approximately 30 km southeast of Częstochowa – D.K.) with the 2nd Light Division, while the 3rd Light Division was to advance in the second echelon

<sup>40</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. RH 19-I/5, Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Süd in Polen 1939, 12 VIII 1939 – 3 X 1939 – Operationsabsichten der Heeresgruppe An O.K.H. Genst. d.H., Operationsabteilung, Neisse 27 VIII 1939, p. 8, 9.

<sup>41</sup> The dearth of confidence in the capabilities of the *Panzerwaffe* at that juncture is exemplified by the dialogue documented in the particular, fictionalized memoirs of Heusinger, then a Lieutenant Colonel in the First Operational Department of the General Staff of the Land Forces, in a conversation that took place on June 11, 1939, between several senior officers of the *Generalstab*. Furthermore, the discussion addresses a war game conducted by General Colonel Halder during an operational and study trip (*Heeres-Gruppenreise*) of the General Staff to Bad Salzbrunn (Szczawno-Zdrój). This game involved the possibility of operating in combat conditions of a panzer army in the strength of six tactical units, attacking in a strip 100 km wide; an analogy to the 10th Army is readily apparent (see Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit...*, 49, 50; on the operational and study trip of the OKH General Staff, see Koreś, *Niemieckie planowanie operacyjne do wojny z Polską...*, 95, 96).

<sup>42</sup> The KTB author was aware that the orders came from Zossen, where the General Staff of the OKH had already established a presence. In his diary, dated August 26, 1939, Halder made the following entry: “10th Army: The existing paths of action remain unchanged. On the present date and tomorrow night, the infantry divisions are to be moved forward in a line, with the armored and light divisions situated behind them, extending as far as the Odra River on both sides, in the areas previously designated for concentration and deployment. The motorized divisions are to be positioned slightly behind these” (See Halder, *Dziennik...* 1:63).

and then be subordinated to it. After combining these two light divisions, the XV Army Corps, as a light corps, was to attack south of the XVI Army Corps deep into enemy territory. This corps was to attack next west of the Pilica River, and the XV Army Corps was to strike east of it. Behind these corps were to advance: the IV Army Corps on the right, the XI Army Corps on the left. The XIV Army Corps with the 13th and 29th Infantry Divisions (mot.) was to remain in the army reserve with the intention of transferring it under the command of the armored corps".<sup>43</sup>

The concept of establishing a formidable armored spearhead within the 10th Army (XVI Army Corps as a panzer corps) with two armored divisions and one light division (which, in practice, was an armored unit) and another, somewhat weaker division (XV Army Corps, as a light corps) that was also armored-motorized, was clearly an early manifestation of *Blitzkrieg*. The question naturally arises as to why this strategy was implemented in a much more limited form during the Polish campaign, which will be discussed later in the article. The project presented above represents a compromise between the demands of the OKH and the expectations of the command of the 10th Army. The discussion on this project, which took place on the Opole–Neisse–Berlin line, prompted Brauchitsch, Halder, and his 1st deputy (*OQu I*) General Stülpnagel to proceed to Silesia. The meeting was scheduled to occur in Nysa, which was designated as the headquarters of the Army Group "South," on August 29 at 12:00 p.m. Additionally, the commanders of the remaining operational units (8th and 14th Armies) and their respective chiefs of staff were in attendance.<sup>44</sup> According to the KTB of the 10th Army, the initiative for this direct meeting originated with Reichenau and his chief of staff. The primary focus of the deliberations was the necessity for armored divisions to be deployed in the vanguard of the assault to breach border fortifications and traverse the Liswarta. The OKH leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the 10th Army's demands by authorizing the relocation of armored divisions to the forefront of the attack formation and providing additional infantry regiments to reinforce tactical units tasked with breaching Polish border defenses, which were anticipated to be robust, comprising formidable infantry units, challenging terrain, and tenacious resistance.<sup>45</sup> These arrangements were reflected in the order of the 10th Army to attack Poland, written on the same day by Colonel Metz. Point 6, sub-point c, presents the tasks of the XVI Army Corps (mot.). The order states that the XVI Army Corps (mot.) will "break through the enemy's border positions on both sides of the town of Panki, occupy Kłobuck, and continue to attack the enemy's positions in the Warta bend north of Częstochowa. The XVI Army Corps will breach the enemy's border fortifications on both sides of the town of Panki, occupy Kłobuck, and continue to assault the enemy's positions in the Warta bend north of Częstochowa. The subsequent objective of the corps is to traverse the Warta and persist in the assault in the direction of Radomsko and subsequently Piotrków. Both armored divisions are to be positioned in the initial echelon, which will confer the requisite strength and velocity to the attack. The infantry is to adhere closely to the armored units in order to expeditiously breach the formidable enemy resistance that may materialize on the Warta section in the event of an unsuccessful endeavor to achieve surprise success in the fight for the river crossings."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/1, Auszug aus dem Kriegstagebuch der 10. Armee über den Feldzug in Polen (Herbst 1939), p. 2, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Halder, *Dziennik...*, vol 1, 71; Diedrich, *Paulus...*, 139.

<sup>45</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/1, Auszug aus dem Kriegstagebuch der 10. Armee über den Feldzug in Polen (Herbst 1939), p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Armeebefehl für den Angriff am X-Tag, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Ia/op Nr 101/39 g.Kdos, Oppeln 29 VIII 1939, p. 37.

The XV Army Corps (mot.), under the command of Infantry General Hoth, was to initiate an offensive maneuver in the vanguard of the 2nd Light Division. However, this division was to follow the right wing of the IV Army Corps, which was to establish a route for it eastward through Lubliniec to Koszęcin and subsequently on to Żarki, crossing the Warta along the way.<sup>47</sup> The 3rd Division was to be deployed in the second echelon of the corps on the right wing as prior to this it had not crossed the Oder yet. It was to move to the exit area via specially prepared bridges in Krapkowice (*Krappitz*) and Kąty Opolskie (*Oderwinkel*). The division was to follow the 2nd Light Division by two alternative routes: either through Tworóg (*Horneck*) on the right flank of the corps or through Zawadzkie (*Andreashütte*) to Lubliniec and then in the wake of Lieutenant General Stumme's division. Schwedler was to commence the attack from positions between the XVI and XV Army Corps (mot.) west of Lubliniec, subsequently occupying that city and Częstochowa, capturing the Warta crossings south of Częstochowa, and continuing to Przyrów. In turn, the XI Army Corps, which had assumed a position on the left wing of the 10th Army in lieu of the XIV Army Corps (mot.), was to advance from the Sternalice (*Ammern*) – Gorzów Śląski (*Landsberg*) line and launch an attack across the Warta towards Działoszyn and subsequently, having captured the Widawka crossings, towards Szczerków. As the forces in the Wieluń area (on the left flank of the corps) were erroneously identified as corresponding to an infantry division and the reinforced with tanks Volhynian Cavalry Brigade<sup>48</sup>, General Leeb's corps received the 563rd Army Anti-Tank Battalion and the 60th Engineer Battalion from the XVI Army Corps (mot.). Furthermore, the corps could rely on the formidable 1st Light Division, which could be deployed from the assembly area near Landsberg within a two-hour timeframe.<sup>49</sup> In terms of reinforcements,

<sup>47</sup> BA-MA, 2. Light Division / 7. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-1/1, Kriegstagebuch der 2. leichten Division während des Polenfeldzug (im XV AK). Abstrift Divisionsbefehle (Original) 24 VIII – 10 X 1939, p. 7, 8; ibidem, Divisionsbefehl für den Beginn der Operationen, 2. leichten Division, Abt.Ia Nr. 211/39 g.Kdos., Hohenlieben, 30 VIII 1939, p. 60ff.; BA-MA, IV Army Corps, ref. RH 24-4/5, Korpsbefehl für den Angriff, Korps-Kommando IV, Abt.Ia Nr. 1026/39 g.Kdos. 28 (or 29) VIII 1939, p. 156, 157; BA-MA, 4. Infantry Division, ref. RH 26-4/2, Divisionsbefehl für die Bereitsstellung zum Angriff in der Nacht, 4. Division, Ia Nr. 220/39 geh., Andreashütte, 29 VIII 1939, no pagination.

<sup>48</sup> Actually, between 18 and 30 August 1939, this brigade occupied positions in the area of Nowa Brzeźnica (about 50 km south-east of Wieluń and about 40 km north of Częstochowa). On 30 August 1939 the commander of the “Łódź Army ordered the Brigade to move to the Ostrowy-Miedźno line (about 20 km south-west of Nowa Brzeźnica) (see Wesołowski, Tym, *Mokra Działoszyn 1939...*, 295, 541 et seq.). Thus the brigade took up positions blocking the marching axis of the left wing of the XVI Army Corps (mot.) and not on the wing of the XI Army Corps.

<sup>49</sup> Concerns about the left wing of the army (XI Army Corps) from the direction of Wieluń led to the issuance of another addendum to the order to attack on the X-day, emphasizing the importance of early reconnaissance of the enemy group near Wieluń. On 31 August 1939 the 1st Light Division took up positions in the area north-east of Praszka, in the second echelon behind the units of the 18th Infantry Division. Its only task was to wait for the enemy to appear on the left flank of the army (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Bezug: Armee-Befehl Nr. 1 vom 29 VIII 39, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Ia/op Nr 101/39 g.Kdos III.Ang., 31 VIII 1939, p. 40). The particular concern for this wing is evidence of the fear of slowing down the 10th Army during the border battle. The allocation of a light division with more than 250 tanks to support two strong infantry divisions covering the XVI Army Corps (mot.) from the north is a measure of these fears, which, as we know today, were exaggerated many times over, since in the vicinity of Wieluń the 18th Infantry Division and the 1st Light Division were mainly to meet: the “Wieluń” detachment of Colonel Jerzy Grobicki (Wieluń National Defence Brigade, part of the 1st Cavalry Regiment of the Border Guard Corps, plus a tankette company), the 15th “Wolves” Infantry Regiment of Colonel Władysław Frączek, and the 36th Infantry Regiment of the Academic Legion of Lieutenant Colonel Karol Ziemięski of the 28th Infantry Division [see *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej* vol. 1, *Kampania wrześniowa 1939*, part 2, *Przebieg działań od 1 do 8 września* (London: Sikorski Historical Institute, 2nd edition, 1986), 155, 156, 162, 174-176, 189, 190, 202-205)]. Between 1 and 5 September 1939, the offensive potential of the 1st Light Division was wasted in reconnaissance operations

XVI Army Corps (mot.) could count on the most of it – after all, it was not only the apple of the commander of the 10th Army's eye, but also of the Army Group “South”s and even the OKH had their eyes on this corps - and these were four howitzer and heavy gun divisions under the overall command of the 627th Artillery Regiment of the Army and two motorized infantry divisions (13th and 29th), which were waiting for a signal in the assembly area, four hours' march from the border.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the forces of Lieutenant General Bruno Loerzer's 2nd Air Division (4th, 76th and 77th *Kampfgeschwader*, I/2. *Sturzkampfgeschwader* and I/76. *Zerstörergeschwader*), which concentrated most of the bomber aviation of the 4th Luftwaffe,<sup>51</sup> were assigned to direct support of the IV, XI and XVI Army Corps (mot.). It is clear from the above that every detail was taken into account for the success of the 10th Army in the border battle<sup>52</sup>, and although this may seem surprising in the context of the forces on the other side of the border (in reality these were equivalent to up to 1.5 infantry divisions, a cavalry brigade of the “Łódź” Army, an infantry division and a cavalry brigade from the “Poznań” Army<sup>53</sup>), it should be remembered that immediate success of the Wehrmacht throughout the campaign would depend on the success of this army – indeed, no other was of interest to the political and military leadership of the Third Reich<sup>54</sup>.

The 10th Army had prepared the orders for *Angriffstag* on August 29, but the superior command (Army Group “South”) issued its first operational order the following day. Although this may appear surprising at first glance, it was not so anomalous within the context of the flexible German command system. The German offensive was to be spearheaded by Reichenau's army (*dem Stosskeil des deutschen Heeres*), as emphasized by General Vormann in his operational synthesis of the Polish campaign.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, this army held the primary responsibility for issuing orders to attack. *Heeresgruppenbefehl Nr. 1* leaves no room for doubt in this regard:

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in the Wieluń area and in an attack on Polish positions on the Warta River near Widawa, before misjudgment of the situation was understood and the division was redirected to another part of the front, to operations that suited its capabilities (see BA-MA, 1. Light Division / 6. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-6/139, *Kriegstagebuch der 1. leichten Division vom 18 VIII bis 16 X 1939. Feldzug in Polen, 7–14; Paul, Brennenpunkte..., 28–33; Schadewitz, Panzerregiment 11..., 104–109*).

<sup>50</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, *Armeebefehl für den Angriff am X-Tag*, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Ia/op Nr 101/39 g.Kdos, Oppeln 29 VIII 1939, p. 36a–37a.

<sup>51</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, *Zusatz zum Armeebefehl für den Angriff am X-Tag*, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Ia/op Nr 101/39 g.Kdos II.Ang., 31 VIII 1939, p. 39; Marius Emmerling, *Luftwaffe nad Polską 1939*, vol. 2, *Kampffliger* (Gdynia: Armagedon, 2005), 24ff.

<sup>52</sup> Let us be precise: the main concern was the left wing and part of the center of the 10th Army (XI and XVI Army Corps /mot./). Schwedler's corps, attacking to the right of XVI Army Corps (mot.), had fewer worries about the enemy, which was clearly defined as having weaker forces (*unterlegene Kräften*), rightly estimated at the size of seven infantry divisions and perhaps an additional division in the second echelon (which in reality did not follow) (see BA-MA, IV Army Corps, ref. RH 24-4/5, *Korpsbefehl für den Angriff*, Korps-Kommando IV, Abt.Ia Nr. 1026/39 g.Kdos. 28 (or 29) VIII 1939, 155).

<sup>53</sup> See The Polish Institute and the General W. Sikorski Museum in London (Instytut Polski i Muzeum gen. W. Sikorskiego w Londynie), The 1939 Campaign – Main Staff Files of August 1939, ref. A.II.8/13, Section “Łódź” – Units situated in the section on 28 August 1939 [situation sketch], pages 1, 2; ibidem, “Łódź” Army – order of battle (picture) b., p. 4; ibidem, Location [of large units of the “Łódź” Army from] 31 August 1939 [situation sketch], pages 8, 9; Władysław Steblik, *Armia “Kraków” 1939* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1989), 114–116 and sketch no. 3 – the position of troops on the evening of 31 August 1939.

<sup>54</sup> Diedrich, *Paulus...*, 139

<sup>55</sup> von Vormann, *Der Feldzug 1939...*, 68.

“The 10th Army, utilizing its superior armored weaponry, will breach the significantly weaker enemy positions and subsequently advance to the Radom-Koluszki line, following the collapse of the Polish Warta defensive line. It is of the utmost importance that, following the breaking of the Warta line, the army be able to rapidly secure freedom of action to the west of the Vistula and to the north of the Pilica. This will entail the deployment of fast units to Radom, Grójec, and Tomaszów Mazowiecki. It is imperative to swiftly assume control of the Vistula crossings, including those at Puławy.”<sup>56</sup>

The German military anticipated that the defensive line along the Warta River would represent the strongest Polish position and that it would encounter significant resistance.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the commander of the XVI Army Corps (mot.), General Hoepner, exhorted his subordinates, who were advancing at the vanguard of the army, to exert themselves to the utmost: “Soldiers of the XVI Corps! We are entering a decisive battle for the existence and future of Germany. We are meeting an enemy filled with the greatest hatred for others. We should be guided by the ‘unwavering will to win’! Our goal is the ‘ruthless destruction of the enemy’! The keyword: Warsaw!”<sup>58</sup>

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From an operational point of view, the early days of the war were a series of successes for the Germans in the 10th Army’s advance zone, interrupted only by minor problems. Halder noted in his diary on the first day of the war (between 11:30 and 13:00): “10th Army: Only a weak opponent. 2nd Light Division passed through the woods. The 4th Army Corps is fighting in the Lubliniec area”.<sup>59</sup> On 1 September (probably around midday), Captain Paltzo of the 10th Army reported to the FHO on Polish field fortifications extending south from the Herby area and on a small number of prisoners. Two captured officers were to testify to the 10th Army Command about, among other things, orders to withdraw beyond the Warta River, where the main position was to be held. The prisoners were to confirm the border positions of the 7th and 25th Infantry Divisions. As an element to be improved, Paltzo reported the need to quickly take over the telephone exchanges in the occupied towns so that the enemy could not be informed of the movements of the German troops.<sup>60</sup> In another report from that day at 11:30, the Army Group “South” reported on the progress of the tactical formations: The 2nd Light Division occupied Hill 357 west of Lubsza, the 4th Infantry Division was 6 km east of Lubliniec, the 46th Infantry Division was advancing 9 km north-east of Lubliniec; the armored divisions were the most advanced - the main forces of the 1st Panzer Division were 5 km west of Kłobuck (which was already occupied at that time), the 4th Panzer Division occupied positions 4 km north-east of Kłobuck in the area of Mokra, and the enemy occupied positions west of the railway line leading from Kłobuck north to Zduńska Wola; on the left wing, the 19th Infantry Division reached the fork north of Krzepice and the village of Lipie, the 18th Infantry Division north-west of the village of

<sup>56</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. RH 19-I/5, Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Süd in Polen 1939, 12 VIII 1939 – 3 X 1939 – Heeresgruppenbefehl Nr. 1, Heeresgruppe Süd, Ia Nr. 390/39 g.Kdos., Neisse – Heiligkreuz 30 VIII 1939, 13.00 h, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> von Vormann, *Der Feldzug 1939...*, 73.

<sup>58</sup> CAMO, f. 500, op. 12474, d. 241, [general E. Hoepner’s words to the soldiers of the XVI Army Corps / mot./], p. 67.

<sup>59</sup> Halder, *Dziennik...*, 1:82.

<sup>60</sup> BA-MA, OKH, ref. RH 4/31, Ic – Meldung (durch Chef 12. Abt.), Op. Abt. Gr. I, 1 IX 1939, p. 4.

Napoleon, and the 1st Light Division “laboriously advanced through the woods of the forest district Rudniki”; in Wieluń, Polish cavalry was reported (previously erroneously defined as the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade, but in fact they may have been subunits of the 1st Cavalry Regiment of the Borderline Security Corps) marching to the north-east. The slow pace of the march was generally justified by the frequently damaged bridges and viaducts.<sup>61</sup> In the Army Group “South” KTB we read about the first impressions of the enemy: “Weak border defense, without proper artillery support, avoids serious fighting”. Among the problems noted was the disruption of the concentration of the 1st Light Division by the Polish cavalry brigade reinforced with artillery (sic!), which was fired upon in the forest west of Gorzów Śląski (*Landsberg*). At 12:40 Reichenau telephoned Halder to inform him of his army’s progress. At 14:00 Ia of the Army Group “South” reported that “so far there has been no significant enemy resistance. In the afternoon there was progress in the attack on all sectors and only minor fighting”.<sup>62</sup> The 10th Army KTB, on the other hand, noted “small enemy resistance on the border and just beyond” and a satisfactory daily offensive progress of the army units, varying from 15 to 20 km. The only difficulties mentioned were the “bad and difficult road conditions” and the Polish planned destructions.<sup>63</sup> We can learn a lot about the destruction and repairs in the first days of the war from the KTB of the 5th Transport Department of the General Staff of the OKH.<sup>64</sup> Also Halder in his diary noted this problem<sup>65</sup>, further brilliantly illustrated by the excellent photographs in the monograph of the 1st Panzer Regiment.<sup>66</sup>

For a Polish historian, the most striking fact is the complete absence of any mention in German operational reports and records in the KTB of any operational associations with the several-hour battle on the first day of the war fought by the 4th Armored Division. On the left flank of the XVI Army Corps (mot.), this division was attacking the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade near Mokra, which is approximately 8 km north of Kłobuck. This is particularly perplexing given the fact that the KTB of the 4th Armored Division devoted nearly three pages to the battle at Mokra.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, General Reinhardt was reprimanded by Hoepner, who was dissatisfied with the XVI Army Corps (mot.) for failing to fulfill the task assigned by the 10th Army command.<sup>68</sup> As the reason for the halt of the 4th Panzer Division was deliberately omitted – the unit should have reached Kocin (currently Stary Kocin) on September 1st, where it was to capture the crossing over the Kocinka River, however, it was halted near Mokra, where it spent the night of From 1 to 2 September,<sup>69</sup> and the distance

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, Lage bei 10. und 8. Armee um 11.30 Uhr, Op. Abt. Gr. I, 1 IX 1939, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG “South”, ref. RH 19-I/5, Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Süd in Polen 1939, 12 VIII 1939 – 3 X 1939, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/1, Auszug aus dem Kriegstagebuch der 10. Armee über den Feldzug in Polen (Herbst 1939), p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> BA-MA, OKH, ref. RH 4/57, Kriegstagebuch. Chef des Transportesens. Gruppe III, p. 6ff.

<sup>65</sup> Halder, *Dziennik...*, 1:85.

<sup>66</sup> Rico Unger, Daniel Jurt, Glen Hendricks, *Panzerregiment 1. From Origin to the Polish Campaign*, vol. 1 (Riga: Self-Published, 2021), 238ff.

<sup>67</sup> BA-MA, 4. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-4/197, Sammlung Generaloberst Hans Reinhardt, Stück A – Kriegstagebuch der 4. Panzer-Division. Feldzug in Polen, p. 13–15.

<sup>68</sup> Wesołowski, Tym, *Mokra Działoszyn 1939...*, 294.

<sup>69</sup> Joachim Neumann, *Die 4. Panzer-Division 1938–1943. Bericht und Betrachtung zu zwei Blitzfeldzügen und zwei Jahren Krieg in Russland*, Bd. 1 (Bad Dürkheim: Verlag & Antiquariat für Zeitgeschichte, 1994), 28, 31. Moreover, the 1st Panzer Division did not achieve its daily objective either and only late in the evening (around

remaining to reach the destination was approximately 15 km – it is plausible that it was caused by (actual) difficulties with the poor road quality, which became a significant issue in hindering the planned occupation of the designated offensive objectives. It seems probable that Hoepner was responsible for the withholding of information about the battle at Mokra and its non-transmission to the 10th Army.<sup>70</sup> In conclusion, the efforts of the XVI Army Corps (mot.) and, in particular, the 4th Panzer Division from the outset of the war can be considered a success, despite the inevitable costs in terms of human lives and equipment. From an operational standpoint, the efforts of the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade at Mokra, despite the considerable losses incurred, had only a limited tactical significance. The gains achieved were minimal in terms of time and territory, and were subsequently occupied by German forces the following day,<sup>71</sup> albeit with notable problems, primarily due to the challenging terrain.

Additionally, the advance on the right flank of the army was largely unimpeded, with the exception of difficulties encountered due to the substandard condition of the roads, until approximately 6:00 p.m. when the 7th Reconnaissance Regiment of the 2nd Light Division initiated an assault on Woźniki, which was under the control of the Krakowska Cavalry Brigade. As documented in the division's KTB:

“the 7th Reconnaissance Regiment was subjected to enemy artillery fire and subsequently reported significant losses. By September 1st, the town of Woźniki will no longer be under enemy occupation. According to prisoners of war, field fortifications have been constructed around Woźniki . . . On the evening of September 1st, the division command reached the conclusion that the prepared field site in the Woźniki area is an element of the fortification system in the Tarnowskie Góry section, which is directly connected via inaccessible terrain to the south.<sup>72</sup> On the evening of September 1st, the division commander made the decision to launch an offensive on the following morning at dawn. The objective was to capture Woźniki, and the plan of attack involved the 6th Mounted Rifle Regiment advancing from the west, the 7th Reconnaissance Regiment from the southwest, and the 66th Panzer Battalion from the north through Ligota Woźnicka. On September 2nd at 2:30 a.m., an operational order was issued, directing the attack to commence the following day.”<sup>73</sup>

Similarly to the 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, the 2nd Panzer Division encountered Polish cavalry along its route, whose artillery proved to be an effective weapon against the German tactical armored-motorized formation. The advance of two regiments belonging to General Stummé's division was brought to a halt, primarily due to the onset of darkness. During the night, the remaining forces of the division were deployed to Woźniki, particularly the artillery and tanks, which afforded the German side a decisive advantage. On the following day, the division was engaged in another confrontation with the Polish brigade. At approximately

8:30 p.m.) did it capture Kłobuck [see Rolf O. Stoves, *1. Panzer-Division. Chronicle of a Three-Stack Division of the German Panzerwaffe* (Bad Nauheim: Verlag Hans-Henning Podzun, 1961), 54] and the left wing of the 19th Infantry Division from the XI Army Corps reached Lipie (approx. 13 km north-west of Mokra).

<sup>70</sup> This can be proven by one sentence from his biography: “The 4th Panzer Division, in light fighting, made equally great progress in its attack to the east [emphasis – D.K.]” [see Walter Chales de Beaulieu, *General Erich Hoepner. A Military Biography* (Havertown-Oxford: Casemate Publishers, 2021), 28], the author of which was, after all, Ia of the XVI Army Corps (mot.), then Lieutenant Colonel Chales de Beaulieu, a participant and co-creator of those events, who remained loyal to his commander until the end.

<sup>71</sup> Neumann, *Die 4. Panzer-Division 1938–1943...*, 32–35.

<sup>72</sup> The officers of the 2nd Light Division did not understand that they had reached the Polish main defense belt, which German intelligence had placed on the Warta River.

<sup>73</sup> BA-MA, 2. Light Division / 7. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-7/1, Kriegstagebuch der 2. leichten Division während des Polenfeldzug (im XV AK). Abstrift Divisionsbefehle (Original) 24 VIII – 10 X 1939, p. 11, 12.

8:30 a.m., the German motorized cavalry reported the occupation of the western edge of the town. At 11:15 a.m., the reconnaissance regiment of the 2nd Light Division initiated a pursuit of the Krakowska Cavalry Brigade retreating to Koziegłowy. This unit was ordered to occupy the crossings on the Warta River.<sup>74</sup> Once again, as in the case of the Battle of Mokra, the Polish cavalry gained only about a dozen hours of time for the right wing of the “Poznań” Army, at the cost of heavy losses – unlike the Volhynia Cavalry Brigade, which retreated without losing its combat capability, the Krakowska Cavalry Brigade ceased to be a tactical unit after the Battle of Woźniki.<sup>75</sup> More importantly, the withdrawal of the brigade from Woźniki had an operational significance for the Germans, as it gave them the freedom to pursue the defeated brigade and then attack in all directions.<sup>76</sup> The first place among the commanders of the tactical units of the 10th Army, in the category of key successes, should therefore go to General Stumme and his 2nd Light Division, which was the first to be given a chance to penetrate into operational depth. Close behind was General Kuntzen’s 3rd Light Division. In total, Hoth’s XV Army Corps (mot.) brought over 160 tanks into the gap in the Polish defense system, plus two reconnaissance regiments and four motorized cavalry regiments. These were forces more than strong enough to carry out a very dangerous for Polish operational units attack behind their own defensive positions. Looking a little further into the future, on 4 September the 10th Army Command issued an operational order which briefly summarized the success in the Częstochowa Gap: “The enemy occupying positions in front of the 10th Army has been severely defeated. The 7th Infantry Division and a large part of the Krakowska Cavalry Brigade were almost destroyed”<sup>77</sup>

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On September 2, 1939, less than an hour after midnight, the 10th Army command issued a new operational order. The primary objective was for the XVI Army Corps (mot.) to break through the Warta line the following day.<sup>78</sup> The 4th Panzer Division, with the assistance of an infantry regiment from the 31st Infantry Division, undertook tasks in accordance with *Armeebefehl Nr. 2*, striving to break through to the Warta crossing

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<sup>74</sup> Ibidem, p. 12, 13.

<sup>75</sup> See Ryszard Rybka, ‘Walki Krakowskiej Brygady Kawalerii 1 i 2 września 1939 r.’, *Wiadomości Bocheńskie. Kwartalnik Społeczno-Kulturalny Stowarzyszenia Bochniaków i Miłośników Ziemi Bocheńskiej*, no 2 (2009): 10–13.

<sup>76</sup> “The forces of the Częstochowa wing – the 7th Infantry Division and the Krakowska Cavalry Brigade – were even more isolated than before amidst the wave of enemy armored and motorized forces pouring in” (see Steblik, *Armia “Kraków”*..., 172).

<sup>77</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/5, *Armeebefehl Nr. 5*, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Abt. Ia/op. Nr. 25/39 geh., Guttentag, 4 IX 1939, no pag.

<sup>78</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10th Army, file reference RH 20-10/3, *Armeebefehl No. 2 für den Angriff am 2 September 1939*, Armee-Oberkommando 10, Abt. Ia/op., Guttentag, 2 September 1939, 0:55, p. 41. In the absence of any information regarding the progress of the XV Army Corps (mot.) and 2nd Light Division, their task remained unchanged. However, the reserve (Army Group “South”) VII Army Corps with the 27th Infantry Division was pulled up behind them to provide potential support to Hoth in the event of difficulties in capturing the crossings on the Warta until 3 September 1939, inclusive. In such a situation, Hoth’s corps was to be placed under the temporary command of the commander of the VII Army Corps. The 1st Light Division was subordinated to the XI Army Corps with the objective of capturing the Warta crossings located to the southeast of Wieluń. It was of the utmost importance for the command of the 10th Army to break through the Warta borders by all corps. (This included the IV Army Corps, which was tasked with crossing the river on September 3, 1939, after previously destroying the 7th Infantry Division on its western bank, which it failed to accomplish.)

through scarcely cleared forest areas between Mokra and Stary Kocin. The terrain proved advantageous to the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade, which demonstrated adeptness in delay combat hindering the progress of the advancing enemy.<sup>79</sup> Ultimately, in the evening, Reinhardt's division reached the Kocinka River border in the vicinity of Stary Kocin, the point at which the division was expected to arrive already the day before. On that day, the 4th Panzer Division was proceeding at a rather sluggish, and not swift pace. The tank losses incurred at Mokra had the effect of moderating the German advance, and the effectiveness of the Polish anti-tank defense began to be respected. However, on that day, the advantage of placing two armored divisions side by side became fully apparent. On September 2, the 1st Panzer Division, under the command of General Schmidt, provided the impetus for the XVI Army Corps (mot.) attack. The division commenced its advance from the Kłobuck area, bypassing Częstochowa from the north.<sup>80</sup> At approximately 2:00 p.m., with its advanced units, it occupied Pławno (10 km south of Radomsko), thereby securing the crossings over the Warta. In the evening, it conducted reconnaissance of the suburbs of Radomsko with its advanced units. The success of the 1st Panzer Division was contingent upon a number of factors. The terrain afforded it a distinct advantage over its left-wing neighbor. Additionally, it encountered minimal resistance from Polish forces in its path. In a strategic sense, it found itself in a position analogous to the 2nd Light Division on the southern flank of the army, operating *de facto* in the rear of the main Polish defensive position, although the evidence for the existence of this position was, in its attack zone, virtually nonexistent. In the division's KTB, we can find a detailed account of the 50 km raid:

"The attack resulted in the capture of three undamaged crossings over the Warta River. The division, isolated from its neighbors, advanced significantly while its neighbors were situated approximately 30 km behind, in the vicinity of Częstochowa, engaged in combat near Ostrowy [on the Oksza River]. This created conditions conducive to the completion of operations north of Częstochowa and the fulfillment of other pivotal objectives. The adversaries from the Polish 7th Infantry Division, who had been positioned in front of the division until that point, were no longer present. The commander of the XVI Army

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<sup>79</sup> Wesołowski, Tym, *Mokra Działoszyn 1939...*, 578ff.

<sup>80</sup> The operational order of IV Army Corps from 3 September 1939 at 3:30 a.m. states that in the evening hours of the previous day the units of the corps occupied Częstochowa and, in pursuit of it, the forces of the 10th, 72nd and 103rd Infantry Regiment crossed the Warta River. The corps command – correctly – believed that the enemy units (7th Infantry Division) had definitely withdrawn from Częstochowa and were trying to withdraw beyond the Pilica River, and therefore ordered the subordinate divisions to join the pursuit, with the left wing of the corps (the reinforced reconnaissance unit of the 4th Infantry Division) to advance to Przyrów and further to Przedbórz (see BA-MA, IV. Army Corps, ref. RH 24-4/9, *Korpsbefehl* für 3 September 1939, Generalkommando IV. Armeekorps, Ia, K.Gef.St. Zumpy 3 September 1939, p. 194, 195). The task of destruction of the Polish 7th Infantry Division was to be carried out by the 3rd Light Division, which turned to the north and attacked Brig. Gen. Janusz Gąsiorowski's division, which was surrounded by the IV Army Corps divisions between Janów and Wola Mokrzeska. After destroying the enemy, the 4th, 14th and 46th divisions were to turn to the north-northeast in order to reach the Przedbórz-Rzejowice line (ibidem, *Vorbefehl* für 14. Division, Generalkommando IV. Armeekorps, Ia, K.Gef.St. Poczesna 4 September 1939, p. 192). The planned turn of Schwedler's corps is a harbinger of the rapidly approaching battle of Piotrków Trybunalski. Moreover, already at noon on 4 September 1939, the direction of the corps' attack on Końskie was changed, with the target area between Radom and Kielce, having on the right wing the 3rd Light Division of the XV Army Corps (mot.) advancing along the road from Janów to Przyrów – Koniecpol and Łopuszno in front of the 4th Infantry Division (ibidem, [Korpsbefehl], Generalkommando IV. Armeekorps, Ia, Poczesna, 4 September 1939, 12:15, p. 187). The Germans noticed the Polish concentration between Radom, Kielce and Pilica, which was explicitly stated in the next order (see ibidem, *Korpsbefehl* für 5 September 1939, Generalkommando IV. Armeekorps, Ia, K.Gef.St. Dąbrowa Zielona, 5 September 1939, p.183).

Corps conveyed via radio the following words of praise 'I am proud of the Division'.<sup>81</sup> Hoepner was likely pleased by this turn of events, as Schmidt and his subordinates had gone above and beyond their duties and created an opening for the entire corps to gain access to the rear of the Polish defensive lines.

How necessary this success was is best illustrated by a surviving letter from Reichenau to General Leeb, commander of the XI Army Corps, dated September 2, 1939 (its contents indicate that the other corps commanders also received a letter of similar content):

"As I emphasized at the first briefing, the goal of the 10th Army is not merely victory, but a quick victory. The experience of the first two days of the war shows that the weak enemy forces have been delaying our attack for too long. If such a situation is repeated in the following days, the 10th Army will be deprived of its operational success, which is one of the foundations of the overall victory. I do not ignore the fact that the destruction and poor condition of the roads played a major role in the delays, especially on the first day. However, it must be admitted that the units moving in the vanguard of the attack - apart from the praiseworthy, fierce attacks of some units - did not always maintain contact with the enemy and, as a result, did not initiate and carry out offensive operations with the necessary energy. I do not see in this a lack of aggressive spirit, but rather excessive methodology [here in the sense of: searching for complicated solutions - D.K.]. Every commander in charge of tactical operations must personally familiarize himself with the terrain where the operations will be carried out before his unit goes into action. [...] After a brief inspection, he gives instructions to his officers responsible for carrying out the action, based on the terrain and not on the map. This is the only way to prepare and execute the attack quickly. I would not give these obvious instructions if I were not personally convinced that they are necessary in these days. I ask the corps commanders to make these recommendations known to their subordinates through specially delegated officers, so that they may quickly adapt to the requirements of war."<sup>82</sup>

Here we see Reichenau's concerns revolve exclusively around the appropriate pace of the corps' attack. Time, as I have already emphasized, was the key, but the impatience of the 10th Army commander with the pace of progress and with the possibility of an operational success getting out of hand (if, for example, most of the Polish tactical units withdrew beyond the Vistula) right after the beginning of the aggression, leaves no illusions about Reichenau's motivation: ambition, rivalry, and the desire to claim the laurels of the winner of the Polish campaign. I can see no other explanation when, on the morning of September 3, the head of the Operations Department of the OKH General Staff, Colonel Hans von Greiffenberg, reported to Halder: „In general, the attack is going well. The 10th Army must concentrate west of the Pilica, no dispersion to the sides”.<sup>83</sup> So far, everything was going according to plan.

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<sup>81</sup> BA-MA, I. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-1/1, Kriegstagebuch der 1. Panzer-Division. Der Polenfeldzug vom 1.-23.9.39, no pag.; ibidem, Lagenkarte 2 [1 and 2 IX 1939], no pag.

<sup>82</sup> BA-MA, IV. Army Corps, ref. RH 24-4/4, [W. von Reichenau] Herrn General der Artillerie Leeb Komandierender General des XI A.K., Der Obelbefehlshaber der 10. Armee, A.H.Qu., 2 IX 1939, p. 105.

<sup>83</sup> Halder, *Dziennik...*, 1:89. Even more optimistic conclusions resulted from the report submitted at 6:50 p.m. that day by Colonel Ludwig Crüwell, head of the 6th Quartermaster General Staff of the Land Forces – XVI Army Corps (mot.) was to move on Piotrków Trybunalski and then on Tomaszów Mazowiecki; if there are any problems, then they concern: fuel supply for front-line units, Polish anti-tank rifles and heavy losses in the officer corps of the 4th Panzer Division (finally an echo of the difficult battles with the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade) [see *Die Geheimen Tagesberichte der deutschen Wehrmachtführung im zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1945*, Bd. 1, I. September 1939 – 30. April 1940, (Osnabrück: Kurt Mehner, Biblio Verlag, 1995), 8].

At that time, the concentration of possible Polish reserves was not well understood, although it soon became evident that XVI Army Corps (mot.) was confronted with further enemy divisions. This is exemplified by the map of the 10th Army's tactical units on the afternoon of September 3, which depicts that, somewhat paradoxically, the furthest north-eastern advance was made by the 4th Reconnaissance Battalion of the 4th Infantry Division, situated in the Przedbórz area, and the *Kampfgruppe* of the 1st Panzer Division, which occupied Radomsko. It is particularly interesting that the area deep in the attack zone of the XV Army Corps (mot.), between Włoszczowa and Miechów, was marked as free ("frei!") from enemy troops. However, it was discovered that the enemy – erroneously identified as the 9th Infantry Division – had already established a presence on the outskirts of Piotrków Trybunalski. Noteworthy is the considerable, measuring over 100 km in air length, gap in the Polish defensive line between the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade (positioned to the south of Pajęczno) and the Krakowska Cavalry Brigade (in the Zawiercie area), as the practically surrounded remains of the 7th Infantry Division fighting to the east of Częstochowa could hardly be seen as a formidable adversary capable of engaging German forces in a prolonged combat.<sup>84</sup> On the third day of the war, the 10th Army poured its entire force into the gap around Częstochowa, in an effort to widen it either by elimination (of the 7th Infantry Division) or throwing the opponent back to the wings (Volhynian and Krakowska Cavalry Brigade). This afforded the freedom of maneuver and the capacity to select the direction of attack, primarily on the right wing, in the strip of the XV Army Corps and the VII Army Corps following it from the reserves of the Army Group "South."

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On the fourth day of the war the command of the Army Group "South" outlined the plan for the 10th Army to fight a battle west of the Vistula bend. First of all, on the left flank of the center of the army grouping, the 1st Panzer Division was to set the pace for the attack of the XVI Army Corps (mot.), advancing to Radomsko and pulling behind it the left-wing 4th Panzer Division and, moving in the second echelon but in close proximity, the 31st Infantry Division of Lieutenant General Rudolf Kämpfe.<sup>85</sup> The infantry regiments of the "Lion Division" (*Löwendivision*) were to support and secure the left flank of the armored divisions, which had over 500 tanks but limited motorized infantry. Hoepner's corps was to complete the 10th Army's basic operational objective of crossing the Vistula River on both sides of Warsaw. At that time the former right flank of the center - i.e. the IV Army Corps - with the right wing of the fast corps (XV Army Corps /motor/) were to attack the „group of enemy forces" (*zum Angriff auf Kräftegruppe*) in the area of Kielce and Końskie, reinforced with artillery from the reserve of the army group (605th and 634th heavy artillery divisions under the command of the 610th artillery regiment). The operational goal of these corps was to surround the enemy group as swiftly as possible and then to quickly occupy through Radom the Vistula crossings in Puławy and Dęblin with armored and motorized spearheads.<sup>86</sup> In fact, this meant dividing the 10th Army into two groups: right wing (IV and XV Army Corps /mot./) and left wing (XI and XVI Army Corps /mot./) and *de facto* liquidating the center of the army. The wings were meant to operate in centrifugal directions,

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<sup>84</sup> BA-MA, IV. Army Corps, ref. RH 24-4/5K, Lage bei 10. Armee am 3.9 gegen Mittag, no pag.

<sup>85</sup> BA-MA, 31. Panzer Division, ref. 26-31/1, 31. Division. Feldzug in Polen. Kriegstagebuch vom 25 VIII – 20 X 1939, no pag. (entry from 4 September 1939).

<sup>86</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Heeresgruppenbefehl Nr. 3, Heeresgruppe Süd, Ia, Nr. 465/39 geh., Neisse-Heiligenkreuz, 4 IX 1939, p. 9, 10.

without mutual influence on each other. In fact, they were to fight two separate battles,<sup>87</sup> although Rundstedt and Manstein's predictions of September 4 had so far outlined only one engagement - in the Kielce area, where the Polish reserve was believed to be concentrated.<sup>88</sup> This assessment, however, does not indicate that any serious battle would take place in the Piotrków Trybunalski area, where only one division was recognized, the 9th Infantry Division<sup>89</sup> (in fact, it was the 19th Infantry Division<sup>90</sup>). It was probably expected that this division would be easily wiped out by the forces of the armored divisions, and therefore Wolbórz, or even Tomaszów Mazowiecki 30 km to the northeast, was confidently given as a target, from where it was about 100 km to Warsaw. On September 4, this decision was revisited, after the attack of the 1st Panzer Division in the Rozprza area was resisted.

Even if Germans began to reckon with a larger enemy group at Piotrków Trybunalski, this did not in any way translate into planning further actions. In Polish historiography there are voices saying that Reichenau made a mistake by not including the forces of the "Łódź" and "Prusy" armies in his calculations.<sup>91</sup> The problem is that:

1. the actions of the 10th Army resulted from the orders of the Army Group "South", and these were embedded in the pre-war directives of the OKH;
2. at every stage of planning - before and after the outbreak of the war - the Germans did not attach any importance to understanding the Polish command system, focusing on a quantitative approach to the enemy (merely the number of tactical formations was counted);
3. everything indicates that the commander of the Army Group "South" and the 10th Army, their chiefs of staff and the operations officers simply disregarded the Polish capabilities of efficient command and conducting an effective counterattack on an operational scale;

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<sup>87</sup> von Vormann, *Der Feldzug 1939...*, 86.

<sup>88</sup> The number of Polish tactical units has traditionally been overestimated [see Piotr Zarzycki, *Poludniowe Zgrupowanie Armii „Prusy” we wrześniu 1939 roku* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2001) p. 166]. Zarzycki, however, incorrectly referred to 6 September 1939 while it actually referred to the state as of 9 September 1939, i.e. at the moment of the end of the Battle of Iłża, and this report clearly mentions that these were various parts of eight divisions (they could even have been wagon columns etc.) and in fact their strength corresponded to 2–4 divisions (see BA-MA, OKH-AG "South", ref. RH 19-I/108, Abendmeldung an O.K.H. O.Qu.IV Ost aus dem Ic – Gebiet, Heeresgruppenkommando Süd, Ic, 9 September 1939, p. 81, 82). In fact, on 6–7 September 1939 the South Group of the "Prusy" Army was assessed as elements of four divisions and one cavalry brigade – here, of course, the 16th Infantry Division or the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade in the Opoczno area were wrongly identified (ibidem, Abendmeldung der Heeresgruppe Süd, Ic vom 7 IX 1939, An O.Qu.IV Ost, Berlin, 89). This is just one of the examples clearly showing the erroneous conclusions that can be drawn from analyzing military operations primarily based on documents of one of the parties to the conflict..

<sup>89</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG "South", ref. RH 19-I/109, Abendmeldung der Heeresgruppe Süd An Oberkommando des Heeres, Abt. O.Qu IV Ost, Heeresgruppenkommando Süd, Abt. Ic.A.O., Neisse, 4 IX 1939 r., p. 97.

<sup>90</sup> It was not established, however, that in addition to the 19th Infantry Division, the 29th Infantry Division and the Vilnius Cavalry Brigade were concentrated in the Sulejów area, and even less so that echelons of the 13th Infantry Division, intended for the army reserve, were coming from the north [Jan Wróblewski, *Armia "Prusy" 1939* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1986) 98 et seq.]. Furthermore, the reinforced 2nd Regiment of Legion Infantry led by Colonel Ludwik Czyżewski was not identified in the Góry Borowskie–Rozprza area. On the road from Radomsko to Piotrków Trybunalski. The 1st Battalion of the 146th Infantry Regiment, subordinated to Czyżewski, took up the position near Rozprza (Mieczysław Bielski, *Grupa Operacyjna "Piotrków" 1939* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1991), 119–122, 131–137). This group managed to slow down the march of the 1st and 4th Panzer Divisions by 24 hours (this was reflected in one of the operational reports of the 10th Army, see *Die Geheimen Tagesberichte...*, Bd. 1, 1:10; see also R. Unger, D. Jurt, G. Hendricks, *Panzerregiment 1...*, 280–303, complete with excellent situation sketches and illustrative material).

<sup>91</sup> Wróblewski, *Armia "Prusy"...*, 99.

4. proof that Reichenau and his staff had their finger on the pulse was the order, at the initial stage of the battle, to move the reserve XIV Army Corps (mot.) to Piotrków Trybunalski;<sup>92</sup> this, incidentally, was part of a wider plan to involve the whole of the 10th Army's left wing, including the XI Army Corps, in the battle.<sup>93</sup>

Both battles of the 10th Army were intended to cut off the retreating Polish troops either from the capital or from the possibility of a free passage across the Vistula. The army's goal was to cut off and eventually destroy the Polish operational units west of the Vistula. Again, in accordance with the OKH assumption.

From the Polish point of view, it may have looked as if the Germans were taking a risk because they did not fully realize (and this is a fact!) the concentration of the Northern Group of the "Prusy" Army. However, from the German side this risk was minimized by several factors, such as the superiority of the armored divisions in all tactical aspects (maneuver, firepower, communications, training of commanders and officers<sup>94</sup>), overwhelming air superiority, adequate reserves, and last but not least, the flexibility of command at all levels resulting from the *Auftragstaktik*, which allowed the operational level commanders to trust in the ability of their subordinates to respond properly and independently to any battlefield crises. And the first days of the war gave them reason to be guided by such premises. Unfortunately, the incompetence of the commander of the "Prusy" Army, Major General Stefan Dąb-Biernacki, only confirmed the correctness of this diagnosis, which was indirectly the result of the 1st Panzer Division's KTB.<sup>95</sup> The operational reports of the 10th Army from September 5, 6 and 7 also leave no doubt - at Piotrków or at Kielce there no mention of any crisis or caution, on the contrary, there is a noticeable "forward" thinking, further maneuvers are planned, because the enemy is clearly defeated and in retreat.<sup>96</sup> The operational momentum and the achievement of the campaign's goal are visibly within reach.<sup>97</sup> That is why the creation of a powerful armored corps, planned in the last days of peace, was abandoned and the XIV Army Corps (mot.) was withdrawn from the Widawka.

<sup>92</sup> It was initially planned – overly optimistically, as it quickly turned out – that the XIV Army Corps (mot.) would cross the Warta at Osjaków and the Widawka at Łobudzice and join the Battle of Piotrków Trybunalski with the forces of the 1st Light Division northwest of Piotrków; in addition, the 29th Infantry Division (mot.) and 13th Infantry Division (mot.) were summoned (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Armeefehl Nr. 4, Armeeführerkommando 10, Abt. Ia/op. Nr. 14/39 geh., Guttentag, 3 September 1939, p. 44, 45). Ultimately, however, the divisions of the XIV Army Corps (mot.) were sent to Radom only because they were no longer needed near Piotrków [see Dieter Hoffmann, *The Magdeburg Division. History of the 13th Infantry and 13th Panzer Division 1935–1945* (Hamburg–Berlin–Bonn Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn GmbH, 2001), 80]. Only elements of the 33rd Infantry Regiment (mot.) from the 13th Infantry Division (mot.) were pulled to the Radomsko area on 5 September 1939, but ultimately these reinforcements were not used near Piotrków (see BA-MA, 1st Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-1/168K, Lagenkarte 6, no pagination).

<sup>93</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Armeefehl Nr. 5, Armeeführerkommando 10, Abt. Ia/op. Nr. 25/39 geh., Guttentag, 4 IX 1939, 23.25 h, p. 45, 45a.

<sup>94</sup> Halder, *Dziennik...*, 1:97. The Chief of Staff noted: "Reichenau returns from Piotrków. Tactical success. The tanks proved to be very effective."

<sup>95</sup> It reads as follows: „If at the same time as the Polish 29th Infantry Division also a cavalry brigade had attacked from the Lubień Forest, it would undoubtedly have had an impact on the 1st Panzer Division, which could have found itself in a very difficult situation, serious losses would have been likely and it would have been difficult to avoid a tactical retreat to the west" (see BA-MA, 1st Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-1/1, Kriegstagebuch der 1. Panzer-Division. Der Polenfeldzug vom 1.-23.9.39, no pagination /entry from 6 September 1939 summarising the Battle of Piotrków Trybunalski/).

<sup>96</sup> von Tippelskirch, *Operativer Überblick...*, 262.

<sup>97</sup> Die Geheimen Tagesberichte..., Bd. 1, T. 1, 12ff.

The main reason for this was the withdrawal of the 1st Light Division, which until recently had been toddling almost in place, and which was withdrawn from the left wing of the army at the very moment when it was supposed to finally gain some freedom of maneuver and carry out an attack on Łask, thus approaching Łódź.<sup>98</sup> The division was withdrawn from Wieluń and transferred (not without communication difficulties<sup>99</sup>) to the center of the group with the task of pursuing Polish units trying to escape across the Vistula via Radom.<sup>100</sup> It was to take over the Vistula crossings in place of the XV Army Corps (mot.), which at that time had to deal with the Polish reserve group in the Kielce-Końskie area. One can only add that it was almost a classic Napoleonic maneuver along the internal lines.

On the night of September 6-7, the 10th Army command did not beat around the bush<sup>101</sup> and the next order directly mentioned the formation of three pursuit groups (*Verfolgungsgruppen*) 1. the right, formed by the XV Army Corps (mot.) (2nd and 3rd Light Divisions and 29th Infantry Division /mot./); 2. the center, i.e. the XIV Army Corps (mot.) (1st Light Division and 13th Infantry Division/mot./); 3. the left with the XVI Army Corps (mot.) (1st and 4th Panzer Division).

The 10th Army turns away from Warsaw and is to relentlessly pursue the retreating enemy and attack the Vistula line between Puławy and Góra Kalwaria to prevent the enemy from escaping across the Vistula. Only extreme efforts can ensure the army's success".<sup>102</sup> In practice, however, the implementation of this task looked different. Thanks to the initiative of General Hoepner, the 4th Panzer Division<sup>103</sup> did not "turn away" from Warsaw, and the XV Army Corps (mot.) engaged in the destruction of the Southern Army Grouping "Prusy".<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, from the operational point of view, at the end of the sixth day of the

<sup>98</sup> Colonel Johann von Ravenstein's battle group was withdrawn almost during the fighting, following a radio call from the command of XIV Army Corps (mot.) (see BA-MA, 1. Light Division / 6. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-6/139, Kriegstagebuch der 1. leichten Division vom 18 VIII bis 16 X 1939. Feldzug in Polen, p. 14–16).

<sup>99</sup> Ibidem, p. 16.

<sup>100</sup> Ibidem. This intention is clearly visible in the draft of operational order no. 6 of the 10th Army command, found in the notes operations officer Colonel Metz (the original has not survived), most probably from the morning hours of 6 September 1939 (see BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3, Armeebefehl Nr. 6 (Bruchstück), Abschrift von Abschrift, von handschriftlichem Entwurf von Oberst Metz, Ia AOK. p. 10, 47).

<sup>101</sup> On September 6, 1939, Halder noted at 5:15 p.m.: "Paulus [Chief of Staff of the 10th Army]: Information has been passed on that the enemy is retreating beyond the Vistula. [Halder orders]: Right wing forward!" (see Halder, *Dziennik...*, 2:97). The pursuit was initiated as a result of an order from OKH.

<sup>102</sup> BA-MA, OKH-10. Army, ref. RH 20-10/3. Armeebefehl Nr. 7, Armee-Oberkommando 1, Abt. Ia/op. Nr. 41/39 geh., Kruszyna 6 IX 1939, 23.00 h, p. 48.

<sup>103</sup> On September 6, 1939, at about 10:00 a.m., the commander of the 10th Army arrived at the XVI Army Corps (mot.) commander's post and after talking to him, Hoepner became convinced that Warsaw was no longer his main goal in favor of cutting off the retreating Polish troops from the bridges over the Vistula River. However, Hoepner decided to ignore Reichenau's order or to carry it out half-heartedly, and therefore the 1st Panzer Division was sent to Góra Kalwaria and the 4th Panzer Division further on to Warsaw. He decided that in this way the corps would be able to accomplish two goals simultaneously. Reinhardt from the 4th Panzer Division did not protest at all (see de Beaulieu, *General Erich Hoepner...*, 37, 38; Neumann, *The 4th Panzer Division 1938–1943...*, 46, 47).

<sup>104</sup> On 7th September 1939 at noon Reichenau arrived at the command post of the 2nd Light Division and after being informed about the division's operations he did not mention anything about pursuing the enemy towards the Vistula, because at that time the division was fighting north of Kielce, occupying Łączna and attacking Suchedniów-Skarżysko Kamienna. The commander of the 10th Army only emphasized and reminded Stummie that the attack should be carried out by surprise and quickly. It seems that Reichenau urged the commander of the 2nd Light Division to break the Polish defenses as quickly as possible, precisely in order to start implementing the 10th Army's Operational Order No. 7 (see BA-MA, 2. Light Division / 7. Panzer Division, ref. RH 27-

war, the 10th Army command considered the battle west of the Vistula Bend to have ended in victory and ordered all the fast formations (including the reserves) to move to the pursuit phase.<sup>105</sup> Finally, the hope that the capital would be found not prepared for defense, and that it would be possible to take it (especially its left bank) by surprise,<sup>106</sup> was the reason for the attack of the 4th Panzer Division on Warsaw on September 7-8.

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The complete retreat of the Polish operational and tactical units before the Army Group “South” front lulled the vigilance of most of the German operators. Except for the Chief of Staff of this group, Lieutenant General Erich von Manstein, who wrote in his memoirs:

“During the first nine days of the campaign, everything went so smoothly and according to plan that probably nobody believed that anything could happen to significantly interrupt or alter the course of the planned operations. In any case, during those days I had a vague feeling that a storm was gathering on the northern wing of the army group. Was it certain, since the enemy forces concentrated in the Greater Poland region had not yet revealed themselves? I pointed this out to the Chief of Staff of the Eighth Army several times on September 8 and 9, stressing that the army should pay attention to the reconnaissance of the northern wing. The discussion between us and the OKH on the question of the remaining Greater Poland troops is evidenced by the OKH’s telegram of September 9, which spoke of the rapid departure of the enemy Greater Poland units to the east by rail transport, thus eliminating the threat to the deep wing of the 8th Army.”<sup>107</sup>

The vigilance of the Chief of Staff of the Army Group “South” is confirmed in The Halder Diaries.<sup>108</sup> Manstein put the blame on the staff officers of the 8th Army who, with Warsaw as their goal, had ignored the group on their left wing. Unfortunately, the intelligence report of the Army Group Command (most likely dated September 8) proves that his closest subordinates also misjudged the situation and confirmed the 8th Army’s belief: “The enemy is retreating north of Łódź towards Warsaw. According to radio reports,

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7/1, Kriegstagebuch der 2. leichten Division während des Polenfeldzug (im XV AK). Abstrift Divisionsbefehle (Original) 24 August - 10 October 1939, p. 19; see also Zarzycki, *Południowe Zgrupowanie Armii “Prusy”*..., 215 et seq.) Unfortunately, the state of the preserved operational documentation of the XV Army Corps (mot.) is unsatisfactory, but the burnt Corps Operational Order No. 14 of 10 September 1939 clearly confirms the implementation of the intention of the 10th Army Command (see CAMO, f. 500, op. 12474, d. 231, Korpsbefehl für den 10 IX 1939 r. (Nr. 14), Jacentow, p. 2).

<sup>105</sup> The Chief of the General Staff of the OKH thought similarly, and the entries in his diary from 7 September 1939 onward increasingly rarely concern operational matters from Poland, even during the counterattack of the “Poznań” and “Pomerze” armies on the Bzura River against the wing of the 8th Army. For Halder, who viewed the Polish campaign from an operational point of view, the war was won already from the seventh day (see Halder, *Dziennik*..., 1:98ff).

<sup>106</sup> M. Pöhlmann, *Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung*..., 308, 309. A wholly simplified and simultaneously misleading version of events is presented by a publication devoted to the 35th Panzer Regiment of the 4th Panzer Division, quite bizarre in terms of content and editing [see Robert E. Dunfield, *35. Panzer Regiment’s Impact on Amored Warfare Through Deeds and Pictures 1938–1941* (n.p., 2023), 49, 50].

<sup>107</sup> Erich von Manstein, *Stracone zwycięstwa. Wspomnienia 1939–1944*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Lampart S.C./Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2001), 37.

<sup>108</sup> F. Halder, *Dziennik*..., 1:97. On September 6, 1939, he noted: “10:15 a.m. Manstein [reports]: Possible concentration of enemy groups in the area of Łódź and Radom”. Tippelskirch, who supervised the FHO at the time, also mentions this (von Tippelskirch, *Operativer Überblick*..., 262), which may be an echo of Manstein’s warnings.

there are even larger enemy forces in the area of Koło-Kutno-Łowicz-Łęczyca".<sup>109</sup> On that day the command of the "Poznań" Army decided to attack the following day the left flank of the German 30th Infantry Division of the 8th Army.<sup>110</sup>

On September 9, 1939, the commander of the Army Group "South," General Colonel Rundstedt, transmitted a telegram to the commands of the 8th and 10th Armies. This message announced a change in the emphasis (*Schwerpunkt*) of Reichenau's operational group and a broader shift in strategy for the entire army group.

"The command of the 8th Army is to immediately establish a new command post in order to assume unified command of the battle for Warsaw and the operation to destroy enemy forces between Warsaw and Skieriewice, as well as those retreating north of Sochaczew in the direction of Warsaw-Modlin. The XVI and XI Army Corps will be placed under the command of the 8th Army as soon as the appropriate conditions are met. The command of the 8th Army must provide the location of the new command post and the earliest possible date for assuming command of the XVI and XI Army Corps. Until further orders are issued, the XVI and XI Army Corps will remain under the command of the 10th Army."<sup>111</sup>

The Battle of Bzura commenced on the preceding day with the counterattack of the "Poznań" Army on the left wing of the 8th Army, and it introduced a new factor into German operational plans that had not previously been considered. This factor can be defined briefly as a threat that required a decisive reaction, but also presented an opportunity for a manoeuvre that could lead to the encirclement and elimination of the last strong enemy group west of the Vistula.<sup>112</sup> It is noteworthy that the issue was rapidly (on the day the battle commenced) defined, and that Rundstedt swiftly responded to the crisis. The decision to place almost half of the 10th Army under the command of General Colonel Johannes von Blaskowitz to eliminate the threat is indicative of a correct assessment of the situation and serves to confirm the flexibility of the German command system. Nevertheless, the Polish side's decision to commence the battle on the Bzura had the effect of seriously disrupting the German operational intentions. It is regrettable that the offensive turn of the "Poznań" Army commenced only when the armored units of the 10th Army had already reached Warsaw and secured bridgeheads on the Vistula, rather than when the "Prusy" Army was preparing for the battle of Piotrków. Nevertheless, on September 9, a new phase of the Polish campaign commenced, which the German side had not anticipated at the outset of the war.<sup>113</sup>

From an operational standpoint, the 10th Army effectively determined the outcome of the war during its inaugural week, despite the continued existence of isolated combat zones

<sup>109</sup> BA-MA, OKH-AG "South", ref. RH 19-I/108, [Abendmeldung an O.K.H. O.Qu.IV Ost aus dem, Heeresgruppenkommando Süd, Ic, 9 September 1939, ?], p. 87. The document is missing the first page, however the arrangement in the folder indicates that it was dated 8 September 1939.

<sup>110</sup> After obtaining prior consent from the Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Brig. Gen. Waclaw Stachiewicz [see Waldemar Rezmer, *Armia "Poznań" 1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1992); Tadeusz Kutrza, *Wojna bez walnej bitwy*, ed. Eugeniusz Kozłowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Volumen", 1998); D. Kores, *General brygady Aleksander Radwan-Pragłowski (1895–1974). Studium biograficzne* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012), 282ff].

<sup>111</sup> CAMO, f. 500, op. 12472, d. 637, [G. von Rundstedt] An AOK 10 Nachrichtlich – [Nr] 2305, 9 IX 1939, p. 20.

<sup>112</sup> von Manstein, *Stracone zwycięstwa...,* 1:37–39.

<sup>113</sup> Rolf Elble, *Die Schlacht an der Bzura im September 1939 aus der deutscher und polnischer Sicht* (Freiburg: Verlag Rombach, 1975), 10, 11.

along the Vistula front until September 12. Polish defense system did not collapse earlier<sup>114</sup> due to the German decision to proceed with caution in the initial stages of the campaign, coupled with the communication challenges faced by armored-motorized units navigating poor road quality. The resistance of Polish tactical units (Mokra, Częstochowa, Woźniki, Piotrków Trybunalski, Widawa) was limited, the most effective of these units in delaying the 4th Panzer Division was the Volhynian Cavalry Brigade. The effect of the so-called Częstochowa gap brought success to the Germans and dealt a crushing blow to the Polish side, which ignored it – a blow tantamount to the defeat of the entire campaign.

**D. KOREŠ: DER SCHLÜSSEL ZUM SIEG – DIE SCHLACHT WESTLICH DER WEICHSEL. DIE OPERATIVE AUFGABE DER DEUTSCHEN 10. ARMEE IN DER ERSTEN PHASE DES POLENFELDZUGS 1939**

Die vorliegende Studie knüpft lose an einen im vorherigen Heft der Zeitschrift *Vojenská história* (2/2025) veröffentlichten Beitrag des Autors an, der sich mit der personellen Besetzung des Kommandostabs der deutschen 10. Armee vor der Invasion Polens befasste. Der Autor richtet seinen Fokus auf die erste Phase des operativen Einsatzes der deutschen 10. Armee in Polen zwischen dem 1. und dem 9. September 1939. In diesem Zeitraum führte die erwähnte deutsche Armee unter dem Kommando von Generaloberst Walter von Reichenau Kampfhandlungen westlich der Weichsel durch. Dabei gelang es ihr, die polnischen Verteidigungsverbände zu besiegen; die strategische Bedeutung dieser Kämpfe erwies sich als entscheidend für die Niederlage der gesamten polnischen Armee. Der Autor widmet den Kampfhandlungen der einzelnen Armee-Korps (XI, XVI, IV und XV) besondere Aufmerksamkeit und bezieht dabei auch die Verteidigungskämpfe der polnischen Truppen mit ein, die dem deutschen Offensivdruck vergeglich standhielten.

**D. KOREŠ: KĽÚČ K VÍŤAZSTVU – BITKA ZÁPADNE OD KORYTA VISLY. OPERAČNÁ ÚLOHA NEMECKEJ 10. ARMÁDY V PRVEJ FÁZE POĽSKÉJ KAMPANE V ROKU 1939.**

Štúdia voľne nadväzuje na autorov text venovaný personálnemu obsadeniu veliaceho zboru nemeckej 10. armády pre inváziu do Poľska, ktorý bol publikovaný v predchádzajúcim čísle časopisu *Vojenská história* (2/2025). V predmetnej štúdii sa autor zameriava na prvú fázu operačného nasadenia 10. nemeckej armády v Poľsku v dňoch 1. – 9. septembra 1939. V uvedenej etape spomínaná nemecká armáda pod velením generála Waltera von Reichenau realizovala bojové operácie západne od koryta rieky Visly. V nich dokázala poľské obranné zoskupenia poraziť, pričom strategický význam týchto bojov sa ukázal ako kľúčový pre porážku celej poľskej armády. Autor venuje relevantnú pozornosť bojovým operáciám jednotlivým zborom armády (XI, XVI, IV a XV), pričom si všíma aj obranné boje poľských síl, ktoré sa neúspešne bránili nemeckému ofenzívnomu tlaku.

<sup>114</sup> It can be quite generally inscribed in the area whose vertices were formed by: Wieluń–Widawa–Piotrków–Kielce–Zawiercie–Częstochowa.

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**O autorovi/ About the author**

Dr. hab. Daniel Koreś

Branch Historical Research Department

Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Wrocław

Historical Museum in Lubin

Jana Długosza 48, 51-162 Wrocław, Poland

e-mail: dkores77@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2766-845X>