

23 August 1945

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

12 July 1949

Note to: ETHINT 14  
By: Kenneth W. Hechler  
Major, Infantry (Res)

This oral interview with Major Schramm was held entirely in English, inasmuch as Major Schramm speaks excellent English. Therefore, no record in German was made at the time of the oral interview. Master Sergeant Albert Kiralfy took stenographic notes of the major points which Schramm made in the course of the oral interview, although this report does not represent a word-by-word stenographic account. At the time of the oral interview, Major Schramm was not familiar with the circumstances surrounding the use of his materials by Captain Scheidt, which is explained on pages 9-10 of this report.

Following my oral interview with Major Schramm, and following oral discussions with Captain Scheidt at the Seventh Army Interrogation Center, on 14 September 1945 I prepared a supplementary memorandum on Scheidt's draft history of German operations in the West, which is appended as pages 11-16 of this report.

It might be noted here parenthetically that although Major Schramm was quite cooperative at the start, he later became very truculent and it was difficult to get him to work on the things which interested the Historical Section. Likewise, Scheidt, who at first did a great deal of work for us, later rather sullenly refused to cooperate. The cases of these two historians were in contrast to the reaction of most of the German generals,

who became more cooperative as time went on. I do not believe that it would have been possible to make either Schramm or Scheidt enter into the spirit of our operations in a more cooperative mood.

ETHINT 14

Title : Preparation of History of Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab  
Source : Major Percy SCHRAMM  
Position : Historian, Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab  
(Armed Forces Operations Staff, OKW)  
  
Date : 23 August 1945  
Place : Oberursel, Germany (probably USFET MISC)  
Interviewer : Major Kenneth W. Hechler

Robert W. Fye  
1st Lt. FA

Historical Branch

16 January 1948

## 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. All parenthetical statements, except those of the editor, which are identified as such, are as they appear in the available record.

Robert W. Fye  
1st Lt      FA  
Historical Editor

16 January 1948

1. Q: What is your opinion of Rittm Scheidt (Ed: Assistant to Generalleutnant Scherff)?

A: Personally, I liked Scheidt. He is a capable man. If he came to me at Goettingen University, I would take him on as a tutor. He is not a steady worker, but this has the advantage that he does not sink so deep in a sea of paper that he never gets above water again.

2. Q: What records were made of the daily situation conferences with Hitler?

A: After the dismissal of Halder at the end of 1942, Hitler always had at least four stenographers at every Lagebesprechung (Ed: daily situation conferences at OKW). Previously, he sometimes mentioned that he wanted something done and then went on to something else, and no one was sure whether he had given an order or not; then Hitler would be enraged when he found the thing had not been done. The notes transcribed were a proof. There were three copies of each transcript, one for Hitler, one for Bormann, and the third was in the possession of Generalleutnant Scherff. The transcript and the original stenographic notes, in General-leutnant Scherff's possession, were all burned at Berchtesgaden. Several blocks of notes were taken out of the fire, and the Fuehrer's stenographers recopied them. These papers amount to a small fraction of the whole. They are extremely important from a historical point of view, because they illustrate how Hitler discussed military questions.

3. Q: What did you think of Generalleutnant Scherff?

A: Generalleutnant Scherff, who committed suicide, did not make many notes. The few notes he did make were intelligible to him alone. This constitutes an enormous loss, since he was the person informed about everything; he was always with Jodl, who discussed his personal opinions with Scherff. Scherff was present when Keitel saw the Fuehrer, and at conferences on the military situation. He had personal discussions with Hitler, and he knew the various other personalities. Scherff was an artist by nature; he was very fond of music and married a lady who was an artist, and so he had a feeling for personalities which is very unusual for a German general. When I talked to Scherff, I used to ask him his opinion on a certain general, and he would give me a psychological analysis of the man which was very convincing and far above the average. And so, as a historian, I am particularly sorry that he lost his life. No one else in Hitler's headquarters could estimate the importance or ability of men or judge whether a man's character was good or bad, as well as he could. As a historian he would have had great difficulties, since he was not a good worker and was too nervous. But he had other men who could have written the books, and he would have given the finishing touches to them.

4. Q: What system for war diaries was used?

A: There was no special Kriegstagebuch (war diary or journal) for the Army General Staff. A staff officer was charged with writing notes each evening, and these papers were all collected. After some months another officer did it, so no one officer of the Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab

ETHINT 14

(WFST - Armed Forces Operations Staff) can give the whole history of developments on the Eastern Front. Nor were these officers historians. The Army General Staff was divided into subsections, e.g., South, Center, etc., and there were officials from Archives, wounded officers, etc., who wrote their diaries. I do not know whether these Eastern Front diaries were burned, preserved, or fell into Russian hands. There was rivalry between OKW and OKH, and we did not hear much about these affairs.

5. Q: How did you work up your running reports of operations in the Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab?

A: My "Ausarbeitung" (Ed: an arbitrary name given by Schramm to the collection of documents, reports, and historical accounts he kept at the WFST) were chronological reports and collections of papers; e.g., orders sent out by the WFST, reports made by the army groups, and reports made by operations officers who were sent directly to the fronts by the WFST. After the Nettuno landing, for example, an officer was sent to collect information, and he made a long report about the gravity of the situation and the reasons why he took this view, the demands made by the troops, etc.

When the organization of the Army was changed, papers were also drafted. When suggestions were made by the WFST to Jodl, and by him to Hitler, proposals and a prepared order were drawn up. Very often an order was not accepted, and the suggestion was rejected with marginal notes indicating changes. The suggestion would again be worked on and modified, and all this material came to the War Diary; e.g., in 1944 we received sixty thousand teletype messages from the WFST (all but some messages it disseminated to special offices). That year we had 120



volumes for the diary. I would work with my associates on selecting material, since we could not read all of it.

6. Q: How did you get your job?

A: I got the job early in March 1943. Until this time the War Diary of the WFST had been written by Ministerial Rat (Ed: Ministerial Rat - an intermediate rank in the German civil government system) Helmuth Greiner. He had been in War Archives and was concerned with the World War of 1914 - 1918. He left the WFST for personal reasons; the party leader in Potsdam reported that he was against the Government and could not be retained in Hitler's headquarters with such a viewpoint. I was selected by accident. I had been in the Crimea and had received leave to give lectures again. I wrote several friends to try to find me a position. One of these had become a member of the WFST (although I did not know this), and he told me that they wanted a new man in the Ic office to take Greiner's place, who until that time had not had a leave of absence. After a few weeks Greiner left, and Warlimont told me to take Greiner's place.

7. Q: Did you like the work?

A: It was the best possible job for a history professor. I was quite free, and I liked the work. I was on very good terms with Warlimont.

8. Q: Did you change Greiner's system any?

A: When I came into the office, I naturally continued Greiner's system. It was quite impossible to write a daily diary, since documents came to my office only after other offices had used them and had finished

with them. Also, I received only the more important orders - those which were of historical interest. I collected them and arranged them in volumes, date by date, and then I could begin my work when they were about two months old; for example, there would be a short note about the situation in the East, then the order given (generally, OKW received no copies of orders issued at the Eastern Front, which was the responsibility of OKH; the OKW area of responsibility lay behind that Front), a Russian advance would be checked by Finnish troops, then there would be a report from the German General in Finland, and finally a WFST order detailing action to be taken. Situation discussions and all orders and reports were kept together. Greiner had begun this system and I completed it, with all important matters kept together by what we called the "spaghetti system." We tried to keep unimportant things together under one date: for example, in January the Rumanian Government requested the construction of a Danube bridge; the proposal was accepted and a copy sent to the German General in Bulgaria to ascertain whether or not Bulgaria objected; the engineer officer on, say, 20 January, would decide if it was possible to build the bridge; on 25 January Hitler concurred; and the following month the construction order was issued. We kept all such material filed according to its final date.

However, this system did not satisfy us. Frequently I spoke to Scherff about it, and he asked Jodl to change the system. I proposed to place all the material in separate volumes, according to theater of war and not only use the "spaghetti system," but keep a running historical account as well, with only the more important events included in it. I called this account the "Ausarbeitungen," purposely avoiding a title that suggested a

completed historical treatise, On 1 January 1944 my system was adopted.

9. Q: Which of your records were burned?

A: I asked Scherff in March 1945 what should be done now that the situation at the Fronts had become so grave, and he said everything must be burned. I objected, stating that the German people were entitled to know what orders had been given by their High Command, what their generals had done in the field, and what the troops had suffered. Operational material, I urged, should be preserved for history. We were at Zossen and could bury all the papers there. If Egyptian manuscripts were intact after thousands of years, our papers could also be kept underground safely. Scherff insisted that we burn them, and as an officer I had to obey my superior. I kept my "Ausarbeitungen," however, (I drew these up by hand, since that makes for a shorter text), and I had the original in a small bag when I arrived at Berchtesgaden. There I was ordered to burn my papers. This I did, but in my report I made no reference to my "Ausarbeitungen," although I was torn between conflicting loyalties. It was not quite correct, but for me as a historian, I felt I did the right thing and my duty to the German people, by keeping this material for future generations. I gave the bag to an American CIC captain, who refused to give me his name. Nobody at Freising, Third US Army Interrogation Center, seemd to have heard of it, and I am afraid that these papers may have been lost. The extracts I made have a value as great as the burned originals now, since I changed none of the facts or judgments in my copy of them. Everything is based on documents or notes made after conferences. In some important cases I consulted experts. I often saw Warlimont; he gave me his opinion and told me what he had heard at conferences with Hitler. His opinions represented Hitler's,

except when he specifically told me that they differed. I put these all together in the so-called "Merkbuch;" e.g., I would ask Major Friedel, the expert on the West, his opinion of the situation immediately after he had discussed the West with Jodl.

10. Q: What does your "Lagebuch" include:

A: The "Lagebuch" contains the material I dictated after each WFST conference; Greiner had not done this. I had a daily Lagebuch. I was present at conferences and made notes which were better than the collection of official Wehrmachtberichte (Armed Forces High Command communiques). It was not possible to give the whole truth in the latter, as was possible in the Lagebuch. Such matters as the danger of an invasion of Sicily, and questions submitted by generals for study, were discussed at these conferences, and I made notes on all of them. So the "Lagebuch" gave more than just the facts known at 1200 hours each day at WFST; it included the High Command's impression of the situation on the various fronts, as well. This practice was continued throughout 1944. The main points appear in my "Ausarbeitung."

11. Q: What was the attitude of Generalleutnant Winter, who succeeded Warlimont, toward your history?

A: In September 1944, Warlimont became ill while away\*; his successor, Generalleutnant Winter, was against continuing the War Diary.

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\*Ed: General der Artillerie Walter Warlimont received a brain concussion in the 20 July 1944 attempt and finally had to be relieved entirely from his position in OKW in September 1944.

There were many things he did not want written down. Warlimont was very much interested in having an accurate, complete, and useful history of the war, preserved in written form. Generalleutnant Winter had the opposite viewpoint; he forbade my continuing my work as before and made me institute a stupid system. Under this new system, I could just say, "West, 1 January, report of Generalfeldmarschall Model, 0900," with a short excerpt from the text, or, "1200, order sent to Army Group G;" only these bare facts without any background. This applied to all theaters of war. This system was not nearly so valuable as the previous one, from a historical point of view - it was primitive. I was angry but could do nothing. Generals believe they are better informed than anybody else, even about history, and I could not tell Gen. Winter that in this case I was the expert and would he kindly let me go on as I had in the past. I made excerpts on all fronts except the East. If these were returned to me, it would be simple to sit down and make the "Ausarbeitung," as I made them before Gen. Winter's arrival.

(Interviewer's Note: The complete facts on the disposition of Schramm's material after he turned it over to CIC are not known to him. As soon as General der Artillerie Walter Warlimont, Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, and others mentioned the importance of this material, a thorough search for it was commenced, at the end of July 1945. The first clue came from a letter in the USFET G-2 files, requesting Seventh US Army to forward this material. About 40% of the material was located at the Twelfth Army Group Documents Center in Wiesbaden, but significantly absent were the Schramm notes on the western front between D-Day and the opening of the Ardennes Offensive.

The search then led to Heidelberg. Neither Seventh US Army G-2 nor the Seventh US Army Documents Center had any knowledge of additional Schramm material, assuming it had all been forwarded. It was finally found in the hands of Rittmeister Wilhelm Scheidt, a prisoner at the Seventh US Army Interrogation Center. Scheidt had worked in the OKW Historical Section and realized the value of these Schramm documents. He had persuaded a lieutenant at the camp to secure them for him. He was encouraged to work these up into a connected narrative of developments on the western front. Stenographic and translator assistance has been rushed to him so that such a narrative will be available to assist the Historical Section in its present mission. To date, he has written, and we have translated 375 typewritten pages carrying developments down to the end of November 1944.

In order to afford the Historical Section, USFET, an opportunity to question Rittmeister Scheidt on interpretations of his narrative, and also to allow him to work in the proper atmosphere for putting refinements on his work, the release of Scheidt to the custody of the Historical Section has been secured. I shall bring him to the Section on or about 1 September 1945; the intervening period will be used by him to exploit to the utmost the Schramm documents before they leave our hands, and also to make full use of the beautiful female stenographers among the prisoners of war at Heidelberg.

Initial moves were made to secure the services of Schramm at St. Germain also. However, this was blocked by MIS, which is taking Schramm and his documents to Washington. The 60% of Schramm's documents now being

ETHINT 14

exploited for our benefit by Rittmeister Scheidt will be released by us to MIS as soon as Scheidt has finished his story - unless MIS discovers them sooner.)

## MEMORANDUM ON SCHEIDT'S DRAFT HISTORY OF GERMAN OPERATIONS IN THE WEST

1. Scope:

This history covers the calendar year 1944 from the preparations prior to D-Day, down through the planning of the winter offensive in the Ardennes. It was not written during operations, but has been done since the author has been a prisoner.

2. The Author:

Dr. Wilhelm Scheidt received his Ph. D., from the University of Berlin in 1936, assisted in the military history section of the University before the war, joined the OKW Historical Section in 1938, spent 1939-1940 as a 2d Lt. with the 8th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, of the 5th Panzer Division in the Polish campaign, and returned later to become the aide and chief assistant of General Scherff, Hitler's military historian.

3. Sources Employed:

The Historian of the Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab (Armed Forces Operations Staff), Major Percy Schramm, kept daily notes on the situation discussions led by Generaloberst Alfred Jodl within the staff. Major Schramm, a very intelligent ex-professor of history at the University of Goettingen, also maintained detailed notes on the principle field orders, intelligence estimates, telephone conversations, and reasons behind key decisions in Generaloberst Jodl's office. Periodically, Major Schramm



would weave these sources into a coordinated narrative of operations, which he regarded as an "open account book" to which he would later add, subtract or amend. By frequent questioning of the experts in General-oberst Jodl's office, he assembled quite exhaustive notes on developments within the German Armed Forces High Command.

In March 1945, when the Allied armies swept across the Rhine, and the Russians advanced toward Berlin, Major Schramm asked General Scherff if he could bury these materials. General Scherff insisted that everything be burned. With rare courage, Major Schramm concealed his pencilled notes and burned the typescripts, signing a statement that he had burned everything.

When Dr. Wilhelm Scheidt was captured, his interrogators upon finding he was a historian told him to "go write a history". Faced with this punishment, Dr. Scheidt pulled a fast one and immediately demanded that first he be given all of the documents then in the possession of Major Schramm. Major Schramm also wanted to write a history with his own documents, but made the mistakes of asking permission and announcing to his captors that he was a historian; he was greeted with a glassy stare and the words: "so what?" Therefore, most of Schramm's valuable documents went to Scheidt, who used them as a basis for his own history.

#### 4. Methods Employed:

In the early part of his history, Dr. Scheidt used Schramm's notes less frequently and put in more of his own observations of the relation between the western and other fronts. This process took much

longer, and it soon became apparent that unless Scheidt got on the ball he would still be piddling around with Cherbourg after most of the USFET Historical Section had finished their work. Therefore, pressure was put on him to use less Scheidt and more Schramm and then he could polish it up later on at his leisure. In the final rush, we ordered him to copy verbatim Schramm's notes on the final chapter regarding the planning for the Ardennes Offensive, which accounts for the rough spots in this chapter.

5. Disposition of Schramm and Scheidt:

Schramm is currently awaiting shipment to the U.S., where he will be sort of a minor cataloguer of German documents at Camp Ritchie, Maryland. Dr. Scheidt will be near St. Cloud until 19 September, when he goes to Nuremberg as a War Crimes witness. Until 19 September, Scheidt will be available for questioning and elucidation of his materials.

Pending his shipment, Schramm has been given documents and stenographic help to enable him to dictate similar material on the execution of the Ardennes Offensive and developments in the west since January 1945. This material will be made available to the various writing groups as soon as it has been completed and translated.

6. Description of Material Contained in the Scheidt History:

Chapter One: Defensive Preparations Before D-Day:

An appraisal of the rising threat of the U.S. rearmament after Pearl Harbor, the relation of the western to other fronts, the effects of the North African prelude, the build-up and nature of German

defenses in France, and their strengths and weaknesses.

Period Covered: 1941 - 1944, with emphasis on January - May 1944.

Chapter Two: The Battle for Normandy.

Reaction by the High Command to landings in Normandy, the shifting of German reserves, the effect of air attacks, expectation of new landings, the defense of Cherbourg, proposals and attempts to drive our bridgehead into the sea, beginnings of Operation Cobra, German inadequacies for such a war movement.

Period Covered: 6 June - 1 August 1944.

Chapter Three: From Avranches to Argentan.

Discussion of possible German defense lines in France, significance of the Avranches breakthrough, estimate of situation on 1 August, planning and execution of the Mortain counterattack, Hitler - von Kluge quarrels and their effect on the course of battle, reaction to the American XV Corps drive to Argentan, plans for withdrawal from the Argentan-Falaise gap.

Period Covered: 1 - 17 August 1944.

Chapter Four: Retreat to the West Wall.

Retreat across the Seine River, the evacuation of Paris, intermediate defense lines, estimate of the situation by Commander-in-Chief West on 1 September, intentions to develop a Somme-Marne Line, early plans for manning the West Wall, defense of the Meuse-Moselle Line,

reappointment of Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt.

Period Covered: 18 August - 16 September 1944.

Chapter Five: German Navy, Luftwaffe and V-Weapons.

Role of the German Navy during and after the invasion, uses and handicaps of the Luftwaffe in Normandy, theories and uses of V-Weapons and their estimated importance.

Chapter Six: Evacuation of Southern and Southeastern France.

Defenses in southern France in anticipation of the landing, estimates where American Seventh Army would land, initial reaction to the landings, plans and routes of withdrawal.

Period Covered: August - September 1944.

Chapter Seven: Reconstruction of Armies in the West and Renovation of the West Wall.

German casualties by branch, 6 June - 29 September, OB West estimates and requests for new troops, the state and fighting power of German infantry and armored units, methods of reorganizing the army and rearming the West Wall, the Arnhem-Nijmegen airborne operation, Battle of Walcheren Island, defense of Aachen, Metz area and Vosges Mountains, the pre- 16 December battles in Alsace and Lorraine.

Period Covered: 15 September - 16 December 1944.

Chapter Eight: Defense of Port Fortresses and the Channel Islands.

Defense of Brest, St. Malo, Lorient, St. Nazaire,  
and the other port fortresses and the Channel Islands.

Chapter Nine: Planning of the Ardennes Offensive.

The build-up of troops for the Ardennes Offensive,  
various plans considered and reasons for their adoption, effect of the  
defensive battles along the front on the mounting of the offensive, pre-  
cautionary measures to preserve secrecy, details of the Skorzeny plan,  
necessary changes in order of battle in the west in order to launch the  
offensive.

Period Covered: 15 September - 16 December 1944.

/s/ KENNETH W. HECHLER  
Major, Inf.