

An INTERVIEW With  
Gen Art Walter WARLIMONT



CIRCUMSTANCES OF  
THE 20 JUL 44 ATTEMPT;  
WAS VON KLUGE A TRAITOR?

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HISTORICAL DIVISION  
SPECIAL STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY  
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Note to: ETHINT 5

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This statement by General Warlimont on the "circumstance of the 20 July 1944 attempt" and the question of "was von Kluge a Traitor?" consists of two different things. The circumstances of the 20 July 1944 attempt is not an oral interview. Dr. George N Shuster, the head of the War Dept Interrogating Commission, asked General Warlimont to write an account of the 20 July affair in German, which General Warlimont did, and the English translation was done by M/Sgt. Kiralfy. I have seen the original German document, but being interested only in the English translation at the time, that is all that I forwarded to the ETO Historical Section. The original German, as well as the original German manuscripts of other documents, may still be in Dr Shuster's possession.

The second part of this document, the discussion of whether or not Field Marshal von Kluge was a traitor, is based on a conversation in English with General Warlimont. Because General Warlimont speaks excellent English, no German record of this oral interview is in existence. As with the other oral interviews with General Warlimont, this does not represent a word-for-word stenographic record of either my questions or his responses, but contains the main substance of his remarks, and is a word-for-word quotation of his more important remarks.

ETHINT 5 - (         )

Title           : Circumstances of the 20 Jul 44 Attempt; Was  
                  von Kluge a Traitor?

Source          : Gen Art Warlimont, Walter

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

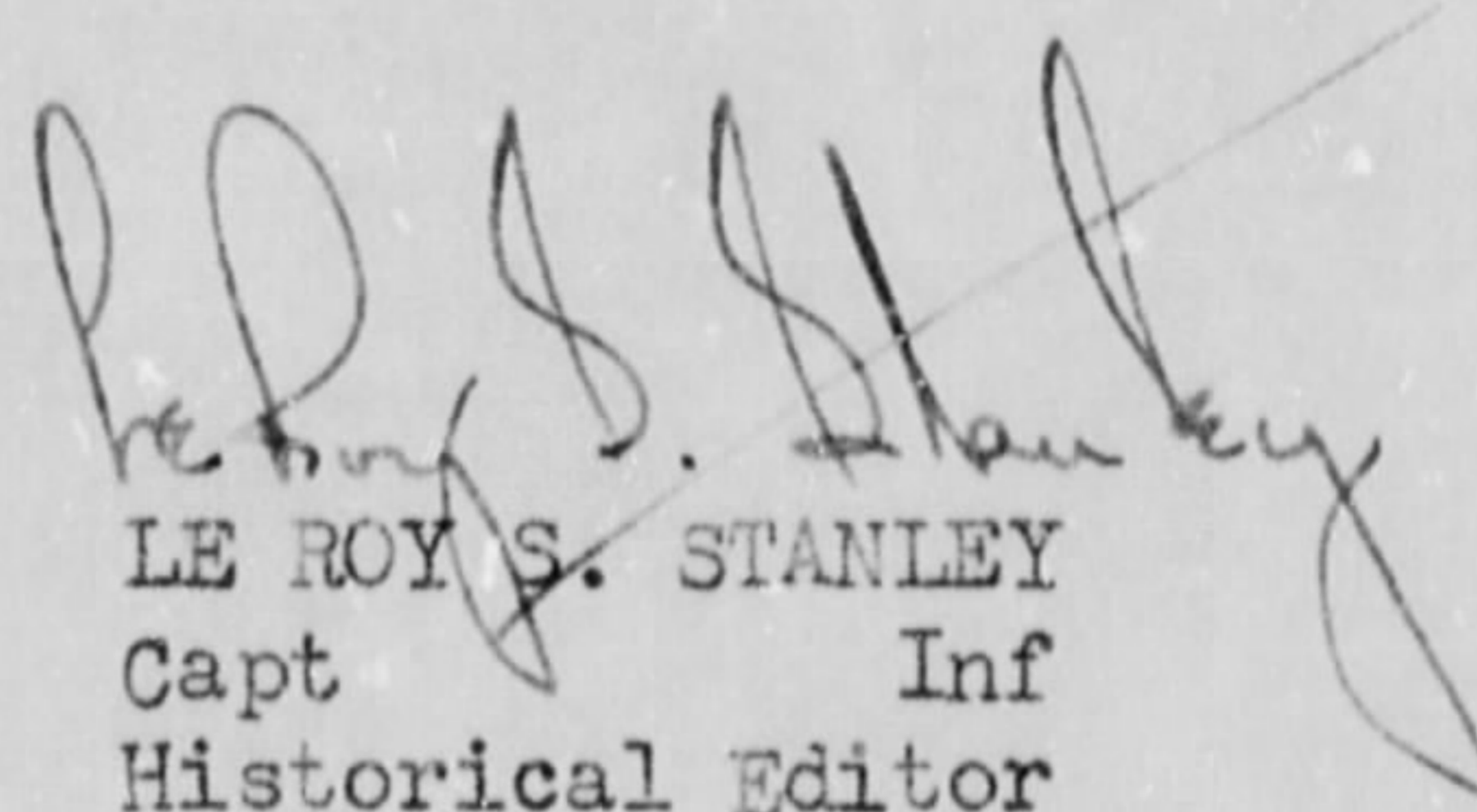
Date            : 3 Aug 45

Place           : Bad Mondorf, Luxembourg

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 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 17 1947

C I R C U M S T A N C E S O F T H E 2 0 J U L Y 4 4 A T T E M P T  
W A S V O N K L U G E A T R A I T O R ?

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I. Circumstances Of The 20 Jul 44 Attempt

1. On 14 Jul 44, the Fuehrer's headquarters was transferred from Berchtesgaden to East Prussia (a wood near Rastenburg) because of the Russian attack which had just been resumed. The staff moved into quarters which had been used there since the summer of 1941. During the few months prior to the transfer, these new quarters had been provided with considerably stronger antiaircraft defenses. The project, however, was yet incomplete and several thousand laborers of Organization Todt were still at work.

2. On 20 Jul 44, the midday situation meeting, as on previous days, took place in a barracks whose walls, although originally constructed of wooden boards between the windows, had been since covered with a layer of concrete about a meter thick. The conference room was situated at the eastern end of the barracks. Along one side and at both ends of the room were numerous windows. The other side was separated from the neighboring rooms by a plain wooden door and thin walls of plaster. On entering the room, one saw a heavy oak table about five or six meters long running parallel to the length of the room. Other than a few chairs, there were no additional articles of furniture in the room.

3. When the Fuehrer entered the room about 1230, the participants in the situation meeting, as usual, were already gathered. Gen Heusinger, who represented the Chief of the Army General Staff, had begun a report on the situation in the East when the door again

opened, a thing not in itself unusual, and Colonel Count von Stauffenberg entered. He did not belong to headquarters but was present either on his own initiative or on the orders of Field Marshal Keitel to give a report on questions within his field of activity as Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Replacement Army. It was a custom that officers of the higher ranks who were temporarily present would attend these meetings and, in certain cases, report to the Fuehrer personally. Field Marshal Keitel, in accordance with this custom, had ordered von Stauffenberg to take part on this particular day.

4. None of the officers present had particularly noticed or taken any objection to the fact that Stauffenberg was carrying a strikingly large brief case and, as the later evidence showed, placed it under the right half of the big oak table (at the middle of which the Fuehrer was standing, with his back to the door) and leaned it against a table leg. Nor, so far as I know, was any greater attention paid to the fact that Stauffenberg again left the room a few minutes later.

5. About 12:00, there suddenly occurred a terrific explosion which seemed to cover the whole room in dust, smoke, and fire, and throw everything in all directions. When I got up, after a short period of unconsciousness, I saw that Hitler was being led backwards through the door, supported by several attendants. He did not seem to have been seriously hurt. As it turned out later, he had suffered an injury to his ears and a bone bruise of the right arm, which soon healed. The ear injuries had no further consequences, thanks to the

treatment of Prof von Eicken, who was summoned from Berlin, and the ear specialist, Dr. Giesing. In only a few cases were there any serious injuries. One man, however, died the same day, and three other deaths resulted later. Other than some persisting scars from burns, the balance came through with only slight injuries.

6. During the early afternoon, a noncommissioned officer of headquarters cast suspicion on Col von Stauffenberg, who had been observed entering the barracks with the heavy brief case and, soon afterwards, leaving without it. Stauffenberg, in the meantime, had flown back to Berlin and, on that same evening, he and a considerable number of other conspirators met their end.

7. As a result of later investigation, it was learned that the attempt had been agreed on for a long time as part of a plot to overthrow the National Socialist regime and that the explosive had been procured about half a year previously and kept hidden ever since. Stauffenberg had made preparations to accomplish the assassination some two weeks earlier at the Berghof (Ed: at Berchtesgaden). He had, however, abandoned it because Goering and Himmler, who were to be put out of the way at the same time, were absent. It was established that Stauffenberg had flown from Berlin in the early morning of 20 Jul 44 carrying two bombs, each of which, if I am not mistaken, contained a kilogram of explosive. He brought the fuse into headquarters and put it in an anteroom. He then laid the case, containing one of the two bombs about one or two meters from Hitler in the manner described. (Ed: The exact meaning of the preceding two sentences is not known.



Other stories indicate that a time bomb was employed and was set by Stauffenberg immediately prior to entering the headquarters area.)

8. If the injuries were comparatively minor, it can be attributed principally to the fact that the floor was laid over a cellar and that the force of the explosion was dissipated through the floor, the thin walls, and the numerous windows.

9. Although Stauffenberg observed the effects from close by, it is clear that he substantially overestimated them. He then drove to a nearby air field before steps could be taken to prevent it. En route, he threw the second bomb, which was later found, from the car. On reaching Berlin, he reported to his fellow conspirators that he had been successful and that the Fuehrer was dead. The other steps prepared by the conspirators were then set into operation.

10. Besides the Fuehrer, the following were present at the attempted assassination:

(a) The Fuehrer's Aides : Gen Schmudt  
Adm von Puttkamer  
Obst von Below  
Obstlt B (Ed: Not

further identified. It is believed that this officer is Obstlt Borgmann.)

(b) From OKW : Genfldm Keitel  
Genobst Jodl  
Gen Warlimont  
Gen Buhle  
Obstlt Waizenegger

		Maj Buechs
		Obstlt von John
(c)	From OKH	: Gen Heusinger
		Obst Brandt
(d)	Other headquarters staff:	Gen Scherff
		Gen Bodenschatz
		Adm Voss
		Gruf Fegelein
(e)	Chief of Luftwaffe	: Gen Korten
(f)	General Staff:	: Two stenographers
	Fatally injured	: Gen Schmundt
		Gen Korten
		Obst Brandt
		A stenographer

(Ed: The above list is not guaranteed by Gen Warlimont to be complete.)

## II. Was Field Marshal von Kluge a Traitor?

11. (Interviewer's Note: The following article appeared in the 25 Jun 45 issue of Time. I read the article to Gen Warlimont and asked for his comment on it. He subsequently talked with Field Marshal Keitel and Gen Jodl and then gave me their reactions and his reactions to the article):

"The Road to Avranches"--The Allies had made the Normandy invasion successful. A Wehrmacht plot to kill Adolf Hitler had failed. Field Marshall General Gunther von Kluge, one of the plotters, knew that he was finished and suspected that Germany was, too.

One day last August he suddenly left his headquarters on the Western Front, which he had just taken over from Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. With some of his staff, Kluge drove to a spot on a lonely road near Avranches in northwestern France. There he waited, hour after hour, for a party of U.S. Third Army officers with whom he had secretly arranged to discuss surrender. They did not appear. Fearing betrayal, Kluge hurried back to his headquarters. Awaiting him there was an order to report to Hitler in Berlin. Kluge got into a car, swallowed poison and died on the way to an airfield near Metz.

A U.P. correspondent at Berchtesgaden, telling this story last week, also told why Kluge's surrender went wrong. On the day of the rendezvous, Allied air attacks blocked the Third Army party's route to Avranches. By the time the U.S. negotiators arrived, Kluge had gone.

12. Gen Warlimont stated that Hitler suspected Field Marshal von Kluge was guilty of such treachery, particularly since his absence was unaccounted for during one day early in Aug 44. After this absence, an investigation was ordered by Hitler and the conclusions were that von Kluge had been unavoidably detained by Allied air attacks while making a trip down to army headquarters. The investigation cleared von Kluge at the time. Field Marshal Keitel states he talked with von Kluge at length on the telephone the same evening of his absence.

13. Gen Warlimont stated that this absence was definitely not the reason for von Kluge's replacement by Model as C-in-C West. The replacement occurred primarily because of the encirclement of the

German armies in Normandy, and secondly because Hitler suspected that von Kluge had been involved in the 20 Jul 44 plot. From all evidence he has seen, Gen Warlimont believes that von Kluge was not associated with the plot. Warlimont also pointed out that von Kluge did not receive an order to report back to Berlin immediately after the incident, as indicated in the magazine article. However, Warlimont corrected the statement he had made in a previous interview to the effect that von Kluge had committed suicide during a plane flight to Metz (Ed: See ETHINT 1, Par 89). The magazine article is correct in stating that von Kluge died in his car on the way to an airfield near Metz. Poison was found in his corpse.

14. Following the suicide of Field Marshal von Kluge, another thorough investigation was held concerning his mysterious disappearance. Early in Aug 44, still another investigation failed again to reveal any treacherous conduct on von Kluge's part in Normandy.

15. Naturally, Gen Warlimont expressed a very burning interest (Interviewer's Note: probably also for Field Marshal Keitel and Gen Jodl) in what Gen Patton might have to say upon the subject of whether US officers were sent to conduct negotiations with von Kluge following the Avranches breakthrough.