



edited by Mad Dog

Questions for General Leutnant VON WIETERSHEIM,

Commanding General of the 11th Panzer Division at the Third Army
Interrogation Center.

1. In your interrogation of 25 July you stated:


a) The 11th Panzer Division was ordered to the Normandy front in the TOULOUSE-REVEL zone after the departure of the 9th Panzer Division. The division moved into this new sector between 19 and 24 July (approximately).

b) The division was ordered to place itself in the AVIGNON area (on 15 August). The division withdrew from BORDEAUX to AVIGNON and its 4 - 5 days march into the AVIGNON area is described.

These statements do not appear to agree. What is the exact picture of what happened?

2. Where was 19th Army Headquarters when the invasion began?
3. Was the 19th Army in the position to foretell exactly where the landing would take place?
4. Was it planned that the retreat should be from Southern France toward a number of combat areas, combat areas where a defense of the lines was to take place? If this was the case, where were these lines?
5. Was a definite retreat plan drawn up at the proper time?
6. Give details concerning the distribution of forces in the battles of SAULT DE VAUCLUSE and MONTE LIMAR.
7. To what do you attribute the fact that your forces were in the position to break through the encirclement of MONTE LIMAR?
8. Which detachment of the 19th Army would have remained encircled in the RHONE Valley if the encirclement of MONTE LIMAR could not have been broken through?
9. What losses were suffered by your division during the battle in the vicinity of MONTE LIMAR or elsewhere in the RHONE Valley?
10. Give details concerning the operations of your division in the BOURG, MEXIMIEUX and BAUME-LES-DAMES areas.
11. On what day did the 19th Army order the retreat to the NORTH up the RHONE Valley?

12. Which of the two roads along the RHONE was to be preferred, the EASTERN or WESTERN?
13. How did it occur that the German forces had not counted on encirclement at MONTEILIMAR? And why did they let our forces get there first?
14. What exact information concerning the American intentions to attack the route of retreat did you receive through radio messages? How was this intelligence evaluated to best advantage and for the protection of the route of retreat?

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INTERROGATION REPORT

on GENERAL WENT V. WIETERSHEIM, CG 11th German Armored Division, as to the questions requested by HQ TSFET (Rear) Historical Section.

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS.

1. During the Normandy invasion the 11th Panzer Division was in the area EAST of BORDEAUX and remained there until about 18 July. Then the division was moved to the TOULOUSE-REVEL area, since it was not certain from where the invasion would come and the possibility also had to be taken into account that an invasion on the BORDEAUX coast was possible. Only after the beginning of the RIVIERA invasion was the 11th Panzer Division ordered to AVIGNON.
2. The Headquarters of the 19th Army was in AVIGNON when the invasion began.
3. It was generally known that extensive preparations had been made on the isles of CORSICA and SARDINIA, but the landing places were not known and therefore taken by surprise. The date of the invasion was known to the Headquarters, since the French population spoke openly of it.
4. No preparations were made for defense in case of a retreat.
5. The General believed that in Army circles the agreement was reached that the landing could not be prevented and that there must be positions further inland, but such thinking was prohibited and nothing could be done without permission from BERLIN.
- 6 and 7. He cannot remember any longer about the distribution of forces in the battles of SAULT DE VAUCLUSE and MONTE LIMAR. The order for retreat came rather late and so it happened that American units had blocked the RHONE Highway. In a small village (he does not remember the name any longer) they were in the position to destroy the American armored spearhead and an infantry attack cleaned up part of the hill occupied by the Americans; therefore, they were in the position to bring through about 100,000 men; he mentioned, however, that they were in the position to eliminate rifle and machine gun fire only and were constantly under artillery fire.
8. One armored division, 2 infantry divisions and about 50,000 additional men, who formerly had belonged to the Luftwaffe, anti-aircraft defense, navy and coastal defense.
9. The losses of the 11th Panzer Division were insignificant.

10. The motive in the battles of BOURG, MEXIMIEUX and BAUME-DE- DAMES was to win time so that the troops could not be encircled.
11. The order for retreat was given 8 days after the invasion.
12. He had no choice which RHONE Highway to use; there was an infantry corps on the WESTERN side.
13. The retreat order came too late.
14. Evaluation of American radio orders was only possible during combat because then radio discipline was not observed. The roads for retreat were not chosen on the basis of these reports.

Remarks:

The General made the following remarks:

The German combat forces would not have been in the position to retreat and particularly before BELFAST it would have been possible for the Americans to capture the entire Army Group (1st and 19th Armies) if the American forces had not attacked so timidly and cautiously.

19 October 1945

/s/ Ernst SIMON

/t/ M/SGT ERNST SIMON
Mobile Mission Dept.

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