

4. End of the 11th Panzer Division; the "Werewolves," and Others

Von Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division has been considered throughout this chronicle as the symbol of the organized professional military resistance encountered by XII Corps. Almost to the last day of the war it had maintain continuity of command. Almost to the last day of the war it retained its integrity as a unit and fought throughout as a unit. Its combat was frequently characterized by a savage effectiveness, as members of the 2nd Cavalry Group and other XII Corps units could testify. Now, thanks to the excellent sense of timing of its commander, it was to surrender as a unit just before the Russian and American front came together, and move as a unit with much of its organic transportation into a state of captivity in which certain preferential advantages accrued to it by reason of this particular action.

At least three of XII Corps' major units were involved in the surrender. The 2nd Cavalry Group was in contact with the enemy division during the proceedings, and nothing could have been more appropriate, in view of that group's perhaps longest and most unpleasant association of any XII Corps outfit with the 11th Panzer Division. In the actual surrender negotiations the 90th Infantry Division represented the Corps and all those of its components which had suffered at the hands of this crack German unit. Some confusion resulted from the fact that while Von Wietersheim and the bulk of the division had reached Klattau on a move to the Passau area, and was therefore in the 90th Infantry Division zone of advance, the rest had gotten as far as Wellern, in this zone of the 26th Infantry Division. Due to some very complicated monkey business concerning command of the enemy division, which occurred during the last four weeks of the war, the nominal commanding general on 1 May 45 was one General Major Von Butlar, formerly of the OKW, and he was with the part of the division facing our 26th Infantry Division. Nevertheless, on 2 May 45, Von Wietersheim decided to surrender the whole division, as he had considered doing for over a month. "He called a meeting of his ranking officers," says the Third Army interrogation report, previously cited, "and informed them of his intention. When all present agreed with these plans, he again took charge of the division. The G4, Major Vogtmann, was dispatched to the 90th US Infantry Division in order to negotiate. Firing ceased on 3 May 45 at 1400 hrs, and the first units of the division marched into the assembly area by 1700 hrs. Butlar had been informed by messenger of the decision to surrender and his group had been included in the terms. He and the 11th Panzer Grenadier Regiment surrendered two days later and joined the bulk of the division in the assembly area around Koetzing" (in 2nd Cavalry Group area of occupation). Thus the story of XII Corps' "war with the 11th Panzer Division," which began with bloody fighting at Luneville by the 2nd Cavalry group away back there in France in September 1944, had come to an end. The 2nd Cavalry Group "remained in possession of the field," with all these survivors of the enemy division as their prisoners.

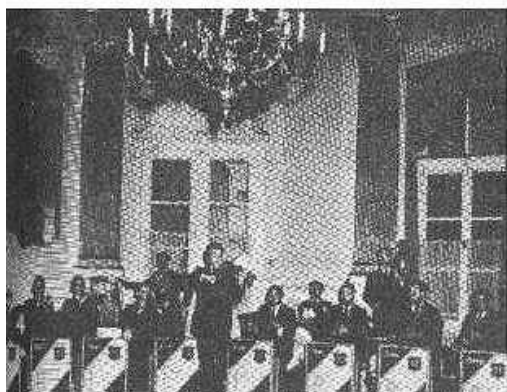
Von Wietersheim and von Butlar were only two in a growing parade of German High Brass. Says a XII Corps press release of the period, with a certain smugness:

"In 24 hours one Field Marshall and seven Generals paid unauthorized visits to the headquarters of the famous XII Corps, commanded by Major General S LeRoy Irwin. Six were prisoners, and the other two, who were White (Fascist) Russians, sought terms of surrender. Included in the XII Corps prisoner bag were: Field Marshall Ewald von Kleist, former commander of Army Group A in the Northern Caucuses and Crimea; Lieutenant General Francis Farkas de Kisbarnack, former Commanding Officer of the VIII Hungarian Corps; Major General Ritter von d'Aubigny von Engelbrunner-Horstig, Branch Engineer; Major General Russwurm, Chief of Signal Troops, Replacement Army; Brigadier General Doctor Deyrer, G4 and Judge Advocate for Wehrkreis XIII.

"When photographers tried to take pictures of Von Kleist, the Field Marshall refused to pose, but Brigadier General Ralph J. Canine, Terre Haute, Indiana, veteran Chief of Staff of the XII Corps, gave photographers the 'go' sign and 11 pictures were taken. All of the PW Generals and the adjutants were interviewed by Sgt Kurt Diamant of 54 Fayette St, Cambridge, Massachusetts."

In a similar manner other Orthodox German units, or what was left to them, and their commanders, rolled into the XII Corps cages. But behind them they left a ghost to haunt the future American occupation. This was the organization loudly proclaimed by the German radio as the one designed to make life hell for US troops after the conventional fighting was over, – the "Werewolves." To this day it is difficult to know whether the "Werewolves" were as much of the myth as the "National Redoubt," or only as much of the myth as the Volksturm proved to be when it came to effective last-ditch defense of the Vaterland. True, S/Sgt Ib J Melchoir, of the MII Team 425-G, XII Corps, and Spec Agt William G Hock and Agents Seaton and Schroepfer, of the 97th CIC Detachment, XII Corps, on 28 April 45 effected the capture of six German officers and 25 EM, hiding in the woods north of Schonsee along the check frontier due north of Cham in 2nd Cavalry Group zone. These individuals, upon interrogation by XII Corps Headquarters personnel, claim to be "Werewolves." They were in civilian clothes, and appeared to have the means to operate along the announced "Werewolf" lines. But if so, it was impossible to suppose this to be the only such group. Others must have existed, if this one was actually a "Werewolf" unit, and if so, not all could have been caught. And evidence of bona fide "Werewolf" activities were conspicuously absent during XII Corps' period of occupation of this section of Bavaria, which was shortly to begin.

THE "GHOST DIVISION" GIVES UP THE GHOST



(1 & 2) Preceded by his request for negotiations, Lt Gen Wend von Wietersheim, Commanding General of the 11th Panzer Division comes into the town of Vseruby, Czechoslovakia, 4 May 45, and surrenders the "Ghost Division." Having asked to give up to XII Corps, before units of which his outfit had been retreating so long, von Wietersheim receives terms of surrender from Brig Gen Herbert L. Ernest, Commanding General 90th Infantry Division then under XII Corps direction. (3) The German general, with 11th Panzer division surrender party, arrives under flag of truce at the entrance to Vseruby, 4 May. (4) Having achieved the desired end of becoming prisoners of XX US Army Corps, instead of prisoners of the Russians, the personnel of the division was distributed about the Corps area of occupation and put to various useful activities. Best remembered perhaps of these groups was the 11th Panzer Division Band, which was brought down to Regensburg, promptly changed its colors and its clothes, and became (relatively) respectable as "Philips (XX Corps' Own) Band" in the ballroom of the Park Maximilian Hotel.

ELEVENTH PANZER DIVISION SURRENDERS ITS T/O & E



(1 & 2) Some German tanks, trucks and an amphibious volkswagen we failed to destroy come rumbling down in as XII Corps' old enemy, the 11th Panzer Division turns over its personnel and materiel to the 359th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Infantry Division and the 2nd Cavalry Group. (Photo 1 by T/5 Millard McKee, 315th Engineer Combat Battalion. (3) Capt Clifford A. Raser of Chief of Staff Section, Headquarters XII Corps, inspects an 11th Panzer Division tank. (4) The personnel surrendering included these women auxiliaries of the division.