

2 Sep 45

A n I N T E R V I E W W i t h
G e n A r t W a l t e r W A R L I M O N T



H I T L E R ' S
M I L I T A R Y H I S T O R I A N

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

12 July 1949

Note to: ETHINT 9

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

This was a follow up on ETHINT 7 ("German Method of Writing History of the War"). After General Warlimont had submitted his written answers to the questions on the German method of writing history, I had a brief conversation with him as a follow-up on these written answers.

Late in August 1945, the high ranking German Prisoners of War were moved from Bad Mondorf to Oberursel, Germany. On the second of September 1945, I secured permission to take General Warlimont outside of the PW enclosure and to keep him out most of the afternoon. It was a beautiful Indian summer day, and we tramped around in the woods which border on the Oberursel enclosure. General Warlimont said it was the first opportunity that he had had to get any exercise since he had been captured. Most of our conversation during this walk had little or nothing to do with historical matters, and I took no notes during our conversation. After our return, however, I made extensive notes on what General Warlimont had said in regard to General Scherff, the official historian. I also noted some comments he had made about Professor Schramm and concerning the ETO Historical Section.

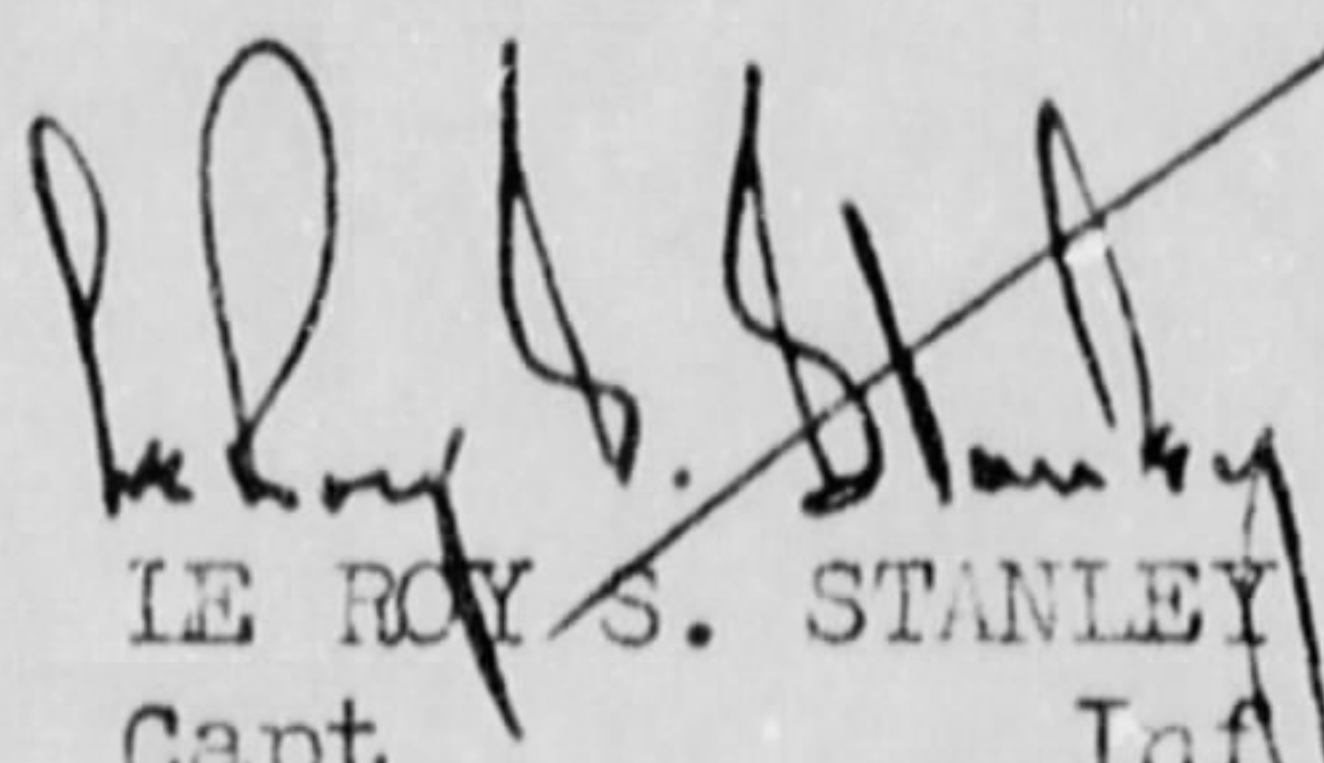
ETHINT 9 - (ML - 699)

Title : Hitler's Military Historian
Source : Gen Art Warlimont, Walter
Position : Deputy Chief, Armed Forces Operation Staff
(until 6 Sep 44, Deputy to Genobst Jodl--
Chief, Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab)
Date : 2 Sep 45
Place : Oberursel, Germany (probably USFET MISC)
Interviewer : Maj Kenneth W. Hechler

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Foreword

This interview is one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, ETOUSA, and its successors. 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.


LE ROY S. STANLEY
Capt Inf
Historical Editor

JAN 16 1948

1. Q: How did Gen Scherff obtain his position as the Fuehrer's official military historian?

A: Gen Scherff got his job by his friendship with Gen Schmundt, one of Hitler's personal aides who was killed in the 20 Jul 44 affair. Gen Scherff did not have a historical background. He was very displeased when he realized that I had opposed his appointment to the position. I had another candidate in mind--one of Gen Erfurth's associates.

Nevertheless, Gen Scherff was an artist and a psychologist who had a keen appreciation of human motivation. He was an excellent historian because he was able to preserve the personal relationships around the Fuehrerhauptquartier.

2. Q: Yet Scherff appears to have been a failure as a historian for these three reasons: (1) he failed to write a line of history himself, (2) he caused to be burned all of the material others had written, and (3) he committed suicide, carrying to his grave everything he had in his head.

A: I agree. Gen Scherff was displeased on one occasion when he discovered, after one of Hitler's decisions went bad, that I had included in the War Diary of the Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab an analysis of the various plans that had been considered and the reasons for the adoption of Hitler's decision. Gen Scherff told Gen Jodl to instruct me to discontinue such theoretical analyses. (Gen Warlimont remarked that the history consisted of an evaluation of

the reasons behind decisions as well as a mere time-table of events.)

3. Q: What did you think of the work of Professor Schramm as Historian of the Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab?

A: Schramm had a rare memory, keen powers of analysis, and great energy. He used to come to see me nearly every morning to ask me for the reasons behind developments in the Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab.

(Interviewer's Note: I gave Gen Warlimont, in response to his questions, a brief discription of the organization and operation of the USFET Historical Section. His only comment was that Germany's experience from the last war had been that the larger decisions at the top are the ones usually lost to history, which accounted for the strong Historical Section maintained right in the Fuehrerhauptquartier.)