

SECRET

Ref No SAIC/23
25 May 45

SEVENTH ARMY INTERROGATION CENTER
APO 758 US ARMY

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: S E C R E T :
:Auth: CG, 7th Army :
:Init: F.K. :
:Date: 25 May 1945 :
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OBSERVATIONS ON ARMORED TACTICS

(Cf also Report Ref No SAIC/17, 24 May 45)

SOURCES

i) GUDERIAN, Hans, GENOBST (Col Gen), FUEHRERRESERVE (Officers Pool), former Chief of Staff, German Ground Forces, and Inspector General of Armored Units, is a 57-year old officer who apparently wants to appear anti-Nazi. He talked freely and answered all questions willingly, but stated emphatically that he did so only because HITLER's death freed him from his oath of allegiance.

Rating: B-2 Date of Information: See Text Interrogator: R.W.

ii) VON GEYR, Leo, GEN D PZTRUPPE (Lt Gen), Inspector of Armored Units. Proud of his profession, of the old Prussian general type, source gave information grudgingly; his personal pride borders upon the ridiculous. Having been Military Attache in LONDON for several years, source claims to have an understanding of Anglo-American affairs.

Rating: B-2 Date of Information: See Text Interrogator: R.W.

1. PERSONAL HISTORY OF GEN GUDERIAN

17 Jun 1888 Born at CULM/VISTULA.

1894-1901 School at COLMAR.

01-03 Officers candidate institute (KADETTENANSTALT) at KARLSRUHE.

03-07 Main Off Candidate Institution (HAUPTKADETTENANSTALT) LICHT-ERFELDE.

07 Assigned as O C (FAEHNRIICH) to HANNOVERSCHE JAEGER BN 10 at BITCHE.

27 Jan 08 Promoted to 2d Lt.

09 Transferred to GOSLAR with Bn.

12-13 On DS with TELEGRAFEN BN 3 (3 Telegraph Bn).

13-14 War Academy (KRIEGSAKADEMIE) BERLIN.

Aug 14-Nov 14 CO of Radio Posts with various hqs.

8 Nov 14 Promoted to 1st Lt.

Spring 15 Intelligence officer with various hqs.

18 Dec 15 Promoted to Capt.

Spring-fall 17 On DS on staff of various hqs.
(up to that time, his basic organization was still 10 JAEGER Bn)

Feb-Nov 18 With a hq staff in Italy.

Dec 18-Sep 19 FREIKORPS (GRENLSCHUTZ) (Frontier Guards) for the EAST.
Source helped to organize these units.

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Oct 19-Jan 20 REICHSWEHR BRIGADE 10, HANNOVER.
Jan 20-Apr 22 Company commander with 10 JAEGER Bn of 17 Inf Regt, GOSLAR.
Apr 22-fall 24 REICHSWEHRMINISTERIUM (War Ministry) INSPEKTEUR DER KRAFT-
FAHRTRUPPEN (Inspector of M/T Units).
Oct 24-Sep 27 On 2d Div Staff, STETTIN.
1 Feb 27 Promoted to Maj.
Oct 27-Jan 30 REICHSWEHRMINISTERIUM (War Ministry), TRANSPORT ABT DES
TRUPPENAMTS.
Feb 30-Sep 31 CO, KRAFTFAHRABT 3 (3 M/T Bn), BERLIN LANKWITZ.
1 Feb 31 Promoted to Lt Col.
Oct 31-Jun 34 C of S, Inspector of M/T units.
1 Oct 33 Promoted to Col
Jul 34-Oct 35 C of S, KOMMANDO DER PANZERTRUPPEN (command of armored
troops).
Oct 35-Feb 38 Commanding 2 Armored Div.
1 Aug 36 Promoted to Brig Gen.
1 Feb 38 Promoted to Maj Gen.
Mar 38-Nov 38 CG XVI Corps, BERLIN.
Nov 38-Aug 39 OKH, CHEF DER SCHNELLEN TRUPPEN (Chief of Mobile Units).
Nov 38 Promoted to Lt Gen (GENERAL DER PANZERTRUPPE).
Sep 39-May 40 CG, XIX Pz Corps (Poland and France).
Jun 40-Jun 41 CG PANZERGRUPPE GUDERIAN
Jul 40 Promoted to GENOBST (Col Gen).
Jun 41-Dec 41 CG of PANZERGRUPPE 2 (Pz Group 2, later changed to 2 Pz
Army).
Dec 41-Feb 43 Placed in FUEHRERRESERVE (Officers Pool).
Feb 43-Mar 45 Inspector General of Armored Troops.
21 Jul 44 In addition to other duties, Chief of Staff, German Ground
Forces.
28 Mar 45 FUEHRERRESERVE (Officers Pool).

2. PERSONAL HISTORY OF GEN VON GEYR

2 Mar 1886 Born at POTSDAM.
1892-1904 Gymnasium at STUTTGART.
04-11 26 WUERTEMBERGISCHES KOENIGSDRAGONER REGIMENT.
05 Promoted to 2d Lt.
11-14 War Academy (KRIEGSAKADEMIE) BERLIN.
13 Promoted to 1st Lt.
Aug 14-Nov 14 Regt Adj, 7 Cav Div.
Nov 14-summer 16 With 9 Cav Div Hq, as Russian interpreter.
Jan 15 Promoted to Capt.

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summer 16-Jan 17 On DS with XXII Res Corps Staff.
Jan 17-Apr 17 Liaison Officer, First Bulgarian Army.
Apr 17-fall 17 Assigned to XXII Res Corps Staff.
fall 17-Apr 18 G-2, Army Group (HERZOG) ALBRECHT.
Apr 18-May 18 C of S, 30 Inf Div.
May 18-Jun 18 C of S, 26 LANDWEHR Inf Div.
Jul 18 G-2, Army Group SCHOLZ.
Aug 18-Sep 18 On Staff of Bulgarian ORCHRIDA Div.
Sep 18 Ill with malaria until end of war.
Mar 19-Oct 19 GROSSER GENERALSTAB (Higher General Staff), BERLIN (Polish and Russian questions).
Jun 20-Sep 22 Instructor of tactics at OCS WUENSDORF near BERLIN and at MUNICH.
Sep 22-Jan 25 Squadron Commander of 18 Cav Regt, LUDWIGSBURG.
Jan 25 Promoted to Maj.
Jan 25-Oct 28 1-A (First Staff Officer) 3 Cav Div.
Oct 28-Jan 31 1-A (First Staff Officer) WEHRKREIS IV DRESDEN.
Jan 31-Apr 33 CO, 14 Cav Regt LUDWIGSLUST/MECKLENBURG.
30 Promoted to Lt Col.
Oct 32 Promoted to Col.
Apr 33-Oct 37 Military and Air Attaché, German Embassy LONDON, and in the legations at BRUSSELS and The HAGUE.
Sep 35 Promoted to Brig Gen.
Oct 37 Promoted to Maj Gen.
Oct 37-Feb 40 CG, 3 Armored Div, BERLIN.
Feb 40-Dec 41 CG XXIV Corps (later changed to XL Armored Corps).
Apr 40 Promoted to Lt Gen.
Dec 41-Jun 42 Ill.
Jun 42-Sep 42 CG, XL Armored Corps.
Oct 42-Jan 43 Ill.
Feb 43-summer 43 Deputy CG, LXXXVI Corps.
summer 43-Jul 44 GENERAL DER PANZERTRUPPE WEST (Gen of Armored Forces, West), which was nucleus for the PANZERARMEE DER PANZERGRUPPE-WEST (Panzer Army of Panzer Group, West), later renamed 5 Pz Army.
Aug 44-May 45 Inspector of Armored Units.

In July 44, source was relieved from his command in the WEST because of differences in opinions regarding armored tactics.

3. NOTES ON ARMORED TACTICS - GEN GUDERIAN

Gen GUDERIAN considers air superiority an essential factor in a good coordinated tank attack. Another important point is that tanks should

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always be employed in masses. On ideal terrain and with all necessary tanks available, a good attack can employ three armored divs, each with 300-400 tanks. If the attacking force has more than one corps available, all divs can be employed on a broad front without any reserves, while the other corps takes up positions to the rear as reserve unit. In the case of tank units in reserve, the General points out, it is difficult to bring them up to the critical points in time to be of decisive value. As an illustration, source recalls that when he attacked the MAGINOT Line in 1940, he employed three armored divs on a broad front, leaving the question of reserves to another corps.

The leader of tank units should always be far up to the front, since quick decisions and forceful leadership are by far more important in armored tactics than in engagements of any other arm. It is of paramount importance to recognize the exact moment when the unit should advance into battle to its best advantage.

Armored tactics, source points out, were substantially known even before the war. Source's "ACHTUNG PANZER", Gen de GAULLE's "L'ARMEE DE CHOC", and British tactics were essentially the same. However, these tactics were employed neither by the British nor by the French; thus, despite inferiority in heavy tanks, the Germans achieved victory in 40, mainly due to superior communications equipment, and through correct employment of armored tactics.

As regards tank production, it is better, in Gen GUDERIAN's opinion, to have quantities of an older-type tank available than to experiment with too many models and lack the necessary amount of armor. Through series production the many changes of the experimental stages (KINDERKRAANKHEITEN - "children diseases") are avoided.

4. NOTES ON ARMORED TACTICS - GEN VON GEYR

Source stresses the importance of speed of decision as applied to armored tactics. A leader of tank units must be able to make decisions on a minute's notice, work constantly under the pressure of time; he must have a "stop-watch mind" (GEDANKEN DER STOPPUHR). American regtl, bn, and co commanders still require too much time for making decisions, source believes, and are thereby losing the surprise element. Leadership of armored units of div and greater strength should be characterized by its dynamic qualities, and should "deliver punches at the right time and at the weak spot".

Armored tactics must vary according to the opponents, source points out. He himself developed different tactics for the Eastern and Western fronts. The amount and execution of air-tank coordination are decisive in tank battles. In this connection, the failure of the GAF is mainly responsible for the Allied break-out in Normandy.

The ability of the individual tank gunner to aim a good shot at long ranges is also a most important factor in the outcome of tank engagements. Generally, proper organization and leadership of fire fights has to be stressed.

(NOTE: All information below has been obtained from Gen GUDERIAN)

5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Land warfare will be dominated by the use of the tank as long as no more efficient A/T weapons are developed. Three types of tanks will continue to be essential: a heavy penetration tank (SCHWERER DURCHBRUCHPANZER) for the main thrusts; a light reconnaissance tank (LEICHTER AUFKLAERER); and a tank destroyer, which should be heavily armed and speedy. Source points out that during this war there has been a German tendency to replace the light tank with a heavy one, and that only on account of his specific

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requests the production of light tanks was taken up again.

For close combat developments of the flamethrower tank are to be expected. The German flamethrowers suffered from the bad quality of the oil; also, the inflammable liquid was placed within the tank. The American solution of placing the inflammable liquid on a trailer was much more efficient and comfortable for the tank crew, and American oil is excellent. As a weapon, the flame throwing tank is limited to street fighting and fighting against an enemy that cannot be reached by the straight flight of the machine gun bullet. It should be used as support weapon only. Source, however, expects further developments of its fire technique which, he believes, will be carried along artillery lines. The morale effect of the flame throwing tanks upon the enemy is considerable.

Rockets, having the obvious advantages as to weight, etc, cannot yet engage point targets and are therefore unsuitable for mounting on tanks. Once this disadvantage of the rocket projectors is overcome, however, tank-mounted rocket projectors will be commonly used.

Source does not believe that tank-mounted arty weapons will undergo considerable changes. He points out that tank crews had already enough trouble with a long barreled 88 mm gun, especially in the case of a gun with a muzzle brake, when passing a ditch, for instance. A longer barrel would seriously limit the tanks' mobility. A limited number of tanks used for penetration only might be the exception.

Howitzers mounted on SP chassis did not prove very successful, except for specifically assigned special missions. The best suited weapons for mounting on tanks at present are guns of calibers between 75 and 90 mm.

German technicians had quite some trouble in finding a good tank engine; dust in Russia had a destructive effect on German engines. Source thinks that similar difficulties might be encountered by the Americans when employing tanks in China. He believes mass employment of tanks against the Japanese in China possible, but difficulties might be encountered trying to employ armor on a large scale on the Japanese islands. Due to the numerous rivers in China, further developments of amphibious tanks would be of value.

Source believes that extensive adaptations of infra-red rays to tank warfare are to be expected. He is of the opinion that years to come might bring in the field developments comparable to these in the field of radio equipment between 1918 and the outbreak of the present war.

6. COMPARISON OF EXISTING TANKS

Source rates the German Royal Tiger as the best tank employed at present. Next is the Russian T-34, especially the model mounting a 85 mm gun. Next is the American SHERMAN the main shortcoming of which are its too narrow tracks. The Russian T-34 has excellent tracks as well as a light metal DIESEL engine. The quality of the steel in Russian tanks was slowly declining, however, and the lack of easily turnable turrets as well as good radio communication equipment were obvious disadvantages.

Source credits the German Army with having the best tank units.

7. GERMAN - JAPANESE COOPERATION

Source does not believe that any attacks by the Germans and the Japanese were coordinated. To his knowledge, information on German tactics was given to the Japanese only once, in 1940. Afterwards the Japanese diplomatic representatives were seen by source with HITLER on rare occasions. During nine months of working close to the FUEHRER, source saw the Japanese Ambassador, Mr OSHIMA, only twice with HITLER. The Japanese Military Attache, Mr KOMATSU, was seen five times with HITLER during the same period. On the Japanese diplomatic staff was also a Mr NISHI (?), specialist in American questions.

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Source does not know whether Japanese aggressive measures which led to the declaration of war were coordinated with German efforts, but he believes that they were.

8. DETAILS CONCERNING HITLER

Source saw HITLER last 28 Mar 45, before being placed in FUEHRERRESERVE. At that time the FUEHRER was suffering from nervous attacks, and his left arm and leg were shaking strongly. HITLER was also still suffering from bruises on his right arm and from the injured right ear drum, results of the 20 July attempt on his life. HITLER talked clearly and in a precise manner, and was well informed about the last details of the military situation at that time.

Source thinks that after his rise to power in 33, HITLER worked in the interests and to the good of the German people. The following events source thinks passable, if not entirely "correct". This refers to the increase of the German Army, the occupation of the Rhineland, the Saar plebiscite and the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland. German annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia and of Poland did not find source's approval.

HITLER, source states, was able to convince everybody that his decisions were right through his personal charm, throughout the war. Field Marshal KEITEL, whom source does not consider very clever, was particularly susceptible to HITLER's arguments. The German General Staff raised objections as to various contemplated operations, but HITLER had his successes to back him up, and repeatedly accused his generals of a lack of imagination. Source states that the General Staff did not like the idea of attacking Poland in 39, but that the generals finally agreed to attack knowing that they could not resist HITLER's wishes.

9. THE EVACUATION AT DUNKIRK

Source claims he was not allowed to enter the Port of DUNKIRK with his tanks. The British forces there were to be destroyed by the GAF alone. The Air Force, however, failed in this task, and the British evacuation at DUNKIRK was thus made possible. Source believes that, given permission to enter DUNKIRK, he could have annihilated all troops assembled there.

10. NORMANDY INVASION

While a number of mistakes were made in the German preparations for an Allied invasion of France, the factor mainly responsible for Allied successes was the failure of the GAF! At the time of the invasion the GAF was still at the level of 1940, with no new-type planes. The lack of air-superiority led to the complete breakdown of the German net of communications. Other failures were the neglect to modernize the SIEGFRIED Line, the neglect to fortify cities like PARIS, LIEGE, ANTWERP, and the wrong distribution of armor. Source claims that the sole responsibility for all these errors lies with HITLER alone who neglected to follow advice given by the General Staff. It was HITLER who decided that the Atlantic Wall was strong enough to withstand all attacks. Commanders of tank units opposing Gen PATTON were unable to use their initiative, but had to follow HITLER's own plans. Source thinks he could have stopped Gen PATTON in France, had he been left free to employ his own strategy.

11. NOTES ON THE RUSSIAN ATTACK OF FALL 44.

After source had been appointed Chief of Staff, German Ground Forces, he tried to work out a plan to stop the Russian advances. He found conditions similar to those prevailing in the WEST, namely that important places had not been fortified.

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The GAF, unable to cope with Allied air superiority in the WEST, was completely absent from the Eastern front. Source believed that because of inferior technical developments of the Russian Air Force as compared to the Allied, the GAF could achieve more in the EAST. He asked for air support, but it was denied. When the situation became more critical, HIMMLER, formerly commanding Army Group Upper RHINE, whose primary function was, at first, to catch deserters, appeared at the Eastern front entrusted with the task of stopping the Russians. Source told HIMMLER that he considered his function as leader of the German Police more important, and asked him to "stop playing troop leader". HIMMLER reported this conversation to HITLER, and eventually brought about source's ousting as Chief of Staff. Source also had a conversation with RIBBENTROPP, in which he pointed out that a two-front war was too much to cope with, and asked him to make peace either in the WEST or in the EAST. This conversation was also reported to the FUEHRER, and helped in bringing about GUDERIAN's dismissal. Source claims that as early as 43 he had conversations with SPEER and GOEBBELS in regard to the seriousness of the situation. Both agreed with source's point of view, but were unable to influence HITLER to stop his "intuition warfare".

The contemplated date and location of the Russian thrust were well known to the top Eastern front leaders, source claims. HITLER, however, did not believe that the situation was dangerous, believing Russia too weak after the summer campaign to start a new offensive. All materiel prepared by source for the Eastern front was shipped to the WEST in Sept 44. HITLER also erroneously overestimated the value of the RUHR, in source's opinion. The RUHR was at that time already crippled by Allied air attacks, while the Upper Silesian coal mines were still working full blast. Still, it was decided to concentrate on the defense of the RUHR. Source points out that stronger resistance in the EAST would have helped German food problems, since East Prussia was an essential factor in assuring the necessary crops.

12. ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

Although source was not involved in this offensive in any official capacity, he was watching it closely, since all his reinforcements for the Eastern front were used up during this campaign. Source thinks that in the beginning the front, limited to valleys, was too narrow. According to his estimate, the offensive should have been broken off on 20 Dec, after American resistance on a larger scale appeared. RUNSTEDT, however, was ordered to hold his gains at all costs.

13. PERSONALITIES

Source considers VON RUNDSTEDT as the best of all German generals at the present time. He is serious and still commands the confidence of the German people. Source suggests him as a candidate for a role similar to that of HINDENBURG in 25.

HIMMLER, source believes, is responsible for the deeds of the SS. He is a man with bad illusions. Source expected HIMMLER to change the policy of Germany by putting HITLER in his proper place.

KESSELING, source says, is very intelligent, clever, but an opportunist.

14. PERSONAL NOTE

When Gen PATTON broke out of Normandy, HITLER told his generals that they would be unable to employ such daring tactics. Gen GUDERIAN objected, recalling his historic breakthrough in the ARDENNES, in 1940.

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15. MISCELLANY

a) On 16 Jan 45 a German corps had to return toward WARSAW. The WARSAW garrison was weak, but the FUEHRER ordered the city held at all costs. Source gave this order to his C of S, Col VON BONIN. In the afternoon Col VON BONIN reported that the troops as well as the WARSAW garrison were withdrawing and source, after checking this information as best he could, designated the next stand of the withdrawing troops. At the FUEHRER's conference, source was asked by HITLER whether he had known of the seriousness of the situation. Source said he had; while they were conferring, a radiogram arrived stating that the WARSAW garrison was still holding out. HITLER again gave orders to hold to the last. At that time GUDERIAN's orders as to a next stand had not yet arrived at WARSAW and when they finally came, the WARSAW commander preferred to follow those orders than those of HITLER. When the FUEHRER received the news, he decided to hold VON BONIN responsible and put him, together with two junior officers into the STRAFGEFAENGNIS (Prison) BERLIN-MOABIT, despite source's protests that he was the only responsible person. The two junior officers were finally released and given front assignments, while VON BONIN's case was transferred to the RSHA (Central Security Office). The RSHA investigation cleared VON BONIN of all charges, but HITLER stated he did not trust the investigating officers. VON BONIN stayed in prison for two months and was then transferred to the DACHAU concentration camp.

b) Col GRAF VON RITTBERG, an intelligent German officer, realized in Apr 45 that the war was lost for Germany. He said so, and was shot for his careless remark.

c) "Russia wants to eliminate Poland. The American and British policy in regard to the Russian question is not understandable".

d) Source believes that Germany cannot supply her own food as long as Russia keeps her Eastern provinces.

e) "Negro troops either from French colonies or from the United States used as occupation forces will damage all signs of good will".

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SEVENTH ARMY INTERROGATION CENTER

Paul Kubala
PAUL KUBALA,
Maj, MI,
Commanding.

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