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I. NORWAY

II. NORTH AFRICAN INVASION

SECRET

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL der ARTILLERIE, WALTER WARLIMONT;  
DEPUTY CHIEF of WEHRMACHTSFUHRUNGSSTAB

(Second in command to General Jodl of Armed Forces Operations Staff up to 6 September 1944)

Date of Interview : 28 July 1945  
Interviewer : Major Kenneth W. Hechler  
Place of Interview: CCPWE 32 (Ashcan)

I. NORWAY

Q. In the autumn of 1940, what was the German strength and what were the troop dispositions in Norway?

A. In the fall of 1940, <sup>the</sup> German army <sup>was</sup> almost the same strength as used for the invasion in April, 1940. When the initial plans were laid for the invasion of France in November 1939, there had been no intention of invading Norway.

Ten to twelve divisions, which had been newly activated during the winter of 1939 - 1940, were in Norway during autumn, 1940. They were in many respects weaker than normal divisions, and were equipped only with lightest artillery. These divisions also used light coastal batteries which had been taken over from the Norwegian army. They were situated only in the main ports of Norway - Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and ~~Narvik~~ <sup>Narvik</sup>. Their strength was found limited because 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 manned with German troops after they had been transported to Norway.

In autumn of 1940, the German airforce was still rather strong in Norway, and was devoted to reconquering coastal zones, launching air attacks against Scapa Flow and later hoped to use Norway as a base for air operations against British ports on the east coast of Scotland and middle England, and against British shipping in the Atlantic.

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.

Q. Did Germany ever have intentions to occupy the Shetland Islands, the Faroe 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 wanted to use Iceland as an air base for the protection of our submarines operating in that area. Hitler's

advisers also insisted that it was impossible to build airfields on Iceland. Hitler was subsequently enraged after American occupation of Iceland to discover that America had built airfields where Hitler's advisers insisted it was impossible. There was very little opportunity to get near the Shetland Islands or the Faroe Islands, because of the powerful British navy surrounding that area.

Q. What about an airborne invasion?

A. An airborne invasion would have succeeded, but resupply would have been impossible by sea. Resupply by air was possible in 1940 but would have become less and less possible as the months proceeded.

## II. INVASION OF NORTH AFRICA

Q. Were the Germans aware of the invasion of North Africa in November, 1942?

Q. We were caught completely by surprise. In the first place, no one realized that you were building up for an invasion operation. Secondly, attention was at that time preoccupied with the Russian campaign. There were only two indications that two individuals in the German High Command suspected an American invasion of North Africa. <sup>First</sup> 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 higher authorities concerned. Secondly, 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. There were two difficulties with the prediction, however: 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.

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

A. There were a number of reasons:

- (1) This appeared to be the weak spot from which you would be free to place your foot on the weakest spot on the European continent - Italy.
- (2) I knew that your agents (or should I say public officials) had been very busy in North Africa, and in touch with the French authorities. This led me to believe that you were preparing the French authorities for future landing operations.
- (3) 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.
- (4) No other spot in the eastern hemisphere seemed so suitable for an invasion, and so little defended.

Q. Was there anything in addition to the weather which led you to suspect an invasion in North Africa in November, 1942.

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 the second of November, 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 good-bys to my associates and went to my home near Munich. General 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 Wehrmachtsfuhrungsstab was abbreviated <sup>over</sup> by your invasion of North Africa. Hitler then read the previous order I had issued to my staff and commented to General Jodl: "I have been unjust to Warlimont" and I returned to the Wehrmachtsfuhrungsstab the day after the invasion.

Q. What German troops were in North Africa at the time of the American invasion in November, 1942?

A. All of our combat troops were concentrated under Rommel much further east, and there were no combat troops outside of the Italian colonies. There was a control commission set up by the Armistice with France consisting 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 here 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. On the Italian side of French Morocco there were about 200 German soldiers only because Italy objected to leaving French Morocco entirely free of combat troops on the Italian ATLANTIC side.