

LEADERSHIP ■ STRATEGY ■ CONFLICT



HEINZ GUDERIAN

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Table of ranks

| German | British | USA |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Leutnant | Second Lieutenant | Second Lieutenant |
| Oberleutnant | Lieutenant | First Lieutenant |
| Hauptmann | Captain | Captain |
| Major | Major | Major |
| Oberstleutnant | Lieutenant-Colonel | Lieutenant-Colonel |
| Oberst | Colonel | Colonel Brigadier* |
| Generalmajor | Brigadier* | Brigadier-General |
| Generalleutnant | Major-General | Major-General |
| General der...** | Lieutenant-General | Lieutenant-General |
| Generaloberst | General | General |
| Generalfeldmarschall | Field Marshal | General of the Army |

Notes:

* equivalent to *Generalmajor* and brigadier-general, but not a general rank

**rank completed with the arm of service or speciality of the owner

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Front cover: The Tank Museum, 3222A5

Key to military symbols

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|--------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | | | |
| Army Group | Army | Corps | Division | Brigade | Regiment | Battalion |
| | | | | | | |
| Company/Battery | Platoon | Squad | Squad | Infantry | Artillery | Cavalry |
| | | | | | | |
| Airborne | Unit HQ | Air defence | Air force | Air mobile | Air transportable | Amphibious |
| | | | | | | |
| Armoured | Armour | Air aviation | Ship | Engineer | Headquarters | Maintenance |
| | | | | | | |
| Recon | Missile | Mountain | Navy | Special forces | Ordnance | Parachute |
| | | | | | | |
| Communications | Signal | Supply | Transport | Chemical | Ordnance | Air defence artillery |

Key to unit identification

1:1 with added elements
 1:1 with added elements
 1:1 with added elements



CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Early years | 5 |
| Military life | 8 |
| Hour of destiny | 13 |
| Opposing commanders | 46 |
| When war is done | 54 |
| Inside the mind | 55 |
| A life in words | 58 |
| Further reading | 63 |
| Index | 64 |



INTRODUCTION

Guderian is presented with a French flag captured at Juniville by Oberstleutnant Hermann Balck, commander of Schützen-Regiment 1. This photo was taken at La Neuville on 11 June 1940. (IWM, MH 10935)



‘Panzer General’ is an epithet that can be applied easily to Heinz Guderian given his role in the development of armoured warfare. He was the creator of the German armoured force, the one he successfully led on the battlefield against Poland in 1939 and then against France in 1940. From this point of view Guderian’s career is unique; unlike other military innovators throughout the world, he successfully had a voice in the development of new doctrines and tactics which (quite exceptionally again) he tested first-hand on the battlefield, with highly remarkable results. As such Guderian is revealed not only a valid theoretician, but also a first-class field commander. He was also

lucky in that he avoided, unlike other legendary field commanders, eventual failure and defeat on the battlefield. Even though Operation *Barbarossa*, the German attack against the Soviet Union, failed in the end, Guderian is not associated with that failure but instead his record as a field commander up to December 1941, when he was removed from command of 2. Panzerarmee, emphasizes his command and leadership qualities. The fact that his removal prevented him from facing the first defeat on the battlefield suffered by the German Army in World War II certainly helped his reputation. If Guderian’s military career had ended here then perhaps an enduring myth might have developed. However, it did not and eventually Guderian returned to a familiar role: that of a staff officer, not so different from the many other staff officers in the German army.

This is actually closer to the truth about Guderian than that of the battlefield Panzer leader. Guderian was very much a product of the German staff tradition. He was a fringe member of the Prussian military elite, and took part in World War I without seeing a great deal of service on the battlefield.