

**SECRET**

COORDINATOR OF INFORMATION

THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS IN ALLIED STRATEGY

The Cape Verde Islands, lying only 480 miles due west of Dakar, command sea-lanes and air-routes vital to inter-allied supply. Their relation to West Africa and South America is analogous to that of the Azores to Europe and North America.

Shipping routes around the Cape of Good Hope to Britain, shipping routes from South America to Britain, air routes from Britain to South Africa, air routes from both Britain and the United States across Africa-- all these pass close to the Cape Verdes, within striking distance of the formidable Vichy outpost at Dakar.

Enemy submarines would find in the Islands an ideal base for attacks on Allied shipping. Enemy bombers as well could wreak havoc from the excellent fields already available. Three of the Islands nearest Africa (Sal, Sao Tiago, and Maio) possess first-class airfields, until recently used by Lati and Air France. Two of these fields (on Sal Island) can accommodate even the heaviest military craft. More fields could be constructed without much difficulty or expense.

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In the event of hostile occupation, our vital air route from Brazil across Africa, by which we supply the British and the Russians, would be directly exposed to attack. In like manner, the British Alternate Air Route, by way of Bathurst to Khartum and the Far East, would be imperiled.

Occupation of the Islands would be a relatively easy matter. Portuguese reinforcements and armaments have been only recently sent and are probably not formidable. No real resistance is to be expected from the population, which is at present racked by famine.

But the Islands would be easier to take than to hold. Dakar has been heavily fortified and manned, and the French have but recently constructed a number of airfields in West Africa. Axis forces, if in control of Dakar, would be much nearer the Cape Verdes than would American or British forces. They could, therefore, launch heavy attacks by both air and sea.

Hence any action by Americans or British must be made in full force, and should be part of a larger operation against Dakar. To hold the Islands against hostile

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forces on the African Coast would be hopeless. The occupation must be viewed in connection with the whole West African problem. On the solution of this problem depends the outcome of the Battle of the Atlantic and the maintenance of our supply-lines to the Near East, Soviet Russian and even the Far East.

Present at Conferences of September 8, 1941,  
November 8, 1941 and December 5, 1941:

Mr. Stefan Michalski, Major (Reserve)  
in the Polish Army (Artillery) and  
Manager of the Bank of Poland

Mr. Stefan Michalski, Jr.

Mr. Janusz Koltowski, Financial Counselor  
of the Embassy of Poland

Colonel William J. Donovan

Mr. Turner McBaine

Mr. Richard Heppner

Mr. James R. Murphy

TO: Colonel Donovan

November 14, 1941

FROM: Turner H. McBaine

Attached hereto is the final report of our interview with Mr. Michalski.

The following is our appraisal of his qualities as an informer:

Mr. Michalski is a high-grade, intelligent educated man, whose opinion of general conditions and trends may be given some weight, but who is not a close observer or accurate reporter of detail. For a man who had spent 14 months in Dakar he could give surprisingly few specific facts, although I believe that lack of a first-class interpreter was partly to blame. Although he maintained a seemingly objective attitude, he was very nervous, and the impression I got from his whole story was that he did not think much of the British, at least so far as Dakar is concerned.

Turner H. McBaine  
Special Assistant

Mr. Michalski is obviously a high-grade and intelligent person. However, in my opinion, he is not a qualified military observer. I asked him numerous questions which a military observer could have answered with ease. He could not. I do not believe his estimate of the defense forces and defenses can be relied on. Furthermore, I do not believe that his harrowing experiences permit him to make an objective estimate of the morale of the defenders. His generalities agree with other generalities which we have heard but he does not add much that is specific.

Richard H. Hepler  
Special Assistant

Colonel Donovan

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Mr. Michalski has an 18 year old son who was with him the entire time in Dakar, went to high school there and had many friends among the French boys. Mr. Zoltowski believes that he could give many details his father could not. Do you think it would be worth while to bring him down to Washington for an interview?

I believe it would be extremely helpful to have a question and answer shorthand reporter available for future important interviews here. Would you like me to arrange for this?

T.H. McB.

Attach.  
THMcB/ecj