

9 Aug 45

An INTERVIEW With  
Gen Art Walter WARLIMONT



GERMAN ESTIMATE  
OF  
THE UNITED STATES, RUSSIA,  
AND DAKAR

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HISTORICAL DIVISION  
SPECIAL STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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Note to: ETHINT 8

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

This oral interview with General Warlimont was conducted entirely in English, which explains why no German record is available. As usual, the entire oral interview was conducted in a very informal fashion, and stenographic notes taken by Sergeant Kiralfy to cover the more important remarks of General Warlimont. It has been correctly noted by the editor that while most of General Warlimont's answers were in the first person, others are in the third person. The explanation for this is that I have attempted to paraphrase General Warlimont's personal remarks in the first person. I have not put direct quotes around these for the simple reason they are not direct quotations; however, they are sufficiently close to the original and sufficiently personal in nature as to justify leaving them in the first person.

The reader will find several places where I have left General Warlimont's remarks in the third person. For example, on page 1, the reader will find the statement: "General Warlimont had the impression that while Hitler did not like this attitude on the part of the United States, He refused to take any action." This single sentence represents a summary of a discussion which lasted 5 or 10 minutes. I did not feel justified in such an impersonal summary in putting General Warlimont's remarks in the first person, yet both Sergeant Kiralfy and myself agreed on the interpretation of General Warlimont's remarks which we recorded in this report.

I realize at this time that this represented sloppy editing on our part, but there was a certain method in our madness. Wherever the first person appears, the remarks are very close to those originally made by General Warlimont himself; where the report is in the third person, they usually represent a summary of a longer discussion, and at times represent the judgement of Sergeant Kiralfy and myself drawn from certain inferences which General Warlimont made in his remarks.



ETHINT 8 - (            )

Title            : German Estimate of the United States, Russia, and  
                  Dakar

Source           : Gen Art Warlimont, Walter

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

Date             : 9 Aug 45

Place            : Bad Mondorf, Luxembourg

Interviewer     : Maj Kenneth W. Hechler

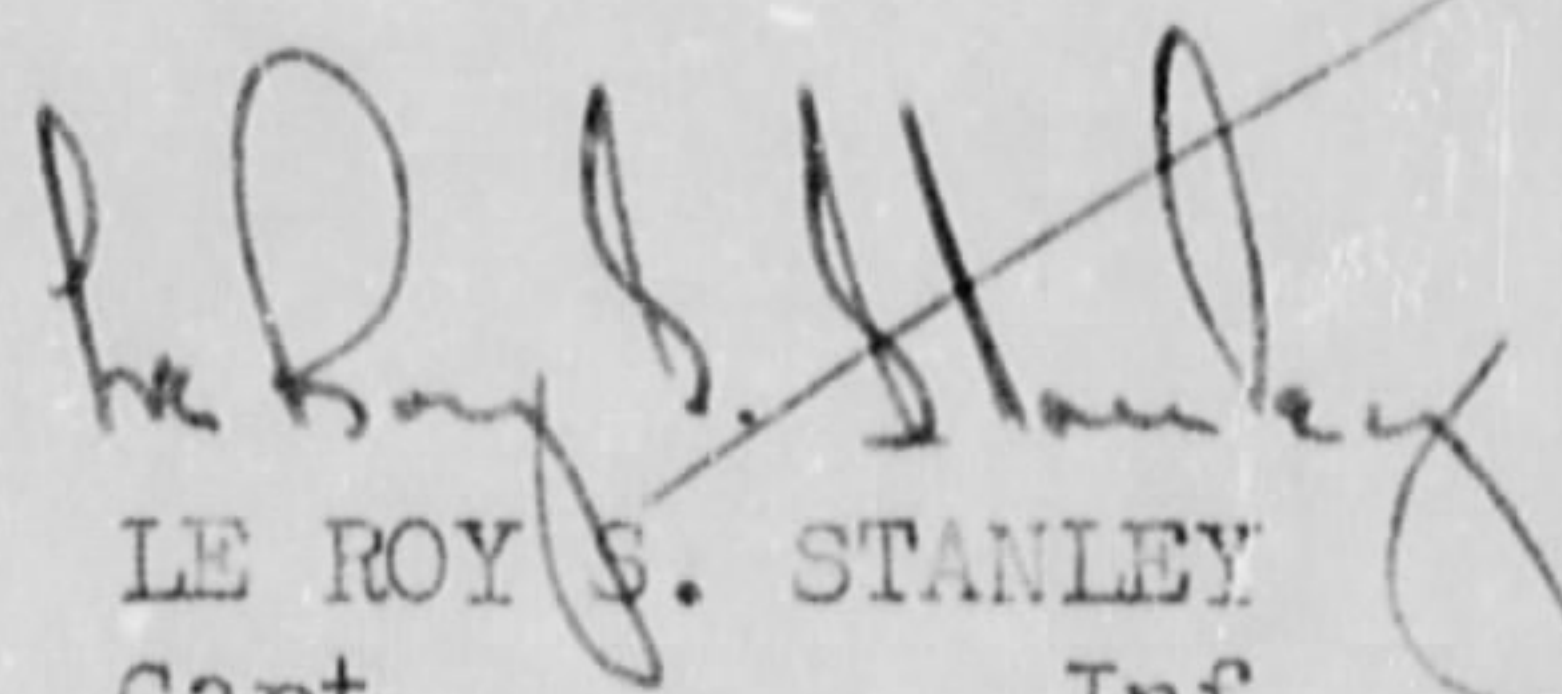
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Foreword

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.

It will be noticed that while most of Gen Warlimont's answers are written in the first person, others are in the third. For the reasons listed above, no effort has been made to convert one to the other.

  
LE ROY S. STANLEY  
Capt                      Inf  
Historical Editor

DEC 31 1947



GERMAN ESTIMATE OF UNITED STATES, RUSSIA, AND DAKAR

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I. Estimate of United States War Capabilities

1. Q: What was Germany's estimate of the United States war capabilities during the period 1939-42?

A: The main interest of Hitler seemed to be to avoid inciting the United States to enter the war. On 20 Aug 39, Hitler seemed convinced that France and England would not come into the war for the following reasons: (1) he felt their Far Eastern interests were more important than their European interests, and (2) they did not appear to be armed sufficiently. On 20 Aug 39, Hitler assembled his commanders-in-chief and all ranking officers down to army commanders and their chiefs of staff--about 60 in all--at the Berghof (Ed: at Berchtesgaden). At this meeting, Hitler did not refer to the possibility that the United States might interfere. In fact, he did not refer to the United States at all.

Afterwards, as the United States continued its "measures short of war," Hitler's attitude was very mild. Gen Warlimont had the impression that while Hitler did not like this attitude on the part of the United States, he refused to take any action. Hitler's attitude toward the United States seemed to have been caused by the increasing conviction that it was possible to finish the war before the United States could interfere, especially since he had succeeded in all his previous military campaigns before attacking Russia. After France was eliminated from the war, Russia was the only power left on the continent to oppose him and Hitler was



convinced that England, by herself, would not be able to invade the continent successfully. Therefore, while he tried to finish off the Russian campaign as quickly as possible, he underestimated the other dangers in Africa.

Hitler had this same operative aim when he started a second Russian offensive in 1942. He hoped to reach a line in Russia which could be defended with small forces and strong reserves. He never felt that a permanent peace treaty could be achieved. His main aim was to win the Caucasus and Baku to insure adequate supplies of oil. A secondary reason for his interest in the Caucasus was an attempt to draw the interest of the British toward the Middle East and away from Europe.

## II. Attack on Russia

2. Q: I have the feeling that Germany may have been successful against Russia in 1941 had she not invaded Yugoslavia. The invasion of Yugoslavia delayed the opening of the Russian campaign until late in Jun 41.

A: It was never considered possible to start the campaign against Russia before the end of May 41. After a hard winter, the ground was soft and the swamps were almost impassable; troop movements would not have been feasible prior to that time. Surprise was essential and it was necessary for the troops to reach the assembly area as quickly as possible. I doubt whether the campaign in the Balkans delayed the start of the Russian campaign more



than eight or ten days at the most.

3. Q: When did you first hear that Hitler was going to attack Russia?

A: I first heard it on 30 Jul 40. On this occasion Gen Jodl said Hitler wanted to start a campaign against Russia in the fall of 1940. Hitler, however, postponed the attack because of a written memorandum by Keitel which enumerated the reasons why a campaign at that time was impossible.

4. Q: Why did Hitler want to attack Russia?

A: There was a British-Russian understanding at this time and Hitler, noticing that Russia was already assembling troops on the Russo-German border, welcomed an opportunity to strike.

5. Q: After the Polish campaign, it seemed that the Russians and Germans had little difficulty adjusting the boundary.

A: There were grave difficulties at that time with which I am familiar as I was involved in the negotiations with Russia. That, however, is another story.

### III. Attitude Toward Dakar

6. Q: Why did not Germany seize Dakar?

A: When the armistice treaty with France was concluded, it was deemed important for political reasons to let France retain control of her colonial empire. Germany was afraid that the French government would secede and establish itself in one of its colonies



should the armistice be too stringent. Further, there were some difficulties with Mussolini, who objected to German influence in North Africa. These things prompted the meeting between Hitler and Petain at Montoire in Sep 40, which was held at Hitler's request. He wanted to determine whether France would give in to Italian claims on Tunisia. This was the first and only meeting between Hitler and Petain.

Arising from a proposal by Laval, Franco-German military discussions were held in Paris at the end of Nov 40 to determine whether France would give Germany military support. This proposal was advanced by Laval because he hoped to put France in a better position as the result of such support.

Gen Warlimont attended these discussions with Laval, Darlan, and Huntziger in the German Embassy. There, for the first time, Dakar was mentioned. According to French plans, Dakar was to be used by the French as a harbor for reinforcements for French West Africa. These reinforcements were to be shipped to French North Africa for the purpose of regaining Tchad (which had been taken over by De Gaulle and the Insurgents). These discussions were interrupted after the second meeting on 11 Dec 40 when Laval was replaced by Darlan.

In May 41, after Admiral Darlan had called on Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Gen Warlimont again was charged with the task of completing an agreement on Dakar. This time, he made up his mind not to return to Germany before establishing a definite agreement re-



garding the port. Gen Warlimont departed with the following proposals:

(a) German aid to France when Syria was attacked;  
(b) opening of the port of Bizerte for German and Italian supplies to Rommel's army;

(c) the port and district of Dakar would be at the disposal of the German Navy for a submarine base and the Luftwaffe would be allowed air fields in the area. This was the first time that Dakar had played a role in any German demands toward France.

7. Q: Could not Dakar have been taken easily if Germany had used force?

A: There was no land route to Dakar. The route through Rio de Oro was virtually impassable. The French had made previous attempts to ship troops through the Sahara Desert, but such efforts met with little success except when intermediate stations had been built. The only route thus available was the one Cook's (Ed: Cook & Son, an English travel agency) tour used for ambitious travelers. The sea route to Dakar was impossible except for submarines.

The proposals regarding Dakar were never carried through, and a written statement to this effect is on file.

During the months before the Allied invasion of North Africa in 1942, many concessions were made to France to enable her to reinforce her defense installations along the coast. Hitler was always in a dilemma whether to trust the French with additional weapons and reinforcements in North Africa or to move in and take over the defenses himself. The result was that much of the defense



equipment was a half-way compromise--antiaircraft guns were old, anti-tank weapons were of a small caliber, and only the most ancient tanks were allowed. One of the main French demands, however, the release of 20,000 prisoners of war (specialists) to aid the defense of North Africa, was guaranteed.

8. Q: What do you think of the attitude of Petain and Darlan towards collaboration with Germany?

A: Darlan was particularly anti-British and therefore collaborated with Germany. Petain was definitely aloof always and we were certain that he had an understanding with Great Britain.

9. Q: What do you think of Pierre Laval?

A: Oh, Laval is a type of politician who is more clever than strong.