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Pocket Profile



If Col. Gen. Paul Ludwig Ewald von Kleist has been killed in the Caucasus, as the Russians officially announce, then Hitler has lost one of his most brilliant and effective leaders of mechanized warfare.

Von Kleist was a stocky, grey-haired 61-year-old general who came out of retirement at the outbreak of the Second World War and led the Nazi tanks and mechanized units that broke through the southern wing of the Polish Army. That stroke sealed the fate of Poland. His forces also played a decisive role in the fall of France and the conquest of Yugoslavia.

This typical product of the Prussian military caste commanded the steel spearhead of the Nazi advance into Ukraine. His tank forces helped take Kiev, and the Nazi High Command credited him with the capture of Dnieperopetrovsk, where the Russians destroyed their huge dam and hydroelectric plant.

Von Kleist received his first sound beating at the hands of the Russians when he was driven out of Rostov last November with the loss of four of his five divisions. He managed to hang on at Taganrog. When the Nazi offensive was resumed this Summer, he again took Rostov and headed south across the Don for the oilfields of Grozny.

Son of a privy councillor, he became one of the Kaiser's pets soon after he was graduated from the Military Academy. He was given command of one of the crack imperial regiments and distinguished himself on the western front during the last war.

The Nazi denied that their ace panzer tactician had been killed. The Moscow newspaper *Izvestia* yesterday wrote:

"The death sentence of German von Kleist has been put into effect. A Soviet bullet shot him down, as has happened to millions of other Germans. All Fascist invaders, from private to field marshal will suffer the same fate."