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6821 DIC-MIS, APO 654,
21 Apr 45

Detailed Interrogation Report

KEITEL'S AND KESSELRING'S REPLIES TO
QUESTIONS CABLED FROM WASHINGTON

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A. KEITEL'S Replies:

1. Reaction to Italy's entry into the war: In 1939 Italy had not lived up to her agreement with Germany and declared war. In 1940 Germany had no military interest in Italy's entry and found that she was no help.

2. Invasion ~~xxx~~ of England after DUNKIRK and before fall of FRANCE: It was considered. The greatest risk to the Germans was the existence of the British fleet. The Germans lacked sufficient shipping. There were too many uncertain factors, such as weather, sea, prolonged fog. A series of quiet clear days would have been absolutely necessary. The German Army was ready, the Navy very dubious, the Air Corps limited always by weather. HITLER therefore made the final decision against an attempted invasion.

3. Attack on Russia: It was justified and came as the result of an ever-growing threat posed by Russia. During the French campaign Germany had approx 5 divisions in Poland, Russia 20, and these 20 were constantly being increased. OKW felt it must get troops to the East to counter this threat. The question then reduces to siezing the initiative in a conflict believed inevitable. EAST PRUSSIA food supplies and UPPER SILESIAN coal had to be secured. In the preceding BALKAN campaign, resulting from the unexpected YUGOSLAV revolt, promised Russia support, played an important part. RUSSIA also constantly demanded plans of ships like the PRINZ EUGEN. P/W concludes that the decision to attack RUSSIA was political, not military.

4. 1941 offensive continued late in fall for what reason: It was not continued late into the fall to possibly swing JAPAN into the war. P/W believes the Japs would have stuck to their non-aggression pact with RUSSIA. The late 1941 campaigning was very carefully considered and it was believed that they could capture MOSCOW and force a decision. The campaign failed because good fall campaigning weather suddenly turned into extreme cold.

5. Aims of German 1942 campaign: 1941 had not brought any final decision in the East. The primary 1942 aim was to deprive RUSSIA of her vital industrial and raw materials area. GERMANY failed completely to estimate the reserve industrial and productive power RUSSIA had in SIBERIA. GERMANY aimed to capture the DONETZ Basin, the North Caucasian oilfields, cut the VOLGA. Thus they believed they would deprive RUSSIA of two-thirds of her productive power and three-quarters of her petroleum. GERMANY could no longer advance along a full front. Objectives had to be limited. RUSSIA had had 5 months in which to recover and mobilize.

6. American attack in NORTH AFRICA: The American attack was not expected. Germany had some information on American aims on AFRICA, such as our interest in DAKAR, the island groups off Western AFRICA, etc. It was not believed that we would enter the MEDITERRANEAN because of British interests there. P/W experienced the attack as a surprise. American security was excellent and our transports were believed to be British transports on the way to the Far East. The Germans also found out later that the French knew of our attack in advance and were co-operating.

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P/W believes LEAHY originator of our NORTH AFRICAN attack. If we had attacked further East in NORTH AFRICA the Germans would not have been able to throw troops into TUNISIA.

7. German resistance in TUNISIA: The Germans held on so long in TUNISIA mainly because they had a choice between fighting and surrendering. But they hoped to hold permanently the Tunisian bridgehead, because if that were lost, they would then have to fight in SICILY, etc.

8. Basic 1943 German strategy in the East: P/W found this difficult to define. The loss of STALINGRAD plays a large role. The Germans were thrown back roughly to KHARKOV and POLTAVA, lost heavily and were weakened so much more that any further objectives in RUSSIA would have to be even more limited than in 1942. The following objectives were therefore decided on: reduction of Leningrad, reduction of NOVOROSIISK and TUAPSE on the BLACK SEA, securing of DONETZ Basin against constant Russian pressure. The Russians thwarted the attack on Leningrad by themselves attacking in the LAKE ILMEN area and drawing off German strength. For GERMANY major operations with strategic aims were no longer possible.

9. Invasion of FRANCE: GERMANY expected our invasion of FRANCE. They were confident they could check it, though perhaps not initially. But they were sure they could drive us off the beachheads again or neutralize our positions. They were not sure where we would strike and held BRITANNY as more probable because of the three major U-boat bases located there. Knowledge of our large, uncommitted reserves and airborne units compelled the Germans to withhold reserves after our landing. This aided greatly our landings. Operations in the East were also powerfully influenced. Tank divisions were moved to the West, etc. They considered abandoning sections in the East, but this was never carried out.

10. Reason for long resistance in NORMANDY: Germany resisted so long in NORMANDY because the leaders were confident they could hold it.

11. Responsibility for the ARDENNES attack, Dec 44: The responsibility for the ARDENNES attack is HITLER'S. All major plans and strategy in this war have emanated directly from him. From the broader aspect, the ARDENNES attack did develop to relieve our mounting pressure from AACHEN toward the RHINE and RUHR. It was a case of hitting the flank from either the north or south and HITLER chose the south.

12. Reason for long German resistance in PALATINATE and RHINE, Spring 45: This question is difficult to answer. It would have been better to retreat behind the RHINE. The disorderly retreat across the river, however, endangered its defensive qualities. P/W assesses reasons for prolonged German resistance in these areas as follows:

- a. The conflict broke up into individual battles.
- b. They had the choice of staying put in a good defensive position in the WEST WALL, or of retreating and having to fight in a poor defensive position.
- c. They wished to gain all possible time so they could raise and equip new troop units.
- d. They could not carry out any normal retreat. We could

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move 24 hours of the day at three times their speed; they could only move at night. In a retreat we could tear into them and turn it into a catastrophe.

13. OKW on holding the RHINE: OKW was confident that it could hold the RHINE against our attacks. The REMAGEN bridgehead wrecked their plans because they had to draw off units to contain it, thus making possible successful Anglo-American attacks elsewhere along the river.

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To: Lt. Col. Van Cleave

Interrogation Office - Ashcan.

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Please put the following questions up to Field Marshall Keitel - Kesselring orally and send results of ^{individual} interrogations to Gen. Belts, personal staff forward. ~~Following~~ Request action by Monday, 21 May. Following not to be divulged to Germans: Information sought has been requested on short notice by US War Dept.

Basic Decisions of German High Command 1940-45.

1. Did the High Command welcome the coming of Italy into the War?
2. After Dunkirk was consideration given to an Invasion of England prior to complete conquest of France?
3. Did the high military authorities favor or oppose the Invasion of USSR, 1941?
4. Was the 1941 offensive prolonged into December to encourage Japanese entry into the War?
5. Was German strategy in the East in 1942 aimed at:
 - a. Annihilation of the Red Army?
 - b. Capture of Moscow - Kazan Region after reaching the Volga?
 - c. Penetration of the Middle East?
 - d. Any combination of the above?
6. Was the Allied Invasion of North Africa expected, if so, were the following properly estimated: -
 - a. The weight of the expedition?
 - b. The points of attack?
7. What was the purpose of the German stand in Tunisia?
8. What was the basic German strategy for 1943 in the East?
9. Did Germany anticipate the Allied Invasion in the West in 1944? Were they confident of repulsing it? Did the prospect of invasion in the west effect strategy in the East? How? How much ground would Germany have been willing to yield in the East in 1944 in the course of defensive operations?
10. Who was responsible for holding on so long in Normandy?
11. Who was responsible for the Ardennes counter offensive?
12. Who was responsible for holding on so long in the Rhineland and Palatinate in the spring of 1945?
13. Was OKW confident of being able to hold the line of the Rhine in the spring of 1945?

See: Kettel: Same report, also
includes copy 5.
of original questionnaire

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B. KESSELRING'S Replies:

1. Reaction to ITALY'S entry into the war: P/W states GERMANY did not want ITALY to enter the war. The following reasons were given: the Italian army would be more of a drawback than a help, it lacked morale and it had been weakened by its previous campaigns.

2. Invasion of ENGLAND after DUNKIRK and before fall of FRANCE: P/W does not know what the German High Command decided. He urged ~~strongly~~ strongly the invasion of ENGLAND. It was generally realized in GERMANY that ENGLAND was in a critical ~~position~~ position.

3. Attack on RUSSIA: P/W also believes the attack on RUSSIA in 1941 was necessary because of the preparations the Russians had made, and therefore the sooner, the better.

4. 1941 offensive continued late in fall for what reason: This offensive was not continued into the fall in the hope of drawing JAPAN into the war.

5. Aims of German 1942 campaign: P/W limits German objectives to the UKRAINE and oil, which they intended to take and hold.

6. American attack on NORTH AFRICA: P/W expected our attack but was not believed at OKW. He underwent 6 weeks of intense nervous strain before we invaded. Three days before we landed he reported that it was impending, but GORRING would not believe him. At that time he requested a division, but it was refused. It was clear to him that we would land in strength. He believed we would not attack in strength further east than ALGIERS.

7. German resistance in TUNISIA: P/W opposed the Egyptian venture because he did not think the Germans could maintain extended supply lines and that it would then develop into a struggle of supplies. This actually happened. He had quite an argument with ROMMEL on this score and ROMMEL complained about him to the OKW at this time. By the time the Germans had been forced back into TUNISIA, they had ~~no~~ no choice. They could not supply their troops and also not evacuate them.

8. Basic 1943 German strategy in the East: P/W could give no information on this front.

9. Invasion of FRANCE: GERMANY definitely expected our invasion of FRANCE. They also knew it would come from Southern ENGLAND and that we would not strike at DENMARK or NORWAY. They knew it was coming 2-3 months before it did and the strain on nerves was terrific. P/W feels he definitely could have stopped it and everybody else felt the same way. If GERMANY had not had to hold its reserves for this impending attack in the West, it could have finished RUSSIA off. So far as he knew, GERMANY was not ready to abandon anything in the East at this time.

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10. Reason for long resistance in NORMANDY: Prolonged German resistance in NORMANDY was ordered by HITLER and was in line with his strategy.

11. Responsibility for the ARDENNES attack, Dec 44: HITLER was wholly responsible for the ARDENNES attack, Dec 45. P/W blames the failure of it on tanks of ~~SEPP~~ SEPP DIETRICH'S units getting mired in snow and mud.

12. Reason for long German resistance in PALATINATE and RHINE: P/W states that the Germans held on so long to these areas because they had the choice between the well-prepared defensive position of the WEST WALL or unprepared positions further in GERMANY.

13. OKW on holding the RHINE: The OKW did believe it could hold the RHINE.

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