

28 Jul 45

An INTERVIEW With
Gen Art Walter WARLIMONT



NORWAY ; NORTH AFRICA
FRENCH RESISTANCE
GERMAN - AMERICAN RELATIONS
DIEPPE ; SITZKRIEG

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HISTORICAL DIVISION
SPECIAL STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY
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12 July 1949

Note to: ETHINT 2

By: Kenneth W. Hechler
Major, Infantry (Res)

In this oral interview with General Warlimont, I was attempting to satisfy both the ETO historical section, and Dr Geo. N. Shuster, head of the War Department Commission. The ETO historical section, through Captain Howard Oleck had submitted several questions in regard to German attitudes and strength in Norway, and in North Africa. Dr. Shuster at the time was very much interested in getting the attitudes of various German commanders on why Germany had declared on the United States. I believe that Shuster had discussed this question with both Goering and Keitel, and had not received very conclusive answers.

This oral interview was conducted entirely in English, as General Warlimont speaks excellent English. Every now and then he would make a remark in German - just a phrase or so - where there was no satisfactory English phrase. I have faithfully inserted these German phrases where General Warlimont used them.

This is not a complete stenographic record of our oral remarks. I took some notes on our oral conversation, but in the final draft as presented I of course eliminated a good deal of the inconsequential banter which passed back and forth, and which had nothing to do with the substance of General Warlimont's more important remarks.

ETHINT 2 - ()

Title : Norway ; North Africa ; French Resistance ; German -
American Relations ; Dieppe ; Sitzkrieg

Source : Gen Art Warlimont, Walter

Position : Deputy Chief, Armed Forces Operations Staff (until
6 Sep 44, Deputy to Genobst Jodl -- Chief, Wehrmachts-
fuehrungsstab)

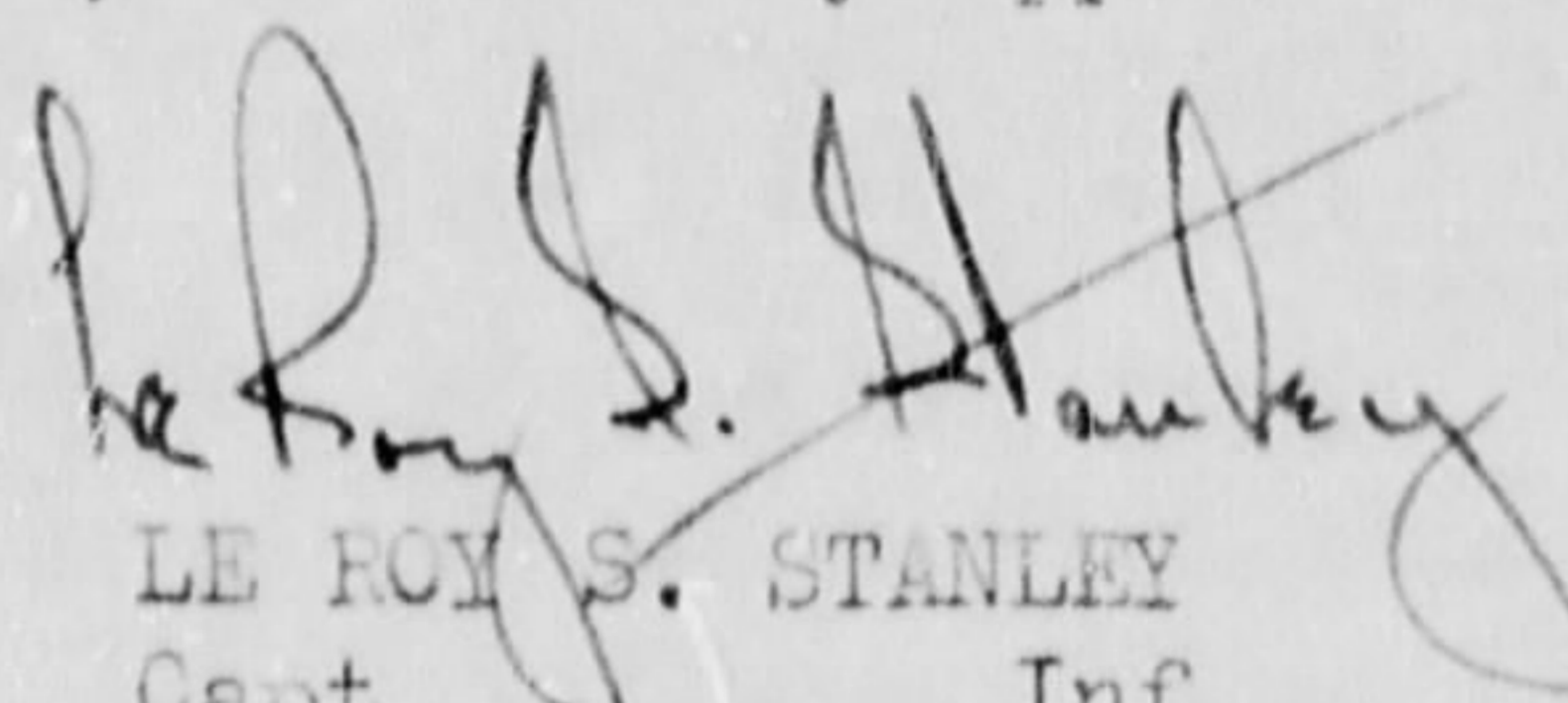
Date : 28 Jul 45

Place : CCPWE # 32 ("Ashcan")

Interviewer : Maj Kenneth W. Hechler

Foreword

This interview is one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, ETOUSA. Unfortunately, only a typed record in English is available for editing. It is not known whether a record in German was made at the time of the interview nor, if one was made, can the accuracy of the translation be determined. Therefore, no absolute guarantee can be given as to the authenticity and completeness of this version of the interview. Only obvious errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical construction have been corrected. All parenthetical statements, except those of the editor, which are identified as such, are as they appear in the available record.



LE ROY S. STANLEY
Capt Inf
Historical Editor

DEC 10 1947

NORWAY ; NORTH AFRICA
FRENCH RESISTANCE
GERMAN - AMERICAN RELATIONS
DIEPPE ; SITZKRIEG

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I. Norway

1. Q: What was the German strength and what were the troop dispositions in Norway in autumn of 1940?

A: In the fall of 1940, the German Army had almost the same strength as that used for the invasion in Apr 40. When the initial plans were laid for the invasion of France in Nov 39, there was no intention of invading Norway.

Ten to twelve divisions, which had been newly activated during the winter of 1939-40, were in Norway during the autumn of 1940. They were weaker, in many respects, than normal divisions and were equipped only with the lightest artillery. These divisions also used light coastal batteries which had been taken from the Norwegian Army and which were situated only in the main ports of Norway -- Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik. Their strength was limited, as many of the Norwegian defense installations had been destroyed.

By the fall of 1940, the German Navy had begun to build up several coastal batteries of its own, but only in small numbers and generally around the principal harbors of the country. It was only when America occupied Iceland that Hitler ordered 150 coastal battery installations taken from other European cities and transported to Norway to be manned by German troops.

In autumn of 1940, the German Air Force was still

rather strong in Norway and was employed to reconnoiter coastal zones and launch air attacks against Scapa Flow. It was hoped that Norway could be used later as a base for air operations against British ports on the east coast of Scotland and of middle England, and against British shipping in the Atlantic.

2. Q: Did Germany ever have designs on any of the islands in the Norwegian Sea?

A: We occupied numerous small islands very close to the coast of Norway.

3. Q: Did Germany ever have intentions to occupy the Shetland Islands, the Faeroes Islands, or Iceland?

A: Hitler definitely was interested in occupying Iceland prior to your occupation. In the first place, he wanted to prevent "anyone else" from coming there; and, in the second place, he also wanted to use Iceland as an air base for the protection of our submarines operating in that area. Hitler's advisers, however, insisted that it was impossible to build airfields on Iceland. Hitler, therefore, was enraged when he discovered that the Americans had built airfields where his advisers had insisted it was impossible. There was very little opportunity to get near the Shetland Islands or the Faeroes Islands because of the powerful British Navy surrounding that area.

4. Q: What about an airborne invasion?

A: An airborne invasion would have succeeded, but resupply by sea would have been impossible. Resupply by air was

possible in 1940, but would have become more and more difficult as the months proceeded.

II. Invasion of North Africa

5. Q: Were the Germans aware of the invasion of North Africa in Nov 42?

A: We were caught completely by surprise. In the first place, no one realized that you were building up for an invasion operation. Second, attention was at that time preoccupied with the Russian campaign. There were only two indications that individuals in the German High Command suspected an American invasion of North Africa. First, after the landing had taken place and for some months thereafter, Admiral Canaris, head of German intelligence, said that he had predicted this invasion. I have the highest respect for the Admiral's integrity and he may have predicted it, but he certainly had not brought this fact forcefully to the attention of the higher authorities concerned. Second, I had been in the habit of making overall surveys of the strategic situation every autumn. In the fall of 1942, I had investigated the possibility of attacks by the Western Powers. In my report, released a fortnight before your invasion, I concluded that your attack must come in French North Africa. Individuals in this detention center still recall that prediction. However, there were two difficulties with the prediction. In the first place, I timed the prediction wrong and suggested that the invasion would come when favorable weather arrived in the spring of 1943. Second,

this prediction never came to the attention of Hitler.

6. Q: Why did you feel that we would invade North Africa?

A: I based my belief on the following reasons :

(a) This appeared to be the weak spot from which you would be free to set your feet on Italy, the most vulnerable part of the European continent.

(b) I knew that your agents (or should I say public officials?) had been very busy in North Africa and were in touch with the French authorities. This led me to believe that you were preparing the French authorities for future landing operations.

(c) I knew that the French officials in North Africa always looked to the United States as their most powerful friend in contrast with their attitude toward the British.

(d) No other spot in the eastern hemisphere seemed so suitable for an invasion and so lightly defended.

7. Q: Was there anything in addition to the weather which led you to suspect an invasion of North Africa in Nov 42?

A: I also felt that it would take you a longer time to get ready than it actually did.

Perhaps I should point out a personal interlude which interrupted my close connection with events in the High Command at that time. On 2 Nov 42, Rommel started his withdrawal from El Alamein and the situation in Egypt became critical. Through a fault of one of my subordinates, Hitler was not given the reports of this

withdrawal the minute the news arrived at headquarters. Hitler became enraged and summarily dismissed me from my position. I bade goodbye to my associates and went to my home near Munich. Gen Jodl brought to Hitler's attention an order which had been issued a month before warning my staff in the most stringent terms to bring important matters (such as the Rommel withdrawal) to my attention immediately. The period of my dismissal from the Wehrmachtsfuehrungstab was abbreviated by your invasion of North Africa. Hitler then read the previous order I had issued to my staff and commented to Gen Jodl, "I have been unjust to Warlimont," and I was reinstated in the Wehrmachtsfuehrungstab the day after the invasion.

8. Q: What German troops were in North Africa at the time of the American invasion in Nov 42?

A: All of our combat troops were concentrated much farther east, under Rommel, and there were no combat troops outside of the Italian colonies. There was a control commission, set up by the terms of the armistice with France, which consisted of 12 or 15 officers in Casablanca. There were some service troops, signal personnel, ground crews for courier planes, orderlies, and other miscellaneous troops in the area of the invasion. There were a few German soldiers in Tunisia, mainly around the port of Bizerte. These were there in accordance with the terms of Franco-German collaboration agreements which provided originally that Bizerte should be open as a port for supplies to be shipped to Rommel's army. There were about 200 German soldiers located on the Italian side of French Morocco

as Italy objected to leaving French Morocco entirely free of combat troops on the Atlantic side.

III. French Resistance Movement

9. Q: In what different ways did the French Resistance Movement attempt to help the American forces prior to the invasion?

A: As you know, the French Resistance Movement received many radio sets by parachute from your planes. We captured many of these sets, gained knowledge of the special code words which you used to communicate with the French Resistance Forces, and tried to maintain communication with those and of the other people who were sending messages to the resistance. (Ed: The exact meaning of the preceding sentence is unknown.)

10. Q: Of what value was the information you intercepted?

A: We got a hint of your intentions and the various steps of your build-up prior to the Invasion; however, we never quite knew the reliability of this information.

11. Q: In what other ways did the French Resistance Movement manifest itself?

A: First, we had the definite impression that there were a number of unreliable French workmen in Organization Todt, which was constructing the defenses along the coast line. We knew from captured British maps that you had fairly accurate knowledge of many of these fortifications, which could have been supplied only by a person very familiar with them. Therefore, we felt that someone in Organization Todt must have supplied this information.

12. Q: In what way did the French Resistance Movement intercept the German troops in France prior to the Invasion?

A: Both before and after the Invasion, sabotage of locomotives, traffic, streams, and canals, etc, flared up in all parts of the country. During the last months before the Invasion, all of this grew much stronger.

13. Q: Where was the greatest damage?

A: It was done mostly in the zone of Belgium and northern France and secondly, in the Rhone valley. Still another field of activity of the Resistance Movement was designed to keep German troop concentrations in certain localities. For example, by small raids, barring important crossroads, and catching small groups of soldiers by surprise, the French Resistance forced us to concentrate a greater number of troops in certain localities than we ordinarily would have had to maintain. The main regions of this activity were in the southeastern part of France -- south of Grenoble, the Sea Alps (Ed: Maritime Alps?), Auvergne area, and the areas of Limoges and Toulouse. After the Invasion, the Resistance Movement developed much more strongly in the Brittany Peninsula.

14. Q: What actual effect did this have in interfering with the German defense plans?

A: I do not believe that the French Resistance Movement was strong enough to modify any defense plans except in local situations. The only actual effect was to force us to send two or

three more divisions of troops to France.

15. Q: Were any unusual measures used to suppress the Resistance Movement?

A: Aside from the usual measures of hunting down and executing the leaders, we achieved considerable success by listening to your broadcasts and ascertaining when you would drop supplies by parachute. In this way we took many stores of weapons which you tried to drop to the Resistance. We always suspected the French Labor Service of being behind a great deal of the Resistance in France. This was an idealistic organization with a nationalistic dream and with the avowed purpose of "keeping the youth off the streets." However, when we recognized its danger to the German occupation, we ordered that it be dissolved in the fall of 1943.

16. Q: Did Hitler have any particular policy toward the French Resistance Movement?

A: No. He merely tried to get rid of it by dispatching more troops to France.

17. Q: Did you say that the Resistance got stronger after the Invasion?

A: Naturally, it came out more into the open. During the second half of Jun 44, the 11 Pz Div was ordered to march from Avignon to the Bordeaux-Toulouse area and attack the Maquis in the Dordogne valley en route. About the same time, parts of other divisions were used to fight a flare-up of the Resistance Movement in the Limoges region. It cannot be said, however, that this handicapped our plans

very seriously because we actually used troops which were in southern France.

German-American Relations (1939-41)

18. Q: What was the German estimate of American war potential prior to the declaration of war against the United States?

A: This did not loom very large in Hitler's mind. Initially, he thought very little of the United States' capabilities. Later, after the Russian situation became more serious, he was preoccupied with that. Furthermore, it was always impossible to bring to Hitler any unfavorable news regarding his enemies. After war with Russia started, that was his entire interest for at least a year and he did not want to see or talk about any information concerning America's growing strength. He regarded anybody who tried to show him such information as a defeatist.

While Gen Boetticher was military attache in Washington, he assembled reports of America's great potential almost every week until Dec 41. I remember in particular that he reported in 1941 that your airplane production was taking on immense proportions and indicated that the airplane output in 1942 and 1943 would come up to figures hardly conceivable and far beyond a measure with which we could reckon. We had similar reports regarding your shipbuilding and also less detailed reports on the training of your army. The reports on the army merely indicated that its increase in size was proceeding

very rapidly.

19. Q: Was it believed, then, that you could conclude your campaign in Europe before the United States could interfere?

A: That was the universal opinion. We were in a particular hurry to get rid of the war in Russia and then deal with our other enemies. Hitler must have believed this possible because all operations were based on such a course.

20. Q: It has always puzzled me why Germany declared war first on the United States on 8 Dec 41.

A: In the fall of 1941, after German successes at Bryansk and Vyazma, all of the propaganda was directed toward getting Japan to enter the war against Russia. Basically, the decision to declare war on the United States was made in order to please Japan.

21. Q: Did you hope Japan would open a second front directly against Russia, or that Japan would proceed with her aims toward the Dutch East Indies and Singapore and thereby embarrass England and the United States?

A: I believe that the Japanese Army and Navy were a little divided in opinion on that score. The army was more interested in China and the area to the south, whereas the navy's primary interest centered on Russia's port of Vladivostok.

22. Q: Did you have a definite agreement with Japan, or how did you discover these things?

A: There was very little direct conversation between the German and Japanese Governments. Many things were "sounded out" with Oshima, the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, and from him we gained

our information. Hitler was never inclined to talk any more directly with the Japanese because he did not consider it good policy to interfere in their sphere.

23. Q: That is wholly incomprehensible. Your interest was a global one. Didn't you have a direct interest in what Japan's intentions were?

A: The question came up many times during 1941 and the Army General Staff practically urged the Fuehrer to approach the Japanese directly and get them definitely lined up against the Russians. He, however, still felt that we should not take a direct step with the Japanese and that they should know what was best for them. Nevertheless, our official propaganda was beamed (Ed: slanted?) in an effort to persuade the Japanese that the time was ripe for them to gain their targets in the Far East. This background is necessary to appreciate that Germany declared war on the United States in order to make a bid for Japanese friendship.

24. Q: Nevertheless, it was an unnecessary declaration and a very foolish thing from your propaganda point of view.

A: Looking back, there was an element of impracticability about it; but Hitler was carried away emotionally by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I remember that he passed champagne around to everyone and took several drinks himself the day the news of the attack reached him. (Interviewer's Note : Genobst Alfred Jodl, in an interview on 28 Jul 45, related this same story about Hitler drinking champagne.) This was a very unusual thing for Hitler to do, as he hardly ever drank a drop, and it was indicative of his emotional

excitement at the attack.

25. Q: Was there any treaty obligation to Japan which justified the German declaration of war on the United States?

A: The only treaty extended provided for our participation should Japan be attacked. Hitler, however, interpreted this treaty in a rare, romantic way, thus leading us into the same foolishness which had impelled the Kaiser to support the Austrians in 1914. What did a treaty mean anyway, even if it did stipulate that we should support Japan as an aggressor? It is always possible to "explain a treaty when the time comes to act." Many times prior to 1941, Hitler exclaimed, "I will never be so foolish as the old Kaiser and declare war on anybody." However, this declaration of war on the United States was due to these causes: (1) fidelity to his part of the treaty with Japan, (2) his romantic feeling of wanting to support a soldierly nation such as Japan, and (3) the continued hostile attitude of the United States.

26. Q: How did the hostile attitude of the United States affect Hitler's final decision?

A: There the answer is somewhat psychological. As the hostility of the United States increased, Hitler resolved to make no overt act against the United States. This resolution on Hitler's part caused him to suffer with patience many annoyances and much abuse after each statement and each act -- from the Lend Lease Act to the "shoot on sight" words of President Roosevelt. Hitler's anger, however, mounted within him and, having suppressed this anger for many months, it was released with a blast on 8 Dec 41. This was definitely

a contributory cause.

I might add, parenthetically, that this actual declaration is even less understandable from a logical point of view when you consider that for some months after war started in 1939, there was no state of war officially admitted anywhere in the German Government. In order to carry out certain provisions regarding the movement of troops, payment of soldiers' salaries, and the paper work in connection with military operations, a special expression - *Besonderer Einsatz* - had to be invented and applied to replace what was actually a state of war. It was a long time before this expression was abandoned and it was finally admitted officially that Germany was in a state of war.

27. Q: It seems peculiar that Germany should try to adhere to legal forms in one way and still denounce them emphatically in another way.

A: That is an interesting problem. Perhaps Gen Reinecke (Ed: Chief, General Armed Forces Office, OKW), who dealt more directly with these matters, can give you further information on the difficulty involved in simulating that we were not at war when actually we were.

28. Q: Do you believe that Hitler might have been influenced by the feeling that we would bring the entire weight of our campaign against Japan rather than against Europe?

A: This might have influenced his decision; however, we soon concluded that you were going to concentrate your forces in Europe.

29. Q: What led you to this conclusion?

A: I was called to the telephone by Gen Jodl and asked to assemble facts for a quick decision on whether you would concentrate your main power against the Far East or against Germany. I concluded that you would concentrate on Europe because the British already had most of their forces entangled in this sphere and this seemed to be the center of gravity. Furthermore, you had already put your forces in Iceland, thereby indicating that you were very much interested in the European area. Very shortly thereafter, open declarations by both Britain and the United States confirmed our opinions.

30. Q: How long did you estimate it would take the United States to bring its military machine to a point where it could exert a definite influence?

A: Just about a year. We figured that you could prepare more quickly than in 1917, particularly in the industrial field.

31. Q: After the outlook began to be a little poorer in Russia, did Hitler switch his intentions more to the West in 1942?

A: By Sep 42, after the failure of the campaign in the Caucasus, Hitler should have realized that he could not accomplish his mission in Russia. However, he did not realize or would not admit this fact and continued his preoccupation with destroying Russia.

V. Dieppe

32. Q: Did Dieppe or the Commando raids on the coast interest him at all?

A: Not very greatly. From captured British orders, we learned that the Dieppe raid was an attack with limited objectives. We observed that several transports remained in the channel without landing their troops because the first troops to land had failed to reach their objectives.

33. Q: Did you change your defenses as a result of the Dieppe raid?

A: We were of the opinion that our defenses at Dieppe worked out very well, that the reserves (part of an armored division) came up to the coast very quickly, according to plan, and that our communications worked very well. Notwithstanding our success in repelling the raid, we did make several changes. We instituted a better means of reconnoitering the sea lanes by the navy. We strengthened our field fortifications, which were found to be insufficiently strong to withstand the heavy fire of British men-of-war, and replaced them by thicker concrete buildings. It was also decided to strengthen the fortifications along the whole coast line. Despite the success of communications, a new, complete network of signal communications was devised.

In late summer 42, Hitler became afraid that similar raids on the French coast, perhaps with broader objectives, could be repeated. Over the objections of his military advisers, who claimed it was unnecessary, two panzer divisions were transferred from the Caucasus to France in Aug. and Sep 42. We felt that these divisions were needed more in Russia at that time.

To answer your question about Commando raids,

Hitler was personally more bothered by these raids than by anything else. He regarded it as a question of prestige to wipe them out completely. He did not want his troops to lose their self-confidence.

54. Q: Were any special measures ordered by Hitler to suppress these raids?

A: Illustrating this desire to direct small details, Hitler went over the entire list of coastal areas where he had troops and weapons and decided in each case whether we had enough hand grenades, pistols, and machine guns. He ordered specific increases of these weapons wherever he deemed it necessary.

55. Q: Was anything done locally for protection against Commando raids?

A: There was an increased amount of reconnaissance and instruction in methods of dealing with individual attackers. That also was the time dogs were used extensively to accompany the sentries on their night patrols.

V. Sitzkrieg (1939-40)

56. Q: What was the reason for the German "war of nerves" on the Maginot Line and why was the attack on the Western Front delayed until late spring 1940?

A: It was not originally intended to be a "war of nerves," but was simply termed that by propaganda. The reason for it was that we could not begin operations in the West any earlier, primarily because of weather. To appreciate this, one has to go back to

the events of autumn 1940. During the last third of Sep 39, when Hitler returned from his advance headquarters at Zoppot, near Danzig, Field Marshal Keitel came into the headquarters one day and informed me that Hitler was considering an attack on France. Keitel was quite excited with the news. It was a tremendous surprise inasmuch as Hitler, scarcely a month before, had stated that neither France nor England would fulfil their obligations to Poland, and, as a result, there would be no war with those two countries. It was amazing news because France and its military power was at that time considered an insurmountable obstacle in the West. Our ideas of France's military power were based upon actual factors of military strength -- number of tanks, artillery, trained reserves, fortifications, and air force.

37. Q: Upon what did you base your estimate of France's strength?

A: Most of us in the general staff regarded the French and German soldiers as the best in the world.

When Hitler returned to Berlin in the last days of Sep 39, he called a meeting in the Reich Chancellery. Before an open fire, holding three or four slips of paper upon which he had written certain key words, Hitler announced that within six weeks he would invade France. Everyone counted to himself and figured that the six weeks would elapse on 12 Nov 39 and the attack on France would start. After this announcement, Hitler dramatically tore up his notes and threw them into the fire.

38. Q: Who else was present at the meeting?

A: Goering, Raeder, Brauchitsch, and their chiefs of staff.

39. Q: Was there any opposition uttered against Hitler's declaration?

A: No one spoke or showed any sign of opposition before we left the Reich Chancellery.

40. Q: Was there any indication of an attack on Norway at that time?

A: Hitler did not mention Norway.

41. Q: Was there any indication of the route to be taken or of the point of attack?

A: As a whole, the attack was to go through Belgium and the southeastern part of the Netherlands -- in other words, along the lines of the Schlieffen plan. During the next few weeks most of the army was transferred from the East to the West and placed in position for launching the attack.

On 5 Nov 39, I, representing Gen Jodl, was again at a meeting at the Reich Chancellery. It was a Sunday. Brauchitsch came in from his own headquarters outside of Berlin and went in to speak to Hitler personally. He spoke with Hitler for 25 minutes. After a short while, Keitel was called. Later, Keitel returned and told me what had happened.

Brauchitsch had reported to Hitler with a written statement. This statement was made up from his judgment of the situation, along with the opinions of his subordinate commanders in the West, whom he had seen shortly before. He told Hitler that Germany

would not be able to launch an attack on France. Hitler interrupted Brauchitsch and prevented him from continuing his report when Brauchitsch came to a point in which he voiced the opinion that German infantry in Poland had not shown the same spirit of attack as had been shown during the last war. This annoyed Hitler no end.

42. Q: Why?

A: Hitler regarded it as an offense against the youth of Germany, whom he had taken pains to prepare to be war-minded to a much greater extent than the German youth had ever been prepared before.

It so happened that 5 Nov 39 was to have been the day when a definite decision had to be announced on whether 12 Nov 39 would be "X-Day" (the day for the attack on France). However, Brauchitsch's statement created such a furor that everyone started to leave the Reich Chancellery before a decision had been reached. I had to ask Keitel whether a decision had been reached regarding "X-Day." Keitel had forgotten it and he had to return to Hitler and get a confirmation that the attack really would begin on 12 Nov 39.

Two days later, the order was rescinded because of bad weather. From then until May 40, there was no weather sufficiently good enough to launch an attack.

The subsequent events, developments and changes in plan constitute the most fascinating part of German military history -- but that is another story.